

CINDY JACOBS: A General on God's Frontlines

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Little girls didn't dream of becoming international Christian leaders when Cindy Jacobs was growing up. *Intercessor* was a word few adults could readily define.

And prophets? Those were the old men in beards and thong sandals who roamed the earth during Bible times.

No wonder Cindy was so surprised when God called her to take on all three of those roles.

"I asked God to use my husband instead of me. You know the prayer: 'Here I am, Lord, send someone else,'" she jokes.

But in 1984, after an unusual encounter with the Lord, Cindy wasn't laughing or inventing more excuses. God, it seems, had a task for her to accomplish—even if she was a woman.

The daughter of a Southern Baptist pastor, Cindy was reared in Texas with plenty of self-esteem and a deep respect for the things of God. Her father, who planted churches the way other Texans might plant cotton, constantly encouraged her to find her identity in Christ.

"Daddy always told me there was nothing I couldn't do," she says with just a hint of a Texas twang. When Cindy was catapulted into Christian leadership years later, she says her father's inspiration helped her weather the criticism and rejection often faced by women in ministry.

She has encountered plenty of rejection since 1985, when she founded her organization, Generals of Intercession (GI). The head of one group cancelled her ordination two days before the

ceremony because of her gender.

During a service in which she was supposed to receive her ministerial license from another organization, Cindy waited in vain for her name to be called out along with the other candidates. Officials handed her papers to her quietly at the service's conclusion.

But Cindy doesn't nurse any grudges against critics who think women don't belong in the pulpit. In fact, she believes she might never have reached the position of leadership she holds today if she had allowed herself to sulk over such rebuffs. She anchors her life with a promise in the book of Proverbs: "A man's gift makes room for him, and brings him before great men" (18:16).

It appears the scriptural promise has come true. With the full support of her husband, Mike, GI's chief executive officer, Cindy has earned quite a reputation among Christian leaders from both charismatic and non-charismatic backgrounds. Over the past few years she has ministered in Canada, England, France, Brazil, Argentina, Israel, Russia, Colombia and Uruguay.

This woman is serious about winning the world to Christ, and she's mobilizing people to accomplish that feat as soon as possible. GI currently is at work in 18 regions of the world with prayer "generals" in 31 nations.

In 1994 she plans to pioneer GI's work in 12 countries, including Singapore, Japan and Malaysia. Her mission is to identify people who can lead what she says is a growing interdenominational army of "prayer warriors" around the world.

Besides being involved with the A.D. 2000 Prayer Track, she's also an international director of Women's Aglow Fellowship and a convener of the Spiritual Warfare Network—a group of leaders that concern themselves with "strategic-level" prayer for

nations. Cindy recently moved GI to Colorado Springs, Colorado, to work more closely with the many evangelical organizations based there.

Called to Pray

Cindy first heard God calling her in 1960 when she was a 9-year-old attending church camp. Her counselor encouraged her to find a place where she could get alone and ask God what He wanted to do with her life.

Cindy hiked out to a big rock in the woods behind the camp chapel. As she sat on the rock and prayed, she says God told her He had something special He wanted her to do for Him.

The recurring dreams about hell began when she was just 12. Night after night she awoke to find herself soaked with sweat. In these terrifying night visions she saw people suffering eternal torment. Hearing their screams, she would jump out of bed and pace the floor, weeping and begging God to use her to win lost souls.

She passed her teenage years eagerly awaiting the time when God would reveal His plan. After college she took a job as a music teacher in a public school.

Influenced by a conservative Southern view of life, Cindy assumed she had to fit into a traditional woman's role in ministry—a missionary, perhaps, or maybe a pastor's wife. That's why she almost missed marrying her husband when he proposed. After all, Mike didn't feel called to the ministry, and he wasn't particularly excited about her ambitions.

"I thought there was no way I could fulfill God's plan for my life unless Mike had the same calling," she told *Charisma*.

"In 1973, after much Scripture-seeking, Cindy accepted Mike's proposal, and they were married. For years after that, she says, it seemed like God had forgotten about her encounter

with Him on the big rock in the woods.

"After her two children were born, she settled into life as a homemaker. She did just about everything conservative Christians said a woman could do: She directed church choirs, played the piano, led Sunday morning worship and taught Bible studies.

But she always felt a nagging sense that her ministry was supposed to reach far beyond the confines of her home and local church.

"When I turned 30, I remember thinking: *Lord, now will You tell me why You called me on that rock in the woods?*" Cindy says. "But every time I asked the question, I ended up with the same four-letter word: *Wait.*"

That same year a peculiar thing happened. Every night at the same hour, Cindy would suddenly wake up and find herself unable to sleep. After about two weeks, she decided she must be waking up for a reason.

In response to her questioning, she says God showed her He wanted her to pray. So, with the bed covers pulled over her head, she murmured prayers for her family and friends. And she mentioned any other names that flitted across her mind.

These wee-hour prayer sessions fueled a curiosity about the dynamics of intercession. Cindy studied books about great prayer warriors like E.M. Bounds, Andrew Murray and Rees Howells.

One cold night she felt impressed to pray for a minister in her church. She whispered a simple prayer: "Lord, he needs healing, and he feels lonely and afraid. Comfort him, Father, heal him, and let him know he is not alone."

She then attached an addendum to her request: "God, I really would like some confirmation from You that my prayers are

making a difference.” Before she rolled over and went to sleep, Cindy noted the time. It was 3:10 a.m.

The next evening at a Wednesday night church service, the minister tracked her down. “Cindy,” he said, “not many people know this, but I have cancer. Last night I was awake in extreme pain. I felt lonely, and I cried out to God, ‘Lord, doesn’t anyone care?’

“At that moment God spoke to me and said, ‘Cindy Jacobs is awake, and she is praying for you.’ It was about ten-after-three,” the pastor said.

That was enough encouragement to keep Cindy praying in the middle of the night. But she got a double boost when she learned later that the minister had been healed.

Charged with enthusiasm, she prayed more fervently than ever—often with dramatic results. Unlike the vague prayers she had uttered in the past, Cindy began to feel that her prayers were hitting their target every time.

Word spread that if people had a need, they should notify Cindy Jacobs. Churches and Women’s Aglow chapters began asking her to speak on intercession. She dug into the Scriptures to find out how to teach others to pray.

God furthered her education, she says, by introducing her to respected prayer leaders like C. Peter Wagner, Joy Dawson, Dick Eastman and B.J. Wilhite. She also found inspiration from lesser-known men and women who spent lots of time on their knees, and her encounters with these people fueled her desire to be used by God.

A Trip to Mount Moriah

The inner conflict regarding her call to ministry began to surface when Cindy was in her early 30s. She sensed the Lord was directing her to travel to other nations, yet everything

else told her she should be a traditional stay-at-home mom.

Then she began meditating on a Scripture that troubled her: "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And He who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me" (Matt. 10:37-38).

During prayer one evening, she recognized God's now-familiar voice. She knew it was time to take up her cross. God wanted her to carry the gospel to the nations of the world.

"And then I had a brilliant idea," Cindy recalls. "I asked God to send my husband instead."

Since she had two young children at home, Cindy figured it was OK to offer God another option. But the words of Matthew 10:37-38 kept running through her head.

So did a barrage of questions: *Was God trying to tell her He wouldn't negotiate? What would people think? What about the Scriptures about women not teaching?*

The wrestling grew intense. Cindy wanted to obey God, but she wasn't about to sacrifice her children for the ministry.

For the next two years she struggled. One night when her eyes fell on the scripture "Woe to him who strives with his Maker!" (Is. 45:9) she froze.

Then, she says, God quietly spoke to her heart: "Stop fighting against the way I've made you. If I am going to pour My Spirit out on *all* flesh in the last days, then some people I choose have to be women! Cindy, give me your children."

Remembering how Abraham offered Isaac on the altar at Mount Moriah, Cindy consciously gave her children to the Lord. After that step of faith, she says, a deep, peace settled over her.

She knew exactly what God required of her, for now another

Scripture leaped off the page of her Bible: "Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession" (Ps. 2:8). Cindy was ecstatic about the prospects of impacting the world for Jesus.

But Mike wasn't exactly thrilled when Cindy told him she'd been called to the mission field. He offered a typical response: "Who's going to wash my clothes, cook my dinner and clean the house?"

It was an honest question, one that sent Cindy back to her prayer closet to surrender her calling. Rather than resist her husband, she decided to leave the matter in God's hands.

Meanwhile, Mike began studying the subject of women's roles in Scripture. One day he discovered Galatians 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither *male nor female*; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Eventually he settled the issue in his heart.

"Barring all the theological questions," Mike told *Charisma*, "it came down to the basic question of whether Cindy had an anointing from God or not. Once I recognized that she did I had the responsibility to trust God with it He's the One who put it there."

Fit for Frontline Combat

While congress is still debating questions about women's roles in the U.S. military—particularly the issue of whether women are fit for combat—Cindy Jacobs has been organizing an army of prayer warriors since 1985. That's when she and Mike held the first Generals of Intercession meeting at Church on the Rock in Rockwall, Texas.

Cindy believes that churches have not been effective in winning nations for Christ because Christians have lacked a military-style prayer strategy. So, like C. Peter Wagner and other like-minded spiritual warfare advocates, she is calling

believers around the world to fight demonic forces with targeted prayer.

Although her pulpit manner is warm and feminine, Cindy feels perfectly comfortable talking about aggressive war against the devil. She challenges Christians to fight “territorial spirits.” Her 1991 book, *Possessing the Gates of the Enemy* (Chosen), is described as “a training manual for militant intercession.”

Success in prayer isn’t always easy to document, but Cindy has a long list of “war stories” she likes to swap with friends:

- In 1990 she taught two prayer seminars in the city of Resistencia, Argentina. Local pastors identified what they felt were the city’s ruling demonic spirits—including San La Muerte, the spirit of death worshiped by some residents.
- That same year, Cindy prophesied during a prayer meeting in the Argentine city of Mar del Plata that the gaming tables in one of the city’s largest casinos would be thrown into the streets. She also declared that the casino would become a place of worship—a statement that seemed outrageous at the time.
- In 1991 a group of intercessors in Brazil targeted the demonic stronghold of *Carnival* after Cindy gave a prophetic message that God would use the March for Jesus processions to stop this festival. The intercessors believe Carnival is the driving force behind Brazil’s riotous street parties. According to Cindy’s sources in Brazil, at least five of the carnival celebrations were shut down in 1993.
- Last year Cindy led a groundbreaking prayer conference in Japan, where the evangelical community is small and divided. Local leaders said it was a significant breakthrough because charismatic and non-charismatic believers repented for being isolated from each other. Months later, during the first nationwide evangelistic

crusade ever held in Japan, thousands of people made first-time professions of faith in Christ.

After a time of repentance, local Christian leaders rebuked the demons. According to Argentine evangelist Edgardo Silvoso, the city of 400,000 had been hard to reach until that time. But within months church membership almost doubled, 18 new congregations were planted, and the city's mayor professed Christ.

But after 51 days of prayer by local intercessors, both predictions came true within a year. A fire damaged part of the casino, and the owners literally threw the charred gaming tables in the streets. The facility was later closed, and a church negotiated a three-year contract to use the casino's auditorium as a sanctuary.

"That's what I call power evangelism!" remarks theologian C. Peter Wagner, who often shares the pulpit with Cindy at spiritual warfare conferences.

Cindy Jacobs isn't intimidated by her leadership role because she's read the battle manual, and she knows who's going to win. Besides, she believes God uses weak vessels to accomplish big things for His kingdom.

And that's all the assurance this lady general needs to keep her on the front lines.