

Theme Introduction

Transforming Prayer: Inviting God's Presence to Your Community

I was in my office downtown when I received a call from a member of my community prayer group. "Carol," she said, "we've decided you need to walk over to the convention center and place your hands on the podium that the [cult leader] is going to use tonight—and pray that his words will have no power."

This particular cult had established its international headquarters in our community, building a temple on a prime piece of land in the center of town. We had been praying for months that God would cleanse and redeem that land. We prayed according to 2 Chronicles 7:14, believing it was God's heart to bring transformation to our community. We knew such prayer required humility, repentance, and seeking God's face for the healing of the land.

Now the cult leaders were hosting an event downtown that would draw thousands of followers from around the world. My prayer group was planning to covertly pray in the temple, and they decided that, at the same time, I should pray at the convention center where people would be gathering that night.

So I dutifully walked several blocks to the center, then casually moved past several people inside who were setting up chairs and adjusting the sound and lighting. Making my way to the front of the auditorium, I placed my hands on the stage (there was no lectern), and prayed a simple prayer of faith. I asked the Lord to rescue the people caught in the lies and

darkness and to render the leader's deceptive words ineffective. As quickly as I came in, I turned and walked out.

On my way back to the office, I called my friend. When she finally answered, her voice was hushed. At that moment my prayer group was quietly praying in the temple. My friend had forgotten to turn off her phone, and when I called, she couldn't dig it out fast enough to silence it. So in the quietness of the temple, where people were meditating and praying to a false god, her ring tone blared "The Hallelujah Chorus."

As she fumbled for her phone, she silently apologized to the Lord for being so careless. Then she heard God's words of comfort: "I did that. This is the first time there has been worship offered to Me in this place!"

Inviting God's Transforming Presence

I wish I could report that God destroyed the temple, redeemed the land, and responded with His saturating and transforming presence. That hasn't happened yet. But I believe that in God's timing, His heart desires to do a work of community transformation—when we ask. Wherever I live, I will not give up the hope that humble, repentant, united prayer will open the door for God's presence.

In this issue, Doug Small describes what a community looks like "when God comes to town." Dave Kubal explains interrogative intercession—a form of prayer that asks the Lord what is on His heart for one's community. Dennis Fuqua compiles the results of interviews with pastors in communities that seem to be on the path toward transformation. Their experiences offer valuable insight and encouragement.

After the convention center incident, I discovered later that my friend was joking when she suggested I pray there. My

prayer group didn't think I would actually do it! But maybe there's a lesson in that. Will we do the unusual and unexpected in the hope that God will, in turn, do the supernatural? I can't think of a better way to bless our communities.

CAROL MADISON is editor of *Prayer Connect*.