

Boot Camp 2007

March 24, 2007

INTERCESSORS/ALTAR WORKERS

Theme Scripture: Luke 4:31-37

31 And [Jesus] came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the Sabbath days. 32 And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power. 33 And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, 34 Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God. 35 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not. 36 And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this! For with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out. 37 And the fame of him went out into every place of the country round about.

Jesus in the text above is displaying the ultimate life of a believer. The devil knew, without Jesus saying a word, that Jesus was the Christ. Jesus' very presence posed a serious threat to the devil. We must realize that "This Is Not A Game". The moment that we confess that Jesus is Lord and begin to live according to the Word of God, the devil will take notice of you to destroy you. God has supplied us with the power we need through the precious Blood of His Son to be overcomers. As believers, our purpose is to live so that the devil will recognize us and literally hate to see us coming! Our theme Scripture assures us that this is possible through Jesus Christ.

PREREQUISITES

Know your purpose. Even though you may encounter persecution by the ones that you are interceding for you must stay focused by protecting your heart against contamination. *"Those who have been brought into a particular nearness to God must exercise a sharp insight into the holiness and the righteous demands of God"*. (Dr. Vernon McGee)

We must live a life so that the devil is certain of our identity and strengths in Jesus and feels threatened by us. (Live so that the devil hates to see you coming). **Mark 1:23-24** *And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, 24 Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.*

Being in service to others means that your life is not your own. You must change everything about you. You must change the way you act, the people you spend time with (you must be selective but not partial). You are not a garbage dump. There are some people that would love to bring you a lot of garbage and make your being able to come before the Lord a challenge if not impossible. You will have to change the places you go. There are some places that a true believer should not be seen going. Even if it is just a friend's or family member's house when that friend or family member is not depositing the right thing into your spirit you should not be there. Sometimes the clothes that you wear will have to be changed. You don't want to be distracted and unable to focus on the situation at hand because your attire is not appropriate. Our goal is that Jesus Christ is seen in every area of our lives. If you love the Lord like you say you do, it will be seen in your consecrated life and your modest apparel. Be considerate of your

brother and sister. After all, we are to esteem others higher than ourselves. **Matthew 5:16** *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.* **2 Corinthians 6:17-18** *Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, 18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*

You must have the confidence that if necessary your consecrated life can be used as a ransom for someone else when they may not be entitled to the favorable hand of God. God will not accept worship in our own will, no matter how sincere. **Leviticus 10:1-3** *And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. 2 And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD. 3 Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the LORD spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.*

NOTE: You can be an intercessor without being an altar worker but you cannot be an altar worker without being an intercessor. For this reason, we're going to look at both of these positions.

INTERCESSORS – Job 1:4-5 - God requires prayer for all men.

Intercession – Intercession is seeking the presence and hearing of God on behalf of others; primarily fall in with; meet with in order to converse; then, make petition, especially to make intercession; to make a petition or intercede on behalf of another

Intercession/Prayer is communion with God. It implies that God is a person who is able and willing to hear us. He has ordained both the prayer and the answer. **Romans 8:27** *And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.* **Matthew 6:8b** *...For your Father knows what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him.*

Question: Why are people so needed for such an honorable office as intercessor?

Answer:

In order to come before the presence of God, we must be sanctified (set apart for the use of the Master). It implies a right relationship with Him. Acceptable prayer can be offered to God by the righteous only. **James 5:16** *Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*

Don't give an opportunity for the chance of you losing your right standing with God. If you have a heart issue, deal with it! Protect your heart from the very ones that are causing you a lot of hardship, because this is what the Lord would want you to do. Make sure that nothing will be able to separate you from the love of God and Him hearing your prayer. **Matthew 5:44** *Love your enemies, bless them that curse*

you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you. You can only achieve this only if you love Jesus more than anything. That includes your ailing heart.

ALTAR WORKERS – *Everyone is not qualified to “work the altar”. Exodus 28:1*

Altar – In the Old Testament, the altar was the erection of stone or earth wherever Jehovah should manifest Himself.

- ❖ God designates a place for us to prepare and await His arrival. Preparation requires effort on our part through a repenting heart and surrendered will. Exodus 20:24
- ❖ During our services, there is a certain area in our churches that we esteem as consecrated for the move of God! This area is recognized as the “altar”.
- ❖ At the moment that this area has been designated as the “altar”, there’s a perimeter around the area that only the chosen should be allowed to enter. Exodus 19:12,20

Worker – One who works; a laborer; a toiler. **Altar Worker** – One who works at the place where Jehovah will manifest Himself.

There are attitudes that one must acquire to be an affective altar worker.

- ❖ Privilege. It is a privilege and duty for all Christians to pray effectively as well as put forth the effort for their fellow man. Job 1:5
- ❖ Humility. We must realize that the outcome of our service “is not by might (our physical abilities), nor by power (our manipulation or influence), but by the Spirit of the Lord (the power of the Holy Ghost)”. Zechariah 4:6
- ❖ Spiritual Sensitivity. Don’t always picture the type of result (physical sign) that you think should occur. You are confronting spirits not the flesh.
- ❖ Authority. You have been endowed with power by paying a great price with your life. Walk in your authority! **Luke 10:19** *Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.*

Altar work wins the heart of God and, consequently, the favor of God.

- ❖ The most assured way to obtain God’s package of **favor** is through humility. **DON’T TOUCH GOD’S GLORY. Luke 10:20** *Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven. Isaiah 42:8* *I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.*
- ❖ The price of favor is costly. Only the chosen will be willing to pay. The package includes being held in high regard by God Himself, a token of good will or kind regard is granted because He loves you. You receive biased treatment from the Holy God of the Universe. **Favor ain’t fair.** You may rest assured that the Lord will hear you the very moment you enter into His presence because you have kept yourself worthy.

Every called altar worker is required to possess (or be able to operate in) at least these three gifts, along with others, for the edification of the body of Christ.

❖ **The Gift of Wisdom**

- The Gift of Wisdom is the ability to understand God's Word and His will. While you are praying for that person on the altar, the gift of wisdom will enable you to skillfully apply that understanding to their life.

❖ **The Gift of the Word of Knowledge**

- The Gift of the Word of Knowledge gives the altar worker the ability to understand and speak God's truth with insight into the mysteries of His Word. You will have the ability to know information about an individual that cannot be known apart from God's revelation.

❖ **The Gift of the Discerning of Spirits**

- The Gift of the Discerning of Spirits is the God-given ability to recognize lying spirits and to identify deceptive and erroneous doctrine and fleshly elements.

GOOD ALTAR WORK PRACTICES

- **Hygiene** is the foremost concern of an altar worker. Bad breath, body odor or dirty clothing will become a distraction to the person trying to get to God.
- **Safety** must be felt by the candidate on the altar in order for them to be able to focus on receiving something from the Lord. A safe atmosphere is very important. If they are uneasy or afraid to close their eyes to shut the world out, and release their mind to the Holy Spirit, your mission as an altar worker will be very challenging and possibly unsuccessful.
- **Altar materials** should be on hand the moment the minister is about to have an "altar call". We should not have to use anyone's coat or scarf to cover up somebody. Neither should we have to anxiously wait for the person responsible to get them from another room. We should move quickly when necessary. You don't want the enemy to have even a hairline crack to steal what the person had just received. Therefore, you must be prepared with anointing oil, which is used as a point of contact. You will need a box of facial tissue. (Please don't run and get a roll of toilet paper when the person is in great need of facial cleansing.) Last but not least, you will definitely need a covering of some sort. It may be a nice size piece of fabric, a fabric tablecloth or a nice size blanket. It should be something sufficient to cover an adult so that the enemy will not have a chance to distract them concerning their dignity in case the Spirit chooses to "slay them in the spirit" (they fall to the floor or get into a posture that may be compromising). If necessary, have someone who is trained on how to brace their fall let them down easily. Nevertheless, if not, the Holy Ghost will not allow them to get hurt.
- **Temperance** is one of the attributes of the fruit of the Spirit that is often absent at the altar. Remember, it is not by our own efforts that the Spirit of the Lord will show up. Nor will it cause the person to be more willing to surrender. Therefore, running around the church, jumping up and down, clapping of the hands, screaming at the top of your lungs, swinging their heads back and forth and spinning them around until they are too dizzy to stand up is not an effective approach. These are just a few of our practices that the Lord winked at because of "our" lack of knowledge.

- **Voice volume** can hinder the fruit of your labor when working the altar. Screaming into a person's ear will not only cause discomfort to the eardrum, but it can possibly cause embarrassment. Sometimes just a whisper into the candidate's ear using the gift of the word of knowledge will break through any barriers that are present.
- **Staying focused** is a must if you plan to snatch this soul from the stronghold of the devil. Therefore, you must remove all distractions that can be used to hinder any progress. You must leave all of your issues outside of the perimeter of the altar and focus on spiritual warfare. All children should be removed from the area so the parent can concentrate on what they want God to do for them. (This also should be done for the safety of the child from any demon spirits that will be ordered out of the adult.) Crying children must be removed from the room so that their crying will not distract the parent. Also, the audience should be encourage to go into prayer at their seats, because the more they bombard heaven the more we have a guarantee of victory.
- **Personal servant hood** is an attitude you have now acquired. Your purpose is to do whatever necessary to win the battle of the mind, soul and spirit. You gird up your loins for warfare so that your sister or brother will be taken from the clutches of the devil. Their best interest is all you should be concerned about for the moment.
- **Becoming sensitive to others needs** is more important than your looking spiritual and victorious. It's not about you at all. It's about your sister or brother trying to get to God who feels that they are not worthy to come in the presence of God on their own. Or they feel that they need help getting what belongs to them from the devil. It's about God using a willing vessel to defeat the plans of Satan to destroy one of His children. It's about you knowing your purpose and humbly walking in it. Therefore, allow the Spirit to lead you how to minister to your sister or brother.
- **Carefulness** is very essential when working at the altar. Because we usually give an "altar call" for those who do not know the Lord, this means that most who come will come to the altar with many personal issues. Wisdom will be our governing source. ***Be careful where you lay your hands!*** You don't want to be the hindering force unawares. Many times, we don't realize that the touch of a hand from the opposite sex may arouse an individual. Also, we do not want our good to be evil spoken of by carelessly placing our hands on a particular part of someone's body. Allow the Holy Spirit to lead you if you should put your hands on that person or not. Sometimes the person may not really want to receive from the Lord, but would love it if they could "receive" of you. Remember, we are in a "Spiritual Warfare", and like the man who dwelled in the tombs in the book of Mark 5:1-7 they may be seeking divine help, but they are still influenced by the spirit of the devil. Therefore, wisdom is strongly needed to obtain the promised victory. It is the "soul" that is our focus. What a rewarding feeling you get when you have marched in against the devil and his agents and came out with the deliverance for your sister or brother. Praise God for Jesus!
- **Never work the altar alone!** We don't give praise to the devil, but we are not ignorant of his devices. If you are a female, please be accompanied by a male. If you are a male, heed the same warning and be accompanied by a female. There are some people the Holy Spirit will not allow you to minister to. Remember, it's not about you. It's about the soul that is standing before you. So don't feel threatened or intimidated to allow your partner to intercede for that particular individual. It is not your show! Your desire should be that it doesn't matter who the instrument is that the Lord decides to use. All you want is for your sister or brother to receive what they need and desire of the

Lord. If it is at all possible, get a man to work with another man and a woman with another woman. If you are alone and a point of contact is necessary, a strong handgrip should be sufficient.

REMEMBER...

If we are to achieve the ultimate life of victory according to our theme Scripture as an effective intercessor/altar worker, we must realize that we are in a serious spiritual warfare. It's more than a jump, shout and speaking in tongues. It's even more than a title before or behind our name. It's about allowing God to be glorified through our lives at all time. **Second Corinthians 10:3-5** reads, *"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: 4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) 5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."* This lets us know that our outward appearances and accomplishments will not get us anywhere close to the life of our theme Scripture. The spirit of the devil in a fleshly man saw Jesus Christ the Messiah in the form of a man and was terrified. Jesus promised that we would be just like him. We must spend time in prayer/communion with God, and fast often in order to keep our flesh aligned with the Word and the Will of God. Our time must be used wisely and productively. Once again, let me remind you that we must be selective but not partial when it comes to whom we fellowship and keep company. Our lives must be consecrated and set apart so that God can use us at any given moment. The anointing is very meticulous when it comes to its dwelling place. You paid a great price for your anointing with years of suffering and sacrifices, so be careful that you don't lose it over a moment of self-gratification.

Loving God's people is the key that unlocks the door to an ultimate life of victory. If you want God's favor on your life, LOVE HIS PEOPLE! If you want to operate in the anointing at any given moment, LOVE GOD'S PEOPLE. After all, God is all about souls, and everyone that comes to church is not saved and/or spirit filled. You will encounter all type of spirits while working the altar, but if you are walking in ultimate victory, you will have no fear when you are challenged by the devil. Loving God's people can be accomplished with a forgiving heart and a loving spirit.

This means, Altar Worker, that you will have to keep yourself on the altar!

ABOUT YOUR FACILITATOR: EVANGELIST SHARON D. WEST is the First Lady of West Side Church of God in Christ, Rockford, Illinois. She was licensed as an Evangelist Missionary in the Churches of God in Christ in April of 1982. She has worked in ministry in the church and in the community. Her personal vision is to help as many as possible to understand how to live victorious lives in Christ Jesus. This is done by instructing people according to the Scriptures on how to confront every challenge that life and the devil sends their way. This vision also consists of helping young women to know their rightful places in God, their homes, and their churches.

She and Pastor Maurice A. West have two sons, Maurice II, who will be graduating in May from Illinois College in Jacksonville, Illinois, and Mark, a junior at Rockford's Auburn High School in their Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA) program.