

Towers ministry – short reads

“Short reads” look at specific parts of the intercessory life within the towers. They are just four or five pages long designed to cover one issue.

The sacrificial heart of the Towers Intercessor

The beginning

The heart of the intercessor is a battlefield. The enemy roams over it, attacking, fighting, hurting and breaking. It is easy, when faced with these hard things to feel a sense of weariness - even failure - as Intercessors.

Here is the greatest challenge of all to those who would intercede – this is not a failed heart, but one the Lord needs. Somehow Intercessors have to keep the enemy defeated, and at the same time allow the brokenness of humanity to take root within their broken hearts.

This is a difficult balance

This is a difficult balance. Intercessors must be strong in the Lord and yet at the same time feel the frustration, emptiness and brokenness of the world in which they intercede. This will be very true for intercession within the towers. A sense of weakness and failure is the intercessor absorbing the world, and in that process Intercessors will feel broken and weak. Then they know that they are identified with the broken sacrificial heart of Jesus.

There is only one heart which can endure this trampling of the feet of the enemy, the broken pains of creation, the tears of the Lord and his infinite love pouring into them. A heart nailed to the cross. What is that heart, and how do intercessors get it and protect it?

Living sacrifice

Gregory of Palamas, a 14th Century Greek Monk put it like this:- **“Our passionate life must be offered to God, living and active so that it may be a living sacrifice.”**

He’s right. The humanity of the intercessor must be offered within intercession, whatever the cost. The personal pain is part of sacrificial intercession. It must be accepted, whatever the cost, and the cost is high. Intercessors inside the towers will find themselves distressed, bewildered, afraid, in the dark, at the cross, under the cross, in the cross. At this deepest level, this is a price which has to be paid and however much is paid there is always more. Our intercessory life is a progress towards the cross and finishes up dying on it.

Intercession within the towers is a living sacrifice and any sacrifice is costly and painful. I came across this from an anonymous older intercessor -

The Son's body is the altar of the world where the sacrifice is made. It is made in a human body, not in a liturgy or a church. It is offered within humanity. That is why it hurts so much and that is why many try to distance themselves by rules, theology or liturgy. Intercessors do not have this luxury. For at the deepest levels they too become, with their Lord, an altar of the world, and people die on altars.

Bearing the cross

The living sacrifice of the intercessor takes place on the cross. So many of the older assessors have spent hours days weeks months and years meditating on the cross, and that's where they found their strength to sacrifice and endure. There are different levels of this meditation.

Identification

I was praying for a sick child. My prayers seemed so very shallow. I wanted to get much deeper. Immediately I was standing before the altar of the Lord and the sick child was in my arms. I understood that I had to bring this child into the heart of the cross. The Lord reached out his hands and I placed the child in them. The Lord seemed to absorb the child into his passion. I longed to respond. So I gathered all my love for the Lord, and, like King David, I poured it out onto the ground as an offering to the Lord. Love poured out of me - all the love I could manage for the Lord's sacrifice and his love for me. It was costly and painful, and also very fulfilling.

Later, I came to understand that I was identifying with the Lord's Passion and his drawing of the child into that Passion. I was, in a minute way, sharing in his work for and towards the child.

Intercessors in the towers must identify with the sufferings of the world and the sufferings of the cross in this way. The enemy has no way of breaking such an identification because he dare not even look. He will, of course try.

Suffering

Julian of Norwich wrote often about seeing the head of Jesus, crowned with thorns. This suffering became hers – her crown was all the sorrows and burdens she had to bear. For Julian, this crown of thorns picture become the core of her meditation and intercession.

Isaac Watts gets close to it as well – “See from His head His hands His feet Sorrow and love flow mingled down. Did e're such love and sorrow meet or thorns compose so rich a crown?”

The lesson from many intercessors from history is that in intercession, there can be real suffering in the flesh for the kingdom. To this suffering intercessors are called. They get sick,

have problems at work in the home or in with the family. They get filled with depression, despair or hopelessness. The pain is so great that they want to give up.

This real suffering is part of the intercessory heart. Intercessors offer themselves as living sacrifices as their Lord did. There is no short cut or way around this burden. Apostle Paul encourages -

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:1-2)

This suffering, willingly entered into, can move the heart of God. Hannah and Jesus both knew this truth. Their sufferings in intercession moved the heart of God.

This is the central core of towers intercession. We take our sufferings to his heart and plead that his heart should be moved. The subject of our intercession may change, but the method never changes.

Inner struggle

Towers intercession is a battle – fought mostly on the inside, in the heart of the Intercessor. The enemy wants to crush the world. The Lord wants his world to live in the power of God. This will result in an intense inner struggle for those who pray for the release of his power. Jeremiah gives an idea of what it might be like and this series of verses are a good place to reflect on the intercessory calling.

11:18, 12:6. Why do the wicked prosper?

*You are always righteous, O Lord,
when I bring a case before you.
Yet I would speak with you about your justice:
Why does the way of the wicked prosper?
Why do all the faithless live at ease?*

15:10-21. It hurts!

*Alas, my mother, that you gave me birth,
a man with whom the whole land strives and contends!
I have neither lent nor borrowed,
yet everyone curses me.*

17:14-18 I'm wasting my time

*Heal me, O Lord, and I will be healed;
save me and I will be saved,
for you are the one I praise.
They keep saying to me,
"Where is the word of the Lord?
Let it now be fulfilled!"*

18:18-23 No one listens

They said, "Come, let's make plans against Jeremiah; for the teaching of the law by the priest will not be lost, nor will counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophets. So come, let's attack him with our tongues and pay no attention to anything he says."

20:7-18 It's brought me nothing but trouble

*O Lord, you deceived me, and I was deceived;
you overpowered me and prevailed.
I am ridiculed all day long;
everyone mocks me.
Whenever I speak, I cry out
proclaiming violence and destruction.
So the word of the Lord has brought me
insult and reproach all day long.
But if I say, "I will not mention him
or speak any more in his name,"
his word is in my heart like a fire,
a fire shut up in my bones.
I am weary of holding it in;
indeed, I cannot.*

Jeremiah could easily have been a towers intercessor.