

**Scriptures and Doctrine :: intercessory prayer****intercessory prayer - posted by brentbarnett (), on: 2006/9/7 14:30**

Hi, all! I wanted to share an article with you that I wrote on intercessory prayer, seeing that prayer of this nature is so important for revival. Please let me know what you think.

The Nature of Intercessory Prayer:
A Lesson From Nehemiah

Nehemiah was a powerful individual in the sense that he had a prestigious earthly position. As an advisor to the King of Persia, he could influence the course of the most powerful nation on the face of the earth at the time. He could, if he wanted, use the king to make things happen according to his own desires. But as the account in chapter 1 of Nehemiah unfolds, no such human or earthly reality is present. We see, rather, how Nehemiah trusts in the most powerful King of the Universe to affect his desired change.

The first thing we must know is that Nehemiah was a Jew. Hanani, a trusted Jew and upright man, informs Nehemiah about the state of his own people back in Jerusalem. Though still vassals of the king of Persia, the Jews were given great freedom, having been able to rebuild their temple and govern themselves. Yet they are starving, they are morally in decay, and they are enslaving and robbing one another. All is chaos, and God is not being worshipped. The walls are burned down, and the people are vulnerable to attack and persecution from outsiders. Nehemiah, though in the capital city of Susa and far away from his people, is cut to the heart. Though he has it made where he is, he is moved to do something for his brothers, regardless of how difficult the task might be.

1The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah Now it happened in the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year, while I was in Susa the capital,
2that Hanani, one of my brothers, and some men from Judah came; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped and had survived the captivity, and about Jerusalem.
3They said to me, "The remnant there in the province who survived the captivity are in great distress and reproach, and the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are burned with fire."

Principle #1: The Intercessor is Practically Informed

He understands the reality of the situation around him from a practical and circumstantial perspective. He knows what is going on and is aware of what needs changing. The intercessor is not self-absorbed but has eyes and a heart for others and for the world, particularly for his Christian brothers and sisters.

Principle #2: The Intercessor Is Spiritually Sensitive and Discerning

Nehemiah weeps over the state of things in Jerusalem. Seeing his brothers starving and in disorder bothers Nehemiah, but what really breaks his heart is the fact that these are God's people. It gives God a bad name that they are as they are. They have the wisdom of the Word of God, but they are not taking advantage of it. Bearing the name and identification of God's people, they are a far cry from what they ought to be and from what would be characteristic of a chosen nation of God. Nehemiah views reality in light of how God sees it. In addition to knowing the earthly reality of circumstances and being aware of needs, Nehemiah thinks from the perspective of God, thinking what God would think of all of this and how He would feel. This sensitivity, spiritual perceptiveness, and discernment are what a burdened intercessor must feel, sense, and understand.

4When I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days; and I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

Principle #3: The Intercessor Turns to God Immediately

Nehemiah didn't catch the latest sports scores and eat a few munchies before entering into some ritualistic prayer because it was the right thing to do. He immediately, upon hearing the news, went to God in prayer. Likely, he dismissed Hanani, thanking him for the news while choking back the tears, and then rushed to his private quarters, finding a quiet place

to call upon the Lord. The intercessor allows himself to feel the emotions and full reality of the situation, and he doesn't hesitate to stop everything and bow the knee in prayer. Prayer by definition is an urgent, desperate plea. Intercessory prayer is in no way exempt from this definition.

Principle #4: The Intercessor Carries In Prayer

Nehemiah prayed without stopping to eat. Scripture seems to indicate that he didn't sleep either (v. 6). What is clear is that he prayed continually for days on end. I imagine that he got permission from the king to do this so that he didn't fail in his responsibilities, but he cast himself before God's presence until he was sure about what he should do. He didn't rise up until he had direction from God.

5 I said, "I beseech You, O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who preserves the covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments,

6 let Your ear now be attentive and Your eyes open to hear the prayer of Your servant which I am praying before You now, day and night, on behalf of the sons of Israel Your servants, confessing the sins of the sons of Israel which we have sinned against You; I and my father's house have sinned.

7 "We have acted very corruptly against You and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses.

Principle #5: The Intercessor Accepts Responsibility on Behalf of Others

The intercessor himself might not be guilty of the particular sin which he confesses on behalf of his people, his church, or Christians in general. What intercessors do is act as those who go between God and those who have sinned. Just as Jesus interceded for us by bearing the penalty of sin on our behalf, so we are to put ourselves in the place of responsibility so that we can beg God to forgive and restore others who have sinned. Like Moses did on behalf of Israel, the intercessor prays that God will relent and have mercy if for no other reason than the fact that the intercessor himself sees the problem and has a pure heart before God. Christians who want to intercede must be walking in purity before God and appealing to the righteousness of Christ that is their own. In the same way that Christ intercedes on our behalf by taking our requests to God, we approach God's throne on behalf of those who are in need.

Principle #6: Intercessors Understand the Gravity of Sin

Nehemiah didn't push the blame for the Israelite situation in Jerusalem off on anybody else. He knew that ultimately their dire state was not because it didn't rain enough or because their economic strategies were wrong. It was because they had sinned before God, and God disciplined them accordingly. If God is withholding His blessing upon the church, Christians had better do what Nehemiah did and look to the state of the hearts of the people of God. The issue is always one of holiness and consecration to God. Intercessors recognize the sin, admit the sin, and confess the sin on behalf of others.

8 "Remember the word which You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful I will scatter you among the peoples;

9 but if you return to Me and keep My commandments and do them, though those of you who have been scattered were in the most remote part of the heavens, I will gather them from there and will bring them to the place where I have chosen to cause My name to dwell.'

10 "They are Your servants and Your people whom You redeemed by Your great power and by Your strong hand.

Principle #8: Intercessors Remember and Appeal to God According to His Character and His Promises in His Word

God doesn't forget His promises, but it is just that some of His promises are conditional. For example, the promise in 2 Chronicles 7:13-14 of restoration, healing, forgiveness, and blessing is conditional upon God's people repenting, praying, humbling themselves, and seeking God's face. Nehemiah in v. 5 reminds God (and ultimately himself) that God is a covenant-keeping God and a merciful God. God has made promises to Israel to multiply them and bless them, so Nehemiah is appealing to those promises of God in his time. Quoting from the Book of the Law, Nehemiah reminds God that He has promised to gather Israel if they keep His commandments and return to Him. As Israel is being gathered in Jerusalem while still under Persian control, Nehemiah asks God that they will return to Him in their hearts, not just geographically. He also reminds God that Israel is His people who are called by His name whom He has delivered according to His power and strong hand. In other words, Nehemiah is asserting that it would be to God's advantage if Israel lived like they were the people of God. Being mindful of how God has worked powerfully in the past and of His great power, Nehemiah

ah is encouraged to pray that God will act powerfully in his time for his people who are ultimately God's people. He wants to see God's name lifted high and exalted as the people of God turn to Him and praise Him.

11"O Lord, I beseech You, may Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant and the prayer of Your servants who delight to revere Your name, and make Your servant successful today and grant him compassion before this man " Now I was the cupbearer to the king.

Principle #9: Intercessors Beg for God to Listen and Act

Again, intercessory prayer is burdened and urgent. The intercessor is desperate for change and for answers from God, pleading with Him for wisdom, direction, and grace. He knows that there is no hope apart from God answering and working. He also knows that he is not the only one who is righteous. He is not deceived into believing that he is the only one left who is faithful. Nehemiah knows Hanani is a godly man, and he probably knows of others. Even when it feels like we may be the only ones who are burdened for change and who see the issues as they really are, we must remember that there are others praying for change as well. There are other servants of God who are walking in holiness, and it is in conjunction with those that we pray. We approach God in the name of Christ and as a representative of the faithful remnant. Intercessors would love to have others with whom they can pray. They value their alone time with God, but they are not loners.

Principle #10: Intercessors are Led to Action

The intercessor avails himself to do whatever God needs to cause the needed change. He not only assumes responsibility by interceding on the behalf of others due to their unfaithfulness, but he surrenders himself in the process to be an instrument of God in the corrective working of God. That things would stay as they are is in no way an option for the intercessor. He waits for God to lead him in the next step he should take. It is evident that Nehemiah believed that he was going to have to say something to the king. Indeed, in the next chapter the king recognizes his fallen countenance and asks about it. God does answer his prayer, granting him grace before the king, who gives him leave and the resources to do what he needs to do in Jerusalem. Nehemiah didn't use great speech or flattery to get the king to let him go. He merely answered the king's honest questions, the king asked him what he could do, and God worked out the provisions for Nehemiah. Nehemiah waited upon God and let God open the door and provide a way. Intercessors do whatever they can to affect change in the direction of their God-given burden as God has led them, though it is always by faith.

Summary

Intercession is not a ministry for the faint of heart but rather for the tender and courageous of heart. Those who are touched by the reality of the surrounding godlessness and unfaithfulness of the church of God are likely to intercede on behalf of others. They are willing to do whatever God will lead them to do. They are totally open to His leading and direction. They plead with God until they get direction, they wait for God to open the door at the proper time, and then they boldly walk through it. When God touches their hearts, they pray immediately, fervently, and as long as they need to. They are willing to stand in the gap on behalf of others even if and especially when the people for whom they pray are not interested in God. These are people of desire, action, passion, and perseverance. They understand their need for God and have a total reliance in the power of prayer. They believe that God can do exceedingly beyond all that they could ask or imagine, and they are people of faith whose faith leads them to prayer and whose prayer leads them to action.

Are you an intercessor? Will you be? I am interceding on your behalf that you will.

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Re: intercessory prayer - posted by awakenwithin (), on: 2007/8/26 1:44

yum this is good
charlene