

Session 9 The Call to Be a Full-Time Intercessory Missionary

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. One significant aspect of the global prayer movement is the growing number of believers the Lord is calling to engage in prayer ministry as a *full-time occupation*. I refer to those who are called to this vocation as “intercessory missionaries”—those who do the work of the kingdom (as a full-time occupation) from the place of prayer while embracing a missionary lifestyle and ministry focus.
- B. People sometimes ask me what an intercessory missionary is and where this ministry title is mentioned in the Bible. The calling and occupation of intercessory missionary appears throughout the Scripture *in principle*, though it is not referred to by that specific name. However, its function can be found in both the Old and the New Testaments, including passages that focus on end-time prophecy, as well as throughout church history and in contemporary ministries.
- C. The New Testament gives only a few specific ministry titles and job descriptions, but it does encourage us to participate in kingdom-related activities such as winning the lost, caring for people, helping the poor, and praying. “Apostle” is the title with the clearest job description. But we don’t find the titles such as “senior pastor,” “marriage counselor,” “youth pastor,” “children’s pastor,” “outreach pastor,” and many other titles used in the church today. In fact, most of the titles that are currently used are not specifically mentioned in the New Testament.
- D. It’s understandable that the Bible does not provide a comprehensive list of ministries the Holy Spirit has used to meet the needs of every culture in every generation throughout the history of the church. As long as biblical values are upheld, the church has the liberty to name specific ministry focuses in a way that applies to a particular generation and culture so that God’s purposes are fulfilled.

II. INTERCESSORY MISSIONARIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

- A. The Old Testament provides important information about the full-time occupation of singers who ministered to God night and day. King David received understanding from the Holy Spirit related to how the temple was to be designed and how the priests and Levites (including singers and musicians) were supposed to function (1 Chr. 28:11-19).
- B. David was the first leader in the Bible to establish worship as a full-time occupation. The singers were employed in that work day and night, being “freed from other duties” (1 Chr. 9:33; Ps. 134). In other words, they did not have other jobs outside their temple responsibilities. What they did—singing and playing their instruments—was hard work. I imagine they had “worship team practices” and had to grow in musical skill, knowledge of the Scripture, and other related activities.

³³These are the singers...who were free from other duties; for they were employed in that work day and night. (1 Chr. 9:33)

- C. David set into place 8,000 “intercessory missionaries”—4,000 singers and musicians and 4,000 gatekeepers— all of whom were Levites (1 Chr. 23:3-5). Imagine 4,000 full-time paid musicians and singers supported by the “gatekeepers” who took care of the buildings and finances and carried out many other activities to support the ministry to God in the temple. In our context “gatekeepers” include those who help in financial or event management, sound techs, IT and media teams, ushers, children’s ministry, editing, running the bookstore, the maintenance and security teams, etc.
- 5...four thousand were gatekeepers, and four thousand praised the LORD with musical instruments, “which I made,” said David, “for giving praise.” (1 Chr. 23:5)**
- D. Establishing night-and-day prayer and worship required a significant amount of effort, and it was very expensive. But David insisted on making the costly investment of time and money because the Lord had commanded it and because he knew that the God of Israel is worthy of extravagant praise.
- 25And he [King Hezekiah] stationed the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with stringed instruments, and with harps, according to the commandment of David...for thus was the commandment of the LORD by his prophets. (2 Chr. 29:25)**
- E. After King David established a new order of worship, he commanded all the kings after him to uphold it because it was a direct command of God (2 Chr. 29:25; 35:4, 15; Ezra 3:10; Neh. 12:45). In the generations after David, when Israel went astray, God raised up spiritual reformers who restored worship as David commanded. Seven generations in the Old Testament honored the command given to David by restoring Davidic worship with full-time “intercessory missionaries.”
- F. Around 970 BC Solomon established singers according to the command that God had given David.
- 14...he [Solomon] appointed...the Levites for their duties, to praise and serve before the priests, as the duty of each day required...for so David the man of God had commanded. (2 Chr. 8:14)**
- G. Around 870 BC Jehoshaphat’s reform included establishing full-time singers and musicians in their place to sing to the Lord (2 Chr. 20:19, 21, 28). In about 835 BC Jehoiada the high priest restored worship with full-time singers and musicians.
- 18Jehoiada appointed the oversight of the house of the LORD ...with rejoicing and with singing, as it was established by David. (2 Chr. 23:18)**
- H. Around 625 BC Josiah’s revival restored full-time singers and musicians to their places just as David had commanded the kings of Israel (2 Chr. 35:3-4, 15)
- 15The singers, the sons of Asaph, were in their places, according to the command of David... (2 Chr. 35:15)**
- I. In 536 BC Zerubbabel established singers and musicians in place to worship God as their full-time occupation because David had commanded that this be done in Israel (Ezra 3:10-11; Neh. 12:47). In 445 BC Ezra and Nehemiah established full-time singers and musicians and provided them with finances because David commanded it (Neh. 11:23; 12:24, 45-47; 13:5-12)

⁴⁵Both the singers and the gatekeepers kept the charge of their God...according to the command of David...⁴⁷In the days of Zerubbabel and in the days of Nehemiah all Israel gave the portions [finances] for the singers and the gatekeepers, a portion for each day. (Neh. 12:45-47)

III. INTERCESSORY MISSIONARIES IN END-TIME PROPHECY

- A. Before Jesus returns, the Spirit will raise up the greatest prayer movement in history. There are many indicators of this in the Scripture (Ps. 96:1, 9, 13; 98:1-9; 102:15-22; 122:6; 149:6-9; Isa. 19:20-22; 24:14-16, 23; 25:9; 26:1, 8-9; 27:2-5, 13; 30:18-19, 29, 32; 35:2, 10; 42:10-15; 43:26; 51:11; 52:8; 62:6-7; Jer. 31:7; 51:8; Joel 2:12-17, 32; Zeph. 2:1-3; Zech. 8:20-23; 10:1; 12:10; 13:9; Mt. 21:13; 25:1-13; Lk. 18:7-8; Rev. 5:8; 6:9-11; 8:3-5; 9:13; 14:18; 16:7; 18:6; 22:17).
- B. The conflict at the end of the age will be between two global worship movements—one led by Jesus and one by the Antichrist’s worldwide, state-financed worship movement (Rev. 13:4, 8, 12, 15).
- C. Isaiah prophesied about prayer ministries that would continue 24/7 until Jesus restores Jerusalem as a praise in the earth—this occurs in context to His return. Isaiah referred to watchmen-intercessors whom the Lord Himself would appoint and set in place who would not keep silent day or night.

“On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen [intercessors]; all day and all night they will never keep silent. You who remind the Lord, take no rest for yourselves; ⁷and give Him no rest until He establishes and makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth. (Isa. 62:6-7, NAS)

- 1. This prophecy states that God will raise up 24/7 prayer ministries in the end times that will never be silent until Jesus returns, at which time He will make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.
- 2. Only one generation will see the complete fulfillment of this promise to set watchmen (intercessors) in place to cry out day and night until Jerusalem is a praise in the earth.

IV. INTERCESSORY MISSIONARIES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

- A. Some ask where intercessory missionaries are found in the New Testament. My response: Where in the New Testament do we find leaders who do not prioritize prayer? Beginning with Jesus and the apostles, the New Testament highlights many who gave themselves to prayer in an extravagant way.
- B. Jesus personally spent long hours in prayer (Mk 1:35; 6:46; Lk 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28; 21:37). He emphasized prayer, or “watching,” more than any other specific activity when speaking about the generation in which He would return (Mt. 24:42-43; 25:13; Mk. 13:9, 33-38; Lk. 12:38-39; 21:36).
- C. Prayer was a high priority among the leaders in the New Testament (Acts 1:14, 24; 2:42; 3:1; 4:31; 6:4; 9:11; 10:2-4, 9, 30-31; 11:5; 12:5, 12; 13:3; 14:23; 16:16, 25; Rom. 8:26; 10:1; 12:12; 1 Cor. 7:5; 2 Cor. 1:11; 9:14; 13:7-9; Eph. 1:17-19; 3:14-20; 6:18; Phil. 1:4, 9-11; 4:6; Col. 1:3, 9-11; 4:2-3; 1 Thes. 3:10; 5:17, 25; 2 Thes. 1:11; 3:1; 1 Tim. 2:8; 4:5; Heb. 13:18; Jas. 5:13-18; Jude 20).

⁴...but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” (Acts 6:4)

⁴²And they continued steadfastly...in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. (Acts 2:42)

- D. Paul embraced night-and-day prayer in various seasons and called widows to this ministry (1 Thess. 3:10; 1 Tim. 5:5; 2 Tim. 1:3). John the Baptist spent much time communing with the Lord in the wilderness of Judea (Matt. 3), and the apostles were very committed to their prayer lives (Acts 6:4).

V. THE ANNA CALLING

- A. One of the most powerful examples in the New Testament of an intercessory missionary is Anna, an elderly Jewish widow who prayed in the temple night and day prior to Jesus’s birth. She was empowered by the grace of God to spend long hours in His presence for many years.

³⁶Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess...she had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; ³⁷and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. ³⁸And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem. (Lk 2:36–38)

- B. Luke described Anna as a prophetess (2:36), an intercessor (2:37), and an evangelist (2:38). In this one woman the grace for three ministries—prophecy, intercession, and evangelism—came together. Anna was widowed after living with her husband for seven years (v. 36), so she was probably in her mid-twenties when I believe she began giving herself to prayer night and day. At 84 years old—approximately 60 years later—she was still ministering to the Lord in prayer with fasting.
- C. Anna is representative of intercessors with grace to sustain long hours of prayer for many years. Her calling—what I refer to as “the Anna calling”—transcends gender and age. It is for male and female, young and old. In this hour the Lord is calling people to the full-time occupation of worship and prayer like Anna to be modern-day “Annas” in the body of Christ around the world.
- D. God’s kingdom work is accomplished both in the place of prayer and outside it. The three dimensions of missions work—*continual prayer, mercy deeds, and sharing the gospel*—must go together. Prayer causes the work of outreach to the lost and needy to be much more effective. Oswald Chambers said, “*Prayer does not fit us for the greater work; prayer is the greater work.*”
- E. Through the years “intercessory missionaries” have been known by different titles, but the biblical values behind their occupation is evident: *they did the work of missions from a lifestyle of being deeply engaged in prayer, worship, and the Word.*
- F. The Lord has led many throughout the 2,000 years of church history to establish night-and-day prayer ministries. Ministries from all streams of the body of Christ—Celtic, Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant traditions—have mobilized 24/7 prayer ministries; see *Growing in Prayer* (chapter 27).

- G. Intercessory missionaries today—see *Growing in Prayer* (chapter 28) for many examples of how the Spirit has raised up thousands of new prayer ministries in these days. The number of 24/7 prayer ministry in the world has increased from fewer than twenty-five in 1984 to more than ten thousand.

- H. Certainly not everyone is called to be an Anna. We are all called to pray, but not necessarily as our primary occupation. *The greatest ministry is to do the will of God*, whatever that may be for each one of us. In other words, the greatest ministry you can have is the one to which God calls you. Embrace your own individual calling—whether it is serving God full-time in the marketplace, in your home, school or neighborhood, or in the prayer movement—because that is God’s highest calling for you. For some of you, full-time intercession is not your calling, but the Lord may lead you to support emotionally and/or financially someone who is called to this occupation.