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A Holy Priesthood: Exodus 28-30

## INTRODUCTION

1. Image: Serving puts you into a position of power. Being served, on the other hand, puts you in a position of humility.
2. Need: We often times believe that we can draw close to God without the help of others.
3. Subject: How do we ask believers to help us draw near to God?
4. Text: Exodus 28-30
5. Preview: Consider three requests to make of other believers.

## BODY

- I. Ask believers to remind you of your identity (Exodus 28:3-5; 29:7, 35-46; Heb 6:26-27; 1 Pet 2:9)
  - A. God selected Aaron's family to serve as priests to remind Israel of their relationship with God.
    1. God selected Aaron's family (Exodus 28:1)
    2. God distinguishes Aaron's family through vestments (Exodus 28:3-5)
    3. God distinguishes Aaron's family through an anointing with oil (Exodus 29:7)
    4. God distinguishes Aaron's family through an ordination ceremony (Exodus 29:35-37)
  - B. The priests reminded Israel of their relationship with God by overseeing the sacrificial system (Exodus 29:38-46)
    - a. A lamb is offered in the day and at night (Exodus 29:38, 42)
    - b. The sacrificial system would remind Israel of its special identity (Exodus 29:45-46)
  - C. God selects Christ to serve as our high priest to remind us of our relationship with God. (Heb 6:26-27)
    1. Christ is distinct because of his perfection (Heb 7:26)
    2. Christ reminds us of our relationship with God through his death on the cross (Heb 7:27)
  - D. God selects believers as priests to remind believers of their relationship with God (1 Pet 2:9)
- II. Ask believers to help you follow God (Exodus 28:38; 30:21; Heb 2:18; 1 John 1:9; Gal 6:1-2)
  - A. Priests help Israel follow God
    1. Aaron inspected the offerings (Exodus 28:38)
    2. Aaron followed purifying rituals (Exodus 30:21)
  - B. Jesus helps believers follow God (Heb 2:18; 1 John 1:9)
    1. Jesus aids us when we are tempted (Heb 2:18)
    2. Jesus cleanses us from sin (1 John 1:9)
  - C. Believers help one another to follow God
    1. Help one another identify sin (Gal 6:1)

2. Help one another overcome sin (Gal 6:2)
- III. Ask believers to intercede for you. (Exodus 28:12, 29; 30:7-9; Rom 8:34; Welch)
  - A. Priests interceded for Israel (Exodus 28:12, 29; 30:7-9)
    1. The High Priest represented Israel before God
      - a. The high priest represented Israel before God through the shoulder plates (Exodus 28:12)
      - b. The high priest represented Israel before God through the breast piece (Exodus 28:29)
    2. Aaron oversaw the offering of the incense (30:7-9)
  - B. Jesus intercedes for believers (Rom 8:34)
  - C. Believers intercede for others (Side by Side, by Ed Welch)
    1. Paul asked others for prayer (*1 Cor 1:10-11; Eph 6:19-20; Col 4:3; 1 Thess 5:25*)
    2. Ask others for prayer
    3. Ask others for prayer with a scriptural promise.

#### CONCLUSION

1. Summary: Ask believers to remind you of your identity. Ask believers to help you follow God. Ask believers to intercede for you.
2. Closing Image: If you don't ask for help now, it may be too late.

## MANUSCRIPT

Two weeks ago, I joined our college students on a local mission trip here in Houston. Three of those days we worked with a ministry called the Forge. One day, we had a lesson about serving in regards to working with the homeless. **Serving puts you in a position of power. Being served, on the other hand, puts you in a position of humility.** The idea made me pause. When you think about the context of homeless ministry, we think about what we have to offer them. We can hand out care packages, provide coats, and give medical services. When we do this, we demonstrate to the homeless that we have something offer you. But you have nothing to offer us. But when we ask for help from a homeless person, we put ourselves in a position of humility. We are saying to them: “You have something to offer us.” F

For some reason, this particular lesson continues to resonate in mind because we don't like to ask people for help. We live an age that values independence and competency. A lack of competency could mean being passed over for a position, advancement, or school. To ask for help is to admit incompetency. I think that it's easy for us to transfer this idea into our spiritual lives as well. **We often times believes that we can draw close to God without the help of others.** That's why some people present company excluded believe that they can do church by streaming a service online, ordering communion elements online, and baptizing themselves in their bath tubs. I can follow God by myself without the help of others. If I'm going through a difficult spiritual time, then I'll just read my Bible more, pray more, and serve more. If I just work hard enough on my own, then my relationship with God will grow. But deep down, we know that it's not true. We desire permission to cry out: “Help!” We want to wave some kind

of flag to get the attention of our brothers and sisters in Christ. But we don't know what kind of help to ask for.

**How do we ask other believers to help us draw near to God?** What do we say to another a believer when we need help? What should be some of the things ask? How do we ask other believers to help us draw near to God?

We'll find some insight how to ask other believers for help in our passage from Exodus. God has saved Israel from Egypt via passage through the Red Sea. At Mt. Sinai, God has given Israel the law. The law stipulates how Israel will conduct its relationship with God. God also instructs Moses on how to construct a tent of meeting. God would dwell in this tent and in the midst of Israel literally in the center of the camp. This tent of meeting would include altars and lampstand. But who would tend to the sacrifices and care for the temple? It couldn't just be anyone from the people of Israel. It's interesting that God would only allow one family from a tribe to tend to the things of the tent of meeting. Everyone else in Israel would need to depend on this one family to help them draw near to God. God creates a means of worship that requires a mediator a helper for the people. Israel needed the help from one family to worship God. This is what we'll study about in this morning's texts from Exodus twenty-eight through thirty.

This morning, **we'll consider three requests to make of other believers.** We'll look at three things for which we can ask help.

The first request is this. **Ask believers to remind you of your identity.** Invite other believers to remind you of the significance that is found in being a child of God. Seek out

people who would remind you what it means to be identified as a follower of Christ. **Ask believers to remind you of your identity.**

**God selected Aaron's family to serve as priests to remind Israel of their relationship with God.** God chose a specific family from within the tribe of Levi to serve as his priests. Read with me in chapter twenty-eight, verse 1: *"Then bring near to you Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the people of Israel, to serve me as priests – Aaron and Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar."*

How would Israel know that God had chosen Aaron's family to be its priests? God distinguished Aaron's family through a few ways. First, **God distinguishes Aaron's family through vestments.** The clothing Aaron's family wore would be different than all other Israelite especially that of the High Priest. Exodus, chapter twenty-eight, verses three through five says: *"You shall speak to all the skillful, whom I have filled with a spirit of skill, that they make Aaron's garments to consecrate him for my priesthood. These are the garments that they shall make: a breastpiece, an ephod, a robe, a coat of checker work, a turban, and a sash. They shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother and his sons to serve me as priests. They shall receive gold, blue and purple and scarlet yarns, and fine twined linen".* Note the color of the yarn: gold, blue, purple, and scarlet. This is the same yarn used to construct the tabernacle. Just as these yarns would be used to construct a place for God's spirit to dwell, the priest's garb would communicate to Israel: "I belong to the service of God".

**God distinguishes Aaron's family through an anointing of oil.** Anointing oil is reserved only for those whom God has selected for a specific task. In this case, it's in reference to the priesthood. Read with me from Exodus, chapter twenty-nine, verse seven. It says this: *"You*

*shall take the anointing oil and pour it on his head and anoint him.*" The anointing of oil also indicates a change in identity. When Aaron's family received the anointing of oil, they received a new identity as priest. Think about how the anointing of oil indicated that Saul and David were to be kings of Israel.

**God distinguishes Aaron's family through an ordination ceremony.** Read with me in Exodus chapter twenty-nine, verse thirty-five to thirty-seven: *"Thus you shall do to Aaron and to his sons, according to all that I have commanded you. Through seven days shall you ordain them, and every day you shall offer a bull as a sin offering for atonement. Also you shall purify the altar, when you make atonement for it, and shall anoint it to consecrate it. Seven days you shall make atonement for the altar and consecrate it, and altar shall be most holy. Whatever touches the altar shall become holy."* God instructs Moses on how to ordain the priests and also the altar on which sacrifices would be given. Note how long the process took. It took seven days. Seven days is significant because it indicates completeness. It also took seven days for God to create all things. Hence, I believe that the seven days may also be symbolic of how a new priesthood "created".

How did the priests remind Israel of their relationship with God? **The priests reminded Israel of their relationship with God by overseeing the sacrificial system.** Besides the various offerings described in Leviticus, the priests would offer up a daily sacrifice. **A lamb is offered in the day and at night.** Read with me in Exodus twenty-nine, verse thirty-eight and then forty two. Verse thirty-eight says this: *"Now this you shall on the altar: two lambs a year-old day by day regularly"*. Verse 42 then says: *"It shall be a regular burnt offering throughout your generations at the entrance of the tent of meeting before the Lord, where I will meet with you."*

A burnt offering symbolizes one's whole hearted devotion to God. Just as I give up a whole lamb, I offer up my whole life for your service.

The priests by maintaining the sacrificial system would remind Israel of their special identity. They would be the one people on the earth with whom God would dwell. Read with me chapter twenty-nine, verse forty-five and forty-six: *"I will dwell among the people of Israel and be their God. And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them. I am the Lord their God."* Not it's not just Lord your God. It says: "Lord their God". God emphasizes that he will have a personal relationship with Israel unlike every other people on the earth.

Well... we don't have a sacrificial system in place now. As believers we know this. **God selects Christ to serve as our high priest to remind us of our relationship with God. He is distinct because of his perfection.** In the book of Hebrews, the author reminds believers that Christ is set apart from all human beings because he is without sin. He is garbed not by vestments but by a righteousness that surpasses flawed humanity. **Christ reminds us of our relationship with God through his death on the cross.** Hebrews again teaches us that unlike the priest of old, our high priest for eternity only needed to make one sacrifice himself. If we ever doubt that who we are, then all we need to do is consider the cross. For the cross reminds us of the cost of our sin and the willingness of our savior to give his life as ransom for many. If we wonder if our doing is ever enough, then we look at the cross where we remember that the work is finished. For the cross and the resurrection teach us that we are a redeemed people.

Not only does Christ remind us of our identity, but so do other believers. **God selects believers as priests to remind believers of their relationship with God.** Peter writes this in 1

Peter, chapter two, verse nine: *“But you are chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”* As those of have professed Christ as Lord and savior, we are to proclaim his wonders not only to the world but even to one another. When we’re with one another we need help remember, we’re not engineers, students, doctors, lawyers, or ministers first. We’re not even classmates, friends, girlfriends, boyfriends, fiancé, husband, or wife first. All of these things flow out of first our identity in Christ. We need people to remind us of who we are.

What is the second request? What is the second area that we can ask for help in? **Ask believers to help you follow God.** I know that in your outline, it says: “Ask believers to help you examine your life.” But I think that it’s probably better to say: Ask believers to help you follow God. In other words, invite others to keep you accountable in following God. **Ask believers to help you follow God.**

**Priests helped Israel follow God.** Their lives and activities would help Israel understand the seriousness by which they should follow God. For instance, **Aaron inspected the offerings.** If he sees any blemishes with a bull, lamb, or ram that is not appropriate for sacrifice, then he should confront the worshipper. Future high priests would continue this practice. Read with me in chapter twenty-eight, verse thirty-eight: *“Aaron shall bear any guilt from the holy things that the people of Israel consecrate as their holy gifts.”* Why would the High priest bear the guilt? It’s because God expected Israel’s worship at the tent of meeting to remind them of his holiness. Only certain animals could be offered in a certain way. If you didn’t follow the prescribed manner of worship, then your life would be forfeit. Consider how Nadab and Abihu



would lose their lives because they offered up the incorrect incense at the altar of incense. Although you have a relationship with God, it doesn't give you permission to treat God as normal. A relationship with God does not negate his holiness.

This is further seen by the purification rituals. Aaron and subsequent generations would need to practice purification rites. **Aaron followed purifying rituals.** Read with me in chapter thirty, verse twenty-one: *"They shall wash their hands and their feet, so that they may not die. It shall be a statute forever to them, even to him and to his offspring throughout their generations."* Every time the priests served or ministered at the tent, they would need to wash their hands in the bronze basin. Imagine all the dirt and blood that they would have to remove from their hands to do their work. Their bloody work reveals the great price that is paid in order for Israel to have a relationship with God. But it reveals the graciousness of our holy God who would allow people to draw near.

Of course, Aaron and his subsequent heirs are hints of what Jesus would do to help us follow Christ. **Jesus helps believers follow God.** For instance, **Jesus aids us when we are tempted.** The author of Hebrews reminds us that Jesus was in every way like us. He even experienced temptation. Since he experienced temptation, he is able to help us when we struggle.

**Jesus also cleanses us from sin.** Many of us know the verse in first John chapter one, verse nine: *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* When we commit a sin, then we can trust that if we confess it to God we will receive forgiveness. We experience a fellowship restored.

**Believers help one another to follow God.** Let me outline two specific ways. First, help one another identify sin. We can invite other believers to examine our lives to highlight areas of struggle. Galatians, chapter six, verse one says: *“Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you be tempted.”* Do you allow people into your life to help you see any sin issues that you might have? This may require you to ask your accountability partners: *“What are areas of sin that you see in my life?”* After you ask the question, be quiet and listen. Don’t defend yourself. Don’t offer excuses. Allow the brother or sister share freely what he or she might see. You may not like what is said. But that’s the point. No one ever said sanctification would be painless.

Second, **help one another overcome sin.** It not simply enough just to identify sin, but how can your brother or sister in Christ help you craft a way to do battle with your sin. One once said: *“mortify your sins.”* For Galatians, chapter six, verse two says: *“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”* You’ll have to think about how you might be able to invite your fellow believer would help you do battle against sin. Battling against sin doesn’t mean that you will not sin any longer. When the temptation arises, you become much slower to give into the temptation which each subsequent encounter. Hopefully, by God’s grace, that particular sin will lose hold over you. Some of you might not know how to overcome a particular sin and might need to consider biblical counseling.

We’ve talked about two requests so far. First, ask believers to remind you of your identity. Second, as believers to help you follow God. Let’s move onto our third and final

request. **Ask believers to intercede for you.** Ask others to pray for you. Invite people to ask God on your help. Request the help of others. **Ask believers to intercede for you.**

Priests interceded for Israel. While any Israelite could pray to God, the priests had a unique access to God. Israelites would ask the priest to present certain prayers before God. If you think about Hannah in 1 Samuel, Eli presents her request for a child before God. **The High Priest represented Israel before God.** There are two ways the high priest would represent Israel before God. **The High priest represented Israel before God through the shoulder plates.** There are these two plates made of gold. Within these plates, there would be an onyx stone set on them with the twelve names of Israel engraved upon them. Moses writes this in Exodus, chapter twenty-eight, verse twelve: *“And you shall set the two stones on the shoulder pieces of the ephod, as stones of remembrance for the sons of Israel. And Aaron shall bear their names before the LORD on his two shoulders for remembrance.”* **The high priest represented Israel through the breast piece.** The breast piece is a gold plate with twelve stones. It would be four rows with three stones per row. Each stone represented one tribe of Israel. Look with me at chapter twenty-eight, verse twenty-nine: *“So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel in the breast piece of judgment on his heart, when he goes into the Holy Place to bring them to regular remembrance before the LORD.”* Through these two articles, the high priest would not only represent Israel in offering up the sacrifices but also incense as well. For no one else besides the high priest had this responsibility to go before God on behalf of Israel.

**The High priest oversaw the offering of the incense.** He had to make sure that there was incense burning on the altar of incense in the holy place right before the curtain leading into the holy of Holies. Exodus chapter thirty, verse seven through nine says this: *“And Aaron*

shall burn fragrant incense on it. Every morning when he dresses the lamps he shall burn it, and when Aaron sets up the lamps at twilight, he shall burn it, a regular incense offering before the LORD through your generations.” Incense in the OT and NT is used to represent the prayers of the saints. One commentator states that the incense served as a visual depiction of Israel’s prayers wafting up to the God in the heavens. Moreover, it would be the single thing that could penetrate the curtain separating the Holy place from the Holy of Holies.

**Jesus intercedes for believers.** Paul reminds us in the letter to the Romans that Jesus sits on the right hand of the father interceding for us. Even as we sit here today at this moment, Jesus is praying for us in heaven. He prays that we would be united with him and the Father through the Spirit. He prays that the church would be unified as he and the father are one. He prays that we would obey his commands and do his work until he returns.

**Believers intercede for others.** As believers we pray for people whether they be believers or non-believers. Often times, we don’t share prayer requests unless someone else asks. Few of us would ever text someone stating: “Hey! I’m going through a tough time right now. Can you pray for me?” But it’s interesting that Paul the apostle would request prayers in his letters. **Paul asked others for prayer.** If you ever read the letters of 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, Colossians, and 1 Thessalonians then you would see that he asks for these church’s prayers. **Ask others for prayer.** How do we do this? Yesterday, I was rereading Ed Welch’s book: Side by Side. In the chapter title: “Say ‘Help’ to Other People”, he suggests that we ask for prayers in both circumstances and the matters of the heart. Matters of circumstance would be such as a search for a job, application to medical school, healing for a loved one, or financial provision. These would all be circumstances. The matters of the heart would include thoughts

or feelings. For instance, one would request prayer for one's attitude at work or school. It might be the ability to love your spouse. You could be going through a low time emotionally and you need God's comfort. These things would lie beneath the surface one's heart that would require prayer.

Don't just ask for prayer in these areas. Ask for these requests with scriptural promises attached. For instance, if you are looking for a job you would share: "I've been let go at my company. I'm looking for work. I find myself anxious and looking constantly at job boards." Then you would share the request: "Would you pray that as I look for work God would help me seek him first and trust him? The Scripture that shapes this request is Matthew chapter six, verse thirty-three: "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you."

Maybe you've had a long day with the kids. You might share: "It's been such a rough day. The kids refused to nap. Because they refused to nap, they became cranky. They also made a mess in the house. One of them spilled their cereal. Another got paint all over their clothes." Then you would share the request: "Would you pray that I recognize my anger is my responsibility and that I would not hold on to it?" The scripture that shapes this request is Ephesians, chapter four, verse twenty-six through twenty-seven: "*Be angry and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger.*"

You might have an exam coming up and it's got you worked up. You might share: "I have this exam coming up. I feel as though no matter how much I study I still can't make heads or tails of it. If I don't pass this exam, then my grades may tank." The you would share the request: "Would you pray that I learn to cast my worries on the Lord and trust him." The

Scripture that shapes this request is first Peter, chapter five, verses six thru seven: “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.”

Ask believers to pray for you. When you present your requests, be sure to also ground it in the promise of the word.

This morning we talked about three ways that we can ask for help to draw near to God. First, ask believers to remind you of your identity. Second, ask believers to help you follow God. Third, ask believers to intercede for you.

During one of my last engineering classes, a professor drove home the point that if **we need help we should ask**. It was the first day of class. Dr. Farouki comes in and explains the syllabus. After he finished explaining the course requirements, he made the following comment: “If any of you need help understanding anything, then please raise your hand to ask. It’s better to look foolish in class and ask a question, then take the final exam and ask because at time that I may not be able to help you.” If you need help, ask. Let’s pray.