

Are You Praying for Leaders?

If you are especially burdened to intercede for governmental authorities, it's possible you've been anointed for a special assignment.

Who can forget the memorable Wednesday night in January 1991 when television viewers watched with astonishment as the Gulf War unfolded before our very eyes? The war appeared to be a struggle over Kuwait's crude oil. However, oil is symbolic of power, both physically and spiritually.

Saddam Hussein did not count on the fact that God's people would gather throughout the land to pray. Not unlike the prideful Goliath, Hussein was swiftly defeated and made the laughingstock of the entire world. God honors the prayers of His government intercessors!

The Greek philosopher Aristotle wrote: "The state comes into existence that man may live. It continues that man may live well." But man can live well only when God is in control.

The purpose of government intercessors is to stand on God's side as watchmen over governments that represent the various countries, states, cities, neighborhoods, homes, schools and churches upon the earth. Godly governments empower people; conversely, ungodly governments use their power to oppress people.

"If God is concerned about the nations," people ask, "then why are poor people in so many countries starving to death and living in complete chaos?" The answer is, prayerlessness.

When the Lord issues a burden to pray and we respond in silence, we become Jonahs of prayer and defectors of the call. Jesus is Peace, and any nation that does not know Him cannot

know peace.

The Lord insists that we can change a nation with our intercession. In 2 Chronicles 7:14 we read: “‘If My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land’” (NIV).

God can and will heal the lands of the earth if we are faithful to pray. Before we can reach uncharted regions as foot soldiers, we must first have an army of pray-ers who will travel on their knees.

MAMA’S ARMY OF INTERCESSORS For many years, the late Dolores Hayford (known to most as “Mama Hayford”) led a weekly prayer group called “Gideons” who interceded for government and church leaders by name.

Mama Hayford scoured the media for governmental concerns that deserved concerted prayer. She did research on significant legislative officials and assigned those leaders to the army of intercessors who assembled weekly to pray.

Nations that suffered desolation or catastrophes of any kind were also brought before the Lord in prayer. On the local level, Mama dispatched intercessory teams into the districts of Los Angeles County to prayer-drive the political turf. These teams saturated every government building, church and school in that county with prayer.

Schools were a very important issue at the Gideons prayer meetings because, as Mama Hayford pointed out, the students of today are the leaders of tomorrow. Though Madalyn Murray O’Hair, the ACLU and other groups rallied support to keep prayer out of schools, the truth remains that almost every ancient civilization can trace its educational roots to its religious beliefs and philosophers.

Few people reflect on the fact that, for a long time, the primer of American education was the Bible. The Pilgrim fathers of the United States did not settle in this nation because of its material wealth; they settled here to pursue their convictions about God—and they perpetuated those convictions through education!

The pendulum to separate church and state has swung too far and is destroying our nation. Only prayer can change its course. That's why it is essential that we—like the Gideons—find and fulfill our specific prayer assignments.

GOVERNMENT INTERCESSOR? NOT ME! One of the first experiences the Lord used to make me (Beth) aware of the different prayer anointings happened on a trip to Washington, D.C., during the primary years of my Christian walk. I agreed to accompany a friend who was part of a women's group that gathered daily to pray on Capitol Hill. These tenacious intercessors battled on their spiritual knees for the various bills brought to the floor.

Intercession was prompted by the announcement that a particular bill was coming up for a vote. The women would pray for the lawmakers, petitioning God to align their hearts with His will.

The women cried out for the scales to be removed from blind eyes and lifted up every detail until they sensed that the bill and the legislator had melded together in God's will. The more they prayed, the more my conscience rebuffed me; I was overwhelmed with guilt.

I still remember thinking, This country is going down the drain, and it's all my fault! I don't understand a thing they're talking about—and even worse, I don't care.

This is like a foreign language that I have no desire to learn. It's way beyond my comprehension.

I left for home cloaked in feelings of condemnation. When I finally met with the Father alone, I asked, "Lord, what am I going to do?"

His answer jolted me: "Stick within the sphere of your anointing!" I didn't fully understand what He was talking about, so I prayed until I heard, "If there is a crisis, I will call you to pray for the nations."

"And if there is a crisis for a man in the nation, I will call you to pray. Your job is to lift up the hands of the leaders of the nations as I place them on your heart."

What freedom those words brought from the bondage of having to share the same passion as the women I had met on Capitol Hill! I now realize that if the Lord wants you or me to carry a burden, He will give us a passion to do so.

You might not be a person who can pray over a daily list for leaders. You might be a crisis intercessor who is called to respond to governmental emergencies.

You need know only what place God is calling you to in prayer. Simply ask the Lord where you have been anointed to stand, and He will show you. The important point is this: Find your place and stick with it until God gives you new orders!

DANIEL'S PROPHETIC INTERCESSION The prophet Daniel is an example of one who faithfully executed his prayer duties. His gripping story illustrates the strength of character necessary for government intercessors. Abducted as a teen when Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, Daniel was recruited—along with three of his prayer partners—into government.

Like Daniel, government intercessors do not forget their spiritual roots, no matter who governs the environment in which they live or work. They know the importance of partnering with others in prayer and have teachable,

discerning spirits.

When Daniel and his friends arrived in Babylon, their names were changed to reflect the pagan gods of that government. They were also immediately enrolled in the Babylonian educational system so that they might learn the language and embrace the polytheism of that land.

Through the lives of these four godly men we discover the cornerstone of success in government intercession: uncompromising convictions. Their story also dramatizes the fact that the cost for representing God's government includes an almost certain consequence of being mistreated, misrepresented and mistaken among those we are praying for.

We recommend that every government intercessor read the book of Daniel. The following lessons are only some we have gleaned from it:

****Appeal to the chain of command, even if those in authority are ungodly, but do not break God's laws (see Dan. 1:8-10).**

****Honor God in your prayer closet, and He will honor you publicly (see Dan. 2:16-49).**

****Put your trust in God's ability to change people's hearts rather than in your own eloquence (see Dan. 3:26-28).**

****Watch your appetite and don't feast on Satan's delicacies—pride, lust, materialism and celebrity (see Dan. 1:8).**

****Come into agreement with godly prayer partners before you speak up and speak out on government or church issues (see Dan. 2:17-18).**

****Give God the credit for the discernment you receive (see Dan. 2:27-28).**

****Don't discount your dreams or the dreams of others until you**

have sought the Lord for their interpretation (see Dan. 2:26-45; 7:1-9,27).

****Realize that truth will always be refined in a fiery furnace of trial and people are watching to see if God is in the fire with you (see Dan. 3:13-27).**

****Ask God to interpret “the handwriting on the wall” for leaders who are walking outside His will (see Dan. 5:5-30).**

****Believe that no country is impenetrable. Prosperity without godliness is a guarantee for destruction, so pray for wisdom rather than wealth (see Dan. 4:1-36).**

****Believe that your prayer is heard the moment you speak it and that warfare in the heavenlies may delay your answer but can't stop it (see Dan. 10:10-14).**

Government intercessors are the spiritual Daniels of our day. They are the ones who will see “the handwriting on the wall” and know how to pray (see Dan. 5:5).

That prayer effort might be for a family, a church, a neighborhood, a school, a city, a state or a nation. The key is to stand as Daniel did with a disciplined focus at the windows of prayer (see Dan. 6:7-10).

The nations are Jesus' inheritance. We must sow seed into governmental soil so He can reap a harvest. By changing a city, we change a state; and who knows how that state will affect the nation? We know we can't change the world by ourselves, but we are aligned with Jesus, the One who can.

THE CHARGE TO US In the United States, God has given us a window of opportunity for righteousness to be established in our nation. Since a nation is a reflection of its leader, the Lord is summoning His people to pray for their president.

Many ministries are hearing the trumpet call of the Lord to pray for President Bush. At Intercessors International, we are

enlisting churches and groups to join us in focused daily prayer for the president and his family.

We have established a network of 24-hour prayer coverage, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. With each watchman faithfully taking a small part, we can make a great difference, and we will see the Lord's kingdom come and His will done in America.

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