

Lifting Up Leaders



By Dave Butts

“The Amalekites came and attacked the Israelites at Rephidim. Moses said to Joshua, ‘Choose some of our men and go out to fight the Amalekites. Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hands.’

“So Joshua fought the Amalekites as Moses had ordered, and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went to the top of the hill. As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. When Moses’ hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up – one on one side, one on the other – so that his hands remained steady till sunset. So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword.

“Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Write this on a scroll as something to be remembered and make sure that Joshua hears it, because I will completely blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.’

“Moses built an altar and called it The LORD is my Banner. He said, ‘For hands were lifted up to the throne of the LORD’”

(Ex. 17:8-16).

This Old Testament story is so rich with meaning. Many times I've used it to teach of the power of intercessory prayer. But today, I want to see it in the light of prayer for and with leaders. John Maxwell calls this story the first biblical example of a prayer partnership.

In *Partners In Prayer*, Maxwell writes, "With the help of Moses' brother Aaron and a layman named Hur, Joshua was able to be victorious against the forces that were trying to destroy God's children. Moses was one of the greatest leaders who ever lived. He spoke to God face-to-face, as a person would speak to a friend (Ex. 33:11). Yet he still could not do it alone. Even he needed assistance and encouragement" (p. 85).

What a majestic picture! Imagine Moses, standing alone on the mountain, interceding for Israel. As he prays with hands lifted up to God, with the rod of God – the symbol of power – in his hands, Israel triumphs. But as this eighty-something-year-old prayer warrior gets tired, his hands drop, and the battle turns against Israel. In today's culture we might say, "Well, let's just get a younger, more vigorous leader...one capable of standing in prayer with his hands outstretched for longer periods of time. Maybe it's time we throw a retirement party for Moses." Fortunately for Israel, they had no such throwaway mindset.

Instead of discarding their aging leader, they prayed for him. Aaron and Hur came to the top of the mountain and together they held Moses' arms up until the victory was secured. It is interesting to note that to hold Moses' arms up, the two men had to also hold their own arms up. A prayer meeting was taking place, as all three held their arms up before the throne of God in prayer.

The question today is, "Who is holding your pastor's arms up

in prayer? Who in your congregation is standing with him as he wages war against the enemies of God? Where are the Aarons and Hurs of our day?"

The need is great for Christians who will take seriously the biblical mandate to pray for leaders. The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy saying, *"I urge then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone – for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth"* (1 Tim. 2:1-4). All those in authority are not simply civil authorities. We must pray for those with spiritual authority as well – especially for those who lead, guide, and teach the Church of Jesus Christ.

It should be obvious that there is an all-out assault by the forces of Satan to discredit and sideline Christian leaders. *"Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered"* (Zech. 13:7). Satan has certainly put that verse to use. In church after church pastors are under attack. Who will stand with them? Who will pray for them? My friend, Terry Teykl, has written a wonderful book entitled, *Your Pastor: Prayed For Or Preyed Upon?* What about your pastor...is he the prey of ravenous wolves, or prayed for by those who love and respect his service for the Lord?

Roger Campbell tells the following story: "A young preacher had just begun his first pastorate in a Philadelphia church when one of the members came to visit him. 'You are not a strong preacher,' said the visitor, 'and in the usual order of things you will fail here, but a group of us has agreed to meet every Sunday morning to pray for you.' The young minister saw that group grow to more than a thousand people praying for their imperfect pastor, J. Wilbur Chapman, who later became known as one of the greatest preachers in America." Campbell continues on, observing, "Not many pastors build great

churches, but great churches build great pastors by choosing to encourage and pray for them rather than focus on their imperfections.”

Praying for our pastors ought to be a regular and continual part of our Christian life. This could be the year that your church begins to take seriously the need to pray for and encourage their pastors. You can be the one who begins such an effort in your congregation. Don’t wait for someone else to do it! Begin praying today for God to empower, protect, and supply every need for your pastor or pastoral staff.

–Dave Butts (1953-2022) was the president of Harvest Prayer Ministries, and the author of multiple books, articles and resources on prayer. Some of his books are [Prayer, Peace and the Presence of God](#), [The Giving Church](#), and [Prayer Ministry Volunteer Handbook](#) co-authored with his wife, Kim.