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

1. Introduction
   * 1. 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.

*Tonight I want to give a biblical overview of what it means to be a full-time intercessory missionary. Now I realize that many in the Body of Christ do not have that calling. As a matter of fact, the vast majority do not. It is a calling that the Holy Spirit is emphasizing, and so much of the Body of Christ needs to understand the biblical foundation and the necessity of it, because the Holy Spirit is breathing on this reality around the world right now.*

*Godly believers want to understand what the Lord is doing, and they want to support it. Again it may not affect their lives in a direct way, but they will know somebody that it does. They will want to be an encouragement to them, a support to them in various ways. As this reality has been unfolding in the last couple of decades, even many sincere believers ask, “Where is that in the Bible?” More and more today people are saying that is biblical, and it is happening around the world. So I feel like that it is important as we embrace this vast subject called “growing in prayer,” that you would have a biblical answer for something the Spirit is doing in a powerful way across the nations right now.*

*Something I will mention a little bit later, but about thirty years ago someone did a count of all the twenty-four hour prayer ministries they could find in the earth, that went twenty-four hours and did not stop, not necessarily led by music, but just twenty-four hour prayer. To their amazement and encouragement, they located twenty-five of them around the nations. I remember hearing the story that there were twenty-five, twenty-four hour prayer ministries; I heard it years ago.*

*Today there are about 20,000 of them. Many of them are prayer rooms where a person prays an hour and hands off the baton, so to speak, to the next person. Just thirty years after there were twenty-five that were counted, not that there were not more that were not known. Still, it is such a dramatic increase of the Holy Spirit’s activity that there are over 20,000 that can be identified today. Beloved, that is a sign of the times. Most of those 20,000 have been started in the last ten years. I am anticipating in the next ten years for that number to double.*

*God the Holy Spirit is doing something. It will not look like what we are doing. Every city, every culture will have a different application. It is happening in all streams of the Body of Christ just like it has throughout history. Many believers who really love God, the Word, and the work of the Spirit are unaware and uninformed about the biblical basis and the historical precedent of that which the Spirit is breathing on in a very unique way in this hour in history.*

*One of the most significant aspects of the global prayer movement today is the growing number of people who feel called to do this as their full-time occupation. Meaning not that they go to a prayer meeting once a week—which I think is fantastic; I think that is a glorious thing—but I mean they feel it is their primary full-time vocation, whether they are in the singing worship part or they are in the prayer room or serving in various ways related to supporting the prayer room. I refer to those who have this vocation as intercessory missionaries. That is just a term we use. That is a term other people use as well. It is not a biblical term. It is a biblical idea, but not a biblical term. We are talking about those who do the work of the kingdom from the place of night and day prayer. They do the work of the kingdom from the place of prayer while embracing a missionary lifestyle and a ministry focus.*

* + 1. 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.

*Some people ask me, “What is an intercessory missionary? Where is it in the Bible? Where is that title?” Again the calling to this as a full-time occupation appears throughout Scripture, but it appears in principle, not in the title itself, not by specific name. Its function is found in the Old Testament and the New Testament. We are going to look at that in a moment.*

*I want to point out that its function is also found throughout church history. It is exploding in this reality across the earth today. I am asking the Lord for a million full-time intercessory missionaries. I do not mean related to what we are doing here, just sovereignly raised up in the nations in all the different streams. Then when there is a million, and I do not know that we will ever know what the number is, we are going to pray for ten million because we are believing for a billion people in the great end-time harvest.*

* + 1. 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.

*The New Testament only gives a few ministry titles specifically. The ministry title that is used the most with the clearest description is the apostle. We do not find titles in the New Testament like “senior pastor.” We do not find “marriage counselor” or “youth pastor.” We find those values are supported by the New Testament, but we do not find those titles themselves. As a matter of fact, we do not find the actual terminology of most of the titles in the Church today in the Bible.*

* + 1. 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.

*The Bible does not provide a comprehensive list of ministry titles, but as long as the biblical value is upheld, that is the key point. I believe the Church has liberty to use the title or the phrase that makes sense in its culture in a way that applies to what God is doing in their hour as long as it upholds the biblical values. That is why you can call somebody senior pastor, youth pastor, children’s ministry pastor. It is okay because the Bible does not give a comprehensive list of all the titles used in church history.*

1. Intercessory Missionaries in the Old Testament
   * 1. 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).

*Let’s start in the Old Testament. It started with David. The Old Testament provides a lot of information about the occupation of the full-time singer. I am using* ***singer*** *and* ***intercessor*** *interchangeably because the singers in the Old Testament context were before the presence of the Lord in the place of intercession. So I am using interchangeably the worship/intercessory position.*

*Well, in 1 Chronicles 28:19 it says that David testified that the Holy Spirit revealed to him the function of the Levites, the singers and musicians. He said that the Holy Spirit specifically showed him this. He recorded it at the end of his life as he was turning the kingdom over to his son, Solomon. He gave testimony before the entire nation. He said, in essence, “This was not just my idea. It was given to me directly by the Lord.”*

* + 1. 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)

*David was the first leader in the Bible to establish the singer/musician in a full-time occupation. It says in 1 Chronicles 9:33—this is talking about David. He is thirty-seven years old at this time, and he is a young king, based in Jerusalem over the nation of Israel—that one of the first things he does when he becomes king over all Israel is to get the singers and musicians and put them in place in a full-time capacity to stand before the presence of the Lord.*

*It is no wonder he was called the man after God’s own heart. David’s heart was so in tune with God’s heart. Of course we know they worship around the throne night and day in heaven. Jesus prayed, “On earth like it is in heaven.” David had a glimpse undoubtedly into something bigger that was going on around the throne; that is my assumption. He wanted something on earth that reflected what happened in heaven, and they worship night and day around the throne.*

*In 1 Chronicles 9:33, there are the singers. Now notice, they were freed from other duties. A full-time occupation, they were employed in the work night and day. It is work. We just had our sixteen-year anniversary yesterday, our sixteen years since beginning IHOPKC. Over the sixteen years we have had a lot of singers and musicians come and join us. As a matter of fact, it is just over 16,000 different people have been with us in a full-time capacity in the sixteen years—16,000—most of them for a couple years, the majority a couple years or more. So I have had a lot of opportunity to look at singers and musicians. I mean not all 16,000 full-time have been singers and musicians, but the majority were. Many of them when they joined loved Jesus and loved music, but the work of doing it day and night is like, “Whoa! Okay, I love music, but this is real work!” How many of you know it is work? Okay, you know. So they were employed in the work day and night, and they were freed from other duties. In other words, they were not to have an outside job outside of their responsibilities in the temple; it was to be a full-time occupation.*

* + 1. 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)

*In 1 Chronicles 23, David placed 8,000 full-time—I am going to use my term—intercessory missionaries; that was not his term. They were Levites, 8,000 full-time. 4,000 were called gatekeepers, and 4,000 praised the Lord with instruments and music, etc. Imagine, the 4,000 singer-musicians were supported by the 4,000 gatekeepers. They are the ones who kept the temple function going.*

*Now in our context the gatekeeper ministry is all the activities that support the work in the sanctuary. In our context it is sound techs; they are gatekeepers. There you go, Chris! [the FCF sound tech] The I. T. team, the media team, the ushers, the children’s ministry, the bookstore, these are all gatekeepers. The maintenance team, without the maintenance team there would not be a prayer room. The security team, all of those would be under the category of the gatekeepers. Well, there were about fifty percent who supported the other fifty percent who were singers and musicians. That just gives you a little snapshot as to how it worked.*

* + 1. 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)

*I want you to notice the intentionality and the sobriety that David had about this task. David was an excellent singer and musician, but this was not David’s “music ministry.” I can imagine as a young king, thirty-seven years old, that many of the commanders in the army were older than he. He gathered them all together the commanders of the army, the political leaders, and the financial leaders.*

*He says, “Hey, I heard from God!”*

*They say, “Great! This is amazing. What?”*

*“We are going to finance 8,000 new staff positions paid by the government.”*

*“Wow, that is a lot. That is going to take a lot from our army and our military and building our national infrastructure. What are they going to do?”*

*“Well, a lot of them are just going to sing night and day before God.”*

*“Well David, we know”—again he is thirty-seven years old—“in your time we know you were a young musician. You are a good singer. We like you. We bought your CDs, and we like them. I mean you are amazing. But we cannot use the national economy to support your music ministry.”*

*He says, “I am not talking about that. I am talking about something entirely different than that.”*

*Look what it says in 2 Chronicles 29:25. Now this is Hezekiah, about 300 years later. King Hezekiah is about 300 years after David. He is commenting, going back 300 years. I mean 300 years is a long time ago. Think about the history of our nation; 300 years ago what was happening in America? Well, this is Hezekiah going back 300 years.*

*It says about him, “He stationed the Levites”—the Levites are used interchangeably with singers and musicians, not always but many times—“he stationed the Levites in the house of the Lord,” that is, the temple. It was called the house of the Lord, it was called the temple, and it was called the house of prayer by Isaiah. Those terms you could use interchangeably. The Levites were stationed with cymbals, instruments, and harps. Now here is the key, “according to the command of David”; that was 300 years ago. That command was still for all the kings of Israel, still in effect. Why was David so adamant? Because it was the command of God, so David commanded them to keep this occupation going.*

* + 1. 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.”

*David lived around 1000 years BC. All the kings from David all the way to Jesus were all commanded to uphold the occupation of the full-time singers and musicians—the intercessory missionaries—that was a central function in Israel’s mandate from God. Well, in that 1,000-year period from David to Jesus, there were many times of apostasy, which means backsliding. In that 1,000-year period Israel fell away from the Lord a number of times. There are seven periods in that 1,000-year period, seven generations, that had what we could call a “revival,” a restoring. Here is what is interesting: in all seven of those periods of restoration or revival—that is a term we use today—in all seven of them they put the singers back in place and paid them full-time. They established the intercessory missionary, the person who stood before God crying out day and night for the purpose of God to go forth in their land and worshipping God because of His worthiness. It is not an accident that all seven of them are linked to bringing back this occupation into its central place in the nation.*

* + 1. 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)

*The first king after David was his son, Solomon. Of course this was not a revival. Worship was still going well from David’s day. Look at this, 2 Chronicles 8:14, Solomon appointed the Levites—again that is the singers and musicians—to praise God, as the duty of every day required. It is a full-time job. He is just emphasizing this again. Why did he do this? Because his father David, the man of God, commanded it.*

*Now notice he does not say, “my Dad” because he sees David as more than just his dad. He saw David in his function, his office, as the man of God, the man who heard from God and commanded this. So Solomon is actually responding to his father’s command as more than Dad’s command, Dad’s way. It was bigger than that.*

* + 1. 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)

*Jehoshaphat re-established it. You can read that in 2 Chronicles 20. Jehoiada the high priest did the same in 2 Chronicles 23. Notice he put the singers “as established by David.”*

* + 1. 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)

*Josiah—look at the phrase—“according to the command of David,” meaning this is something God energized. The Lord energized His leaders and gave a command that was something they were to take very seriously.*

* + 1. 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)

*Zerubbabel, Ezra, Nehemiah all did it. Notice it was not because they liked music or had kind of a special place in their heart for prayer. As in “Well, you know, we kind of do the prayer thing because we are kind of into prayer.” It was because it was commanded by God. Something bigger is going on is the point.*

*I think of my own calling to this. It was thirty-two years ago in 1983 when Bob Jones walked into my office. He said, “The Lord wants me to tell you a little bit about your future. You are going to have full-time singers and musicians night and day.” He asked, “Are you a singer?”*

*I said, “No.”*

*“Are you a musician?”*

*I answered, “No.” Well, the truth is that in my heart I am. They just will not let me do it on the platform. One of these days they are going to see. After my fifth failed audition Misty said, “We will call you. Do not call us.” There is always the millennial kingdom and a resurrected body.*

*My point is, the reason I am doing this is not because I am a singer, musician. It is not because music is my thing. I saw what is in the Word, and I saw it as a command. Again, not everyone is supposed to have a twenty-four-hour prayer room; it is nothing close to that. That is not what I am saying. The Lord is breathing on people. He is marking people all over the nations. The number of leaders I have communicated with, since IHOPKC has started over the last sixteen years since I have been talking about this, who have received a dream from the Lord, no relationship to what we are doing here, never heard of us, and the Lord told them directly and sovereignly to put singers and musicians night and day. This is happening all over the world.*

*Beloved, something bigger is going on. Though it may not be your job—maybe you are here for a short season—but wherever you go, support it, champion it, encourage people to do it, encourage them not to quit. Encourage them to keep moving on, wherever the Lord puts you.*

1. Intercessory Missionaries in End-Time Prophecy
   * 1. 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).

*It is not just in the Bible in the Old Testament. It is in many end-time prophecies. Most of those end-time prophecies are in the Old Testament. That is why I am still talking about the Old Testament right now. Most of the end-time prophecies are in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, Daniel, etc.*

*Before the Lord returns—nobody knows when that is—but the Holy Spirit is clear in the Bible that the Holy Spirit will raise up the greatest prayer movement in history. The fact that there are 20,000 identifiable twenty-four-hour prayer ministries in the earth today—again many of them are still one person for an hour in a prayer room handing the baton to somebody else you know, when they, you know they go from three to four o’clock in the afternoon, then someone else comes in for an hour. Many of them are that, but many of them now have instruments and music a little bit.*

*The fact that this is exploding around the earth is a sign of the times. I mean it is prophesied in the Bible, the prominence of prayer in the generation the Lord returns. We have gone from twenty-five to 20,000, 24/7 prayer ministries in the last thirty years. Again, most of those are in the last ten years. I think in the next ten years we are going to see that number double or more. I mean it is just a thought; who knows! The Holy Spirit is breathing on this. This is a God-thing. I do not mean our version of it; I do not mean what we do here. There are many, many different ways to do this according to culture and leadership and the resources, etc.*

* + 1. 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).

*The conflict at the end of the age, right at the core, is a conflict between two global worship movements. That is the primary conflict at the end of the age. There is a demonic Antichrist worship movement and there is a Jesus-centered worship movement, and the two are in collision with one another. That is at the very focal point of the conflict: who is worshipped.*

*It says in Revelation 13 that the Antichrist demands to be worshipped at the threat of death. He has control of and influence in economic system of the nations, and he bases the economics on who worships him. Satan came to Jesus in the wilderness in the temptation. What was the point? He said, “You worship me and I will give you all the nations.” Satan wants worship, and that is what the Antichrist wants. The Father is going to see that Jesus is worshipped in all the nations of the earth forever. What is happening in houses of prayer is that full-time intercessory missionaries are catalytic. Meaning they are helping the prayer movement in their city, in their geographic area.*

* + 1. 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.

6On 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.

*Our most-quoted Old Testament prophecy is Isaiah 62:6-7. We reference it many times. It says here in Isaiah 62:6, “On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed”—or I have set—“watchmen.” The watchmen are clearly intercessors. Well, they are messengers, too. They are prophetic messengers, and they are intercessors. They cry out night and day; that is the core definition of these watchmen. They remind the Lord of His promises. They remind the Lord of what He promised to do in the earth, the breakthrough of power. We could call it revival. Call it transformation, whatever you want. I mean there are many terms. They remind God what God promised in His Word. That is their definition. They take no rest for themselves night and day.*

*This was 2,700 years ago, and Isaiah said that there was coming a generation where God would appoint people who do this night and day. How do you know that they happen in that generation? Because those are ministries that will not stop until Jerusalem is a praise in the earth. When does Jerusalem become a praise in the earth? Jerusalem becomes a praise in the earth at the time of the second coming. Jerusalem is hated and contended for right now. I mean the Jewish purpose in Jerusalem. God’s purpose in Jerusalem is detested by many in the nations. Jerusalem is not a praise in the earth right now. It is a contention in the earth right now, and it is going to be more so as time unfolds. At the coming of the Lord, He is going to cause Jerusalem to be seen as the City of the Great King, His own city. All the nations will be awestruck at what happens in Jerusalem because Jesus and His throne will be there.*

*So when Isaiah said, “Thus says the Lord: I will appoint and set intercessors, and they will keep on night and day until My Son returns and makes Jerusalem in the earth,” he was talking about a specific timeframe, those decades leading up to the coming of the Lord. I do not know when the Lord is returning, I do not know that I will see Him return in my lifetime; I might or I might not. I know one thing: more and more ministries are being established that are crying out night and day.*

*Isaiah said, 2,700 years ago, that all over the earth in essence—I am putting that part in here—God will raise up watchmen and they will not stop until the Lord returns. In other words this is not a temporary movement that is kind of swelling for a moment and then disappearing. This is going to go until Jerusalem is a praise in the earth, which is synonymous with “until the second coming of the Lord” because that is when Jerusalem becomes a praise. So this movement is increasing night and day, 24/7. 24/7 they are breaking out everywhere. It is not going to pass away, and it is not a fad, because it is unto the return of the Lord. Those ministries will start, and they will not stop until the Lord returns. I am sure some of them may, but many God-appointed ones will not stop. They will persevere straight until the end; it is remarkable.*

*So in the Old Testament, in the period between David and Jesus’ first coming, we have the Levites in that 1,000-year period who did this full-time, many who did this full-time. Then in the Old Testament time the prophet said this is going to happen in the generation the Lord returns, and prayer will be central; it will be a central activity in the generation the Lord returns.*

1. Intercessory Missionaries in the New Testament
   * 1. 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.

*Now we are looking at the New Testament. Some people ask where is the intercessory missionary in the New Testament. My response is, “Where in the New Testament do you find leaders who do* ***not*** *prioritize prayer in a radical way?” The argument is not where in the New Testament do they pray? It is, where in the New Testament are there leaders who* ***do not*** *prioritize prayer as a major part of their job description? I cannot find any place or leader paradigm in which hours of prayers were not understood as part of their job and their function. So the argument is exactly the opposite!*

*Throughout church history we have grown so accustomed to prayer-less leaders that now it is odd that God would call people to prayer as a primary function as their full-time job. Remember, when I say prayer is a full-time job—and I have said this many, many times—I do not mean that all they do is pray. They would pray several hours a day or more or less. For each one it would be different. It all would be different. They do other kingdom work; prayer is not the only thing they do. So when I say intercessory missionary, I mean the work of the kingdom done from the place of prayer, not an occasional prayer meeting, but engaged in it in a regular, sustained way as part of their lifestyle and even viewed as a part of their job description.*

* + 1. 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).

*Well, we start with Jesus. The Man who needed prayer the least is the One who prayed the most. That is just something! The Man who least needed prayer prayed the most. When you notice His teaching on the end times, what is the number one activity in the several passages where Jesus talked about His second coming? The number one activity He called His people to do was prayer in the context of His return. He did not say to preach more, although that is a good thing to do. He did not say to do more acts of service, although that is certainly biblical to do. I am not minimizing those in any way; I am very committed to those. In every one of the contexts He said, “Watch and pray.”*

*I have asked the Lord about it over the years. I say, “That is odd. You know there will be national calamities and crisis and great revival breaking out and power. And like the only thing You say is to pray more and watch? Why? I mean why not, you know, to store food or something?” I don’t know. I didn’t really ask that question. I believe the answer is that if we talk to the Lord we will have instruction for all the other areas. The wisdom of the Spirit will come for all the other kingdom activities if we are connected to and talking to the Lord.*

* + 1. 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)

*Prayer was a high priority among New Testament leaders. Look at Acts 6:4. The apostles said, “We give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word.” The apostles did not just go to a weekly prayer meeting; they* ***gave themselves to prayer****. It was critical and central to their job description. The most powerful leaders in the book of Acts, they were the epitome of intercessory missionaries. That means they embraced X amount of prayer as a routine part of their life, and again I am not going to put a number on it, but it is not all they did. It is clear in the whole book of Acts they did the other kingdom activities. When asked, Peter said, “This is the thing we give ourselves to continually.”*

*In Acts 2:42, it says that they continued steadfast in the apostle’s teaching; they heard the Word. They taught the Word and fellowshipped in the breaking of bread. They added prayer. That was something they called the community of God to do in a steadfast way. Paul embraced night-and-day prayer. John the Baptist was really engaged in this, too.*

* + 1. 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).

1. The Anna calling
   * 1. 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)

*So we see that in the Old Testament it was an established job description. The Old Testament prophet said that night-and-day prayer would happen in the generation the Lord returns, and it would be sustained until He returned, the generation where Jerusalem becomes a praise in the earth. We find the New Testament leaders highly prioritized prayer. Now I am going to talk about the Anna calling. That is a term I use; you do not have to use that term. She is such an extravagant picture because not only was she devoted to prayer but she was devoted to preaching Jesus, to moving in the things of the Spirit.*

*Most of you have heard the Anna exhortation over the years. We have had how many conferences in sixteen years I do not know, but at every conference I give an “Anna” exhortation because this is absolutely essential. Not because I want everybody to do what we are doing, but I want this idea understood. Wherever I influence anybody I want this idea in their mind so that leaders, though they may not be doing it themselves, are supporting it, are calling it forth, and are celebrating it, not resisting it.*

*I am talking about this lifestyle, this occupation, being given to God in this crying out before Him. Well, in Luke 2, there was one, Anna; she was a prophetess. So we know she operated in the things of the Spirit—dreams, visions, signs, wonders—as that is what the prophetess did. The prophets were known for operating in the realm of the spirit, the dreams and visions realm, and the signs and wonders realm.*

*She lived with her husband seven years from her virginity. Now here she is eighty-four years old, and she has been a widow since her mid-twenties; now she is in her mid-eighties. It describes her lifestyle, how she did not depart from the temple, which Isaiah and Jesus called the house of prayer. That was the title they gave the temple, the spiritual title “the house of prayer.” She did not depart from it, but she served God with fasting and prayer, day and night. Now technically she departed; she did not sleep there. There were no corridors for Anna to spend the night or have her meals there. That is not what they meant. It meant that she was in attendance at the prayer services, the prayer gatherings, night and day.*

*The part I want you to notice is that she* ***served*** *God by doing this. Some people when they think of night-and-day prayer, they think it is disconnecting from everything else and kind of just enjoying the Lord. Now, there is an “enjoying the Lord” dimension because the Lord is enjoyable. When we have a right view of the beautiful God who loves us like He loves His own Son, beloved, that is enjoyable, that is moving. But it is more than personal renewal and refreshment; God is served.*

*In what way is God served? The spiritual atmosphere—meaning the angel-demon realm—is shifted. It moves when people on the earth pray night and day. When night and day prayer goes forth in the cities, greater Holy Spirit activity is released, more angelic activity is released, demonic activity is hindered, and God is served. It is not just that we feel refreshed. Some people join or participate in the prayer movement only for personal refreshment. I think that is good at first, but it needs to go beyond that. God is served. There is a bigger dimension, though I believe that the personal enjoyable refreshing is very important and we never want to outgrow that ever, but we do not want to limit it to that.*

*Notice that three dimensions of the grace of God were happening in Anna’s life. She was a prophetess, so there were the signs and wonders, dreams and visions. She was an intercessor, verse 37. She did not depart from the temple night and day. Verse 38, she spoke about Jesus to everyone that had a heart to hear. She was an evangelist. So in Anna all three dimensions of this came together, and this is why in one short passage it is such a snapshot of what I call the intercessory missionary. They are in attendance in the prayer room. Not that they have to be in the prayer room. Though she actually went to the corporate prayer gathering, you can do it at home for sure. I talk to the Lord a lot at home. She was involved in evangelism, and she was involved in intercession.*

* + 1. 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.
    2. 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.

*Anna is representative of the intercessor who has grace to do this for long hours. I mean Anna did it maybe five or ten hours a day. That is purely speculative; I have no way of knowing. Some people have said that she did it eighteen hours a day. I said, “Hey, she was in her eighties! Give her a break. I mean she did take a couple of naps here and there.” I bet she did it some hours a day. I do not know how many, and it does not really matter that we know.*

*It takes the grace of God to do this, you know. In our context we have a Sacred Trust where we do two prayer meetings a day. That is four hours; four hours a day we are in the prayer room. We are reading our Bible, we are meditating, some people are doing other things, but we are there. That is significant. That is a huge amount of time in my opinion. That is huge; that is not small. It takes the grace of God to do that.*

*It does not have to be ten hours a day for this thing to be real. We do not have to do it as much as Anna did it because Anna was not leading a worship team, she was not overseeing the security team, she was not processing all the money through the accounting office, etc. She was not doing all of that.*

*So there are other dimensions going on in this role. I am asking the Lord to raise up a million modern-day “Annas.” When there are a million—and I do not know when I will ever know that number, but in a few years—I am just going to up it to ten million. I am just going to assume the million is there. I mean we do not want to count; we do not want to have, you know, a census. How many? Who? I do not know. God knows and that is all that matters. My point is more than a few. We are believing God for a billion in the new harvest, so even then a million or ten million is a fraction. It is a percent, even a fraction of a percent.*

*Some people wonder about that prayer thing, I have talked to folks over the years, and I understand it because I remember when the Lord first told me thirty-two years ago I thought, “Huh?” I remember saying to Bob Jones, “What will we do all day?”*

*He said, “Well, there will be 24/7 worship, singers, musicians.”*

*I said, “But what will we* ***do****?”*

*He said, “Well, I think we will sing and worship and stuff.”*

*I said, “Really?” I remember distinctly going in my mind, “Weird.” I remember thinking, “I don’t want to do that.” I really mean that. I said, “I do not want to do that.” I mean the Lord won out, but I get the “what?” I get that response. That was my response, so I get it. So when people say that, I do not say, “How dare you!” I say, “I get it. Let me tell you my story.”*

*Some folks are thinking, “Well, is it, you know, a real job?”*

*I answer, “When was the last time you spent hours a day in a prayer room crying out for somebody else?” Most folks that I have talked to over the years, even in real, honest, heart-to-heart conversations, just think of it as enjoying good music and kind of disconnecting. I say, “No, no. It is labor. Maybe the first few weeks or few months you kind of really just enjoy the music, but sooner or later you get into the work of the intercessory missionary.”*

*Some folks think that if they go to a prayer room, they will love less. I found it is just the opposite. When you go into a prayer room, you connect to the One who is love and you love more. You cannot connect to Him who is the consummation of love and NOT love more. Again it is the idea that people are just disconnecting to hear good music. Now if that is all they do, I understand that concept, but that is not what an intercessory missionary does. They are connecting to the heart of that Man.*

*If someone’s son has a demon, they do not just need a hug. I mean a hug is nice. They do not just need a meal, though it is good to give a meal. They do not just need a sermon. They need someone to cast the demon out of that kid. By this I mean we need to see a greater dimension of power, and Jesus said, “This kind only goes out through prayer and fasting.” There is a prayer-and-fasting dimension to greater manifestations of power. The equation is not perfectly clear, but we know they are connected. You want to really love somebody? You go pray and fast for their family for two or three days and you will find out like, “I really am pouring myself for them.” I don’t mean that everything less than that is not love. I am not saying that at all because they need the hug, they need the meal, and they need the sermon. I give sermons; I appreciate sermons. But there is another dimension when you are contending for a breakthrough of power. When someone has cancer or someone has a demon or someone has a crisis situation, they need a power demonstration, not just encouragement, though they do need the encouragement. Again I am in no way minimizing that. I completely value the ministry of encouragement; it is one of the top ministries in the Body of Christ.*

*My point is, this is not about disconnecting from real needs to be isolated to listen to good music. This is about engaging in the labor of the kingdom in full engagement. That is what this job is about. That is what I am talking about.*

* + 1. 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.”*

*The work of God’s kingdom is accomplished inside the prayer room and outside the prayer room. There are three dimensions of missions work. I mean there are more than three, but I am just giving the broad strokes so you do not limit it to one idea. There is the continual prayer, the night-and-day prayer, for justice in the cities of the earth. There is the category of the mercy deeds that are the hug, the meal, and the encouragement. Then there is the preaching of the gospel. They all go together. The deeds of compassion go together with the faithful preaching of the Word that goes together with the night-and-day prayer for justice. When all three come together with all the implications in the cities of the earth, more of the kingdom activity takes place.*

*Prayer causes the work of outreach to be more effective. When the spiritual atmosphere is changed, the sermon that moved ten people now moves 100 people because there is a shift in the demonic kingdom, the demonic resistance is driven away, and greater angelic and Holy Spirit activity is released.*

*I like what Oswald Chambers said, “Prayer does not fit us for the greater work. Prayer IS the greater work.” Prayer is not just personal refreshment, though it is refreshing. Again, when you talk to the most beautiful One, who has all power, who loves you, you kind of get refreshed. But I tell you it is work. Prayer is the work. It is not just to help the work. It is part of the work itself.*

* + 1. 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.*
    2. 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).

*Throughout church history, 2,000 years of church history—I have it in my book, Growing in Prayer, chapter twenty-seven, I chronicle a whole lot—there are so many dynamic examples throughout church history of twenty-four hour prayer ministries. I mean it is remarkable. If you do not know about it, you think something brand new is happening. No, it happened all through the Old Testament, AND it happened all through church history. The most dramatic example was in Bangor, Ireland, which again is in chapter twenty-seven of my book. You can read it if you want to know some of these examples. Jono Hall is an expert on this subject. He has really studied it quite thoroughly. In Bangor, Ireland there were 3,000 full-time monks that kept the night-and-day chanting and singing of the psalms. Night and day, it went on—catch this—for 300 years!*

*Beloved, we are at year sixteen. 284 years to go! They had 3,000 full-time at one time in the first generation. I do not know how many over the years, but enough to sustain it for 300 years. We are talking serious! There are many examples throughout church history from the Catholic to the Protestant to the Celtic to the Orthodox. All the different spheres of the Body of Christ have had twenty-four hour prayer ministries. This is not like a new thing that we came up with in an internship or something. This thing has been rooted in church history. In other words, the Lord has shown His zeal for this in capturing leaders through history for this subject.*

* + 1. 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.

*For intercessory missionaries today, in my book I say there are 10,000 because I wanted to be more conservative. 10,000, 24/7, is what I wrote in the book. I have talked to top leaders who have done the stats and they said that it is well over 20,000. I said that I was going to put 10,000. They responded, “No, put 20,000.” I said that I was going to say it a little bit softer, and if there is more, that is better news. Well, in chapter twenty-eight in my book I chronicle a lot of those ministries breaking forth in the earth.*

* + 1. 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.

*Now, not everyone is called to be an intercessory missionary. Even folks in our own midst say, “I am not an Anna.” When I say “intercessory missionary,” Anna is the most extreme example. I mean everyone who is accepting a full-time role here is accepting that position of intercessory missionary. But we are not all the “Michael Jordons” of the prayer movement, you know, the Annas. She is the most extreme of all. We are in the spirit of doing prayer and doing our work. That is what I mean.*

*Now not everybody is called to be an intercessory missionary. We are all called to pray, but it is not to be everyone’s occupation. Let me tell you what the greatest ministry calling is. I absolutely know the greatest ministry calling—listen carefully—do the will of God in your life.* ***The greatest calling for you is the will of God in your life.*** *If you step away from the will of God to go be an intercessory missionary, the Lord says, “Wait, I called you to be in the marketplace. What are you doing?”*

*You can do it for a season, but my point is this: some people say that if they leave the marketplace and go full-time as an intercessory missionary, that is better. I say, “No, it is not better or worse.” The will of God is the best. One season this, one season that, maybe ten or twenty years this, ten or twenty years that. I do not know. The will of God is the place of success. Some people come and do this for a few years, and then they go into the marketplace and kind of hang their head down like, “Oh, I couldn’t make it.”*

*I say, “What? You are doing it! Number one, you gave several years to prayer, and number two, you are doing the will of God. You* ***are*** *doing it. What is the ‘it’?”*

*“I don’t know. I thought if I left staff, I was a creep or something.”*

*No, it is the will of God because that is how God created you, and He will lead you. So* ***embrace your own calling****. My final point is that* ***most people do not have this calling****. I mean, a million or two do, or maybe more, I don’t know. There are a billion believers. Support and don’t talk a friend or a family member out of it in the days to come; help them do it in a biblically wise way. Do not find Bible verses against it. The enemy is trying to take this out of their heart anyway, so try to help them. Say, “Hey, you know what? It is in the Old Testament, New Testament, church history, and end-time prophecy. You are right. This stuff is part of what is on God’s heart. Understanding this will equip you to be a blessing if it is not your calling. Amen and amen.*