Abraham’s Intercession for Abimelech

There are five essential elements to an effective, productive and joyful prayer life: (1) Confession (2) Worship of God (3) Thanksgiving (4) Intercession (5) Petition.

In this article we will discuss intercessory prayer and in particular the intercessory prayer of Abraham in Genesis 20.

We must remember that God seeks intercessors.

Ezek 22:30, “I searched for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, so that I would not destroy it; but I found no one.”

Isa 59:16, “And He saw that there was no man, and was astonished that there was no one to intercede.”

Abraham prayed for Abimelech and his family to be healed (Gen. 20:1-7) after the latter had unwittingly taken Abraham’s wife Sarah into his harem. Before we studied this passage in Genesis 20, I am going to spend a little time giving a you little biography of Abraham and his wife Sarah.

Abraham was born around 2161 B.C. in the land of Ur of the Chaldeans (Gen. 11:31). The land of Ur was located in lower Mesopotamia, more specifically on the Euphrates River in what is now southern Iraq.

His name was originally Abram, which means "exalted father," but was changed by God in Gen. 17:5 to Abraham after God had established His covenant with him. The name Abraham means "father of a multitude," and this he was indeed though he and his wife Sarai were childless up until the time that Abraham was hundred years old (Gen. 21:5).

His father's name was Terah (Gen. 11:27) and he also was born in Ur. Abraham's family were idols worshippers and this is revealed in the word of God in the book of Joshua 24:2, 14.

Joshua 24:2, “Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, "From ancient times your fathers lived beyond the River, namely, Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods."

Abraham accepted God’s invitation to salvation when he was 75 years old. He accepted God’s invitation to have fellowship and a relationship with Him.

Now Abraham was a man of faith and this he declared openly several times in his life. In fact, Abraham and his wife Sarah are listed in the God’s Hall of Fame of Faith Hebrews 11.

Heb 11:8-12, “By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he lived as an alien in the land of
promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised. Therefore there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead at that, as many descendants AS THE STARS OF HEAVEN IN NUMBER, AND INNUMERABLE AS THE SAND WHICH IS BY THE SEASHORE.”

Romans 4:11 says that Abraham is the “father of all them that believe.”

What was it that Abraham believed God would do for him? He believed that God would give him an heir from his own body even though him and his wife were well past the age producing children.

Gen 15:1-6, “After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, ‘Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great.’ Abram said, ‘O Lord GOD, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?’ And Abram said, ‘Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir.’ Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, ‘This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir.’ And He took him outside and said, ‘Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.’ And He said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be.’ Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.”

Rom 4:1-22, “What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? ‘ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.’ Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: ‘BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED. BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT.’ Is this blessing then on the circumcised, or on the uncircumcised also? For we say, ‘FAITH WAS CREDITED TO ABRAHAM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.’ How then was it credited? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised; and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while
uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them, and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised. For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified; for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, there also is no violation. For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, (as it is written, ‘A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU’) in the presence of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist. In hope against hope he believed, so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, ‘SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE.’ Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah’s womb; yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform. Therefore IT WAS ALSO CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

Abraham is called in Scripture "the friend of God" because he trusted God and he also is the recipient of a covenant promise from God.

James 2:23, “And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, ’and Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,’ and he was called the friend of God.”

The covenant that God made with Abraham was unconditional. The Abrahamic Covenant was an unconditional covenant meaning that the agreement was based upon the Lord’s faithfulness and not Abraham’s. The Lord was responsible to fulfill the agreement and Abraham’s part was to take God at His Word and accept it by means of faith.

The Abrahamic covenant is related to the race of the nation of Israel and was thus exclusively to the Jews. Abraham was the 1st Jew in history and thus became the 1st of the new racial species as a result of his faith in the Lord.

Abraham and his family lived in tents and followed their herds. Although Abraham is called the father of all those who believe, he wasn’t without faults. Genesis 20 reveals Abraham in all his blemishes.
Now, let’s read the entire passage and then we will break it down verse by verse and note some principles from the passage.

Gen 20, “Now Abraham journeyed from there toward the land of the Negev, and settled between Kadesh and Shur; then he sojourned in Gerar. Abraham said of Sarah his wife, ‘She is my sister.’ So Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah. But God came to Abimelech in a dream of the night, and said to him, ‘Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is married.’ Now Abimelech had not come near her; and he said, ‘Lord, will You slay a nation, even though blameless? Did he not himself say to me, ‘She is my sister’? And she herself said, ‘He is my brother. In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this.’ Then God said to him in the dream, ‘Yes, I know that in the integrity of your heart you have done this, and I also kept you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her. Now therefore, restore the man's wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live. But if you do not restore her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours.’ So Abimelech arose early in the morning and called all his servants and told all these things in their hearing; and the men were greatly frightened. Then Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, ‘What have you done to us? And how have I sinned against you, that you have brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? You have done to me things that ought not to be done.’ And Abimelech said to Abraham, ‘What have you encountered, that you have done this thing?’ Abraham said, ‘Because I thought, surely there is no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife. Besides, she actually is my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife; and it came about, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said to her, ‘This is the kindness which you will show to me: everywhere we go, say of me, ‘He is my brother.’ Abimelech then took sheep and oxen and male and female servants, and gave them to Abraham, and restored his wife Sarah to him. Abimelech said, ‘Behold, my land is before you; settle wherever you please.’ To Sarah he said, ‘Behold, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver; behold, it is your vindication before all who are with you, and before all men you are cleared.’ Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech and his wife and his maids, so that they bore children. For the LORD had closed fast all the wombs of the household of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.”

Gen 20:1, “Now Abraham journeyed from there (Sodom and Gomorrah) toward the land of the Negev, and settled between Kadesh and Shur; then he sojourned (גָּרוּ) in Gerar.”
Like most tent dwellers, Abraham did not stay in one place too long. The word “sojourner” is the Hebrew verb gur, which refers to a specific legal status. A person who lives as a resident alien is a person who is in a dependent legal status. This person is not a native, but is dwelling upon the land.

In societies, which possess a clan structure, this person is without legal protection since he has no blood ties. Such a person, like Abraham, would have been dependent upon a native to recognize and protect him. Abraham was very rich yet he was living on Canaanite (Gen. 17:8) and Philistine land (Gen. 21:34). This was not uncommon.

The Mari documents (1800 B.C.) indicate that the relationship between “sitting” farmers and nomadic herders (such as Abraham) was that contracts were drawn up concerning grazing and watering rights. This relationship is known as dimorphism as these 2 distinct yet interrelated cultures exist side by side.

Abraham is entering into a land, where he no legal rights and protection, which will affect his decision making as we will see later on in the chapter.

Abraham was 99 at this point and Sarah 89. They moved south into the Negev desert, where Abraham found enough grass and water between Kadesh and Shur to stay for a while. Then Abraham moved north to the territory belonging to the city of Gerar, about 16 miles northwest of Beersheba.

Gerar was near the coast about 12 miles south of Gaza and about 50 miles south of Hebron, in the land of the Philistines. Because he moved into the territory of the city state of Gerar, he did the same thing that he did when he went down to Egypt in Genesis 12.

Gerar was the capital of a race of men who had dispossessed the original inhabitants of the land, and were gradually passing from the condition of wandering shepherd life into that of a settled and warlike nation. Afterwards to be known to the Hebrews by the dreaded name, Philistines, a title, which, in fact, gave to the whole land its name of Palestine. Their chieftain bore the official title of Abimelech, "My Father the King."

Gen. 20:2, “Abraham said of Sarah his wife, ‘She is my sister.’ So Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah.”

Sarah’s name means, “princess.” Her original name Sarai means “contentious.” So she went from being contentious to a princess because of the Lord. Sarai married Abram in Ur of the Chaldeans before they migrated to Canaan according to Genesis 11:29. At this point in the narrative she is identified only as the daughter-in-law of Terah, Abram’s father according to Genesis 11:31. Later, however, Abraham claimed her as his half-sister, having the same father but a different mother according to Genesis 20:12.
Sarah was a beautiful woman but she was also married to a wimp, namely Abraham. On 2 occasions (Gen. 12 and 20) Abraham placed Sarah in a potentially adulterous situation to save his own life.

Now, you might say, how could Abraham repeat this terrible sin? The answer is simple, Abraham, like all men whether believer or unbeliever possesses a sin nature.

Every one in the human race possesses an old sin nature as a result of Adam’s original sin in the garden. Everyone in the human race possesses a sin nature.

John 8:34, “Jesus answered them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.’”

At the moment of physical birth 2 imputations take place for every member of the human race: (1) Imputation of soul life. (2) Imputation of Adam’s original sin to the genetically formed old sin nature.

The imputation of Adam’s original sin to every member of the human race is noted by Paul in Rom 5:12, “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.”

The fact that we all have a sin nature means that at any time we can enter into sin, thus Abraham simply makes a bad decision, which is motivated by his sin nature trend to fear, worry and anxiety.

The old sin nature manifests itself in 3 ways: (1) Mental attitude sins (2) Verbal sins (3) Overt acts of sin. Sin is any mental, verbal or overt activity that is contrary to the perfect character and standards of God. Sin results in spiritual death (Rom. 6:23).

The sin nature contains: (1) An area of weakness (2) An area of strength (3) Trends toward legalism (4) Lust patterns.

The area of weakness is the source of temptation for personal sin. The area of strength is the source of human good, which God hates.

Mental attitude sins are the most destructive to the spiritual life since the spiritual centers around your thinking.

Mental attitude sins include: (1) Pride (2) Envy (3) Jealousy (4) Bitterness (5) Hatred (6) Vindictiveness (7) Implacability (8) Guilt feelings (9) Fear (10) Worry (11) Anxiety (12) Self-pity.

Abraham has entered once again into fear, worry and anxiety, which prompted him to make this terrible decision regarding his wife Sarah. The believer through his negative decisions to the will of God will immediately fall back into living in his old sin nature. Our decisions determine whether we live in our sin nature or in fellowship with God. So Abraham commits this terrible sin again because his sin nature is weak in this area.
Gen. 20:2, “Abraham said of Sarah his wife, ‘She is my sister.’ So Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah.

“Sent” is the 3rd person masculine singular qal imperfect form of the verb shalach (שָלַח) and is correctly translated.

“ Took,” is the 3rd person masculine singular qal imperfect form of the verb laqach (לַאֲחַךְ).

This word laqach can have many different meanings depending upon the context.

Depending on the context, laqach also can have the following meanings in the qal stem: (1) Select (2) Summon. It can also mean “to take” or “to fetch.”

Here the context clearly indicates that Abimelech sent messengers to “fetch, retrieve, summon” Sarah in order to add her to his harem. So we have Abimelech here dispatching his courtiers in order to bring Sarah into his presence in the palace and add her to his harem.

The name “Abimelech” means, “my father is king” and is not a proper name but rather a title for royalty among the Philistines, just as the term “Pharaoh” and “Caesar” were. Therefore, the term “Abimelech” a designation for the king of the Philistines during the days of Abraham in 2086 B.C.

Gen. 20:3-6, “But God came to Abimelech in a dream of the night, and said to him, ‘Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is married.’ Now Abimelech had not (emphatic negative particle lo [pronounced loh]) come near (Qal perfect form of the verb qarav (קָרָע), “to have sexual intercourse”) her; and he said, ‘Lord, will You slay a nation, even though blameless? Did he not himself say to me, ‘She is my sister’? And she herself said, ‘He is my brother.’ In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this.’ Then God said to him in the dream, ‘Yes, I know that in the integrity of your heart you have done this, and I also kept you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her.’”

“I kept you from sinning” refers to the “overruling will of God,” which indicates that God intervened and did not permit Abimelech to have sexual intercourse with Sarah that would have resulted in adultery and thus Abimelech would be worthy of death, thus God protected Abimelech from unwittingly committing adultery with Sarah.

Directive will of God: God directly states what He desires of us. Permissive will of God: God permits us to have our own way. Overruling will of God: God overrules our decisions-not letting them have their intended results-in order to protect us and the rest of mankind from our own negative volition and to preserve and perpetuate His own marvelous plan.
Gen. 20:7, “Now therefore, restore the man's wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live. But if you do not restore her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours.”

God restrained Abimelech in a two-fold fashion. First, God warned him in the strongest terms: “Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is married” (Genesis 20:3). It becomes clear that death will only follow if Abimelech’s actions are not reversed and Sarah returned, untouched to Abraham. God told Abimelech he was as good as dead if he did not act decisively and according to God’s directions.

Secondly, Abimelech and his entire household were physically restrained from sinning against Sarah, even if they had wished to according to Genesis 20:6-7 and 17-18. 1 Chronicles 16 and Psalm 105 refers to this protection of Abraham and Sarah.

“Prophet” is the noun navi (נָבִי) (pronounced nah-vee), “authorized spokesman for God.” The first time that the word appears in the Old Testament is Genesis 20:7.

The fact that the noun navi is employed with the Hebrew verb palal, “to pray” in Genesis 20:1 indicates that being a prophet was not primarily predicting the future but rather representing God and speaking the Words of God.

Abimelech was told by God that Abraham was a prophet not that Abraham might predict the future but that Abraham might pray for him!

There were a number of activities that the prophets of God were involved in such as communicating doctrine, issuing judgments, communicating future events, serving in the Temple, performing miracles, proclaiming Messianic prophecies, and interceding through prayer for the people (Hab. 3).

“He will pray” is the 3rd person masculine singular hithpael imperfect form of the verb palal (לָעַל) and refers to “intercessory prayer.” The Lord won’t listen to the prayer for Abimelech since he is an unbeliever but He will listen to the prayer of Abraham because he possessed divine righteousness. God will only hear the prayer of a righteous man.

Abraham trusted in the Lord as His Savior and thus God imputed His righteousness to Abraham.

Gen 15:5-6, “And He took him outside and said, ‘Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.’ And He said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be.’ Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.”

Thus, Abraham was righteous in God’s eyes, thus Abraham’s prayer for the deliverance of Abimelech and his household would be heard and answered whereas Abimelech would not be heard because he was an unbeliever. Abraham had a relationship with the Lord but Abimelech did not.
Genesis 20:8, “So Abimelech arose early in the morning and called all his servants and told all these things in their hearing; and the men were greatly frightened.”

Abimelech and his servants were terrified because they knew that the God of Abraham who spoke to Abimelech in a dream telling him to release Sarah was the very God who destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19.

Gen. 20:9-13, “Then Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, ‘What have you done to us? And how have I sinned against you, that you have brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? You have done to me things that ought not to be done.’ And Abimelech said to Abraham, ‘What have you encountered, that you have done this thing?’ Abraham said, ‘Because I thought, surely there is no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife. Besides, she actually is my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife; and it came about, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said to her, ‘This is the kindness which you will show to me: everywhere we go, say of me, ‘He is my brother.’”

Abraham indicates that his conduct was the result of fear. He feared that because of Sarah’s beauty he would be killed, and she would be taken as a wife by violence. This fear was based upon a faulty theological premise: God is only able to act when men are willing to obey. God could save Abraham only in a place where He was known and feared by men. The inference is that where ungodly men are, God’s hand is shortened and unable to save. Such theology was due more to unbelief than to ignorance. It was the same fear Abraham had twenty-five years before.

Abraham didn’t have the faith to trust that God would save him from the hand of Pharaoh or Abimelech, but God did deliver him and Sarah with both of these rulers. Abraham failed because of unbelief, not because he was uninformed. Because he entered into fear and not faith, he committed this terrible sin.

Incidentally, this unbelief had to disregard specific revelation, for shortly before this incident God had twice told Abraham that Sarah would become pregnant and bear a child within the year (17:19,21; 18:10).

Abraham’s conduct differs little from that of Lot in Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot, by inviting the two strangers under his roof, assured them of protection. Rather than break this commitment, he was willing to sacrifice the purity of his two virgin daughters and give them over to the men outside his door. So certain sins do run in families.

Abraham, fearing for his own safety, was willing to give over his wife to the king (or any other citizen of Gerar) to protect himself from harm.
Abraham’s excuse was technically factual since Sarah was, indeed, his sister, the daughter of his father, but not his mother (verse 12).

Gen. 20:12-13, “Besides, she actually is my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife; and it came about, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said to her, ‘This is the kindness which you will show to me: everywhere we go, say of me, ‘He is my brother.’”

Facts can be and often are used in such a way as to convey falsehood. His sister, indeed but not she was his wife. Abraham tried to defend himself by technicalities but not by truthfulness.

I do not think that Abimelech was impressed with Abraham’s explanation. Nevertheless, God had severely cautioned him, and he knew that Abraham was the only one who could intercede for him to remove the plague, which prohibited the bearing of children.

Abimelech quickly sent for Abraham and offered him and Sarah restitution because of fear that Abraham’s God would destroy him and his kingdom and not out of repentance. Because of this, restitution was made.

First, Sarah was given back to her husband Abraham along with sheep, oxen, and servants (verse 14). Then, to Abraham the invitation was extended for him to settle in the land wherever he chose (verse 15).

Finally, a thousand pieces of silver were given to Abraham as a symbol of Sarah’s vindication (verse 16). Her return to Abraham, therefore, was not because she was found to be unacceptable or undesirable.

Also, we must note that Abimelech’s conduct as an unbeliever is superior to Abraham’s who is a believer. Abraham is a terrible witness to this unbeliever.

1 Peter 2:12, “Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.”

Also, we must note that Abraham’s excuse that since the Philistines had no fear of God, that they would slay him and take his wife was not denied by Abimelech. So possibly Abraham’s fear was well grounded though he still should have trusted the Lord for his safety and his wife’s. If you notice, that God severely rebukes Abimelech but not Abraham.

Gen. 20:14-16, “Abimelech then took sheep and oxen and male and female servants, and gave them to Abraham, and restored his wife Sarah to him. Abimelech said, ‘Behold, my land is before you; settle wherever you please.’ To Sarah he said, ‘Behold, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver; behold, it is your vindication before all who are with you, and before all men you are cleared.’”
Not only did Abimelech return Sarah to Abraham. He showed his respect for the Lord and his goodwill by giving Abraham gifts. He also gave Abraham permission to stay wherever he wanted in Gerar’s territory without any treaty or compensation since he knew that Abraham was a representative of the Lord. Then he informed Sarah that he was giving Abraham a thousand shekels weight, which is about 25 pounds of silver as a compensation for the offense against Sarah, so that she was fully vindicated as not having sinned in the sight of everyone and her household would recognize this.

Gen. 20:17, “Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech and his wife and his maids, so that they bore children.”

“Prayed” is the 3rd person masculine singular hithpael imperfect form of the verb פָּלָל (palal) and refers to “intercessory prayer.”

Gen. 20:18, “For the LORD had closed fast all the wombs of the household of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.”

The reason Abimelech needed prayer was because God had made it impossible for his wives and slave girls to become pregnant. So God answered Abraham’s prayer and brought a healing or restoration to Abimelech and to them all. In all of this, God was faithfully watching over and protecting Sarah as the mother of the promised son.

James 5:14-16, “Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.”

The fact that God heard and answered Abraham’s intercessory prayer for Abimelech and his household clearly implies that Abraham had confessed his sin since God will not hear even the prayer request or intercession of a believer who is out of fellowship.

Ps 66:18, “If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear.”

Ps 32:5, “I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD’; And You forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah.”

It appears that after this episode in Gerar that Abraham and Sarah learned the lesson of faith and trusting in the Lord and not going to the world to solve their problems or relying upon their own devices to solve their problems. Never again to we read from this point forward in Genesis that Abraham failed in this area again.

As believers we are commanded to offer up intercessory prayers for both believers and unbelievers.
1 Tim 2:1-8, “First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time. For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying) as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension.”

Ephesians 6:18, “All of you pray on a consistent basis, at all times by means of (the omnipotence of) the Spirit through every kind of specific prayer request and for this very purpose, all of you be continually alert with every kind of persistent specific prayer request on behalf of all the saints.”

The believer-priest should have a prayer list whether mental or written down. Prayer can be: (1) Specific: Praying for particular or specific needs. (2) General: Praying for needs in generalities.

You can make intercessory prayer for others by simply mentioning their names without any specific need of theirs in mind or you can pray for their specific needs when you have specific information regarding their needs.

The intercessory prayer of Moses for the children of Israel at Kadesh-Barnea is an example of the power of prayer (Num. 14:17-20). The intercessory prayer of Samuel for the children of Israel was powerful for it delivered them from the hand of the Philistines (1 Sam. 7:1-14). Elijah’s prayer to heal the widow’s son was powerful resulting in the resuscitation of the child (1 Kings 17:17-24). The Lord struck the Syrian army as a result of Elisha’s prayer (2 Kings 6:18). The Lord delivered king Hezekiah and the nation of Israel from destruction at the hands of Sennacherib king of Assyria as a result of Isaiah’s prayer (2 Kings 19:14-20).

Intercessory prayer for other believers and unbelievers is an expression of the love of God. If we love our neighbor, we will pray for our neighbor. The Lord Jesus Christ expressed His love for those who mocked, scourged, vilified and crucified Him by interceding for them before the Father (Lk. 23:33-34).

Luke 23:33-34, “When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left. But Jesus was saying, ‘Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.’ And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves.”