

Protecting Pastors through Strategic Prayer

By Adena Hodges



In the 1990s, one of the regions in a very dark part of Kenya, Africa, was known as the graveyard of pastors and missionaries. It seemed that no work of God could be established there.

But a pastor with a team of intercessors was determined to see God's Kingdom advance. They tried many prayer and worship methods but still experienced considerable opposition. Then, in desperation, the pastor asked each of his intercessors to take a day of the week to fast and pray for him and the ministry.

In the beginning there was a measure of breakthrough. However, one by one, the intercessors were "picked off" through sickness or accidents. Realizing the vulnerability of the intercessors as they fasted and prayed for their leader, the pastor then asked two intercessors to cover the intercessor assigned to pray for the pastor on each day.

When they began to do this, breakthrough happened! Today, there are many churches and a Bible college in this region (source: compilation by Beni Johnson, Prayer Changes Things, chapter 9).

The Power of Strategy

This simple prayer strategy changed everything! It was not complex, but it significantly turned around the thwarted attempts to advance God's Kingdom.

Without strategy, battles are lost, businesses fail, and people walk aimlessly through life. We cannot afford to be isolated on the battlefield of prayer. God wants us to learn to understand one another's gifts, callings, and assignments as we fight strategically side by side.

Picture intercessors like the military. Each branch (Army, Marines, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard) has specific roles and assignments. As intercessors learn to appreciate each other's differences, operate in their strengths, and pray strategically, we'll see much greater advances for the Kingdom of God.

Seal Teams in Prayer

While we need everyone to be engaged in prayer for our churches, pastors, and leaders, a specific type of prayer team can come around the pastor—much like the teamwork of U.S. Navy SEALs. These “special ops” team members perform a strategic role in assisting the pastor by providing additional spiritual coverage and protection.

Using the simple model from the example of the pastor and his intercessors in Kenya, my church implemented the idea of Seal Teams. The Seal Teams not only fast and pray for the pastor, but they also cover each other in prayer. When it is one intercessor's turn to fast and pray for the pastor, the people assigned to the days before and afterward also pray for that intercessor.

Since implementing this model in our church in 2011, we've seen incredible breakthroughs. It is amazing to see major

obstacles removed and lives changed.

Our Seal Teams found other benefits we hadn't anticipated. Too often breaches between pastors and intercessors can divide ministries and decrease their effectiveness. Often a pastor may be willing for intercessors to pray off in a corner or back room but might have difficulty working directly with them. In our church, these special, dedicated Seal Teams, however, helped form bonds between the pastor and the intercessors that produced spiritual fruit.

In addition, a culture of prayer developed as the teams learned to pray for one another. You can't pray for someone regularly without coming to love and appreciate him or her in new ways.

Prayer Points for Leaders

As you develop Seal Teams, here are some common prayer points to encourage intercessors to pray in agreement

- Pray for a strengthening of your pastor's "inner man." Paul tells the Ephesians that he is praying that they will be "strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man" (Eph. 3:16, NASB).
- Pray for effective team leadership. Ask God to surround your pastor with trusted, faithful leaders and intercessors to help fulfill the calling on his or her life.
- Pray for courage for your pastors so they will ask for help when needed. Most pastors feel they can't trust anyone with the battles and struggles they are going through. This isolates them and keeps them from sharing their difficulties until sometimes it's too late.
- Pray for seasons of rest. Pastoring is one of the most difficult jobs around. It's often 24/7 with little reward or compensation. Encourage your pastor to get away for times of rest and refreshment.

For more information or training, go to intercessorsworkshop.com.

ADENA HODGES and her husband Gil are co-directors of the Kingdom Equipping Center in Roseville, CA. She is also the author of two books and writes a weekly blog at 1000waystopray.com.