

Learning to Pray with Moses: Need & Prayer

Exodus 32:7-14 || Pastor Paul Hahn || 06 February 2022

*To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW together as followers of Jesus,
To SERVE those God has placed in our path.
– CG Mission Statement*

Icebreaker: What's something random or silly you keep in your wallet or purse?

Worship: [Psalm 33](#) (*Remain a few moments in worship with this passage. What is God's invitation?*)

Sermon Summary for [Exodus 32:7-14](#) (*Read the passage aloud before reading the sermon summary.*)

God assures us: we should call upon Him when we are deeply troubled, for He will deliver us. May this be an encouragement as we learn to pray in the spaces of our need. We have a Father who delights to hear and listen to us talking to Him; His love for us so deep that He always makes Himself available to us. We have His attention and His care, regardless of the context – joy, sorrow, blessing, trials or afflictions. In fact, these places of need provide the backdrop for some of the most alive and poignant prayers we will ever offer. This might even mean we find ourselves arguing or pleading with God to change His mind. And our Father encourages this! There are plenty of examples of it in the Bible, so what should it look like for us?

The Context for this type of Prayer // The pleading and arguing with God that Moses does in Exodus 32 comes out of the depth of relationship he has with God. He, like most other examples of this in the Bible, has a deep relational connection with God, which serves as the background for this kind of praying. Which makes sense; God is deeply relational. He loves to connect with us regularly. He delights in it. And our daily prayers are our opportunity to commune with our Father. Eternal life begins now because we can cultivate and enjoy our relationship with God here and now through prayer. It's the beginning of our heavenly experience. And it's also true that we become more Christlike – and therefore more like our Father – the more we are with Him.

The Content for this type of Prayer // Prayers like this aren't formulaic. This is true for Moses in this passage. When he pleads with God, he is pouring his heart out. His language is vivid, heartfelt, and direct. He both questions and challenges God, taking God back to the realities of His past with His people and that He is the One true God, the only One who is truly good. God recognizes that Moses' cries are based on this trust and his deep love for God. And underneath these prayers – these arguments made by Moses – stretch out the promises of God, what He pledged to do through Abraham, Isaac and Israel. Moses makes his case by appealing to God's goodness, trustworthiness, and glory to fulfill His promises. And we are invited to do the same.

The Mystery in this type of Prayer // It's worth asking: Did Moses' prayers *actually* change God's path? And there is certainly a mystery surrounding the answer. God is not a god who changes His mind; He is not fickle. Nor does he set out to do something only to change course because He is unable to do it. As the Westminster Shorter Catechism helps describe, "The decrees of God are His eternal plan, based on the purpose of His will, by which, for His own glory, He has foreordained everything that happens" ([Ps 33:11](#), [Is 14:24](#), [Acts 2:23](#), [Eph 1:11-12](#)). Our prayers fit within this – within God's divine providence ([Neh 9:6](#), [Eph 1:19-22](#), [Prov 16:33](#)). He has ordained our prayers, to respond to them, to move and shift and change course in response to them. As Doug Kelly wrote, "*God makes plans; our prayers release those plans and bring blessings to the world.*" So yes, our prayers are vitally important, so let us believe and ask and watch God move in and through our prayers!

Discussion Questions (You will not be able to discuss all the questions. Pick the ones you like. Some are personal perspective and application questions for life-transforming discussions.)

The Context for this type of Prayer

- Based on the way he speaks with God, what do you think Moses's daily prayer life was like?
 - One of the hopes of prayer is that "we become more like God as we commune with Him." Knowing this, in what ways does Moses reflect God's character?
- Do you think of God as someone without free or available time? Do you feel that you approach God as the all-forgiving Father who works with you, or as the all-knowing Father who is set in His ways?

The Content for this type of Prayer

- A great need pointed Moses to his specific prayer. What did he need?
 - What often gets in the way of prayer during times of great need for us?
- What does it take for our prayers to become more vivid, heartfelt and direct?
 - What place do "formulaic" prayers like the Lord's Prayer have in our prayer life?

The Mystery in this type of Prayer

- What is your understanding of how prayer worked in the Exodus 32 story?
 - Has prayer worked this way in your life?
- What do you make of the mystery of prayer? Do you find it comforting or disconcerting?
 - How can we rest in the mysteries of the Lord, rather than becoming overwhelmed by them?
 - If God's sovereign plans do not change, why do we pray?

Engage & Experience: Prayer & Gratitude

Last week, you were encouraged – through prayer – to ask God to open your eyes and to refresh your appreciation for who He is and what He is doing in the world. For more about this, read [Pray With Your Eyes Open, Chapter 3: Fascination With God's Character](#).

This week, ponder these thoughts from [Pray With Your Eyes Open, Chapter 9: In Times of Need, page 110](#):

"Why pray when God already knows and controls everything? The same question may be asked of other areas of life. Why go to the doctor? Why work a job? Why spread the Gospel? We do all these things because God has established these actions as vital creaturely means for accomplishing His purposes. The same is true of prayer. Prayer is one of the many secondary causes through which God fulfills His plan."

Bring the needs of your family, friends, community, or the world before God, realizing that your prayers have been ordained by Him to accomplish His purposes. Journal a story about how you have seen this play out in your life.

If your group wishes to work through the book [Pray With Your Eyes Open](#) by Richard Pratt, along with the discussion guide, you can find the link to purchase [HERE](#). Take your time in practicing the exercises in this book; it can serve as a resource for the entire year of our focus on prayer.