

The heart of the intercessor

How to pray for Nations

Entering

The essence of intercession is summed up with the word “entering.”

- * Hannah had to enter into the sufferings of barrenness. (1 Sam 1:9-11)**
- * Jesus had to enter the loneliness of Gethsemane. (Mark 14:32-34)**
- * Amos had to enter into the shock of his people’s destiny. (Amos7:1-2)**
- * Moses had to enter the devastation of his people’s betrayal (Num.14:13-20)**
- * The church had to enter into the danger of Peter’s position. (Acts 12:5)**
- * Jesus entered into the barrenness of the people (Matt 9:36)**

So much of our prayer has to do with entering pain and loneliness. We can’t just make this happen. The Lord will stir our emotions, so that we want to enter the loneliness - perhaps we will feel lonely and isolated.

How do we pray for a nation – for Armenia?

“enter in with bitterness of soul” (AV). We have to have “deep anguish. “(NIV) “crushed in soul” (Message) (Matt 26:37-38)

Try this: “Lord, I open my emotions to you for Armenia. Show me how to pray.” This is the beginning. We ask to be allowed to enter in to the spiritual Armenia. It takes a little time for this to happen. But without it, we can never understand, or pray with compassion.

It is an ongoing process, not a one shot deal.

How do we pray for the Caucasus?

Moving up from a nation to a region, it's good to have one thing to be the key to prayer. For the Caucasus, Beslan is a key. For Vietnam, the little girl burning in Napalm was a key.

Find the key - it's like a place to put your spiritual feet. Then be prepared to have your mind challenged with a complexity of nations.

The servant nature of our character.

"The sorrow in my heart is so great it almost crushes me" (Matt 26:38)

What keeps us at our intercessory task is the servant nature of our character. We have been called to serve:-

* **"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled."** (Luke 1: 38)

* **"The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve."**
(Mark 10:45)

* **'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'**
(Luke 17:10)

We have to bring our servant nature to the work of intercession. Otherwise we will give up. Which brings us back to a very old principle - what matters in intercession, as in ministry, is **who we are and the nature of our character**, not particular skills or methods. There is no method to being the Lord's servant. Luke 17 makes it clear - we do the master's will first, before we consider our own needs. I must have written volumes on being an intercessor, but I am less and less interested in the "how." It's rather more a question of "who I am."

So the character of the Intercessor is under scrutiny in this work. And the work changes us, so that we get better at it. Books, courses and videos cannot do it, and we don't need to worry about whether we have read the latest book. The question is **"Are we becoming more the type of characters that can cry out before the Lord?"** This is much more painful than any course, and much more effective.

Suffering

“Whatever anyone else dares to boast about—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast about. Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they Abraham’s descendants? So am I. Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. I have laboured and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?” (2 Cor. 10:21-29)

This is real suffering in the flesh for the kingdom. Not some dreamlike suffering - the real thing. **To this intercessors are called.** We pray for Armenia, in the ways already outlined, and we get sick, have problems at work in the home, with the family. We get filled with depression, despair, hopelessness. We want to give up. We feel isolated- we are isolated by other believers who cannot or will not understand what we are doing.

This real suffering is part of our heart for Armenia, or wherever. We offer ourselves, as living sacrifice (Rom.12:1) and cannot expect to be given a free pass around it.

This makes intercession hard, and what’s worse, no one in Armenia knows we are doing it and nothing changes. We appear to suffer for nothing.

This brings us close to a key and central tenet of this material - this suffering, willingly entered into, can move the heart of God.

Amos, Hannah, Samuel, Jesus – moved the heart of God to act. Our aim has to be to move the heart of God towards Armenia. This will make a difference, and that has got to be worth pouring out our lives for. Imagine the joy in heaven, and the privilege we have been given.

This is the central core of intercession, and that's why I seldom write much about what we should do with what God has shown us. **We take it to his heart, and we plead that his heart should be moved.** The subject of our intercession may change, but the method never changes.

Inner struggle

It is a fight, and it is fought out inside us. The enemy wants to crush Armenia, and we want it to live in the power of God. This will result in an intense inner struggle. Jeremiah gives us an idea of what it might be like:-

11:18, 12:6. Why do the wicked prosper?

*You are always righteous, O Lord,
when I bring a case before you.
Yet I would speak with you about your justice:
Why does the way of the wicked prosper?
Why do all the faithless live at ease?*

15:10-21. It hurts!

*Alas, my mother, that you gave me birth,
a man with whom the whole land strives and contends!
I have neither lent nor borrowed,
yet everyone curses me.*

17:14-18. I'm wasting my time

*Heal me, O Lord, and I will be healed;
save me and I will be saved,
for you are the one I praise.
**They keep saying to me,
"Where is the word of the Lord?
Let it now be fulfilled!"***

18:18-23. No one listens

They said, "Come, let's make plans against Jeremiah; for the teaching of the law by the priest will not be lost, nor will counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophets. So come, let's attack him with our tongues and pay no attention to anything he says."

20:7-1.8 It's brought me nothing but trouble

*O Lord, you deceived me, and I was deceived;
you overpowered me and prevailed.*

*I am ridiculed all day long;
everyone mocks me.*

*Whenever I speak, I cry out
proclaiming violence and destruction.*

***So the word of the Lord has brought me
insult and reproach all day long.***

*But if I say, "I will not mention him
or speak any more in his name,"
his word is in my heart like a fire,
a fire shut up in my bones.*

*I am weary of holding it in;
indeed, I cannot.*

This we have to bear for Armenia. It's a costly burden.

Outer pain

Apostle Paul said "I bear on my body the marks of Jesus." (Gal.6:17) If we are going to intercede for Armenia, then we too can expect physical and emotional struggle.

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| * Physical pain: | Weeping over Jerusalem. (Luke 19:41) |
| * Emotional turmoil | Sorrow in my heart. (Matt 26:37-38) |
| * Frustration. | I call an you do not answer (Jer. 3:19) |
| *Emptiness | Hannah womb. (1 Samuel 1) |
| * Sorrow/grief | Martha and Mary (John 11) |
| *Despair | Master don't you care? (Mark 4: |

This overflows into our daily life - Work/family problems. Jesus warned us about it:-

“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you,” (Matt.23:37)

All this pain - this physical and emotional pain – becomes our lot as we pray, because that is the lot of the nation we are praying for. We become identified with all its pain.

Weakness

“An angel from heaven...” (Luke 22:43)

We can only pray in weakness, aware of our weakness. Otherwise the enemy will overcome us! He knows all about arrogant intercession, self centred intercession. Etc, but he doesn't understand weakness intercession.

What does this mean for us and Armenia? If our thinking is right, then as we pray, we will become weaker, and need strengthening, just as the Nation needs strengthening. Into these “weak” positions, God acts. (Mizpah.)

deceptions

“Methodia” (Ephesians 6:11)

I have written about what we are up against in the material “What is loose on Europe” And “Is the beast rising?”

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