

EXODUS

v o l u m e 3

Intercession

(Exodus 32:7-14; 33:12-17)

Bottom Line: God hears and responds to the prayers of those who are committed to finding their joy in glorifying Him.

In both chapters 32 and 33 of Exodus, something interesting happens. The Israelites commit a grave sin in making and worshiping the golden calf. Because of this, God's anger and wrath is kindled toward Israel and He basically says that He is going to wipe them out (32:10). But Moses implores the Lord NOT to do this, instead He prays for God to turn His wrath *away* from Israel and to forgive them. What Moses is doing is called "intercession." To "intercede" means "to put yourself between". Moses was putting himself between God and Israel and pleading for God to forgive Israel for their sins rather than punish them.

Read Exodus 32:7-14. How did Moses make his appeal to God? What characteristics of God did Moses base his intercession on?

What this passage indicates to us is that Moses' intercession wasn't *ultimately* for Israel, although it's certain that Moses' love for Israel was part of his motivation, (in verse 32, Moses is willing to give his life for the people of Israel). Moses' chief concern was for the glory and renown of God. Moses appeals first to God's reputation amongst the unbelieving world (v. 12), then Moses pleads for God to remember His faithfulness and fulfill the promise He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Israel (v. 13). Moses wants God to turn away His wrath from Israel *for God's sake*. In both of these instances, Moses' chief concern wasn't necessarily for Israel, but for God's glory.

How does this compare to the way you pray for others? Have you ever prayed for someone by appealing to something about *them*? (Ex: "God, he is a good man, please have mercy on Him.") According to what we see Moses doing, what would be a better way to pray for others?

Read Exodus 33:1-3 and 12-17. Again, who is at the center of Moses' appeal? What is the significance of the reason God gives in verse 17 as to why He is answering Moses' prayer?

Moses' intercession for the people of Israel is instructive to us in many ways: first, all of Moses' pleas to God were based upon something that God had already promised Israel. God had promised Israel would be His people, so Moses prayed accordingly (33:13). God had promised to make Israel a great nation that would bless the world, and that He would lead them into the promised land, so Moses prayed accordingly (32:13). God had revealed Himself to Moses as a compassionate and merciful God, so, again, Moses prayed according to what He knew about God (32:12). In everything, Moses never appealed to God on the basis of his own feelings or desires, but on the basis of God's nature, and on the basis of God's promises.

What characteristics of God can you appeal to when you pray for other people? What promises of God can you appeal to when you pray for other people?

E X O D U S

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Read the following: Ezekiel 33:11; Isaiah 30:18; 1 Timothy 2:3-4; and 2 Peter 3:9. How can these verses inform the way that we pray for others?

We learn an interesting aspect about intercession from these verses: that when we place the glory of God at the center of our prayers for others, we are simultaneously praying for their joy to be maximized. In other words, when we pray for our lost or wayward friends to be saved, that is, when we intercede for them, we are not praying for God to be glorified at the exclusion of their joy, we are praying for God to be glorified by their finding their joy in Him. As we've said many times before: God's glory and our joy are not at odds with one another. The exact opposite is true, God is glorified by our finding joy in Him. So for the sake of the joy of our lost friends and family members, we intercede on their behalf, asking God to save them for His glory.

We are told in 1 John 5:14 that "if we ask anything according to His will, he hears us." There's no better way to ensure that our prayers are according to His will than by praying according to the revealed will and nature of God in the Bible.

Spend the rest of your group time interceding in prayer for those you know who are lost or those who have wandered far from God. Mention them specifically by name. Recite these specific verses or others that may come to mind. Be sure that your prayers are specific, based upon Scripture, and are centered on God's glory above all else.