

Standing in the gap between people and God

Write a list of people that you need to pray for - Use the back of your book

We are going to look at Moses' prayer list today so keep your finger on that back page - I have a feeling you may want to add to it as we go through today's message...

Look at Moses the intercessor- One who prays for others

An intercessor dares to plead for hardened people

Exodus 8:8-15

This scenario unfolds again with the plague of the flies, Moses prays but Pharaoh hardens his heart. (8:32)

When the same request is made after the plague of hail you would think Moses would learn his lesson. In fact he says:

Exodus 9:28-35 “I know that you still do not fear the Lord”

It happens even a fourth time with the plague of locusts

Moses prays for the hard-hearted. His enemies are on his prayer list. Those who think differently and offend him and even cause him harm will be prayed for. Even, and this may be the toughest for us - those who would take advantage of him and treat him like a doormat.

We can be quite the opposite of Moses. When people start to show openness to Christ - that's when we pray.

There's an unfortunate reality in our world for endangered species. The cute ones get funding and the ugly ones are left to go extinct.

Are we only praying for the cute ones? Are we only petitioning God for the people that we think show promise.

We can learn from Moses' example with Pharaoh, we can learn from from Ezekiel who was told that the people he was to speak to were stubborn and rebellious - he was to speak whether they listened or failed to listen. We can learn from Christ who died for us - the ultimate intercession while we were his enemies, while we yelled, crucify him!

The hardness of heart should not affect our willingness to plead for our friends and family. Moses understood that it was up to God to answer prayer and our perception should not change our prayers.

Who is the pharaoh on your list? You may need to add one.

An intercessor seeks God's glory

After the spies return with a negative report the people rebel..again

Num 14:11-20

Moses could have had God push the reset button. But instead of seizing the glory for himself he sought the glory of God. He knew the Israelites did not deserve to be forgiven so there is nothing in his plea about any goodness in them. His plea is all about how great God is, he reminds God of his reputation, he refuses to settle for a small deliverance.

When we pray for our friends' salvation what is our great motivation? Our own glory and success- bad motive. Our friend's salvation- good motive. The glory of God- Best motive! "Lord you will be honored by this person's salvation for the rest of his life. I would be honored to have a hand in bringing you more glory!"

This is the prayer that always gets answered, this is the prayer that Jesus prayed the night he was arrested in John 17.

John 17:1 “Father, the hour has come. glorify your son, that your son may glorify you.”

What does that mean to glorify? It means to show off. When we pray that prayer like Moses did and like Jesus did we are saying, God- I want you to show off in my life. When we pray it for others, in our groups, in poor families, for people we are studying the bible with, we are saying, God I want you to show off in their lives. Reflect all of your awesomeness through them. We don't need to be too specific- Just look at the sunset or up at the stars - god knows how to show off his glory. We just need to pray it and watch amazing things happen in our lives and in the lives of the people we pray for!

[Show Sunrise Image]

One of the best parts of my vacation was sitting and watching the sunrise and praying for every person on this church by name to glorify God.

For whom on your list will you pray the prayer that always gets answered?

An intercessor shows sacrificial love

The great sin of the golden calf is very similar to the rebellion we just read about in Numbers. God offers to make Moses into a great nation and Moses refuses and instead asks to see God's glory. He goes even a step further:

Ex 32:31-32

Moses makes no excuses for the people and their great sin. We would expect him to say “now punish them for it” but he does something that only a few men in history have been able to do. Jesus did it, Paul said he would be willing to do it in Romans 9:3

It is said that one of the early Christian martyrs was questioned by the soldier who was torturing him to death.

“What has your Christ ever done for you that you should endure this?”

The Christian replied, “He has done for me, what I now do for you, in the midst of all my pain, I do nothing else but pray for you.” He was willing to sacrifice even for the sake of his murderer because of the sacrifice of Jesus whom his sin had murdered.

Some of the people on our lists hurt us by their sin again and again. Moses, Jesus and Paul were willing even to perish for the people they loved. Jesus said, “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.”

Prayer is something that we do with God and God does amazing things to answer our prayers. But often times he uses us to answer our own prayers. By praying consistently about people, even people who've hurt us, we start to get perspective and compassion and love for them.

In fact, if you don't start to feel for the people you are praying for, I would question the authenticity of your prayers. Prayer plus sacrifice has amazing results.

What are you willing to endure so that the people on your list will have a chance at salvation?

An intercessor stands in the gap

Psalm 106 is an account of all the rebellion by the Israelites in the desert.

Psalm 106:16-23 What if Moses had not prayed for the people?

If Moses had not prayed they would have been destroyed.

Sometimes we think our prayers do not make a difference in the lives of others. But I urge you to think how much worse it could be, imagine what God is saving them from and preparing them for as a result of our prayers. This verse proves that God listens to and acts on behalf of intercessors.

Moses is described as standing in the breach or standing in the gap as many translations say. Moses was literally the only thing standing in the way of God's wrath and the people. He blocked God's wrath by his prayer.

This image comes to mind: [Tienamen Square - 'Tank Man']

That's Moses - only God's got much bigger tanks.

That's me and you when we pray for the people in our lives.

[Slowly] Your prayers are powerful enough to stop the wrath of God.

Who on your list has been helped by your intercession?

An intercessor has a shepherds heart

Num 27:15-17

Joshua - whose name means 'he saves', was the immediate answer to this prayer. But Jesus, which is the Greek form of Joshua and whose name means, 'He saves' is the ultimate answer to this prayer - some 1500 years after it was prayer, god's people were given a leader so that they would no longer be sheep without a shepherd.

We are not just praying for souls to be saved but to stay saved forever. I think this is why God delays salvation sometimes. Maybe our church is not ready to shepherd that soul. Maybe you are not ready to take care of that person for a lifetime.

I truly believe that when we can show God that we can take care of what we have, that we will grow more.

Look at your list, are you ready, not just to baptize but to be devoted to these people and shepherd them?

An intercessor sees Christ as the greatest answer to prayer

We've seen Jesus in each of our points today.

Jesus dared to pray for us when we were hard hearted.

Jesus prayed for us to glorify God.

Jesus sacrificed his very life for us.

Jesus still stands in the gap as the only thing protecting us from God's wrath.

Jesus is our good shepherd.

Praying for people is so powerful because it has nothing to do with us. It's all about Christ. Even in Moses' day, over a thousand years before Christ, it was all about Christ. We get these glimpses:

In Exodus 15 at the waters of Marah, Moses throws a piece of wood into the water to take the bitterness away. We can see a foreshadowing of the cross and baptism.

In Numbers 21 snakes are biting the people and Moses puts a bronze snake on a pole so that people who are bit can look up to the pole and live. John 3 looks back at this and sees Christ. When sin poisons us we look up to the cross and live.

In the ministry of Jesus, he goes up to a mountain and is transfigured. His glory shows and he is met by two visitors: Moses and Elijah, in Luke 9 it says they were talking with Jesus about his departure (which in the greek is 'exodus')- it's no surprise that Moses was on the scene. His prayer life, not his leadership or his personality or his smile or any ability, his prayer life, brought a people from slavery to salvation. And now Jesus was getting ready to do the same thing in an everlasting way.

Intercession is all about Christ. That's why it is so powerful.

Hebrews says he always lives to intercede for us. Even now, Christ is interceding. It's his eternal role. When we intercede we can be sure that we are doing exactly what Christ is doing.

Will you intercede?

Will you make praying for others a priority?

Will the people on this list have a Moses in their corner, whether they know it or not, keeping them from harm, leading them to Christ, , showing off for God, just by the power of prayer?

Will the people on your list, your ever growing list, face the wrath of God on their own or will you stand in the gap?

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