

Intercessory Prayer in the Workplace

Os Hillman • Prayer

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Colossians 4:12

Because we've been entrenched in the "secular versus sacred" model for so long, it can be difficult for us to view our work as a ministry and workplace believers as missionaries in the 9 to 5 Window. However, God tells us clearly that we are to glorify God in all that we do (see Col. 3:17,24). One way we can do this is through intercessory prayer, which can be characterized as an intense type of prayer for others (see Eph. 6:18; Col. 4:12), the priestly calling of all believers (see 1 Pet. 2:5; Exod. 19:6) and the Holy Spirit praying in us (see Rom. 8:26-27). Having people pray for us to fulfill our purpose and calling in our workplaces is consistent with the will of God for every individual.

Imagine if all corporations had a director of corporate intercession as a paid position. I am pleased to tell you that in at least one case, this is already happening. Darlene Maisano is a full-time intercessor for the marketplace and a paid intercessor for several businesses. She is paid as a consultant would be paid. She sits in business meetings, quietly praying and "listening." She has authored the only resource I know of on the subject, *Breaking Open the Doors of Success Through Marketplace Intercession*. Here are her thoughts on the importance of workplace intercession:

Through the birthing and establishing of the Church, nothing has ever been accomplished on earth without prayer and intercession. And with the restoration of the workplace, intercession is a key to bridging the gap, making a way and nullifying the shortage of laborers in the Kingdom.

Whereas we once thought of those involved in politics, economics, religion, and the military as the ones controlling the earth, today we recognize the enormous influence wielded by those in the workplace.

As a workplace intercessor for numerous national and international businesses, I have experienced the importance of interceding on their behalf. Favor, wisdom, financial gain and well-being have been manifested and evident in peoples' lives and businesses. I am also seeing a growing number of workplace intercessors stepping up to the plate saying, "That's my calling."¹

While the idea of a workplace intercessor may be a new concept for us, we need to remember the examples we find in the New Testament of believers praying for one another. One such example is Epaphras, who Paul states to the Colossians "is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus. . . . He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured" (Col. 4:12).

Let me give you a modern example of what I am describing as intercessory prayer in the workplace.

Intercessory Prayer in an Optical Company

Colin Ferreira is a friend, a board member for our ministry and an owner of an optical business in Trinidad. I first met Colin in 2001 when he invited me to speak at a Caribbean workplace conference that he was organizing. I have watched Colin develop into a Kingdom business leader whose vision is to see his nation transformed.

For many years, Colin considered his business to be a Kingdom business as well as his primary calling to

ministry, even though he had also been in church leadership. At his workplace, he would have weekly prayer meetings and exercise prayer in business meetings whenever he felt the need. For eight years, he led his management staff in a weekly study of the book of Proverbs from a business perspective. The biblical principles they discussed together caused them to change the way they operated the business.

Eighteen years ago, Colin and his management staff made a decision to use a minimum of 10 percent of their profits (before tax) for building the kingdom of God. God blessed their business greatly, and they have been able to support many ministries and provide significant leadership and administrative support to some of those organizations. However, through a series of struggles common to most businesses (made worse due to apparent spiritual opposition), Colin began to recognize the need for more prayer coverage. One of the organizations for which he had been supplying financial and leadership support maintained a House of Prayer. Colin asked the minister who headed the organization to intercede for him and his company on an ongoing basis, and she gladly agreed.

The two met periodically to discuss prayer needs and critical issues developing within the organization, which the minister then addressed discreetly in her intercessory group meetings. Often, this woman would recognize specific problems during these prayer meetings and know how to pray for them effectively. This became the first step to Colin developing intercessory prayer within his own company. In his words:

God continued to nudge me to go a step further. Business being as dynamic as it is, there is constant need for prayer on the spot and in meetings. We also realized that we needed to take a more proactive approach to taking and maintaining authority over the business in the spirit realm at every location. I felt that God was saying that we were to have someone fulltime on staff. The question was, How do we have someone on our payroll without raising a heap of questions and criticisms from our non-Christian employees?

We went before the Lord with that question and He gave us an answer. We established a new position called the Employee Assistance Officer/Intercessor. To our 120 employees, her function is that of an Employee Assistance Officer, and her job is to identify ways we can provide tangible and practical assistance to employees with problems. Her role fulfills a need that exists and that was a genuine concern of our company, as we desire employees to function at their best.

She visits our six locations periodically to connect with employees and identify those with problems. These problems could be marital, parenting, housing, financial or medical, to name a few. Her role is to provide counsel, guidance, direction and other tangible forms of assistance with careful assessment of each situation.

In order to develop this area further, Colin decided to get some training for both his intercessor and himself at Christian International in Florida, an organization that is experienced in developing believers' ability to receive prophetic input from God. Colin strongly believes that a Christian CEO should be able to hear the voice of God for himself and not be heavily dependent on someone else's communication with God. He also believes that, in an effort to stop dividing things into "secular" or "spiritual," such training should be just as important as a management training seminar, if not more so. The training proved to be very enlightening, practical and necessary for both of them.

Colin states that his Employee Assistance Officer now develops her prayer strategies in the following way:

"On her location visits, besides identifying employee problems, she tries to identify the spiritual problems in each specific location. These vary from place to place and may even involve witchcraft as evidenced by paraphernalia known to specific cults. A team of

intercessors (including a company director) revisits the location outside of working hours to pray specifically for the needs and situation of that location. Every week, a different location is visited.

Our intercessor is also involved in the employee weekly prayer meeting and, particularly, the senior management prayer meeting, where sensitive and confidential situations are addressed. From time to time as we are praying, she will receive a vision or word from the Lord that will either confirm something or provide more clarity or direction that later proves to be on target. She is also on call throughout the day to pray as situations arise.

We are still learning from the Lord in this area of intercession in our business. I do not believe that there is a set formula for the use of intercessors in a business organization as each situation has its uniqueness. However, I do believe that it is a necessary and vital function for any Kingdom organization in these times."

My First Encounter with an Intercessor

In June of 1996, Christian Financial Concepts (now Crown Ministries), a ministry led by Larry Burkett, published my testimony in their monthly newsletter. Shortly after the article appeared, a call came into our office from a woman named Jan. She mentioned that she had a ministry of intercessory prayer and said she was calling because she sensed the Lord had told her to do so. A mentor and I had just been discussing the need for intercessors to undergird the work we were beginning, but I did not learn until later what that really meant.

Jan came to our office a few days later and met with Sue, my mentor's wife, who was using some of my office space. Sue was a real prayer warrior herself, often awaking in the middle of the night to pray for those God put on her heart. The two women soon began praying together. After a while, Jan tentatively revealed to Sue that she felt led to pray for three men. When she prayed for the third man, she described seeing a boy between the ages of 12 and 14 who had played basketball, experienced a major crisis in his life, and had grown up with a burden of insecurity that had plagued him most of his life. She prayed for him and asked Sue if she knew who this man might be. There was no doubt that this was me-my dad had died when I was 14, I had played basketball and I was then in the process of being freed from a stronghold of insecurity and fear. The other two men turned out to be Sue's husband and my last employee from the advertising agency.

When I heard about this, I was shocked. I thought, *Who is this "seer" who has come into my office?* A few days later, Jan and I met at a restaurant. This was my first introduction to a prayer intercessor. We prayed together, and at the conclusion of our prayer time, Jan said the Lord showed her that I would be speaking to a lot of men and women in large settings. Tears came to my eyes, because this confirmed a dream in which I had been speaking to a large group of people. Now, almost 10 years later, God has taken me to 14 different countries, where He has allowed me to speak about what He is doing in the workplace and in my personal life. Jan, as she continues to pray, has become a key partner in this ministry.

The Application of Intercessory Prayer in the Workplace

I have found the following process to be the best application of intercessory prayer as I have begun to implement it in my organization. First, I personally pray and consult with my wife on key issues. Next, I ask my prayer team to pray over specific issues and ask for their input as they hear from God. We weigh the feedback from the prayer team and make strategic decisions based on what we believe God is saying to us. We do not believe it is the role of intercessors to dictate strategic action but to confirm direction and make us aware of any "spiritual minefields." Here's a specific example of what I'm talking about.

A few years ago, I was about to meet with some partners on a ministry venture. For months I had been troubled about the foundational direction this venture was taking. However, I had not been able to clearly discern whether it was something that God wanted me to address. I did not share the specifics with Jan but simply asked her to pray about something that I was concerned about. The next morning, Jan sent me an email that said God seemed to impress her to encourage me to boldly address anything that was on my heart, especially anything that was "foundational." She actually used those words. This was confirmation for me to know that what I was sensing was from God, and it gave me the boldness to address my concern. It resulted in me leaving the partnership.

I currently have three types of intercessory prayer relationships:

1. *Pray-ers.* Pray-ers tend to pray for shorter periods of time and often over lists of things for others. I have over 1,000 people who have volunteered to pray for Angie and our ministry. I send out periodic notices to these volunteers about the work we are doing and request prayer for specific things. They rarely report back what they hear to me, as they are not accustomed to "listening" on my behalf.
2. *Intercessors.* I distinguish a difference between one who prays and one who intercedes. The intercessors I have enter into an extended time of prayer on my behalf. They often report back to me on the things they are hearing from the Lord.
3. *Inner Circle Intercessors.* Only one or two people make up my inner circle intercessors. They know my family and me well and often travel with me or participate in key events with our ministry.

So how do you find intercessors and begin working with them? First, ask God to identify them to you. Then ask your pastor for the names of intercessors in the church who might be willing to intercede on your behalf. Once you have found people to be your intercessors, determine your expectations of one another before you begin working together. You may even want to write these expectations out and discuss them together. Finally, it is important to proceed slowly in the relationship to determine if this is something both you and the other parties are comfortable in pursuing.

Compensating Intercessors?

The idea of compensating intercessors by paying them for their time is something that is still in its developmental stage and may represent a new and unusual concept to us. However, we need to move past the roadblock of thinking that it's inappropriate to pay people to pray and realize that those who are spending time praying for a business need to be compensated in the same manner as any other person who is working on its behalf.

The models for employing and compensating intercessors are varied depending on the circumstance, the people involved and the skill and ability of the intercessor. Here are a few examples of some of these models:

- *Employee of the Company.* One company I know has several intercessors who work as regular paid employees. They are there to do a specific job, but they also volunteer their time to pray for the needs of the company.
- *Paid Intercessor.* A company may also hire a person whose primary role is to pray and intercede on its behalf. This individual may become a chaplain to the business as part of this role.
- *Off-site Intercessor Consultant.* An off-site intercessor consultant may work exclusively for one company or for several different companies. He or she might simply be on call to pray for the needs of a particular business and agree to report back to that company on what he or she is hearing. Sometimes this individual's

compensation is structured; other times it is provided through periodic love offerings from the company that hires him or her.

It is important to remember that anything can be knocked off track when we get out of balance. Satan desires to get in the mix in any area that does not have proper biblical foundations. Here are just a few things to keep in mind when incorporating intercessors into your work life or business:

- Intercessors should not be viewed as a crystal ball to determine direction. It is the responsibility of leaders to seek God for themselves.
- If an intercessor tells you to take a particular course of action, beware. This is not their role. They are in your life to confirm what you already feel God has spoken to you.
- Avoid making a decision based on one intercessor's input. Gain agreement through more than one source, such as the Bible, circumstances or prayer.
- Try to have a mix of male and female on your intercessory team.
- *You are responsible for the final decision.* You should have a peace about your decision and a willingness to commit it to the Lord should it not fit your rationale all the time. Sometimes it comes down to obedience.
- Know that implementing intercessory prayer into your work or business life requires work and additional time. It takes time to seek the Lord, communicate with others and wait on feedback.

God Is Raising Up Intercessors in the Workplace

What can we expect in the future? In May of 2004, I spoke in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, to a group of city intercessors and workplace leaders representing every church in the city. I told them that if we are going to impact our workplaces, cities and nations, an army of intercessors must be raised up. I stated that God is raising up these intercessors for the workplace today and pledged my support for the raising up of a global network of intercessors that would begin to intercede for the seven major areas that shape society: government, family, arts, religion, education, business and the media.

The intercessors were excited to hear personal examples and teaching on intercession in the marketplace. The leader of the intercessory teams asked all of the workplace leaders to come forward and stand in a circle. They wanted to pray for each of the workplace leaders. It was a prophetic picture of the future-intercessors joining hands with workplace leaders to influence their workplaces, cities and nations. I believe we will see more and more workplace believers desire to have intercessors involved in their work-life call.

In this chapter, I have mostly addressed this topic to leaders of organizations who may want to incorporate intercessory prayer into their organizations. However, intercessory prayer is needed at every level of any organization. Regardless of whether or not you hold a management level position, I want to encourage you to apply the material in this chapter to whatever position you find yourself in. If you are called to great levels of intercession, begin to pray about who you are to intercede for. Just as God is calling forth business leaders to incorporate intercession into their leadership methods, so too is God raising up intercessors for the marketplace. God will lead you to partner with those leaders He has assigned for you to serve.

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