

ATHENS *Prayer Network* USA

Intercessory Worship

A shift is taking place. A shaking in the very way to how we done things and have evaluated the world around us. Paradigms are something we live with, without giving it much thought. It is the way we see things, the perspective we have. Our paradigm is formed by our upbringing, our experiences, our values, our culture, etc. No paradigm is 100% correct. It is incomplete, and is biased by our sin nature, as well as other factors. As such, God is into shaking and changing our paradigm. These are often called new wineskins. One such paradigm that is currently being shaped is the way we pray. God is breaking off many religious shackles and setting us free to pray in new and exciting ways.

Intercessory Worship Defined

The two streams of *worship* and *intercession* are converging. It was always meant to be this way. Revelation 5 depicts heavenly elders holding two important items. In one hand they held golden bowls filled with incense, representing the prayer of the saints. In their other hand they held a harp, representing worship. These two items when brought together releases God's power.

The late John Wimber defined worship as *"a personal and intimate meeting with God in which we praise, magnify and glorify Him for His person and actions. It is the act of freely giving love to God. We meet with Him and He meets with us."* This is a very personal and intimate definition, but this intimacy embraces God in His incredible splendor and glory, as well as His desire to be close to us! Worship is a personal, and loving encounter with a personal, loving God who wants to get personal with us! We define intercession as *"finding out what is on God's heart, then speaking, singing and living it back to Him through identification and sacrifice until there is release."*

Now there are four groupings of intercessory people. First, there are *intercessors* who simply want to get on with the task at hand. It is not that they don't like to worship, but it takes a second priority. If you don't get into a heavy, serious prayer session, they probably will not come back next time. Second, there are *worshipping intercessors* who enjoy to worship, but still can't wait to get down to business. For them, worship is the launching board into intercession. And third, there are *worshippers* who simply want to linger in God's presence. Lastly, there are *intercessory worshippers* whose priority is to worship. Then as God reveals His heart, they respond in prayer, song and prophetic acts. It is here we are seeing the shift away from simply getting the job done to intimate partnership with God. Intercessory worshippers are perfectly fine if the session doesn't get into the intercession stuff and the whole watch is about enjoying God. Nevertheless, as the Lord reveals His heart intercessory worshippers are quick to respond, so they can get back into loving dialogue with God.

Intercessory Worship Releases the Lightning of God

Several years ago a program called "The Raging Planet" was on television. Each Monday night this special series would focus on one of the earth's natural forces. Over the few months that this show was aired we learned about hurricanes, earthquakes, tornadoes, tsunamis, fires, volcanoes and more. One night the topic was lightning. Like all the shows, this was fascinating. The following day it dawned on me that lightning is often used to depict the throne of God. Then as I sat before the Lord, He led me to various passages that described the lightning around His throne. I am no meteorologist, and in my giving the following description I may totally mess up the technical side of things. Nevertheless, the point will be understood.

Lightning is the result of specific environmental conditions being met. This is low, warm, moist air rising to be cooled by the cold, high air. The air turns into ice particles and falls towards the earth. These ice particles collide with the rising moisture. As this builds, we earthlings see beautiful cloud formations develop. The moisture that is rising from the earth happens to be charged with negative ions. As they rise they collide with positively charged ions that are falling towards earth. As this intensifies, flashes can be seen in the cloud as electricity is produced. But the lightning does not shoot down to earth until a "feeler" reaches toward heaven. This "feeler" is also electrically charged and becomes a target for the lightning. When the cloud is ripe and the feeler is reaching upward, lightning will shoot toward the earth hitting the mark. Then for a few milliseconds there will be an interaction between the earth and the sky as the lightning bolt shoots up and down between the cloud and the earth several times.

Intercessory worship releases the lightning of God. It originates in heaven, around the very throne of God, but it needs a target, someone reaching heavenward for it to be released. As the environment of worship and prayer intensifies on earth, the activity around the throne increases until finally the conditions are right and ZAP, the lightning of God's answer strikes!

Let's look at a few "lightning" passages and see the relationship to intercessory worship.

Revelation 8:3-5 (NLT)

Then another angel with a gold incense burner came and stood at the altar. And a great amount of incense was given to him to mix with the prayers of God's people as an offering on the gold altar before the throne. ⁴ The smoke of the incense, mixed with the prayers of God's holy people, ascended up to God from the altar where the angel had poured them out.⁵ Then the angel filled the incense burner with fire from the altar and threw it down upon the earth; and thunder crashed, lightning flashed, and there was a terrible earthquake.

In this wonderfully, terrifying scene, we witness these golden bowls being filled with the prayers of the saints. An angel presents these prayers before God, and God responds by hurling it back to earth, resulting in lightning, thunder and an earthquake. This reaction brought the answer to the prayers that had been offered up to God.

Job 36:32 - 37:3 (NIV)

*He fills his hands with lightning and commands it to strike its mark. ³³ His thunder announces the coming storm; even the cattle make known its approach. **37** "At this my heart pounds and leaps from its place. ² Listen! Listen to the roar of his voice, to the rumbling that comes from his mouth. ³ He unleashes his lightning beneath the whole heaven and sends it to the ends of the earth.*

Here we see God literally fills His hands with lightning and commands it to strike the mark. This striking the mark is the "feeler" that is reaching heavenward. To strike the mark is the Hebrew word "paga". It is also seen in Isaiah 59 where God is looking for someone to intervene (intercede). Intercession releases God's brilliant lightning to strike the mark on earth.

Psalms 18:6-14 (NIV)

In my distress I called to the LORD; I cried to my God for help. From his temple he heard my voice; my cry came before him, into his ears. ⁷ The earth trembled and quaked, and the foundations of the mountains shook; they trembled because he was angry. ⁸ Smoke rose from his nostrils; consuming fire came from his mouth, burning coals blazed out of it. ⁹ He parted the heavens and came down; dark clouds were under his feet. ¹⁰ He mounted the cherubim and flew; he soared on the wings of the wind. ¹¹ He made darkness his covering, his canopy around him— the dark rain clouds of the sky. ¹² Out of the brightness of his presence clouds advanced, with hailstones and bolts of lightning. ¹³ The LORD thundered from heaven; the voice of the Most High resounded. ¹⁴ He shot his arrows and scattered the enemy, with great bolts of lightning he routed them.

In the above text, David was desperate and he cries out to God. Here is a clear example of how God responds to the prayer of His saints. Worshipers reaching heavenward release powerful response.

Just as lightning is the result of specific environmental conditions being met, both on the earth and in the heavens (skies), so is the lightning around God's throne. It would seem that as we intensify our crying out and reaching heavenward, the lightning activity around the throne also intensifies. Until suddenly, the critical load is met, and ZAP, the lightning flash answer comes and hits the mark - "paga!" It is interesting to note that there is no more mention of lightning after all the redeemed are in heaven. Worship will continue but prayer as we know it won't!

So intercession is intimately intertwined with worship. As we push in as worshippers, seeking His face, it stirs activity around the throne, which ultimately releases the lightning of God. Our first and primary goal is to seek His face. As we connect with Him at this level, He reveals His heart to us. We in turn cry out for what is on His heart in prayer, which moves Him to respond... and His response - *lightning bringing about His kingdom and His will here on earth.*

Conclusion

With this shift and shaking that is occurring, we must be willing to look at our own worship and prayer style. Are you an intercessor, a worshipping intercessor, a worshipper, or an intercessory worshipper? Let the Lord do His stuff to bring you to the place where you see the lightning of God released through your intimate partnership with Him.