

Standing in the gap: Intercession

How many of us have watched movies where someone shoots someone else, but a loyal friend, colleague, or employer dives in the way taking the bullet for that person. In a sense that person acts as an intercessor. He stood in the gap on behalf of someone else. God is looking for us to stand in the gap – to be intercessors.

I looked for someone among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found no one. So, I will pour out my wrath on them and consume them with my fiery anger, bringing down on their own heads all they have done, declares the Sovereign Lord.
Ezekiel 22: 30 – 31

1) The need to stand in the gap

- In Ezekiel 22 God was confronting Israel for her many and various sins through Ezekiel.
- He starts off by saying, “Son of man, will you judge her? Will you judge this city of bloodshed? Then confront her with all her detestable practices.”
 - On one hand the holiness of God wants to judge the sinfulness of the people.
 - On the other hand, the mercy of God cries out for an intercessor to stand in the gap so that he would not have to destroy them.
 - 2 Peter 3: 9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.
- Abraham pleaded with the Lord on behalf of Sodom and Gomorrah when He revealed his plan to destroy them because of their sinfulness. (Genesis 18: 16 – 33)
- Moses had to constantly plead with God not to destroy the Israelites for their rebellion against him.
- Samuel interceded on behalf of the Israelites when they asked for a king.
 - 1 Samuel 12: 19 – 23 The people all said to Samuel, “Pray to the LORD your God for your servants so that we will not die, for we have added to all our other sins the evil of asking for a king.”
“Do not be afraid,” Samuel replied. “You have done all this evil; yet do not turn away from the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart. Do not turn away after useless idols. They can do you no good, nor can they rescue you, because they are useless. For the sake of his great name the LORD will not reject his people, because the LORD was pleased to make you his own. As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by failing to pray for you. And I will teach you the way that is good and right.
- Why are intercessors needed?
 - We plead with God to do something that only he can do for someone or some people.
 - To stand in the gap between sinful man and God. This can be:
 - A nation or group of people
 - A specific person who is wayward.
 - It’s a plea for God to grant repentance and forgiveness, and turn his wrath away.
 - We plead with God to intervene on behalf of someone or people who are experiencing difficulties in their lives, such as:
 - Someone who is sick, depressed or grief stricken.
 - People who are oppressed
 - Victims of crime such as human trafficking, robbery, assault, etc.
 - For governments
 - 1 Timothy 2: 1 – 4 I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

2) Principles of intercession

- Intercessory prayer is exerting the same energy in pleading with God in prayer for someone else as you would if you could help them yourself.
- The prayer of Moses for the Israelites
 - Exodus 32: 9 – 14 I have seen these people,” the Lord said to Moses, “and they are a stiff-necked people. Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation.”
But Moses sought the favor of the Lord his God. “Lord,” he said, “why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, ‘It was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth’? Turn from your fierce anger; relent and do not bring disaster on your people. Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self: ‘I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever.’” Then the Lord relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.
- **Principles of intercession**
 - Acknowledge your absolute dependence on God to change the situation - Humility
 - Seek the favour of the Lord – the mind of Christ
 - Uphold the honour of the Lord – Why should the Egyptians say...
 - Plead for God to relent from his anger.
 - Pray the promises of God – God is always faithful

3) The character of the intercessor

- Love
 - Romans 8: 34 – 35 Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died —more than that, who was raised to life —is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?
 - The only reason that we don’t stand condemned before God is because Jesus interceded for us by going to the cross to take on God’s wrath that was intended for us.
 - Not only that, Jesus is at the right hand of God still interceding for us.
 - His motivation for his intercession is love.
- Compassion
 - Matthew 9: 36 – 38 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”
 - Jesus was moved with compassion and called on his disciples to intercede on their behalf.
 - An intercessor is moved with compassion
- Identification
 - Exodus 32: 31 – 32 So Moses went back to the Lord and said, “Oh, what a great sin these people have committed! They have made themselves gods of gold. But now, please forgive their sin — but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written.”
 - A true intercessor identifies with those he’s praying for as if he’s one with them. He isn’t judgemental towards them.

God is calling for intercessors to stand in the gap