

## Lesson 5. "Forgive Us" – Interceding in Prayer (32:1-33:6)

*Opening Thoughts: Jesus teaches us to pray, forgive us our sins as we forgive those we sin against. Why do you think Jesus considers this prayer of forgiveness for others so necessary to include in our prayer life? In the story, the LORD's wrath begins to kindle against Israel for their idolatry. Does our prayer of intercession change God's mind? What about Jesus' intercession?*

Study: Exodus 32:1-33:6 – (Text Notes) Text Notes: Israel has reached Mount Sinai at last. As Moses goes up the mountain to meet with God, the people grow restless. During his 40 days with God, the people craft a god to worship and they hold their own feast to celebrate. This begins a series of four intercessions by Moses.

1. Look up 20:18-21 - Why do the people ask Moses to go to the LORD for them? What is Moses' response? What does it mean to be a mediator? Have you ever been involved in any sort of mediation (official or informal)? What is the job of a mediator? Does this apply to our relationship with God?
2. 32:1-6 - Why do the people decide to make the golden calf? What is lacking in their prayer life that they would turn away so quickly from the way of the LORD?
3. 32:9-14 - The LORD plans to destroy Israel and begin again with only Moses. As Moses appeals for mercy, he makes two fundamental arguments. What are the two basic arguments for God's mercy? What does the LORD do as a result? Does this prayer change the LORD's mind? (NOTE: This is paralleled in the story of Jonah, and is quoted almost verbatim, Jonah 3:10)
4. In the liturgy, we say the simple prayer known as the *kyrie*, "Lord, have mercy." When we pray the *kyrie*, what are we asking? What should we have in mind?
5. 32:15-20 - What is Moses' reaction when he sees exactly what is going on? If God's covenant relationship were thought of as God's marriage with Israel, what would this moment signify?
6. 32:30-34 - The LORD had already agreed not to destroy the people. Why do you think that Moses felt the need to go back to the LORD again about their sin? How God's mercy (first intercession) compare to His atonement (second intercession)? What is the difference?
7. What does Moses offer in collateral for the atonement of Israel? How does Moses give us a foreshadowing of Jesus?

8. Is there a difference between a mediator (Moses in Exodus 19-20) and an intercessor (Moses in Exodus 32-34)? What does it mean that Jesus is our intercessor (Hebrews 4:14-16, 7:25)? What about the Holy Spirit who is within us (Romans 8:26-27)? On this basis, what does it mean for Christians to intercede for others and do you think that such prayers actually affect the course of events?

9. The LORD responds to Moses appeal for atonement by saying “whoever has sinned against me, I will blot out of my scroll.” Was this the response you were expecting? Why / Why not?

Looking ahead: The LORD sends Moses onward. He tells Moses that if He would remain in their midst, He would consume them because of their continued rebellion. The prayers of Moses continue into chapter 33 and 34 with two more intercessions. In #3 (33:12-16), Moses asks for the Lord’s presence and appeals to the LORD’s favor/grace. In #4, Moses asks for the Lord’s forgiveness and appeals to the LORD’s name (34:9). In the middle of all this, between the first two intercessions, and the last two appeals, there is this strange story told about how Moses used to go out to the tent of meeting to talk to the LORD (33:7-11). For next time we will talk about this insertion. Why does Moses include this right in the middle of the golden calf event and what is this teaching us about prayer?

Any Prayer Requests? Final Questions or Comments?

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*For Next Time, Read Ahead and Reflect on the Questions Below:*

**6. “The LORD, The LORD” – The Mystery of His Presence (33:7-34:9)**

*Text Notes: In this final meeting between the LORD and Moses, Moses is given the unique experience of experiencing the LORD’s presence. This draws us more deeply into the mystery of the strange story of Moses relationship with God and his role as mediator of the covenant for Israel. This ends with the final prayer for forgiveness and for the LORD’s presence to “walk” in the midst of Israel.*

*Read and Reflect: What are your own experiences about “getting to know” LORD’s presence and person? What remains mysterious to you? What are the difficulties of such mysteries when it comes to our prayer relationship with the LORD? What have you discovered in your prayer life compared to what you thought prayer was like when you were younger? What are the blessings of this mystery?*