



## WEEK 4 – INTERCESSION

### CHECK-IN

**How are you? Where have you seen God working in your life in the last week? And... completely off topic, but, March Madness starts this week! Are you a Big Dance fan?! Or do you fill out an office bracket based on which teams mascot could be up the other one? Or do you have no idea what we're talking about and your only March Madness is that it snowed Monday and will be 80 on Friday?**

### OPENING PRAYER

**God of Compassion, grant us the boldness to bring our requests for others to you, submitting to your authority, and trusting you with the outcome.**

## INTRODUCTION

Today, we start the second half of our series on how to unlock the power of your prayers and drawing closer to God this season by utilizing The SCRIPT. As we continue toward Easter, hopefully you've been using the tools we've gathered the last three weeks to help rid yourself of the things that stand in the way of your relationship with God... or at least made some progress in that direction. Today we'll talk about another tool in that toolbox that might be the easiest tool to use, but one that can do as much as any other to bring you close to God this Lent. But first...

**Setup Question: What's the first prayer you remember praying that wasn't "now I lay me down to sleep"? Was it praying for someone else? Was it blessing a meal? Was it some song you learned at VBS or Summer Camp set to a tv show theme song? Ready, go!**

## THE SCRIPT SETUP

We're coming out of the locker room and ready to start the second half... (can you tell it's March Madness?) So, let's review where we've been. Remember, the SCRIPT is not just the title of this series, it's an acronym. The first 2 letters are about us, the middle 2 are about others, the final 2 are about God. Today, we'll cover the 4<sup>th</sup> letter, the last one from the *praying for others* part, but here's the first three...

SUPPLICATION

CONFESSION

RESTORATION

I

P

T

We've covered a lot of ground. So, here's a real brief summary of each. (For the details of any you missed, go back and check out the reflections and accompanying guides from the previous weeks.) We started with *Supplication*, which was simply asking God for what we want. And a prayer from the prophet Nehemiah taught us, that it's okay to ask God for what we want, but if we take the time to align our desires with what God wants for our lives, and then we are way more likely to receive what we need. Then we looked at the 'C,' *Confession*, and a prayer from King David, written in the Psalms, gave us some tips on why we need to do it, and how we need to do it. Confession gives us a clean heart and lightens the weight of the load we're carrying. No matter what you've done, no matter how you feel about it... you are worthy of God's forgiveness. Then last week, we looked at the first letter about praying for others, the 'R,' which stood for *Restoration*. A prayer by Jesus himself taught us that one of the most important things we can pray for is the restoration of broken relationships in our lives. The relationship may never return to what it was, but our hearts can. That same prayer also taught us that it's important to pray for the restoration of others' relationship with God, and we should do

what we can do to help that along. Today, we'll look at the second way we can pray for others. Like we said, it's easy... but it's also extremely powerful. But first...

**Question 1: Last week, we were challenged to go to God with our Prayers of Restoration. How'd that go? Have you been able to pray for the restoration of a broken relationship or for someone's relationship with God to be made right? Why or why not? If you were, how do you feel about it?**

## SCRIPTURE

To get at the next letter in our SCRIPT, we're going to look at another story of Jesus, but this time, from earlier in his ministry. Here's your set up: He's begun his ministry, been baptized, called some of his disciples, performed miracles here and there, and he's gained quite a following in the area around the Sea of Galilee. In fact, he can't go anywhere without being mobbed. On this particular day, he's just completed his *magnum opus*... the Sermon on the Mount. Thousands have heard him preach. Dozens, maybe hundreds, have been healed. And he's coming down from the Mount, headed home, probably for a typical pastor's Sunday-afternoon, post-sermon nap. (Yes, that's what your pastor does on a Sunday afternoon.) And we get this encounter...

**Read Matthew, Chapter 8, verses 5 through 13.**

Now, there's not a prayer here, exactly... but the Roman officer goes to Jesus to make a request. If we go to Jesus to make a request today,

that's called a prayer. So, we'll say it counts. But there is so much depth in how the Roman Officer approaches Jesus. We can learn a lot about our next letter from his example.

**Question 2: What stands out to you about this story? If you were Jesus or one of the disciples, how would you have felt about what happened here? If you were the centurion, would you have been that bold? Would you have the faith to say, "Lord, I'm not worthy for you to come to my house, just say the word from here." Discuss!**

## REFLECTION

The Roman Officer, (in other translations called a "Centurion" because he was a military leader of a "century," a team of 100 men,) goes to Jesus and pleads for the healing of his young servant. The way he approaches this with Jesus gives us our fourth letter of our SCRIPT, the 'I'...

## INTERCESSION

The Centurion intercedes for the boy, going to Jesus on the boy's behalf. Prayers of Intercession are simply requests for the needs of others. This is perhaps one of the easiest type of prayer to pray of the six in our SCRIPT. (In fact, it would have been first, but there's no six-letter word that begins with 'I' that uses all our letters. ICRPTS just doesn't package as well as... The SCRIPT.) The Centurion makes a request of Jesus for his servant. It's that easy. So, if you can't do the

first three... you don't have any needs for supplication, you don't do anything wrong so you don't need confession, and your restoration is too raw or real for the moment... just start praying for the needs of others. Intercede for the people in your life who need some prayers. "God, I ask for healing for my mother." "God, please help my friend to get this job." "Jesus, could the Cardinals not suck too badly this year?" (Okay, maybe not that last one... there might be things even beyond God's ability.) It truly is that easy.

**Question 3: Is praying for others a standard practice of your prayer life? What does that look like when you do? Pastor Mike's grandmother used to pray for her family by time zones, just so she didn't forget anyone. How do pray for others?**

Now, even though it's a very simple form of prayer, there are a few things can learn from how the Centurion approaches this request. First, something incredibly telling about this situation is that it's a Roman Centurion who comes to Jesus to make this request. The Bible never tells us how he knows about Jesus. But, Capernaum is not a big town, and Jesus has been causing a stir. And so, there's a high likelihood that the Centurion has been on patrol and seen the crowds gathering around Jesus, maybe he's even been tasked with dispersing the crowd. There's a chance that he's even witnessed a miracle or two himself. But regardless of how he knows about Jesus, he goes to Jesus for *this* reason... *he knows what Jesus can do*. He has either heard about Jesus's ability or witnessed it himself, and he knows the power that Jesus holds. He knows what Jesus can do.

When you go to Jesus to pray for someone else, do we go thinking Jesus *can't* do anything about it? No, we go because we believe in an almighty God, and a Savior who walked on water, healed the sick, and raised from the dead. We go to Jesus because we have seen the movement of the Spirit, and the work that has been done in and around us. We go to Jesus because we know what Jesus can do. When you go to God to pray for the needs of others... go with boldness, pray with confidence, because, like the Centurion, we know what Jesus can do.

**Question 4: Maybe a good follow-up question is, when you say you'll pray for someone, do you actually do it? Could you, when you say you will, stop in that very moment and say a quick prayer *with* the person? If your answer is 'no' to either of those... why not? (No judgment, being honest about where we are just help us get to where God wants us to go.)**

Now, the 2<sup>nd</sup> thing we learn from the Centurion about prayers of Intercession is very telling, and it's also where this scripture gets a little tricky and is often misused. See, this is a Scripture that some Christians and pastors like to use to say, if you only have enough faith, you'll get whatever you pray for. And if you don't get what you pray for, then you didn't have enough faith. "Oh, your mother wasn't healed when you prayed for God to take away her cancer? You must not have enough faith." This is crap theology and not how God works. In fact, that's not even what happens here... look. When the

Centurion goes to Jesus, he simply tells him the problem. “My child is sick.” He doesn’t actually make a request. It’s Jesus who goes, “I’ll come heal him.” And the Centurion’s reply is perfect. He says, “Lord.” In that one word, we get so much. He’s a Centurion, he has superior officers, and Generals, and the Caesar... he doesn’t have to call anyone “Lord.”, (in fact, probably not supposed to.) And so, when he calls Jesus “Lord” he is placing himself under Jesus’s authority. And then he explains...

**“I am under the authority of my superior officers, and I have authority over my soldiers. I only need to say, ‘Go,’ and they go, or ‘Come,’ and they come. And if I say...‘Do this,’ they do it.”**

And so, there’s an implication in that... as a man *under* authority, but also a man *with* authority, he knows that the person giving the commands can also choose *not* to do it. When he calls Jesus “Lord”, he is saying, I’m under your authority. “If you say the words, I believe it will happen. But I know you can also choose not to. I am the soldier under your authority.”

When we go to God with prayers of intercession for others, we are submitting to the authority of Jesus. He can say, “yup, I got you,” he can say, “mmm, not yet,” or he can say, “no, I have something else in mind.” And as the centurion did, we submit to that authority. This is extremely difficult, because we know what’s best for us, right? And we know what’s best for others, right? But if God can say “no”, someone might say, “what’s the point then? If God does whatever

God wants, what's the point in asking?" The point is, sometimes you get the "yes"! Just as a child will never stop asking their mom to take them to get ice cream, because sometimes they get a yes! The Centurion tells Jesus the problem... and then submits to his authority. So must we.

**Question 5: Time to go a little deeper. After you pray for yourself or someone else, do you trust God to make whatever decision will be best for them and for you? What makes that difficult? What would make it easier?**

## CLOSING

The last thing we learn about our Prayers of Intercession is this. The centurion tells Jesus what's going on, Jesus says he'll go to his house, and then the Centurion gives this great line...

**Just say the word from where you are,  
and my servant will be healed.**

The Centurion goes to Jesus because he knows what Jesus can do, he submits to his authority because he knows Jesus's sovereignty, and with this line, *he trusts Jesus with the outcome*. He doesn't tell one of his servants to go "see if it worked," and holds Jesus hostage until he gets back. The Centurion goes home, leaving the decision for the boy to be healed in Jesus's hands. He makes his request with boldness, pleading for Jesus to heal the boy... he recognizes the authority Jesus

has over him... and then he trusts Jesus with the outcome. And Jesus recognizes this faith... not that his request will be granted, but that he has faith in Jesus's decision. We can pray with boldness... we can make requests with all the pleading the Centurion had. But in doing so, we recognize Jesus's authority, his ability to do so if he chooses, and then, we must trust Jesus with the outcome. This is the hard part. You might even start adding it to the end of your intercessory prayers. ("God, please help this person... and help me trust you with the outcome.") This week, add your prayers of intercession... and take a note from the Centurion. Be bold. Plead with God for others. But when you do, recognize the power and authority of Christ, and then, trust God with the outcome...

**Take some time to share prayer requests or celebrations  
and close in prayer.**