

Standing in the Gap

Did you ever wonder why people ask you to pray for them? I have, and I think many times it is because I am the preacher, and maybe people think I have a special inside connection with God. Maybe I do, but I believe you do as well. Can you remember the last time someone asked you to pray for them, and you had every intention in the world of praying for them, and then you forgot? What we are really asking today is, "Does God need me to pray or does He just want me to pray?"

The Book of Job begins with Job praying for his children. Job 1:4-5, "His sons used to take turns holding feasts in their homes, and they would invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. When a period of feasting had run its course, Job would send and have them purified. Early in the morning he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, 'Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.' This was Job's regular custom." Also in Job 42 he was being asked by God to pray in behalf of Job's three friends whom God was not happy with, and it says that God accepted Job's prayer of intercession. Now, if you are like me, I am asking this question, "Okay, God, why do You need me to pray to You, and ask Your will to take place, when You know what Your will is and You can just do it?"

Well, maybe we have to understand how we are made in His image, and how we, as parents know what is best for our children, but we also know that the best thing for our children is not for us to do everything for them, but to sometimes let them be humbled enough to come and ask for help. The fact is God wants us to pray for others, so that His will can be done. James 5:16, "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."

The late president, Richard Nixon, had a godly Quaker grandmother. When he was nine years old he asked her why the Quaker meetings were so silent, and her advice was, "What thee must understand Richard is that the purpose of prayer is to listen to God, not to talk to God. The purpose of prayer is not to tell God what thee wants, but to find out from God what He wants from thee."

What are you going to do the next time someone asks you to pray for them? Can you first of all realize that this is not a coincidence, but that God sent them to you? Will you remember that by your standing in the gap for them, this might be what it will take for God's will to be accomplished in their life?

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