

Do not send us up from here without Your presence.

Intercessors are an army that works behind the scenes to intercede and battle for God's will to be done in our church, city, nation, and world. But unlike other armies, our main source of power is not guns and missiles, but the presence of our God.

2 Chronicles 20:21: *"After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the Lord and to praise Him for the splendor of His holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying: "Give thanks to the Lord, for His love endures forever."*

The next verse says that as they began to sing and praise God, the Lord set ambushes against their enemies. God showed up for them because they bowed before Him and worshipped His name. Learning how to attract His presence will ensure their victory.

One of the fruits of the presence of God is peace. When His presence is manifested there is no struggle, rather there is a flow of His grace and anointing.

Exodus 33:12-17: *"Moses said to the Lord, "You have been telling me, 'Lead these people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, 'I know you by name and you have found favor with me.' If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people."*

The Lord replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." Then Moses said to him, "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?"

And the Lord said to Moses, "I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name."

In Exodus 33:18, what did Moses say to God?

"Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory."

The word “glory” is the word “kabod” in Hebrew. It means weightiness or the full weight of God. It is a tangible presence that you can at times even feel in your physical senses. God wants to bring His glory into our lives so that we know He is there – we will not have to wonder about it.

God desires to manifest His glory. Some believe that God only wants to show His glory among the spiritually elite or only in certain geographical places or special occasions in a seemingly random fashion. There is the belief that people have done something to usher in His presence. The Bible says it is His desire that the knowledge and glory of God cover the earth. That is already His plan. His plan is not to pick pockets for revivals and to shock people randomly with manifestations of His glory. He wants His glory everywhere!

The question is not so much, “How do we get it?” as it is, “What are we doing that is keeping it from happening?” Jesus said to pray that God’s will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. One unique characteristic of Heaven is that we are in the presence of God forever.

Read Isaiah 60:2. Where does God’s glory appear?

“See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the people, but the Lord upon you and His glory appears over you.”

Read 2 Corinthians 3:18. Who is in the process of being glorified?

“And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

1 Corinthians 2:4: “My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power.”

The Lord always desires that we have deeper levels of the manifestation of His glory. It is not just for special occasions. God did not just want to glorify Himself; 1 Corinthians 2:7 says that He wants to glorify us – that He has wisdom destined “for our glory.” In other words, He wants His goodness, power, and wisdom manifested in our lives.

True worship paves the way for His glory.

In the Bible where ever there was true Spirit worship, the manifest presence of God came into that place.

2 Chronicles 5:13-14: *"The trumpeters and singers joined in unison, as with one voice, to give praise and thanks to the LORD. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals and other instruments, they raised their voices in praise to the LORD and sang: "He is good; His love endures forever." Then the temple of the LORD was filled with a cloud. And the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the temple of God."*

The word "cloud" is the word for the Shekinah glory of God. This was the visible manifest presence of God in the form of a cloud or mist. The priests could not even perform their service to the Lord – or even stand up – because of the weightiness of His presence. Sometimes when people are confronted with the glory of God, they fall under its heaviness.

God's presence must be welcomed and respected. It has to be dear to us. What could be more offensive to God than desiring to pour out His goodness on people and have them say, "I do not know if I really want this." That grieves Him.

Hosea 10:12: *"Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unplowed ground; for it is time to seek the LORD, until He comes and showers righteousness on you."*

He says, "Sow for yourselves..." We might think that we can throw the ball in God's court and ask Him to move in our midst and visit us. Remember – that is already His plan and His desire. We are to sow for ourselves righteousness, and we will reap the fruit of His unfailing love – His presence. He is throwing the seed at us, but often it bounces off because of the hardness of our hearts. It is up to us to prepare the way for His presence.

Our most important job as an intercessor is to prepare the way for His glory in our church. Because we are human and no more spiritual than those we are interceding for, it is crucial that we pave the way for the thousands attending our church by personally cultivating God's presence in our own lives. The life of a true intercessor is not marked by attendance at prayer meetings or the number of people we have prayed for. Instead, the mark of an intercessor is the glory of God on us.

How do we cultivate His glory in our own lives? There is not a secret to it. The two things God wants are holiness and intimacy. These are the two components of true worship. When we study intercession and prayer, we will often encounter those two words. Every prayer format or prayer outline has its first call to be set apart from the world, and second, to draw near to God.

Holiness

Psalm 24:3-4: "Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false."

When He sees us in our imperfection, He does not exclude us from fellowship with Him. He is not saying, "You need to get your act together before you can come see Me!" Remember, He already wants us in His presence. He just sees some things in our lives that keep us from being able to come into His presence. He is not angry with us. He is delighted with us and wants us to come to Him. Sin is like mud that a child gets into – it covers us and keeps us from coming inside the house. So the question becomes, how do we get holy?

Holiness does not mean we are without sin and perfect. "Hagios," holiness in the Greek, means set apart. God wants His people to have a relationship with Him that is set apart, a relationship that is like none other. We set our relationship apart to Him as holy.

Write out and meditate on Hebrews 12:14.

*"Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy;
without holiness no one will see the Lord."*

Some of us wonder why we do not experience God's presence the way others do. We think He does not speak to us. The problem is not with God. There are things in our lives that quench and grieve Him, and all He wants us to do is separate ourselves from those relationships and sins that keep us from being holy. He is not telling us we need to get it all together at once.

Write out 2 Corinthians 6:14.

*"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do
righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or
what fellowship can light have with darkness?"*

Write out and meditate on 2 Corinthians 6:17.

*"Therefore come out from them and be separate,' says the Lord.
'Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.'"*

The next verses give us a promise: "*I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters,' says the Lord Almighty. Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.*" (1 Corinthians 6:18 – 7:1)

What do we need to do to have a holy (set apart) relationship with God? There are three instructions we find in the Scriptures.

Pathway to Holiness

1. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you.

If you try to deal with your own mud, you will not be able to completely clean yourself. The Holy Spirit can pinpoint areas of sin where we have been deceived or blinded. We become desensitized by the immorality of our culture to things that grieve God's Spirit.

Write out a prayer for yourself from Psalm 139:23-24.

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

2. Assess your life.

- Unhealthy friendships or activities. The Bible says have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. (Ephesians 5:11)
- Disobedience to parents. The burden for this assessment is actually more on the parents than on the children. Are our homes places where there is the expectation of submission to authority? This must be our standard because without it homes are destroyed, and we grieve the Holy Spirit.

- Dishonesty. We need to be meticulously honest. Be truthful for the sake of having His presence in your life.
- Coarse joking or speech. We need to watch our words, what we listen to, and laugh about.
- Allowing things in our homes that are demon inspired. This would include movies and music created by people who are immoral and serve the devil.
- Unforgiveness.
- Pride.

3. Humble yourself.

In every place in the Bible where there is sin, God never says, "Go away and get your act together." The instruction is always to humble ourselves. Do not go to the Lord and say, "Lord, I have this problem..." Go ahead and call it sin. Instead pray, "Lord, I have grieved You. I have allowed this thing in my home and in my life and in my eyes. Lord, this is not just a problem – it is sin, and it separates me from You." Have an honest talk with the Lord.

From Luke 18:9-14, what do we learn about the attitude we should have as we approach God?

"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men— robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Pathway to intimacy with God

God is inviting us to the place where we meet with Him face to face. Worship is the doorway to God's presence. Everything flows out of your relationship with God.

Psalm 50:7-13: "Hear, O my people, and I will speak, O Israel, and I will testify against you: I am God, your God. I do not rebuke you for your sacrifices or your burnt offerings, which are ever before Me. I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, for every animal of the forest is Mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird in the mountains, and the creatures of the field are Mine. If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is Mine, and all that is in it. Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats?"

What does the Lord require of us in Psalm 50:14-15?

"Sacrifice thank offerings to God, fulfill your vows to the Most High, and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor Me."

In this Psalm God is speaking prophetically through David. He told the people that they were following His instructions. They were meeting the regulations. Then God goes on to say He does not need all those slaughtered animals because He already owns them. The truth was that God did not ever need all of those sacrifices, even though that is what He had commanded them to do. What He really wanted – the only thing He did not already have because He had given it up – was the people themselves. What God desired was gratitude – an expression of their heart for Him – and a fulfillment of their vows to Him. God wanted to come to a deeper level of intimacy with His people, an uncommon closeness that would go beyond just a contract or an arrangement. He wanted to be in a covenant love relationship with them.

What is Intimacy?

1. Affection

There are so many people who want intimacy with God, but church and religion have done them a disservice. God does not want your form; He does not want your "bulls and goats." He simply wants you! The Spirit of God is asking, "Do you love Me?"

From Exodus 33:11, how did the Lord speak to Moses?

"The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend."

Moses had a special relationship with God. He was the only one in the Old Testament who would speak to God face to face as one friend speaks to another. God is looking for a people who will say that church is not enough. The secret to intimacy with God is affection, showing your deep love for Him, and being who you are with Him.

From John 14:15, what is the natural result of loving God?

"If you love me, you will obey what I command."

We think that verse says, "If you love Me, you will prove it to me by doing what I tell you to do." That's not what this verse is saying! It says, "If you love Me, you will keep My commands. They will not be a burden for you." If we fall in love with Jesus, the Bible will be a lot easier than we think it is, because everything will flow out of the love relationship. David was the best at living in the flow of God's love. While everyone else was performing the rituals, David was off in a field worshipping God with his whole heart. He declared that he wanted to be the apple of God's eye. He had only one desire. David had true affection.

From Psalm 27:4, what was David's one desire?

"...that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek Him in his temple."

2. Control.

"God, I give you my life. I commit myself to You and to no other." For intimacy, we must give Him full control of our lives.

Read Ezekiel 47:1-12.

In a vision, the prophet Ezekiel saw a river coming from under the temple. The Spirit of God led him down the stream, measuring as He went. At the point where the river was ankle-deep, God told Ezekiel to go across. Next, the Spirit of God measured off another distance and had Ezekiel go into the water where it was knee-deep. He stepped out into it. The current could be felt there, and Ezekiel got somewhat wet, but he was still in control. Then he was led further out where the water was waist-deep. Now he was really wet and fighting the current, but still in control. Then God instructed him to go all the way into the middle of the river. At this place the river took over. Ezekiel lost contact with the bottom and was swimming in the river.

In this vision the river symbolizes the presence of God. The world is represented by the bottom of the river, including the bank.

The middle of the river – “deep enough to swim in” – is the only place that is teaming with life, where there is healing and where the glory of God is. The only difference between the middle and the first three levels is that in the first three we can stay in contact with the ground and in the middle we lose control. Most of us want God and religion on our own terms. We want to be wet, but not be out where we cannot touch the bottom. At each level we resist when what God requires is that we lose contact with the bottom and give Him control. In the middle we go where the river goes. Trust Him. Stop dating God, say the vows and do them. Go for it, you will not be disappointed – membership has its privileges.

3. Inclusion

He wants to be first on our minds. He wants to live life with us. He wants to be there when we are up and when we are down. A friend wants to go with you. Why would God say, “Call on Me in the day of trouble”? The only reason He would make that request is that people were not calling on Him. Intimacy always says, “Where you go, I go. I have got to be with you.”

Experiencing the glory of God requires only two things: holiness and intimacy. God said He is a jealous God. Draw near to God and wait on Him. Believe that He wants to manifest Himself to you. Stand on that! As you experience His presence, you will find that He wants to show up when you press in. Ask Him – He says we do not have because we do not ask. We must ask and believe!

Prayer assignment for Week Two:

Assess yourself in the areas of holiness and intimacy. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you wisdom and revelation into specific ways that you can make Him feel completely welcome to dwell with you in intimate friendship. Journal your thoughts here.