

Men's Ministries Foundational

**PASTOR'S PRAYER
PARTNERS**

IPHC
MEN'S
DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRIES

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PASTOR'S PRAYER PARTNERS

GIVING YOUR PASTOR ADDITIONAL SPIRITUAL SUPPORT

An old popular song claimed, "Everybody needs somebody sometime. Everybody needs someone, somehow." Those lyrics could have been written with pastors in mind.

The ministry is a fulfilling, rewarding profession. But, like any significant leadership role, it has its own unique, isolating factors, lonely feelings, diverse challenges, and intense demands. Pastors often are not free to discuss details of their struggles over church decisions, counseling situations, or ministry matters. Maintaining confidentiality and trust carries an emotional price tag. Just because pastors are "up-front" in public roles, does not mean they have lots of friends with whom they are safe sharing their personal burdens and concerns. Most churches have a variety of program needs and on-going mini-crises that keep a pastor pulled in several directions at once. Add to all this the fact that ministry often involves battles fought on the devil's territory and that leaders draw more intense fire from the enemy, and you get the picture of need pastors have for "somebody, sometime" and "someone, somehow."

Every Christian benefits from having praying friends. Christian leaders, though, are particularly in need of fellow believers who faithfully, regularly, dependably pray for them and for the ministries in which they seek to be effective. Why do pastors need this extra spiritual support? Consider these factors:

- Pastors are under constant pressure to practice a degree of integrity and professional competence not necessarily expected by lay persons of themselves or other friends and acquaintances.
- Many feel a peculiar isolation because of the limited number of confidants they have to share their personal hurts, inadequacies, doubts, insecurities and burdens.
- Some have unresolved internal conflicts with temptation, painful relationships, poor judgement, financial distress, marriage or family dysfunction, grief, and other stresses.

- Pastors and their families are often subject to gossip, negative criticism, and antagonism, as Satan works to diminish their effectiveness.
- The ministry involves a heavy load of responsibility and accountability for the spiritual well-being of others; pastors face "***a stricter judgment***" for their actions, according to ***James 3:1***.
- A pastor's influence on others places him or her in double jeopardy in case of a fall; not only does moral or ethical failure hurt a leader, it can also devastate a whole church.
- The heavy demands of giving one's best to others in so many ways (preaching, caring, counseling, visiting, administrating) make pastors vulnerable to emotional burn-out, discouragement, pride, and a host of other potential problems.

WANTED: PRAYER PARTNERS

Spiritual leaders need help - especially the kind of moral support that comes from having partners who feel in their soul the urgency, passion, and concerns of their leader. Jesus expressed this need in His own ministry, when He took a small group of His disciples aside on the night He was betrayed and told them, "***My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me***" (***Matthew 26:38***).

The need for prayer partners is also illustrated in the desires of other early church leaders. The Apostle Paul made some of the most eloquent appeals for prayer on record in the Bible. Here are a few examples:

"I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me. Pray that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea and that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints there, so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and together with you be refreshed." ***Romans 15:30-32***

"On Him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many."
2 Corinthians 1:10-11

"Pray also for me that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly as I should." ***Ephesians 6:19-20***

INTERCESSION: A PRAYER PARTNERS MISSION

Intercession is the privilege and practice of praying for others. It typically involves either or both of two approaches:

- Learning about and taking other's needs to the Father;
- Developing an awareness of the Father's desires for others and praying for His will to be done in their lives.

Intercession is a prayer partners mission. Intercessors take other people's needs to God. For too many of us, prayer is often simply telling God our personal want and wish list. If that's your pattern of praying, a wonderful adventure awaits you in learning about intercessory prayer. It is liberating to get beyond ourselves and to love others through prayer. Intercessors enjoy the unselfishness of taking other people's needs to God. Over time, God gives them special insight into how to pray more specifically and effectively for friends, relatives, acquaintances, leaders, strangers, and lost persons. More than anything else, intercession is love on its knees, seeking God's mercy and blessings for other people.

Another mark of intercessors is their intense commitment to seeing God's will done on earth. They study His Word to discern His desires and plans. And out of this search to know the Lord, His will, and His ways, flows prayers for others to experience His fullness in their lives. Intercessors are intimate with Christ, and because of the closeness they maintain to Him, they know how to pray intimately for others who need His touch and His power in their lives.

Intercessors are believers who ***"stand in the gap,"*** a biblical expression for being another person's spiritual protector, encourager, and partner. It is drawn from ***Ezekiel 22:30***. An Old Testament prophet, Ezekiel, longed for the rebuilding of His nation, Israel, after its destruction by foreign invaders. The problem preventing this, however, was the indifference to God, false self-confidence, and moral disability of the nation's people and remaining leaders. In a vision from the Lord, Ezekiel was shown the solution. The Lord's voice said to him, ***"I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found none."*** Apparently, God highly regards our prayers for one another. He gives or withholds some blessings on the basis of His people's faithful intercession for one another.

Ancient biblical cities were often surrounded by a stone wall to protect their inhabitants. Ezekiel envisioned a city wall to protect their inhabitants. Ezekiel envisioned a city wall that had been torn down and only partially rebuilt. It still had huge holes that needed repair, and until the construction was complete, there also needed to be sentries posted to prevent enemies

from getting in and to protect the workers inside. The person who stood in the gap was a friend of those within - a friend who cared enough about their work and safety that he or she came to their aid.

Intercessors are prayer partners who are spiritually qualified to stand before God to obtain His mercy for others, and who earnestly seek for God's will to be done on earth. Just as in Ezekiel's time, the Lord still welcomes intercessors, people who are ready to build strong walls of spiritual protection around others and "***stand in the gap***" to encourage and support them in their labors.

Prayer partners who act as intercessors are one of the best assets any pastor and church can have. They delight in spending quality time praying for the spiritual well being of believers and for the salvation of the lost. They pray with fervency. They are conscious of the need for personal righteousness to add power to their prayers, so they seek to live a holy life, one that pleases God in every way, so that their prayers are not hindered.

DEVELOPING PASTOR'S PRAYER PARTNERS

Imagine a team of men (even if it starts with only two or three persons) who commit themselves to being intercessory prayer partners for your church's spiritual leaders. What an engine they would be for driving revival and spiritual growth in the congregation! As a result of their faithfulness, the church would see specific, often dramatic answers to prayer. The ministry staff would be emboldened and strengthened. Miracles would happen!

That is the vision Men's Ministries has for every Pentecostal Holiness Church. The Pastor's Prayer Partners ministry is designed to help men in your church become intercessors - prayers partners for the pastor(s) leading your congregation, for believers actively involved in lay ministry in your church, and for unsaved person's in your community.

What does a Pastor's Prayer Partners ministry look like? In some churches, it may simply be a group of men who meet before each worship service to pray for the pastor, the choir, the worshippers, and the realization of God's goals for the service. Other teams may want to establish a prayer room and staff it with volunteers who pray throughout each public service for those who are leading and attending. Some prayer ministries may take different forms: a weekly men's prayer breakfast that prays for the church and its leaders or a monthly prayer vigil that organizes volunteers to pray around the clock for special needs. Other prayer partnering may simply involve recruiting men who will promise to pray daily in personal and family devotional times for the church and one day monthly specifically for the pastor.

What steps should Men's Ministries leaders take to develop a Pastor's Prayer Partners ministry?

1. Discuss the idea with your pastor.

Most pastors will welcome the idea being initiated by lay persons. Some pastors will want to take the lead themselves in recruiting and organizing prayer partners. Cooperate fully with your pastor in this area as a demonstration of your real interest - simply providing tangible evidence of the spiritual support your pastor and church can count on.

2. Invite a few individuals to an informational meeting.

This assumes you Pastor's Prayer Partners ministry will take the form of an organized prayer team. Those invited should be persons selected by the pastor or in consultation with him or her. It is usually best not to extend an open invitation to a whole group or church. A prayer partner team does not have to be large or include everyone to be effective. Size is not the issue; commitment to intercession for the pastor, church, and community is.

3. Explain the commitment involved.

- a) Prayer partners should be lead to make a one-year commitment to the team.
- b) Prayer partners are expected to participate in an annual orientation/covenant signing meeting (this may be part of a prayer retreat, if one is planned), weekly pre-worship prayer meetings (when assigned), and quarterly team meetings for encouragement and enrichment.
- c) Prayer partners should be willing to promise to pray regularly and often in secret for the pastor.
- d) Team members are expected to demonstrate Christian love, loyalty and support for the pastor.

4. Share the qualifications for Pastor's Prayer Partners.

- a) Men of faith and integrity, whose walk with God and testimony are respected by others
- b) Mature believers who are able to respond to the needs of the pastor and church with discernment and tact

- c) Team players who are able to keep confidences and respect the trust placed in them by their pastor
- d) Spirit-filled men who are aware of the need to live holy lives and who rely on God for power to be victorious in Christ
- e) Individuals who are faithful in their church attendance and financial support and, therefore, able to pray with integrity about the discipleship of others
- f) Willingness to grow in one's own discipleship and spiritual discipline.

5. Plan a Prayer Partners' Retreat.

Led by the pastor, this retreat might include time for teaching about intercession and prayer; time for personal sharing and spiritual renewal among group members; and time for intense prayer together. A retreat models the ministry of intercession for new prayer partners and is an opportunity for previous participants to reaffirm their commitment.

6. Ask for signed "Pastor's Prayer Partner Covenant" cards from each team member.

Also have them sign a card to keep for themselves as a reminder of their commitment. Signing a covenant card deepens the sense of accountability for team members. The covenant you use might look like the following sample:

<p>Pastor's Prayer Partner Covenant</p> <p>Prayer Partners' Pledge</p> <p><i>I, _____, promise to pray regularly and faithfully during the next twelve months for my pastor, church and community. As a member of the Pastor's Prayer Partner Team, I commit myself to living a life of faith, holiness, and integrity, and will pray for the growth of my pastor, fellow believers, and new Christians in the same areas.</i></p> <p>Pastor's Pledge</p> <p><i>I, _____, pastor of _____ Church, promise to pray regularly and faithfully for each of my prayer partners, asking God to enable us to bear much fruit for Him together and trusting the Lord to lead each of us in knowing and doing His will with joy.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>"I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me." (Romans 15:30)</i></p>

PRAYING FOR YOUR PASTOR

As a Pastor's Prayer Partner team member, you will find it helpful to target specific areas of need as you pray daily for your pastor. Here are some prayer reminders to get you started:

Sunday: Passion for God

Intimacy with the Lord and zeal for His work, fullness of the Holy Spirit, faithful obedience to God, enjoyment in the study of God's Word, courage to stand for Christ

Monday: Purpose for Ministry

Strong vision for the church, unshakable faith in God's design for this ministry, holy motives, divine guidance in ministry planning

Tuesday: Perception

Wisdom and discernment for personal relationships, staff responsibilities, congregational needs, community involvement, and ministry situations

Wednesday: Protection

Physical health; marriage and family relationships; escape from temptation, Satan's snares, and wicked intents of others

Thursday: Priorities

Steadfast commitment to God's will in all areas, including physical well-being, time management, stewardship of personal and church finances, family obligations, ministry planning, personal renewal and recreation

Friday: Perseverance

Deliverance from discouragement and doubt; patience in difficulties and conflict, endurance of persecution; steadfastness in spiritual disciplines: prayer, Bible study, tithing, witnessing, service

Saturday: Productivity

Effectiveness in evangelism and disciple-making, success in developing leadership talents in others, wise church administration, power for preaching and other ministries

PRAYING FOR YOUR CHURCH

The local church should be a special focus for intercession by Pastor's Prayer Partners. Jesus prayer in ***John 15*** is a special source of inspiration, as well as the Apostle Paul's prayers for the church in New Testament letters like ***Ephesians (1:15-19 and 3:14-21)***, ***Philippians (1:3-11)***, ***Colossians (1:3-14)***, and ***First Thessalonians (1:2-3 and 5:23-24)***.

As you and your pastor covenant to pray together for your church, keep in mind its many areas of need and ministry. Add you own concerns to the following prayer reminders:

- Clarified vision of God's purposes
- Holiness and empowerment for ministry leaders
- Increased awareness in the church of prayer resources and greater commitment to intercessory prayer
- Building up and involving lay persons in ministry
- Worship services that are joyful, celebrative, and life-transforming
- Effective disciple-making and teaching ministries for believers new and old
- Fellowship, genuine love and unity among believers
- Meaningful social action that glorifies God
- Provision for ministry needs by faithful stewardship and volunteer commitments
- Guidance in identifying and reaching people who are spiritually receptive
- Divine direction in creating appropriate and productive programming
- Passion for obeying the great Commission
- Open doors and boldness for developing ministries in new areas

PRAYING FOR LOST PEOPLE

Should Christians pray for the lost? Won't God just save whoever He wants to save without any asking? Can our prayers really influence those who so far have rejected Christ as their Savior and play a part in winning them to the Lord?

The answer are yes, no, and yes. The Scriptures give us clear statements of God's intended will for lost, unsaved people. Because these inspired words express God's will, they significantly inform the way we should earnestly be praying.

Lost people matter to God so much so that He sent His Son to seek and to save them. Can we do less than pray for them ourselves? Prayer for

the lost does not convince God to do more for the unsaved and unchurched:

its real power is seen in what it does to us and to the believers we influence. Prayer Partners strengthen the pastor's challenge and call for your church to be a soul-winning church.

Here are a few intercessory prayer requests for the lost. Ask God for...

- The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on workers and witnesses who minister to lost people
- Compassion for those whose life styles and needs we have trouble understanding
- Power from God for believers to be consistent in holy living and to use care in not being stumbling blocks to the lost
- Divinely-arranged circumstances and events that will attract lost people to Christ
- Ability for the lost to understand and believe the Scriptures
- Release for the lost from satanic bondage and blindness to God that block repentance
- Capable teachers in the church to instruct new believers
- Continued obedience and spiritual growth of those who believe in Christ
- Success in starting new congregations to expand the church's witness to the lost and to reach people who might never attend your present congregation

PRAYING FOR YOUR COMMUNITY AND WORLD

John 3:16 declares God's love not just for us and our friends, but for "the world." As you pray for your pastor and for the church you serve together, seek a vision as big as God's. Consider some of these concerns as you pray:

- The need for believers to have eyes to see the harvest of souls
- Confession, sorrow, and repentance for national sins
- Administrative, legislative, and judicial officials on the local, state or province, national, and international level
- Needs evident in current news headlines
- Those charges with serving the larger Church's interest in denominational and educational institutions
- Victims of natural disaster, man-made suffering, and spiritual oppression

- Christians enduring persecution for their faith and witness
- Missionary personnel ministering in cross-cultural situations
- Political, economic, social, and environmental conditions impacting the spread of the Gospel
- Favor for Christian workers with persons of positions of authority and influence who can open doors for proclaiming the Gospel

PRAYING FOR YOUR PERSONAL MINISTRY

As an intercessor for others, you have an important personal ministry. Keeping yourself strong in the Lord and in the might of His Spirit are crucial to maintaining that ministry. As you pray for others, also keep these needs in mind for yourself:

- Brokenness over things that grieve the Holy Spirit in your life, your church, and your community
- Confession of personal sins, failures, and shortcomings
- Personal righteousness to make prayer powerful and effective
- Personal spiritual growth and increased maturity in Christ-likeness
- The fullness of the Holy Spirit in you heart and life
- Wisdom for dealing with family needs, unsaved relatives, and other relationships
- Discovery of your spiritual gifts and God's direction in using your time and talents
- Boldness and effectiveness in personal witnessing
- Faithfulness in praying without ceasing.

SEVEN TEMPTATIONS FOR PRAYER PARTNERS TO AVOID

Praying for others is a wonderful ministry, It can cause love for them to grow in our hearts and true compassion to flow from our lives. Intercession can reward us with the joy of participating in answered prayer. Prayer partnering is a fulfilling way to be a part of someone else's spiritual growth and ministry success.

Prayer Partners can be tempted with wrong motives, though. You will need spiritual insight and God's help to develop your prayer ministry in ways that honor Him and build up His church. Refer to this checklist from time to time to test your spirit and to protect yourself from succumbing to Satan's subtle traps.

1. Spiritual pride

"Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you" (Romans 12:3).

How easy it is to forget that biblical admonition! When pastors, ministries, churches, programs, and people for whom we have prayed are successful, it may be tempting to want to claim credit for ourselves. The reverse can be true, also. When things do not go well (especially if you predicted ahead of time that they would not or if you disagreed with them being tried in the first place), it can be a real temptation to secretly gloat, or even openly gossip about and criticize those who were involved.

Pride may also be a temptation as a result of knowing needs or details about circumstances you have been asked to remember in prayer that are not public information. Do not yield to the temptation of spiritual pride - thinking that your position as a Prayer Partner and your awareness of facts before others learn them makes you more important to the church than you actually are.

2. Boasting.

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud" (1 Corinthians 13:4).

Intercession is love on its knees, so do not stand to your feet and do unlovely things. The closer you are to the pastor as a Prayer Partner, the more tempting it might be to want to tell others things you should not as a means of demonstrating your privileged position. Consider your Prayer Partner Covenant as an honor, not a bragging right.

3. Desire for influence and control.

Being asked to pray for someone else does not give you authority to control or direct their decisions and actions. An intercessor is not a counselor, board member, or boss. You may not agree with some of our pastor's thinking, theology, or decisions. At times, you may hope to change his or her mind about something, or you may literally doubt his or her spiritual integrity or maturity. Do not use prayer as a tool to work your way into a position of influence from which you try to control others. Lust for power is as corrupting as any of life's other spiritual dangers.

4. False friendship.

Have you ever felt manipulated or used by someone? It is a frustrating feeling, especially when you mistook their actions as offerings of sincere respect and friendship. Your pastor is as much in need of human friendship and fellowship as you are. Handle that need with care. Do not allow yourself to become a Prayer Partner as a means of getting inside information about the pastor or church situations to use later in political maneuvers or as a weapon to lessen his or her influence. Remember the lesson of Absalom (*2 Samuel 15-17*). Treachery is ultimately self-destructive.

As a Prayer Partner, your mission is to be a source of support and spiritual strength for the pastor and church. ***"Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart." (1 Peter 1:22).***

5. Betraying confidences.

A word has already been said about avoiding the temptation to gossip by passing along to others things overheard in prayer. The Apostle Paul warned us that, ***"Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up" (1 Corinthians 8:1).*** If your pastor shares a discouragement he is struggling with, a frustration she is feeling, a doubt or fear, a personal concern, information about another church member in need, an assessment of the state of the church, or something about a member or volunteer, keep that information as a sacred trust. Share it outside the circle of prayer only with permission.

6. Overstepping biblical boundaries.

Some prayer ministries get sidetracked when individuals begin focusing on special language, rituals, postures, or spiritualized practices they think add effectiveness to their prayers. But God does not hear us because of how loud, long, logically, or loftily we pray. That was the main point of what Jesus said about prayer in ***Matthew 6:5-8***. Praying is not doing magic, using the right formula to get what you want, or saying words in just the right way to get God to act. Prayer is coming to God on His terms, in His way, to seek His will and glory. Stay inside the lines of biblical teachings about prayer.

7. Selfish desires.

"All a man's ways seem innocent to him, but motives are weighed by the Lord" (Proverbs 16:2).

James cautioned us about selfish motives being a primary factor in unanswered prayers (***James 4:3***). When the main reason a person wants to become a Pastor's Prayer Partner is status, influence, emotional satisfaction, hope for personal spiritual gain or blessing, there is an impure motive at work. It is not selfish to find joy and delight praying for others, but we must guard our hearts against misusing our relationship with others.

SEVEN REWARDS FOR PRAYER PARTNERS

Becoming a Pastor's Prayer Partner team member is a gift you give others. However, it is a biblical principle that God blesses givers. He does so as an expression of love for those who pattern their lives after His character, which is ultimately self-giving. While not making them our motive for prayer partnering with others, God's rewards to praying people is cause for celebration.

1. Delight in seeing others blessed.

Have you ever given someone a gift just for the sheer joy of seeing their happy reaction? Sometimes the satisfaction of seeing someone else's needs being met and their life being blessed is all the reward a person should hope for.

2. Trust with greater responsibilities.

Maybe you have already noticed, but it seems to be a good point in some of Jesus' parables that the reward for good work is more work (see ***Matthew 25:14-30***, for example). God gives greater opportunities to those who are faithful in smaller tasks.

3. Seeing God empower your pastor.

The best way to get a better pastor is to pray for the one you've got. It is pure enjoyment to participate in things that make a leader more Christ like, more Spirit-filled, more effective, and more victorious in their own walk with God and service in His kingdom.

4. Seeing God's will accomplished in your church.

It is a reward to share the unity, experience the fellowship, feel the peace, know the love, and fulfill the dreams of a congregation that has come to desire God's best. Intercessors are one of the unsung heroes of this kind of growth most of the time, but their contribution is significant nonetheless. In fact, some of your greatest joys may come from seeing things happen in your church that you prayed for in secret and God reveals openly.

5. Seeing others grow closer to God.

As a Pastor's Prayer Partner, you will undoubtedly pray often for unsaved people attending church services who are introduced to Jesus Christ; for carnal Christians who finally surrender to God in a new, total commitment; for sick persons who are healed; for empty souls who are filled; for unchurched persons who come alive to God in Jesus Christ and enter into the love of His family.

5. Growing closer to God yourself.

Intercessors spend more time seeking God than the average Christian. According to His own promise to draw close to those who draw close to Him (***James 4:8***), God will expand your love for Him and deepen your assurance of His love for you as you pray day by day. Praying for others will help you see ways to become more open and obedient to Him personally. Your relationship with the father will mean more to you as you bring others into His presence in prayer.

6. The surprises waiting in heaven.

Christians do not live just with a sense of the here and now. We live with an eye toward eternity and a longing to be with the Lord in heaven. Who can imagine what He has in store for those who humbly seek to please Him in this world? Concentrate your life on loving God with your whole

heart, mind, soul, and strength, and on loving others as you love yourself. The Lord will prepare the place for you in His home that will satisfy you forever

Pastor's Prayer Partners ... A "must" in the local church.

