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## Chapter 2

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# INTERCESSORY PRAYER

NOTE: Some of the material discussed in this chapter may be controversial. Much of it is cutting-edge in the spiritual warfare movement. The purpose in including this information is to open your mind to new ideas and to motivate you to intercede in prayer.

Nearly every Christian knows prayer is important. Yet how many of us honestly believe that *our* prayers can really make a difference? When we believe in the power of prayer—and actually PRAY—it will radically change our lives and the lives of those around us. We can talk about prayer, sing about prayer, and even teach the principles of effective prayer. Yet it is PRAYER itself that makes the difference.

### Personal and Intercessory Prayer

In the Foundations Week of Volume I, the focus was our personal prayer life. Personal prayer is a vital part of our Christian walk, the primary purpose being fellowship and communion with God. This discipline flows from our own relationship with the Lord, and is an expression of our love and worship.

Intercessory prayer is praying specifically on behalf of something or someone else. The purpose of this type of prayer is to do battle in the spiritual realm, and to “stand in the gap” for God’s will to be done. Read Ezekiel 22:30, “So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one.” Think about this for a moment! God is all-powerful, yet He was looking for

someone to intercede in prayer so that His will would be done. What an awesome responsibility and privilege God has given us in prayer!

*Through intercessory prayer we can “stand in the gap” for:*

- Other Individuals
  - Family members
  - Friends
  - Unsaved loved ones
  - Church leaders
  - Government leaders
  - Unreached people
- Ministries/Organizations
  - Our church
  - Ministries
  - Outreaches
  - Schools
  - Missionary organizations
- Specific areas
  - Our city
  - Our nation
  - Other nations
  - Our world



In the Bible, we learn that prayer can move the heart of God, and throughout history we see prayer really does make a difference!

### The Power of Prayer

During World War II, an amazing example of the power of prayer took place in the skies above Britain. Over two hundred Nazi bombers outnumbered the handful of British planes. Yet the results (as described in *Hand on the Helm* by Katherine Pollard Carter) were nothing less than a miracle!

*Then inexplicably the discs on the wall chart began to move eastward. The great Nazi air flotilla had turned back. With one hundred eighty-five of their aircraft downed in flames they were in retreat! Miraculously, against all logistical probability, the Royal Air Force had won the battle...*

*Amazing reports came from downed Nazi pilots. [Several were] quizzed as to why they had turned back when only two planes were attacking. 'Two,' exclaimed one pilot. 'There were hundreds!' Another Luftwaffe officer asked them in perplexity, 'Where did you get all the planes you threw into battle over Britain?' His British interrogators managed to mask their surprise. Actually, the powerful Nazi bombers force had been met by a mere handful of little outmoded Royal Air Force Spitfire and Hurricane fighters. There was no sky full of Royal Air Force planes!...*

*A Nazi intelligence officer captured still later came nearest to disclosing the divine source of the...mirages which had confused the Luftwaffe pilots. 'With the striking of your Big Ben clock each evening at nine,' the Nazi told the British intelligence officer, 'you used a secret weapon which we did not understand. It was very powerful, and we could find no countermeasure against it.'*

*He was right! There was a powerful force set in motion each evening as Big Ben struck nine. It was the powerful force of a nation in heartfelt prayer against which no countermeasure could hope to prevail—a nation in prayer to the omnipotent God of creation. Each evening as Big Ben in the clock tower of the Parliament Building struck nine, the people of the British Isles and of the far-flung English Commonwealth halted for the famous Silent Moment of Prayer.<sup>1</sup>*

What tremendous power! Through prayer, we let God fight our battles instead of trying to win the world by our own efforts alone. Our good friend Drake Kanabo, a national minister from Uganda, put it this way, "It's hard to work FOR God, yet it's easy to work WITH God!" Our battle is not in the flesh, but in the spirit. 2 Corinthians 10:4 tells us that "*the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds.*"

Already, God has ultimately defeated the devil through the cross of Calvary and the resurrection of Christ. At the same time, however, the devil continues to have authority on this earth. In Ephesians 2:2 he is even called the "*prince of the power of the air.*" His strongholds can be through belief systems (such as Hinduism or evolution) or over a particular area (such as a country or a people group that is bound by witchcraft or the occult). In addition, the devil can have strongholds in the lives of individuals through fear, depression, anger, hatred, or bondage to sin. As Christians, we need to realize that God has delegated authority to us to pull down these strongholds through prayer (Luke 10:19).

Several years ago, my husband and I had an experience that gave us a glimpse into the importance of intercession. A teen-age girl was living with our family and we had set down several guidelines that she was expected to follow. We loved her and did everything we could to help her. After several rules were broken, however, we felt that she had to leave our home. When one of our friends heard about our decision, she came and pleaded with us to give her one more chance. "I understand what this girl is going through," this older woman desperately cried. "I, too, grew up in a broken home. I wanted to do what was right, but it was so hard! I needed a family, I needed love, and I just needed someone to believe in me. Please, please let her stay!"

As Jon and I listened to this woman pour out her heart for this girl, our eyes were opened to what Jesus is constantly doing for us. The Bible says that Jesus "*ever lives to make intercession*" for us (Hebrews 7:25). He says to the Father, "I understand what they are going through, for I too was tempted. My blood was shed for their sins. Father, forgive them." How grateful we were (and are) for Jesus' intercession for us, and as we thought of His great compassion, we

were moved to give the girl another chance.

### Prayer that Avails Much

From James 5:16 we learn three important principles of intercessory prayer. *“For the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”* 1) We must be righteous before God. Then, our prayers need to be both 2) effectual and 3) fervent.

#### 1. The Righteous Man

No one can stand blameless before a perfect and holy God. Our own good works are nothing but filthy rags in His sight. Through the cleansing blood of Jesus, we have been *made* righteous or “in right standing” before God (2 Corinthians 5:21). Because of His forgiveness, we can come before God with boldness and authority to intercede on behalf of others.

God also commands us to put on our spiritual armor which includes the breastplate of righteousness (Ephesians 6:14), coming to the Lord in an attitude of total surrender and humbleness. We need to keep our heart clean before Him.

*As you begin your time in intercessory prayer, ask the Lord the following questions:*

1. Have I surrendered everything to You, Lord?
2. Is there anything in my life that You want me to change?
3. What do You want me to pray for?
4. How do You want me to pray?

#### 2. Effectual Prayer

In order for our prayers to make an impact for God’s kingdom, they need to be effectual, or effective and accurate. Broad requests such as “God bless the missionaries,” “Help the Africans to have enough food,” or “Lord, I lift up Grandma and Grandpa, Mom and Dad... (simply listing

everyone else you can think of),” are not examples of effective prayer.

As we intercede for others, our prayers should be specific and knowledgeable. When you know more about a situation, you can pray more effectively. Through increased understanding, your prayers will be more heartfelt and you will intercede with more authority and boldness.

To help you pray in this way, find out as much information as you can about the person or situation you are praying for. If you are praying for a missionary, read their newsletters or look for current world events affecting them. If you are praying for a nation, look for information in *Operation World* or *You Can Change the World*. When interceding for a certain people group, search the library for specific details about their beliefs and customs, and come against specific strongholds that are keeping these people in bondage.

Effectual, or accurate prayer also implies the necessity of being biblically accurate. We need to take time to search the scriptures to find out what God’s will is, and to seek His direction and guidance on how to pray. How do we know the difference between God’s will and our own desires? The Bible tells us in Hebrews 4:12 that *“the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”*

#### 3. Fervent Prayer

God’s desire is for our prayers to be fervent and intense. The definition of fervent includes “hot and boiling over”! We need to pray with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. If you are praying for lost souls, pray as if their very lives and souls depend upon your prayers, and as if you are the only one praying for them. Their very soul *could* depend on your prayers, and it *may be* that you are the only one interceding on their behalf.

On my first trip to Africa, I was amazed at the fervency with which the African Christians on our crusade team prayed. For hours they prayed and cried. Everyone prayed at the same time as different individuals led out along different themes. Some were kneeling, others laid on the ground, while a few curled up in a fetal position. There was

a combination of fervent prayer and praise as together we interceded for a mighty harvest.

Another time in Seoul, South Korea, I had the exciting opportunity to attend a Sunday morning service at the largest church in the world, pastored by Dr. David Yonggi Cho. A large part of the service was devoted exclusively to prayer, and what an awesome experience it was.<sup>1</sup> The building practically shook as thousands of Korean believers prayed fervently for their nation and the world. Everyone shouted and prayed so intently that the leader had to ring a bell to get everyone to stop!

Fervency does not always mean loud. In 1 Kings 18 we see the example of Elijah and the prophets of Baal praying fervently for rain. The prophets of Baal cried loudly for hours. Their prayers were noisy and fleshly, but they were not fervent. Elijah, however, prayed a simple prayer to God with intensity and authority. If we want our intercession to "avail much" we must pray with this same fervency.

### The Two-Fold Nature of Intercession

It is important to have an offensive and defensive strategy to win in any sport. This same principle is true in effective intercession. When there is an emergency, a financial crisis, sickness, or trouble, we pray defensively. However, you can never win a battle with only a defensive plan!

### Offensive Intercession

In offensive intercessory prayer there are two major focuses. We need to 1) bind the enemy and his strongholds, and 2) loose the power of God to flow in the opposite spirit. Our focus should always be on God and not on the devil. Our prayers should exalt Jesus Christ and His plans and purposes. Through intercession, God may begin to show you His mission strategy.

Pray for laborers to be thrust into the harvest fields! Pray for open doors to preach the Gospel! Pray for boldness in witnessing! At the same time, seek God for YOUR part in His plan.

### Examples of opposite spirits:

Anger	Gentleness
Confusion	Peace/Clarity of thought/Wisdom
Cursing	Blessing
Death/Murder	Life
Discouragement	Encouragement of the Lord/Hope
Division/Disunity	Unity
Evil	Good
Fear	Faith
Hatred	Love
Independence	Dependency on God and others
Lust/Impurity	Love/Purity
Poverty	God's provision/Abundance
Prejudice	Unconditional acceptance
Pride	Humbleness
Religious spirit	Spiritual freedom
Selfishness	Generosity
Self-righteousness	Dependency on God/Faith
Sickness	Healing
Unforgiveness	Forgiveness
Wanting control	Yielding to God

### Different Callings in Intercessory Prayer

Every Christian is called to pray, and at times, each of us is called to intercede. However, there are different callings in intercession for different people. Some may be called to be personal prayer partners for individuals or ministries, while God uses others to pray for emergency situations.

### Regular Prayer Needs

It is good to make a list of your regular prayer commitments including your family and relatives, your church, missionaries you support, your homeschool, your nation, and other people you are praying specifically for. It is

important to be flexible to the Holy Spirit as you pray each day. (In YWAM's daily prayer diary, weekly prayer responsibilities include prayer for each of the seven major spheres of influence over a society.)

### *Weekly Prayer Responsibilities*

Sunday	The Church/Religion
Monday	The family/The home
Tuesday	The media
Wednesday	The government
Thursday	Education
Friday	Business/Commerce
Saturday	Arts/Entertainment

### **Prayer Partners**

God raises up people who are called to be prayer partners for a individuals, churches, or ministries. Through the years, I have been grateful for the people who regularly pray for our ministry and family. One older woman has faithfully interceded for us for nearly seven years. She receives our ministry newsletter and lifts up our needs in prayer.

As our family was preparing for an outreach to Jamaica, I came to appreciate her prayer support more than ever before. At that time, several people in our church were offended by something I had unintentionally done. I was very discouraged and felt worthless in ministry. Thinking I would only cause problems, I wondered if I should go on the outreach. When I was at this low point, this woman called me. She knew nothing of the church situation, but felt the Lord wanted her to encourage me. In prayer, she felt I was definitely to go on this mission trip and that the Lord was saying two words to me: "NO RESISTANCE!"

The effect of her prayers and obedience was amazing! Soon afterward, our entire family left for Jamaica, and throughout the trip we faced no opposition in ministry. We preached on the streets and in churches and were able to minister the Gospel in many public schools. May doors were opened to us, and even when requesting school assemblies, not one principal turned us down! Over five thousand

people were led to the Lord...and to think that I almost stayed home! How thankful I was for that intercessor and the Lord's timely encouragement.

Our lives have also been spared by the effective prayers of our personal intercessors. In Kampala, Uganda, there is a group of widows who live at a church we often work with. These women live very simply with only a small mat on the dirt floor. Their sole purpose in life is to pray and intercede. They pray for many hours daily, and during outreaches they often intercede around the clock. During one outreach, the Lord warned them in prayer that someone would try to poison our crusade team and that we were not to go over to anyone's home to eat. Two other people from different areas also felt the same warning. We cooked all of our own food and were thankful nothing happened.

Another time, these women knew that we were in danger and began to fervently fast and pray for our protection. As they interceded, one of the women had a vision of our entire team being surrounded by a circle of angels. That very day, in the Tanzanian city where we were preaching, the local police caught four Muslim men attempting to plant a bomb on the crusade grounds. Again, our lives had been spared because of the power of intercessory prayer.

### **Emergency Intercession**

Have you ever been awakened in the middle of the night with a heavy burden to pray? Or have you ever been about your daily routine when all of a sudden you begin thinking of a particular person or need? When this happens, God may be using you to "stand in the gap" for a crisis situation.

As a teenager, the Lord protected my life through this type of emergency intercession. One afternoon, a girlfriend and I were walking in a back area of downtown Seattle, Washington when we were approached and surrounded by a rough-looking street gang. We felt helpless as they began to slap us. We were alone and there was no one nearby.

...At the same time, my parents were having a prayer meeting with several of their friends. They had committed the entire day to prayer and fasting when suddenly someone felt a tremendous burden to pray for the protection of their children. In unity, the entire group began to pray ear-



nestly for God to surround their children with angels and supernatural protection.

...As they prayed, the gang suddenly turned and ran from us. We ran to my friend's house and, together with her parents, called the police. Later, when my parents heard what had happened, we knew that God had intervened.

At church the next morning a close friend of mine (a missionary's daughter) asked me what had happened the day before at a specific time. She had felt so strongly to pray for me and had seen a vision. While in prayer she had "seen" me walking down a street, and all of a sudden I was surrounded by a circle of darkness. As she continued praying, she saw a bright light shine in the center of the circle and at last the darkness left. God had called her to pray and intercede at the exact time I needed it.

Later, I had to testify in court about what had happened. This same gang had been caught for attacking and raping several girls. When they were asked by the judge why they had left so suddenly they had no answer. They just knew they had to "get out of there" fast!

Several years ago we had another dramatic experience showing the power of intercessory prayer. My husband, Jon, went fishing at a nearby river with his parents and our two young sons, Patrick and Joshua. Suddenly, five-year-old Patrick was missing. Jon and his parents began to search the surrounding area. They were all very concerned that he might have fallen in because nearby, the river turned into fierce rapids. Desperately, Jon began to run up and down the river looking everywhere for our little boy. Along the river, he met several young men relaxing and enjoying their day of fishing. "Please!" he yelled, "Have you seen a little blond boy? He's lost and may have fallen in the river!" But the men did not want to be disturbed from their time of recreation. They didn't seem to care.

Jon continued to search, and eventually several others joined him. A police helicopter was sent out to scan the river...but to no avail. No one could find Patrick anywhere.

...During this same time, a long-time friend of mine from across the country was doing laundry with her three young children. I had not seen her since college and not

talked with her for several years. Yet suddenly she felt a tremendous burden to pray. As she began, the Lord directed her to pray for our son Patrick! Interceding fervently (right in the midst of her unfolded clothes), she felt that he was lost and began to earnestly pray for Jon to find him. She prayed for me to have peace, and for God to lead us to him.

...After several hours, a man on a mountain bike found our little five-year-old—alone and covered with scrapes and scratches. Patrick had wandered up a steep cliff over a mile away.

That day, we experienced the power of intercession. We also learned an important lesson about the love of a father urgently searching for a lost child. How our Heavenly Father's heart must break when He sees so many of his children lost in sin! Yet how many of us are complacent like those selfish fishermen by the river?

Can you feel God's heart for the lost? When He tells you to go, will you go? When He gives you a burden to pray, will you pray? We should always be "on call" to intercede when emergencies arise. When God places a burden on your heart, keep praying until you sense a breakthrough! You may never know it, but your prayers could determine the difference between life and death!

### Intercession for Area

Sometimes God may direct you to intercede for specific areas such as your city, a nation, or an area of the world. This is a common practice, especially in mission work. The foundation for this comes from several biblical examples. In Genesis 18, Abraham interceded for Sodom and Gomorrah, and in Psalms 122:6 we are encouraged to pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Ephesians 6:12 teaches "*we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.*"

Daniel 10:11-13 gives us a clear understanding of the role of prayer over particular areas. In this passage, an angel was sent as a result of Daniel's prayers, yet for twenty-one days the evil prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood him in the heavenly realm. As Daniel continued to pray, another angel, the chief prince Michael, was sent to help and finally the victory was won. This spiritual battle continues throughout the earth. For God's will to be achieved



we need to pray and intercede with accuracy and fervency. Following are several points to help you pray more effectively for a particular area.

### 1. *Come against Satan's stronghold.*

Research an area to learn how to pray for it:

Why was this city or nation founded?

What is the political history?

What is the Christian or religious history?

### 2. *Repent for the sins of an area.*

As you intercede, God may lead you to repent for national sins of the past. Moses and Daniel both repented for the sins of Israel even though they themselves were not in the wrong (Exodus 32:11-14 and Daniel 9:19). Examples of this could be prayers of repentance for your ancestors' treatment of the native Indians or requesting forgiveness for America's past slavery and prejudice against certain races. You may pray for the forgiveness of former wartime sins including hatred of other nations or tribes, or for national sins such as abortion. If praying for Germany, God may lead some to repent for the Nazi treatment of the Jews. When interceding for the Middle East, others may be led to pray for forgiveness for the Crusaders' representation of Christianity. Be sensitive to the Lord and His leading as you stand in the gap.

### 3. *Keep an open ear to new information.*

Look up your target area in *Operation World* and keep track of applicable news reports. Pray for specific requests from missionary newsletters, and don't give up!

### 4. *Seek God for His direction in ministry.*

As you intercede for an area, pray for laborers to be sent to reach the lost. Pray for ministry outreaches currently at work, and that God would bring in the harvest. Evangelism is our best weapon against the enemy. Earnestly pray

for God's direction for your family. Perhaps He will want to use YOU to help meet this particular need.

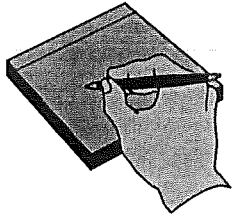
### Intercession in Today's Mission Strategy

In Christian missions today, the body of Christ is beginning to understand more the importance of intercession. Many ministries are increasing their focus on prayer and spiritual warfare as they realize that our battle is not in the flesh but in the spirit.

Today, some ministries will travel to an area for no other reason than to pray and come against Satan's strongholds. Others feel led to walk around an area in prayer (as Joshua marched around Jericho) or to pray over key locations in a city or nation (such as Christians gathering to pray by the Capitol building in Washington D.C.).

Recently, many mission groups have worked together to take prayer journeys into "closed" countries in the 10/40 window. Some friends of ours traveled into Bhutan on such an outreach, and within a few short months, the laws of this country changed to allow foreign missionaries to enter! Organizations such as the Adopt-a-People movement encourage churches to target one group of people for effective and fervent prayer, while AD2000 specifically emphasizes prayer for the unreached.

Right now, we are at the threshold of a new era in missions. The Gospel is going forth at a rate unprecedented in Christian history. As we fight our battle in the spirit, pulling down Satan's strongholds and seeking God's strategies, our ministry will be more productive for His kingdom. As my husband always says, we need to realize that "God has an army, not a mob!" Let us all take our places in His rank and service, and fight together—both in the spirit through intercession and in the natural through evangelism! Together with Christ, we will have the victory!



**NOTES:**