

The following is an excerpt from a presentation to a group of intercessors, encouraging them stay the course.

The cry for intercessors

In every corner of our city and nation, churches and mushrooming prayer groups are crying out to God for His mercy, and revival in America. God himself places great value on and deeply urges His people to pray. His heart longs for intercessors; yet several times in the scriptures He noted the shortage of them.

This cry goes far beyond an office or ministry. It is not something one volunteers to do occasionally, but rather a life given over to be lived out on a burning altar where the fire does not go out. This sacrifice produces a pleasing aroma and secure a favorable response from the throne of God. He is looking for those who will first stand *with* Him, then *before* Him to hear His heart on behalf of the people and the land until He makes it a praise in the earth. Of all the ministries, it is the loneliest, most misunderstood and discouraging work and yet the most vital.

Intercessors do not simply offer prayers, but rather they respond to relenting and often overwhelming burdens straight from the heart of God. These burdens will lift completely only when the purpose of the intercession has been settled in the spirit or when they choose to abandon the assignment regardless of the consequences. Those same consequences however were what God saw Satan seeking to accomplish and raised us up to intercept and defeat those plans.

There are times they are awakened in the night with a cry of pending judgment or someone in deep trouble that needs immediate intercession. These cases can take hours and sometimes days with the knowledge that the solution rests on them to pray through. These burdens are usually so difficult to describe that words fail to convey any meaningful explanation. This is normally the place where prayer warriors wish them well and abandon the assignment claiming it is finished.

This is also the place where human strength is replaced by supernatural power. in this place the intercessor's body is yielded to the Holy Spirit who then carries on the mission with His strength. He alone knows the mind of the Father and can offer travailing groans beyond human comprehension.

The detailed outcome of these battles usually remain a mystery, but Lord is so amazingly gracious... He knows we need encouragement from time to time and often uses a vision, a dream or sends someone to share a testimony that confirms victory in prayer.

For those of you walking this journey, please know that your time invested in intercession is never in vain. The same God, who told the Prophet Samuel that He is going to look for a king, sought through many potential candidates and chose you to engage on His behalf. Like Job, you have been considered. It pleased the great and mighty God who knows the beginning and the end to hand-pick and send you. Many of the people you pray for may never know the investment or sacrifice you made for them. God sees. Many of these people you may never know. God knows them. He, the Faithful One will reward you for your labors.

As intercessors, you should not expect to be appreciated or even understood by the church, much less the unbelievers. I am sure you have had to endure the scrutiny of fellow Christians touting comments like: “What do you have to say to God for so long”; “God knows we are busy and will never require that much time for prayer”; “a few minutes of focused, intense prayer is all that God requires”; or my personal favorite... “Just ask God then declare it done...the battle is over in Jesus name.”

As intercessors on the forefront, you know better. As you navigate past the accusations of having no faith or little knowledge of how God works, remember that Jesus, the Great Intercessor, carried a huge burden with Him into the Garden of Gethsemane. So great was the burden that Jesus Christ picked three of His best students to help Him pray through. Peter, James and John could not understand Jesus’ burden and were overcome with sleep while He travailed alone. In this place of deep intercession, God responded to his passionate cry and sent Him angelic ministry.

Discouragement is also a stubborn opponent in the life of an intercessor. In many of the Psalms of David you can hear him expressing the same sentiments of your heart regarding battles with persistent enemies. The enemies do not stop their assault simply because you pray. They are persistent, constantly evolving with all manner of diversionary strategies to get you to lose focus on the mission.

I am sure you have had to endure the constant intimidation or bullying from the demonic forces threatening to destabilize the work, and/or to kill you or your loved ones if you do not back off your prayers. Sometimes the threats seem so real in your dreams that when you wake up you are relieved it was a dream... but wonder could these things be.

Many who ignored the threats and persisted on the mission had to endure staggering losses including a shattered family life, economic turmoil or both. So many intercessors have become “gun-shy” from frontline spiritual warfare and are no longer interested in fighting; it is just too costly. Others are content to be nominal believers wondering if they can really trust God.

Imagine Abraham, after his long bout of intercession for the destiny Sodom, looking over the plains the following morning to see the smoke of destruction filling the air, knowing that the cities are destroyed. There is no information in scriptures that suggest Abraham ever knew if Lot and his family survived the destruction.

In his book: *HOW TO CHANGE THE SPIRITUAL CLIMATE OVER YOUR CITY*, Ed Silvoso, provides some valuable insight into pain resulting from such battles. He shared: “by March of 1999 we had become overwhelmed by tremendous challenges, almost to the point of despair. Our team had pioneered new concepts, conquered new territory and facilitated unprecedented breakthroughs in cities around the world; but the intensity of those efforts had taken their toll and had exposed us to spiritual attacks, and I was feeling the pain.

In a moment of unhealthy self-pity I began to tell the Lord how badly wounded I was, how much our family and our team has suffered, how brutal the blows has been and how little return we had

seen on our investment.” The Lord’s reply he said shocked him: “*Ed, you should see the other guy! He is the one who looks really bad. You’re on the winning team! He is the one who looks pathetic, just imagine how awful the loser must look... Get up and claim the prize! You are down; so is the devil. He does not want you to know it but he is totally spent after such a fight. He has no more strength and this is why he is so bent on keeping you focusing on your own wounds.*”

In 2 Chronicles 16:9, God sent Hanani to rebuke Asa saying, “...*The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him.*”

That same great God is still looking, longing and patiently waiting for His intercessors today; those who will *become* the prayer they are offering. He is looking for those who will first stand *with* Him, then *before* Him to hear His heart on behalf of the people and the land until He makes it a praise in the earth.

Be encouraged. Be blessed.

Shayne Payne, Pastor