

become angry or judgmental toward situations and people in general, join ranks with the enemy. Read Isaiah 6:1-5 again. Do you sense the prophet's brokenness? There was no room for self-righteous indignation.

We dare not use the things God shows us in prayer to tear down -- only to build up. To tattle-tale reveals an arrogant heart and betrayals constitute a breach of confidentiality. God does not betray his children. He breaks our hearts over the things that break his! He trusts us to pray and to ponder things quietly in our hearts. We are called to remain in the gap until his purposes are fulfilled. Remember, Isaiah's initial response was to weep over his personal condition before God. "*Woe is me!*" Before the prophet could speak, he had to be broken.

I have struggled within prayer labels. To identify in-house intercessors almost smacks of pride and position. True intercessors are those who hide away, who " *dwell in the shelter of the Most High*" (Psalm 91:1a) without fanfare or recognition. These precious ones shut themselves away in prayer closets, behind closed doors.

They "see" but they do not tell. They "hear" but they refuse to pass along sensitive information. What they discern in prayer remains the local church's best kept secrets. Their reward does not

entirely in the intercessory prayer room, but when God's unique purposes come to pass. They never compare their righteousness with others. Prayer is not measured by the hour, but by the brokenness of their hearts, and the spiritual fruit demonstrated in their lives.

Intercessory prayer remains the church's greatest asset. As previously stated, concerted prayer should break us, not puff us up. So called "prayer warriors," who get angry with others become detrimental to the local church. Information passed along outside the prayer meeting constitutes gossip. When sacred trusts are broken, churches suffer. Intercessors are not God's spiritually elite. They never elevate their importance over anything or anyone. They dare not override or undermine the office of pastor. The pastor is their umbrella of protection.

God's plan to evangelize through the local church builds on the necessity of honoring and supporting his delegated authority. Intercessors who exalt themselves above the protective custody of the pastor, who imply that the pastor is not "hearing" correctly. Or who strike out against other believers serve a gross injustice to the real purpose of intercession. In short, to be an intercessor mandates one having an "Isaiah encounter."



PRAY OR PREY? (PART 2)

Intercessory Prayer

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PRAY OR PREY? (PT. 2)

(Continued from Part 1)

True intercessory prayer first breaks our heart regarding our personal condition and subsequently, the human condition. "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among people of unclean lips." Given this understanding, Isaiah was in essence saying, "In the year that I {self} died, I saw the Lord..." Do you wish to see the Lord? Jesus picked up on this same theme in Luke 9:23a when he said, "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself." Intercession is predicated on self-denial.

Church, it's time to pray! It's during intercessory prayer the Holy Spirit burns out impurities and makes us ready for the master's use. In intercessory prayer we are stripped of pride, arrogance, and any rebellion that may inadvertently have crept into our life. Self dies in the midst of God's glory and majesty! Forgiveness flows and God fills us with his unconditional love for others. We are able to sincerely pray with pure and proper motives. Our motivations line up with his will and by-pass our desires.

Now, let's discuss intercessory prayer as we consider the prophet Ezekiel's comments: "The people of the land have

practiced oppression and committed robbery and they have wronged the poor and needy and have oppressed the sojourner without justice. I searched for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found no one" (Ezekiel 22:29-30). The King James Version puts it this way: "And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none."

A background summary may be necessary to understand God's indictments against the people. The priests were supposed to keep God's worship pure and to teach the people righteous living. But God had become commonplace to them. They ignored the Sabbath, and they refused to teach the people. They no longer carried out their priestly duties. When doing God's work became no more important than mundane tasks, they refused to give God the reverence He deserved. Then as now, instead of bringing God down to our level, we should lift our hearts and lives up to his level.

The hedge spoken of here was not made of stones, but of faithful people united in their efforts to resist evil. This wall was in disrepair because no one took the initiative to lead the people back to God. Feeble attempts to repair it -- through

religious rituals or messages based on opinion rather than God's Word -- were worthless and only covered up root problems. When we give the appearance of loving God without living his ways, we cover up sins which eventually damage our lives beyond repair. God wants us to stand in the gap and make a difference in the lives around us, in our church, nation, and even the world. Are you willing to stand in the gap and remain there as long as necessary? When we stand in the gap, we become conduits through which the grace of God can flow.

Intercessory prayer brings great rewards, but it comes with even greater responsibilities. God places accountability upon the intercessor. He requires trust and reveals things, not for us to tattle-tale and become judgmental, but for us, through brokenness, to weep over and to stand in the gap until kingdom purposes are accomplished in a given situation.

Intercessors must understand that what God reveals, he asks them to conceal. Words of knowledge and wisdom are likely to flow when the intercessor waits upon the Lord. These should be processed with caution. Pure hearts cry out, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). Intense prayer automatically elicits emotional responses; however, intercessors who