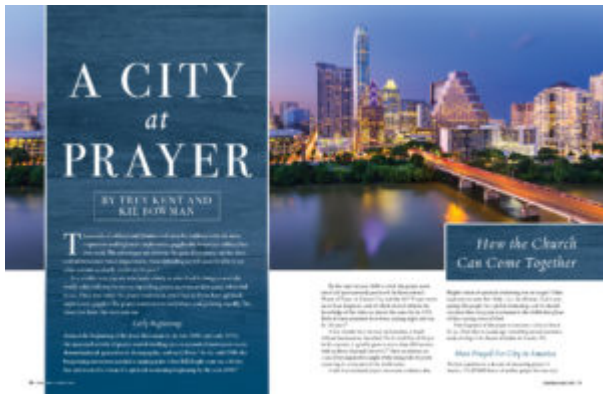


A City at Prayer

How the Church Can Come Together

By Trey Kent and Kie Bowman



Thousands of soldiers and Marines will soon be outfitted with the most impressive and high-tech, night-vision goggles the American military has ever used. The advantages are obvious. In spite of darkness, smoke, dust, and subterranean visual impairment, those defending us will soon be able to see what was not as clearly visible in the past.¹

In a similar way, anyone who looks closely at what God is doing around the world today will start to see an expanding prayer movement that many others fail to see. Once you notice the prayer movement, you'll feel as if you have spiritual, night-vision goggles! The prayer movement is everywhere and growing rapidly. The closer you look, the more you see.

Early Beginnings

Around the beginning of the Jesus Movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the increased activity of prayer started swelling into an unnoticed movement across denominational, generational, demographic, and racial lines.² In the mid-1990s the burgeoning movement reached a tipping point when Bill

Bright went on a 40-day fast and received a vision of a spiritual awakening beginning by the year 2000.³

By the time the year 2000 arrived, the prayer movement had spontaneously produced the International House of Prayer in Kansas City and the 24/7 Prayer movement from England, each of which started without the knowledge of the other on almost the same day in 1999. Both of these ministries have been praying night and day for 20 years!⁴

A few months into the new millennium, a South African businessman launched The Global Day of Prayer in his country. It quickly grew to more than 200 nations with millions of people involved.⁵ These ministries are a small but impressive sample of the rising tide of prayer occurring in every part of the world today.

Is this international prayer movement evidence that Bright's vision of spiritual awakening was on target? Other explanations seem less likely than the obvious. God is preparing His people for a global awakening, and we should conclude that the prayer movement is the visible first phase of this coming move of God.

One fragment of the prayer movement is close to home for us. More than a decade ago something started spontaneously stirring in the hearts of leaders in Austin, TX.

Most-Prayed-For City in America

We just experienced a decade of unceasing prayer in Austin, TX (87,600 hours of unified prayer for our city). We will never be the same! We believe this can happen in every city in America and around the world.

The Unceasing Prayer Movement, our name for the Austin-area prayer movement, began when Mary Anne and Trey Kent stood

under a light pole while on a prayerwalk in their neighborhood in Austin. Trey heard God say He wanted His city covered in 24/7 prayer by local churches adopting a day of prayer every month.

The decade ended with Kie Bowman, Mary Anne, and Trey praying together with Asian believers in a 24/7 prayer room in the city of Jerusalem, Israel. During this ten-year period of unified prayer, we have seen God bring unprecedented miracles, unity, and worldwide growth to this movement of prayer. Our vision is to make Austin, TX, the most-prayed-for city in America!

This is doable in your city as well. We want to see not only our city transformed by unceasing prayer, but your city turned right-side up by mobilizing churches to pray in unity, 24/7, until Jesus returns.

Practical Principles

God wants His cities changed by the praying church. Here's the promise: "Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper" (Jer. 29:7). What could happen if your city became a city of prayer?

How can it happen? Here are some key principles we've observed through ten years of unceasing prayer:

1. The prayer movement begins and ends with pastors.

This was the secret that few seemed to notice or talk about. The prayer movement in America picks up more momentum when pastors begin leading their churches to intercede for revival and awakening in our country. J. Edwin Orr, the leading scholar on awakening and revival, said the Second Great

Awakening was birthed as pastors led their churches to adopt one day every month to pray for revival for the nation.⁶ God answered in a big way!

We must get back to the rhythm of pastors leading their churches to pray for the city. If only 31 pastors in each city will lead their churches to pray 24 hours a month, the city will be covered in unceasing prayer—and God will begin to move in unprecedented ways. God promised this!

We have seen this to be true in our city. Unceasing prayer is for every church, no matter the size or denomination. Every church that believes Jesus is the answer to the city's problems is urged to adopt a monthly day of prayer. Our nation needs unceasing prayer more than ever!

2. Begin by leading your own church to pray 24 hours a month on a given day for a transformed city.

It's easier than you think. Invite 24 people to adopt one hour. You take the most difficult hour and invite others to follow. Soon, you will have a prayer army mobilized in your local church ready to pray one 24-hour day a month for awakening in your church and city.

3. Gather other pastors and invite them to adopt a day of prayer.

Fill all 31 days of the month. We began meeting with pastors for coffee or lunch and then organized citywide pastors' lunches. We kept this focus until all 31 days were adopted by local churches.

It's vital to keep a long-term vision regarding unceasing prayer. Pastors and churches may need time to warm up to this idea. But if you persevere, you will see people praying for your city night and day.

In Austin, as pastors continued year after year, leading their churches to pray, a team of pastors emerged to lead this movement. Our city's prayer movement received a great burst of momentum when a diverse group of Jesus-loving pastors united to lead the Unceasing Prayer Movement! And now hundreds of people are gathering together for citywide prayer meetings once a quarter. These incredible gatherings fuel a passion for prayer.

Your city is full of praying pastors who are ready to be awakened to lead their churches to be houses of prayer.

4. Don't stop until Jesus returns.

Changing the world for Christ is always linked to a praying person. As Samuel Chadwick said, "The greatest answer to prayer is more prayer."

Imagine what God will do in your city when believers commit themselves to 24/7 prayer over your city. We learned very quickly that unceasing prayer does not mean we never miss a minute, hour, or day. Unceasing prayer means we don't quit. Jesus' promises are for the persevering church.

Whatever you do, keep praying and leading your church, family, small group, and community in unending prayer. You and your city will be forever changed.

Tangible Results

Here are some of the clear results of the unceasing prayer movement over the city of Austin. First, the unity of the body of Christ is obvious. Pastors from megachurches and church plants—Baptists, charismatics, Bible churches, evangelicals, and mainline Protestants—join together to pray for spiritual awakening. The unity and fellowship, which most agree is a direct result of the prayer movement, is palpable.

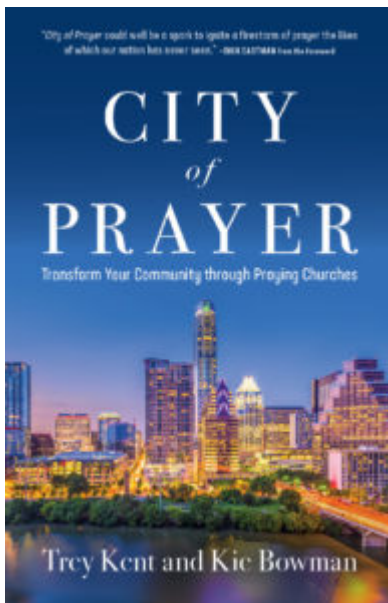
In addition, the prayer movement continually presses into racial unity and understanding. African American, Asian, Hispanic, and white pastors frequently eat together, pray together, fellowship together, and preach in each other's churches. This growing unity is unforced and is a direct result of the hours spent praying for racial unity in the body of Christ. There is always more to be done to heal racial wounds, but there is no better place to begin the healing than in prayer.

Perhaps the most obvious result of the prayer movement came in the form of rain—lots of it! When Austin and all central Texas was experiencing record drought in 2014, a thousand Christians gathered to pray for rain. Within days, flash floods were the biggest problem facing the area! Since the initial prayer meeting, the rains have continued. The lake, from which most of Austin's water is drawn, filled up with millions of gallons of needed water in record time and continues to provide the fast-growing Austin metro area with the water it needs. Those involved in the prayer movement have no doubt God reversed the drought as a direct result of prayer.

Despite the darkness of this world, we can clearly see, with the precision of night-vision goggles, that God is moving. The unceasing prayer movement will not rest until we experience spiritual awakening and make Austin, TX, the most-prayed-for city in America!

1Todd South, "Newest night-vision goggle finishes testing. Here's when Army units will get it," armytimes.com/news/your-army/2019/04/26/newest-night-vision-goggle-is-finishes-testing-heres-when-army-units-will-get-it/.2C. Peter Wagner, *Prayer Shield* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1982), 13.3Bill Bright, *America's Call to Fast, Pray, and "Seek God's Face"* (Orlando, FL: NewLife Publications, 1995), 29.4"Night and Day Prayer and Worship," August 21, 2015, heinspiredme.com, <https://heinspiredme.com/international-house-of-prayer/>.5"The Global Day of Prayer,"

web.archive.org/web/20091103164123/http://www.globaldayofprayer.com/history.html.6J. Edwin Orr, *The Re-Study of Revival and Revivalism* (Pasadena, CA: School of World Mission, 1981), 10.



—TREY KENT and KIE BOWMAN are the authors of the newly released book, *City of Prayer*, available at prayershop.org. Trey is pastor of Northwest Fellowship, and Kie is pastor of Hyde Park Baptist Church, both in Austin, TX.