

## LEADERSHIP PRAYER PARTNERS

- I. **Introduction:** I want to talk about the value and some practical suggestions for organizing a prayer partner team (especially for pastors and senior leaders).

“Intercessors for Christian leaders are the most underutilized source of spiritual power in churches today.” C. Peter Wagner

- A. The picture of prayer partners (teams) comes from the story in Exodus 17:8-13. (Arthur J. Moore)

1. One of the most valuable things in my life has been prayer partners devoted to praying for me. (Lucena, Mom, Paul Shaner)
2. I was convicted recently that one of the things I needed to improve my impact was to ask for more prayer.

- B. Benefits of a prayer partner ministry

1. It helps make prayer a top priority in the church.
2. It enhances and multiplies the impact of ministry.

*“How could one man chase a thousand, or two put ten thousand to flight, unless their Rock had sold them, unless the Lord had given them up?”*  
(Deuteronomy 32:30)

*“If two or three of you agree together as touching anything it shall be done by my Father in Heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.”* (Matt. 18:19-20)  
(I think of nitroglycerin or a battering ram.)

3. It helps provide spiritual covering/protection.

- C. Peter Wagner pointed out that pastors and leaders are higher on Satan’s hit list. *“Strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered.”* (Matt. 26:31)

“Pastors don’t fall because they forget they’re Christians, but because they forget they’re humans.” -Pete Scazzero

We naturally tend to relate to people according to our giftedness without recognizing our humanness. Who we are under the anointing is something different than simply who we are in our humanity.

In his book, *"Pastors at Risk,"* H.B. London quotes some startling statistics from a 1991 survey of pastors by Fuller Institute. Here is what the survey said.

- 90% of pastors work more than 46 hours a week.
- 80% believe that being in the ministry has affected their families negatively.
- 33% say that being in the ministry is an outright hazard to their family.
- 75% report a significant stress-related crisis at least once in their ministry (total burnout, breakdown that was debilitating).
- 50% say they feel unable to meet the needs of the job.
- 90% feel they were inadequately trained to compete with ministry demands.
- 70% say they have a lower self-image than when they started in ministry.
- 40% report a serious conflict with a parishioner at least once a month.
- 33% confess they fell into being involved in some sort of inappropriate sexual behavior at some point.
- 70% do not have someone they consider a close friend.

- D. It creates a firm team for spiritual leadership development.  
John Maxwell created prayer partnership as his key path in spiritual leadership recognition and development. He invited potential leaders to be prayer partners for a year. He found there was supernatural impartation as well as natural mentoring that took place. He was able to better recognize those who truly had the potential to go to the next level.

Jesus obviously did this with his disciples.

*"He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled."* (Matthew 26:37)

- E. It greatly blesses the prayer partner.  
Consistently prayer partners have shared how they grew closer to God and each other. Bonds are formed in prayer that could've never been built in another way.

"Prayer cleanses our hearts in a way that we have a greater capacity to love and see people the way God sees them." -Mother Teresa

## **II. Some practical suggestions for building and selecting prayer partners**

- A. There needs to be a level of trust, maturity, and sense of deep loyalty from the people you invite into your inner circle.

“A true friend is someone that you can pour out the contents of your heart to, both the wheat and the chaff, knowing that they will cling to the wheat and with the breath of kindness blow away the chaff.” -Bedouin Proverb

- B. Pray about it like Jesus did in picking his own disciples.

I also believe you can have different prayer partner circles. You can do as we are doing, developing prayer circles with people, whom you feel are like “the 70”. You are comfortable to trust them to a degree (observe and give time for a potential inner prayer partner circle). I personally feel comfortable having both men and women in my outer prayer circle, but I prefer to have just men in my inner prayer circle, of course besides my wife. Some choose prayer partners with their spouse and have a couples-type group.

- C. John Maxwell’s suggestion was to consider beginning the year with a new group of prayer partners, though a few may always stay in your circle. Get away in some kind of retreat setting. This is where you want them not only to have a heart for you; you want to have a heart for them. Take time to thoroughly share your vision and heart for your ministry. You want them to fully grasp God’s calling on you and God’s plan to fulfill it with others in the coming year.

You can also work out details of when and how you’re going to meet with your prayer partners. John Maxwell had a breakfast once a month; and they met before the service every week. His eventual plan was to challenge them by the end of the year to start their own prayer circle. Part of the natural impartation was to help them find their place of leadership in the church by the end of that time.

- D. As a leader, one of the important things to do personally is to spend time honestly clarifying how you will be more intentional in asking for prayer. One of the goals is to break any stigma in the church about people asking others to pray for them. We like to say, “Anything you want to teach, you must also be fully ready to show.” The best model of discipleship is “show and tell.”

I think it is strategically powerful to work through your prayer request, so you aren’t just asking for “tactical prayer” but “strategic prayer” (Prayers of faith, prayers that deal with core issues and not just symptoms).

Some tools to help in this process are available on our website: [hftw.church/Events/21 Days of Prayer](http://hftw.church/Events/21%20Days%20of%20Prayer).

- Questions from the Lord’s Prayer
- Key Prayers for Pastors
- How to Develop a Prayer Circle