

• *Different kinds of praying – intercession is one of them*

There are different kinds of praying. There is worship or adoration, in which we express our loving admiration for God. There is confession, in which we admit of sinfulness and confess what we have done that has damaged fellowship with God. There is petition and supplication, in which we throw ourselves upon God for our needs. There is thanksgiving, when we tell God how grateful we are for things He has done for us. But there is another special kind of praying: intercession, praying for the needs of others.

• *Intercession is for all Christians*

There is a special blessing for us if we are intercessors. Intercessory prayer is not just something which a special elite number of believers have as their special hobby. It is for all Christians. It is part of being a 'child of Abraham'. When Abraham interceded for the barren women of Abimelech, he immediately received a blessing himself; the barrenness of his own wife came to an end ^{□1}. It was his intercessory praying for others that led God to answer the prayer he had been praying for himself. 'God restored the fortunes of Job, when he prayed for his friends', says Job 42:10.

□1 Genesis 20:17–21:2

5. True praying begins with 'drawing near'

5. True praying begins with 'drawing near'. Abraham drew near to God, says Genesis 18:23. The first thing you do when you pray is 'draw near'. It means that by faith you set foot into the throne room of God. You 'come into His presence'. Of course God is present everywhere and all the time, yet there is such a thing as 'drawing near' to God. The best way to know what it is, is to do it! It is when you 'in spirit' are coming before God. You know that He is listening to you. You are confident that He will hear you and listen to the prayers and praises, the requests and the arguments that you are about to put to Him.

6. True praying is argumentative

6. True praying is argumentative. It is noticeable that Abraham presents reasons and arguments to God. 'Surely you would not be unjust!' he says to God. ^{□1} God does not mind if we press Him and give Him plenty of reasons why we want our prayers answered.

□1 23:25

7. True praying is a mixture of boldness and humility

7. True praying is a mixture of boldness and humility. Abraham boldly moves from point to point, asking God for more and more. He is daring in the way he prays.

And yet he is humble and feels that he is asking a lot 'I am dust and ashes', he says ^{□1}. 'Please let not the Lord be angry' ^{□2}. 'Let not the Lord be angry; I will speak yet once more' ^{□3}.

□1 18:27
□2 18:30
□3 18:32

The Bible says that God is a 'consuming fire' and yet it also tells us to come to Him boldly! How can one come with boldness to a consuming fire? Yet that is what we are asked to do.

8. Progressive praying

8. There is such a thing as 'progressive' praying. Abraham gives us a good example here. He moves from point to point, asking for more and more. When he has got one part of his answer he proceeds to the next. Why should we pray in this way? It is a help to our faith. Very often we do not feel we can ask for something all in one go. We find it easier to pray for some lesser thing and when God has heard us, then we have the faith to pray for something greater. We rise higher and higher as we pray, and we find that we have faith for greater requests. The answer to one part of praying gives us faith to ask for something more and greater. It is 'progressive praying'.

• *One part of the answer gives confidence to ask for the next part*

9. We must be ready for God to answer us as He wishes

• *The righteous were rescued*

• *But God's answer was not as imagined*

• *Jesus is interceding for us now*

• *Jesus prays and His church intercedes also*

• *Intercessors are truly Christ-like children of Abraham*

9. **We must be ready for God to answer us as He wishes.** We might ask the question: did God answer this prayer? In the next chapter, despite all of Abraham's praying, Sodom was destroyed. So what was the value of Abraham's praying for the righteous in Sodom?

One answer is that there were not ten righteous people in Sodom! Abraham stopped praying – or the Lord stopped him from praying – for anything greater than the withholding of judgement if there were ten righteous people in the city.

But the righteous were rescued. Lot's rescue by the angels ¹ was surely the result of Abraham's praying. Lot was actually lingering and hoping that the city would not be destroyed. He was an inconsistent believer who rather liked the city of Sodom. God could easily have let him perish in the city with the wicked people he had chosen to live with. But God had mercy on him, as Genesis 19:16 says.

What it means is that we must be ready for God to answer us as He wishes. His answer may come in a different form from what we imagined.

In his willingness to be an intercessor Abraham is like Jesus, because the greatest intercessor of all time is Jesus. He is interceding for us even now. Every Christian can know that Jesus is at the right hand of the Father interceding for him. It is not that Jesus is begging but He is saying something to God for us and it is a request. It is right to call it 'interceding'.

Jesus prays for exactly the right things for us. He prays that we might be kept from being captured by Satan, that we might be kept in unity, that our faith might continue. The reason why the Christian survives at all is because he has a great Intercessor. Yet Jesus' interceding is also done through His church. By His Spirit He leads us to pray for each other, and so as well as His own intercession He does some interceding through us also.

Praying for others in this way is one of the greatest things we can ever do. It identifies with God and with Jesus. It is truly Christ-like. In this respect, as in many others, we are to be 'children of Abraham'.

¹ Genesis 19:16

	<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible</i> (PTTB) books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>	
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