

## **Scriptures from the meeting of September 1, 2020**

### **Intercession begins with repentance:**

*How do we intercede together? The Second Book of Chronicles tells of the consecration of the Temple which had been built in Jerusalem by King Solomon. As Solomon prayed and asked for God's blessings, God spoke to him and said these words:*

When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. (2 Chronicles 7:13-14)

### **Asking for forgiveness requires that we forgive others. This is a central message in Jesus' teachings:**

Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one. For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. (Matthew 6:9-15)

### **Forgiveness does not mean passively accepting injustices done to us or to others. Jesus confronted his offender, and demanded an explanation for his action:**

When he had said this, one of the police standing nearby struck Jesus on the face, saying, "Is that how you answer the high priest?" Jesus answered, "If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong. But if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?" (John 18:22-23)

### **Jesus taught his disciples to do the same. Confrontation is necessary for reconciliation to take place:**

If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. (Matthew 18:15-17)

**Repentance is a condition for forgiveness:**

Take heed to yourselves; if your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him; and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, and says, 'I repent,' you must forgive him. (Luke 17:3-4)

**But if we experience resentment against someone and we are not in a position to confront them, we should forgive them from the heart. Prayer requires faith, but faith without forgiveness is ineffective. So, when we stand praying, we must forgive anything we may have against anyone.**

And Jesus answered them, "Have faith in God. Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses." (Mark 11:22-25)

**When confrontation is not possible, we need to exercise forgiveness from the heart – which is a decision not to hate or wish ill-will on the other person:**

And in anger his lord delivered him to the jailers, till he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart. (Matthew 18:34-35)

**One cannot conjure up warm, cozy feelings towards someone who has hurt us. But one can make a decision to love them, that is, to wish their welfare and happiness. Of course, God seeks the repentance of a sinner, and someone who has willfully hurt another can never experience joy until they have repented. So, our prayers for their well-being will certainly lead to their conversion and repentance. By praying for the welfare of our enemies, we are behaving as true children of God:**

But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you salute only your brethren, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matthew 5:44-48)