



# Intercession for Leaders

## Recognising the Need

As a first step, leaders need to acknowledge their need for prayer support, to ask the Lord to provide them with intercessors who can "stand in the gap" on their behalf, (see Ezekiel 22:30) to present their needs and ministry before the Lord. There are several reasons why this may not be as easy as it sounds .....

☞ *Leaders may not realise how much they need prayer support.* Things may be going OK - but how much better could they be? There has never been as much pressure on our leaders as there is today, and many Christian leaders need greater prayer support than they are able to provide for themselves.

☞ *Leaders don't ask for prayer support!* After all, there are far more urgent needs out there - people in need of healing, a world torn apart by violence and war, those who are bereaved. Even if the need for greater intercessory support for leaders is recognised, humility can often be a barrier to the ministries and work of leaders being presented as a need for prayer. Yet it is a very healthy and positive Christian practice for others to engage in intercession for leaders.

☞ *Our use of prayer often tends towards situations where there is a problem, or healing is required.* Receiving regular prayer support may make the leaders feel that their ministry is inadequate, or riven with issues.

### Paul's Requests for Prayer

Paul knew his need for prayer support, for particular crisis situations and for his ongoing ministry. He asked for prayer from the churches in Ephesus (Eph 6:19), Rome (Rom 15:30), Corinth (2 Cor 1:11), Thessalonica (1 Thess 5:25), Philippi (Phil 1:19) and Colossae (Col 4:3). Paul's request to the Philippians for prayer highlights the high importance he places on intercession in deliverance from his imprisonment. In his letter to Philemon he is so confident that the prayers for his release will be successful that he asks Philemon to prepare a room for him! His requests in Ephesians and Colossians are for prayer for his ministry of proclaiming the gospel.

Asking for prayer support, and building up effective relationships with intercessors is not easy.

## A pyramid of Prayer Support

Here's a three level model of prayer support, based on one presented by C. Peter Wagner, in his book "Prayer Shield".

At the base of the pyramid is general prayer support - often that provided by a congregation for their minister, or by regular supporters of an organisation for its leadership. It can be difficult knowing how much effective support is being provided at any point in time. Omar Cabera, the Argentinean pastor, simply asks church members to pray for him and his wife when they say grace at meals. The size of his church means this could lead to around 20,000 prayers a day!

The second level on the pyramid represents those who will undertake to pray regularly for specific leaders. Their commitment to this specific prayer need is greater than that of the base level, and they will be fewer in number. There will need to be regular two-way communication with these people. A New Zealand Anglican church planter who visited us recently has 15 intercessors who sign up for a year's commitment, which may be renewed, to pray for him daily. In return he and his wife pray for them once each week. Once a month he writes a very open and specific letter to these intercessors, giving answers to prayer, and some topics for prayer for the coming month.

The top level of the pyramid represents the one or two people who are prepared to undertake intercession for a specific leader as a significant part of their ministry. This may be as a response to a call from God, whether felt as a definite calling, or presented as a desire to pray for a particular leader and his/her ministry. Peter Wagner suggests that it is unlikely that a leader will have more than a couple of these intercessors at any point in time, and most often a single person fulfils this role. This kind of intercessor will very much need the faith to follow God's agenda, rather than solely presenting their view of the needs of the leader. It is clearly important that an open and trusting relationship is built between leader and intercessor.

