

**PRAYER: AN ESSENTIAL IN CHURCH PLANTING**  
**Part Three: Intercession for Yourself and Other Christian Leaders**

*By Glenn Smith*

In Part One we looked at the vital place of prayer in church planting. In Part Two we introduced the importance of intercessory prayer. In this article we want to explore our need as church planters and Christian leaders for personal intercessors.

In the book *Prayer Shield* author Peter Wagner identifies 3 different types of intercessors. The first are **General Intercessors**. These are people who just love to pray for others. They usually note a variety of prayer requests from many different people and they enjoy praying for each person about each request. Sometimes they like to pray over a list of prayer requests from their church, their small group, or their circle of Christian friends. They are happy to field many requests and they pray earnestly about each of them.

Several years ago we had a couple of ladies in our church who were General Intercessors. They would come by the church office every Monday afternoon to pick up a list of prayer requests that were turned in on the Sunday before. They would take these requests with them and pray over them all week. Many people would join with them on Wednesday evenings at the church to pray through the list as well. Sometimes the list was very long, but this did not bother them. They saw it as their ministry to be praying for needs within our church.

The second type of intercessor is a **Crisis or Spontaneous Intercessor**. These praying folks don't necessarily like long lists of requests, but they are much attuned to moments and instances when special intercession is needed. Frankly, my wife has demonstrated this quality on numerous occasions. When a unique need or crisis arises she will frequently suggest that we focus on intercession for that need or situation. There have been many times that she has sensed the need to pray earnestly without us knowing the specifics of a situation, only to find out later that there was a critical need. She is a good example of a crisis or spontaneous intercessor. It could happen at any time, and she will respond!

The third type of intercessor is a **Personal Intercessor**. These believers feel a unique calling to pray for specific Christian leaders. They feel a burden and responsibility to lift leaders up in prayer. They may not have a lot of leaders that they are praying for at any one time, but they pray faithfully for whatever season God calls them to. I have had a few people in my life with which I felt a deep friendship and connection with, only to find out that they had felt a calling from God to intercede specifically for me as a Christian leader. Today I make it a point to maintain at least 2 or 3 personal intercessors. These are people who I trust and who I know hold me up before the throne of grace faithfully.

While all people need intercessors, I have a conviction that Christian leaders especially need intercession! Why? First, I have discovered over time that Satan's goal is to beat up leaders and make them fall! He attacks them at their most vulnerable point. And he will especially attack church planters! 1 Peter 5:8 tells us that we have an adversary, the

devil, who prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. What better target than a Christian leader! Sometimes I ask church planters “What makes this work so hard?” Often they will come up with some good reasons, but the main reason this work is hard is because we are in a spiritual battle and the enemy does not want us to succeed! Don’t be naïve; to be a church planting leader is to put yourself on the front lines of spiritual battle. You will be attacked by the evil one. But don’t be afraid because “greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

Another reason why Christian leaders need more intercession is because they are more responsible and accountable to God. James 3:1 tells us that leaders who teach will incur a “stricter judgment.” This is understandable because they influence so many others. Because of their visibility and influence they have greater responsibility. Their failures will often cause others to fall.

Many believe leaders receive greater temptations. I believe that this could be true. Retired pastor Dr. John Bisagno from Houston tells the story of how at the beginning of his ministry his father in law, Dr. Paul Beck, gave him a warning. Dr. Beck said “It has been my observation that just one out of ten who start out in full-time service for the Lord at twenty-one are still on track by the age of sixty-five. They’re shot down morally, they’re shot down with discouragement, they’re shot down with liberal theology, they get obsessed with making money...but for one reason or another nine out of ten fall out.” Shocked by this statement young Bisagno went home and wrote down in his study Bible the names of 24 of his peers in ministry who he knew would finish well. At his retirement a few years ago, Dr. Bisagno shared that list from his old Bible. Only 2 names remained. All the others had fallen to various temptations and had left vocational ministry.

I’m convinced Christian leaders NEED intercessors! They are targets of spiritual warfare. In his research Wagner made a startling discovery. He found that pastors who have personal intercessors reported more spiritual activity, more evangelism, and more church effectiveness! Duh!!! If we truly want to be effective in church planting ministry we MUST have intercessors.

Why don’t more pastors and Christian leaders recruit committed personal intercessors? Sometimes we’re ignorant about the importance and power that’s available. Sometimes we’re just lazy. Sometimes we have too much pride to acknowledge how inadequate we really are in ourselves and how much we need God’s divine intervention! Many pastors have been hurt and abused by “pray-ers.” As a result, they don’t want to be vulnerable in any way with other people. However, every Christian leader needs to learn how to receive intercession!

Before you immerse yourself in a church planting ministry, be sure you have a team of personal intercessors. Don’t take this lightly! Have some key people who faithfully and fervently hold you, your family, and your ministry up in prayer! I’m convinced that you will not truly succeed without it!