PRAYER

ISSUE TWENTY-TWO, SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 201

Inviting God's Presence to Your Community

the Heart of Christ

TRANSFORMING PRAYER

Resenters and Resisters | Come and See God's Healing "EVEN IF" Kinds of Prayers

14

Conne

Sunday, November 6, 2016 is ... Prayer Force One SUNDAY

The Sunday Before We Elect Our Next President

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FOR

Save The Date!

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." II Chronicles 7:14 Then Participate!

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Senator Ed Moore, (OK-Ret.) President, Prayer Force One

www.PrayerForceOne.com



Feature

25 Even If When the Impossible Confronts You By Paul Covert

PRAYERCONNECT

September/October 2015 | Vol. 5, No.4

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PRAYER

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Carol Madison

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Need a Speaker for Your Prayer Conference or Event?

There are a number of gifted speakers associated with *Prayer Connect*. Jonathan Graf regularly ministers in churches of varying sizes. Carol Madison is also available to minister in the area of prayer for revival and community transformation. Our parent organizations, Harvest Prayer Ministries and the Church Prayer Leaders Network, have many speakers associated with their ministries. You can find their contact information at the respective emails or websites.

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PRAYERCONNECT

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The mission of **PRAYER**CONNECT is

- To encourage and equip believers toward a deeper walk with Jesus Christ through prayerour experiential connection to God.
- 2. To resource prayer leaders and pastors with tools to help them motivate, disciple, and mobilize believers in churches to be a part of an army that seeks to pray the purposes of God for churches, communities, and the nations.
- **3.** To be a unifying force between prayer ministries, community transformation groups, and churches.

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Previously in Prayer Connect

Often our first response to a difficult situation is to pray a fix-it prayer: "Lord, I need You to intervene." But Scripture challenges us to pray beyond the obvious—to



pray Kingdom prayers that align with God's will and purpose. This opens the door for Him to answer in even more glorious ways. The May/June 2015 issue and other back issues are available at *prayershop.org*.

PUBLISHER'SNOTE



As Natural as Breathing

any of us have physical habits that are so ingrained we do not even think about them. We just do them. They are "as natural as breathing." At the National Day of Prayer gathering in Washington, D.C., I heard Senate Chaplain Barry Black talk about prayer needing to be "as natural as breathing." He used as his text 1 Thessalonians 5:17: "Pray continually." And he explained that prayer should be such an integral part of our lives as believers that we just do it—all the time.



Over the years, the admonition to pray continually has been a guide for what I desire in my life. I am not remotely there yet, but I am improving. My desire is that prayer will be something that comes naturally to me throughout the day. I want my mind to automatically go to the throne room at any given moment—as natural as breathing. I want prayer to be the first thing I think about and do in any situation that comes my way.

First and foremost, that kind of prayer lifestyle certainly comes through developing an intimate relationship with Jesus. I need to strive to be ever growing in my walk with Him. I need to spend time in His Word. I need to discipline myself to spend regular time seeking His presence.

But I have found, too, that there are things I can do to remind myself to pray continually. My plan is to do these things until prayer becomes as natural as breathing.

What do I do? I use reminders in my path to pray. I have consciously made the connection between an item I see regularly and the need to pray for something.

One visual reminder is my daughter's bedroom door. Even though she is grown and out of the house, I see the door to her bedroom as a reminder to pray for her. I pray a blessing over her when I pass by, or I pray for an ongoing challenge in her life.

Another reminder is a specific traffic light. Whenever I drive under that light, it triggers my mind to pray for my pastor.

And of course we all have several passwords we use to access computers, websites, accounts, etc. I make some of my passwords relate to people I know. Then using those passwords reminds me to pray for them.

I also use the natural things I encounter on a regular basis to remember to pray: a screen saver with a picture of my grandkids or a photo of missionaries stuck to the fridge or file cabinet. And one of my favorite reminders is a card with a photo of a four-year-old child named Jonathan. This card has been in my Bible for 12 years. I got it when a church I was attending gave intercessors prayer cards with photos of the kids in the church. I have since moved away—and Jonathan is now 16—but I still pray for him when I see that card.

The reminders are working. They trigger prayer throughout the day. I am more likely to naturally pray in a variety of situations—as a first response.

My point is that sometimes we need to take steps to help ourselves develop a habit. Being intentional, looking for reminders, and making conscious connections, we can eventually make prayer "as natural as breathing."

–Jonathan Graf

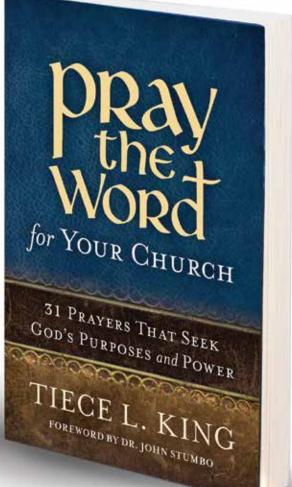
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Air Force Base Can Still Have "Blessed Day"

Georgia Air Force base that made headlines after banning its guards' use of the phrase, *Have a blessed day*, quickly reversed course and will now allow the saying, as long as those who use it "remain courteous and professional."

Following a "nonreligious" individual's complaint to the Military Religious Freedom Foundation (a group dedicated to the separation of church and state) that he had received the unwanted



greeting on no fewer than 15 occasions in two weeks, officials at Robins Air Force Base in Warner Robins, GA, told gate guards they could no longer "bless" those coming into the installation.

The unnamed individual who complained claimed it was inappropriate for guards to say, "Have a blessed day," which led the base to preclude employees from using that greeting. Instead, according to WMAZ-TV, guards were encouraged to say, "Have a nice day." That decision has now been reversed.

-Adapted from Intercessors for America newsletter (*ifapray.org*).

Planning for World Youth Prayer Assembly

eaders from 16 countries participated in a planning session in Seoul, South Korea, for a World Youth Prayer Assembly (WYPA) in 2016 or 2017. Young global leaders made the commitment to be part of the International Dream Team (IDT) and to run with the vision of calling youth from around the world to join in prayer. They were prayed for and anointed by the older generation of leaders who were present. Young leaders were from the United Kingdom, United States, Philippines, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Puerto Rico, Guatemala, Romania, American Samoa, Nigeria, Fiji, Vietnam, India,

Germany, and South Korea.

A faith goal of bringing 1,254 delegates was generated from the commitment of the IDT alone. They also set fundraising goals, as each member believed God for a specific amount. One of the highlights of the meeting was a trip to the DMZ (Demilitarized Zone)—the border between North and South Korea. In freezing cold weather, the team's hearts burned in prayer for the unification of Korea. It was a foretaste of what is planned for the WYPA—to bring the delegates from all nations to



the border to release declarations for the freedom of North Korea and for the unification of the North and South.

The group asks for prayer for the IDT members to move ahead in mobilizing their nations.

-Taken from International Prayer Connections (ipcprayer.org).

ISIS Prayer Guide Is Strategic

he number of terror-sponsored incidents continues to grow worldwide, and the rhetoric of threats is increasing within the United States. Reports of ISIS recruits who are trained and ready to attack inside the U.S. borders are creating news headlines. Historians who look at the rise of Islamic terror in the past, now predict the present danger will not end soon.

To fight the temptation of feeling powerless, a prayer guide has been launched that encourages 30 days of specific prayer for ISIS members. This is a collaborative effort among several ministries that wish to remain anonymous.

The guide contains Scripture, prayer guidelines, photos, and songs designed to prompt your prayers. You can sign up at *prayforisismembers.com* to receive a daily prayer email for 30 days.



NEWS&EVENTS

Australia Calls for Prayer for U.S.

or the third year in a row, the Australian National Day of Prayer and Fasting team called the rest of the world to pray and fast for seven days for the U.S. Their prayer invitation lasted from the Australian National Day of Repentance on April 30 until the U.S. National Day of Prayer on May 7.

In 2013 they called for three days of prayer and fasting, expecting perhaps a dozen nations to join the call. Leaders were encouraged when 28 nations (including Vietnam and China) joined them.

In 2014 more than 40 nations joined the call for 48 hours of prayer for the U.S. The organizers also released a video from an Australian perspective, detailing some of the rich Christian heritage and historic calls for prayer and fasting embedded in American history but not generally known. The prayer in

the video is a call for America to find her prophetic destiny in Christ.

The 2015 call to prayer linked Australia's Repentance Day with the U.S. National Day of Prayer, believing that repentance precedes breakthrough. Organizers believe both nations need revival and transformation because the so-called Western world is spiritually and morally bankrupt.

One of the organizers, Alison Jessup,



said, "We in Australia believe it is our turn to bless the nation of America and pray for healing for the USA through prayer and

fasting according to 2 Chronicles 7:14. We in Australia are grateful for the protection that America gave Australia and the nations of the free world during World War II. The 1942 Battle of the Coral Sea, led by the USA, was the turning point in the Second World War for Australia."

To read the Australian National Day of Prayer and Fasting team's Declaration of Prayer for America, go to *nationalday*ofprayer.com.au/prayusa2015.

Prayer Ministries Begin Working Partnership

n an effort to rally prayer more effectively for the United States at this critical time in its history, especially during this election cycle, Intercessors for America (IFA) and Harvest Prayer Ministries (HPM) announce the formation of a new working partnership that best utilizes the strengths of each ministry.



Harvest Prayer Ministries is known for its impact in churches through teaching and the development of prayer resources. Its resource division publishes *Prayer Connect* magazine and five or six books each year, maintains three contentrich websites, and manages *prayershop. org*—the largest prayer-resources-only store on the Internet.

IFA's more than 40,000 intercessors pray regularly for the nation. This ministry also manages First Friday Fast, a monthly prayer emphasis involving more than 200,000 people. In addition IFA has significant archives of content waiting to be developed to challenge and equip these intercessors.

As part of the partnership between HPM and IFA, HPM recently launched a new, highly robust resource store it will manage for IFA *(IFAResources.com)*, designed to market and deliver new resources to IFA's audience.

Jonathan Graf, HPM's publisher, will serve as content manager. His role will be to develop and deliver IFA's content in more practical and effective ways to its audience and to increase web traffic.

The dream of both ministries is to present a strong voice to rally people to pray for the nation, especially during this election cycle.

"Having Jon on board IFA's team, and being better able to put effective, timely prayer and revival resources in the hands of both ministries' audiences is a winwin," says Dave Kubal, president of IFA.

"We need to rally the church in this nation toward prayer like never before," says Dave Butts, president of HPM. "We believe this partnership will do that in a way that is far beyond what each of us could do separately."



TRANSFORMING

Inviting God's Presence to Your Community

PRAYER

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*.

The Hope of Transformation

WHEN GOD'S

PRESENCE

INVADES

What do the current buzzwords community transformation mean? Some Christians employ language of conquest and triumphalism, predicting banished crime and a tranquil community.

Others, seeing no hope of a city-transforming revival, focus on the rapture and escaping an increasingly hostile world. Many believers wonder if the days of revival are over. Others believe revival is upon us even now.

Is there hope for genuine community revival and awakening?

Globally, in the past 25 years, more people have come to Christ than in the period from 100 to A.D. 1900. At around A.D. 2000, daily conversions spiked near 200,000; estimates today are 125,000 people daily.

Africa, only three percent Christian in 1900, is on the precipice of becoming a "Christian" continent. Indonesia, the largest Muslim nation on the planet, is tipping toward Christianity, with one in four people identifying with Christ. Mega-churches are mushrooming, one with 250,000 members.

In addition, the daily number of new believers in China is staggering. Latin America sees tens of thousands awaken daily to the reality of Christ. In Cuba, the Church is experiencing resurgence. House church movements are rising in Iraq and Iran, even Saudi Arabia. Irrepressible life is found where oppression exists and the darkness lingers.

BY DOUG SMALL

This veritable global explosion of Kingdom growth seems apparent everywhere but the West. In other parts of the world, whole regions have tasted what can be fittingly called transformation. In such places, crime falls. God's light repels spiritual darkness. Youth awaken to the reality of God. Christians become gently bolder in their witness—and large numbers turn to Christ. Uncanny coincidences lead to the capture of drug lords and other criminals. Churches fill with people testifying to the reality of God in their lives.

Moreover, integrity and godliness increase among believers and throughout the community—again, transformation! The driving dynamic is a holy desperation, hopelessness casting itself on God and His intervention alone. This is *desperate* praying, not revival-would-be-nice praying. Holy desperation is tearful praying, crying out to God passionately.

A TRUE VISION OF GOD

At the heart of every community transformation effort is a catalyst—a humble, praying, unifying personality—someone willing to bring people together to seek God. Then an unlikely coalition emerges—Pentecostals, Baptists, and other denominations. It includes "color-blind" leaders of all ethnicities. It includes women and men. It includes lay leaders who connect to pastors.

While denominational theology remains important to each congregation, core theology takes precedence. As one voice, believers, with compelling commitment, engage the culture with the exalted Christ.

The late Dr. Joe Aldrich, author of Lifestyle Evangelism and Prayer Summits: Seeking God's Agenda for Your Community, believed our great need is exposure to the holiness of God, not alarm at the moral and spiritual peril of culture. A fresh vision of God and His holiness produces humility, then unity, then healthy community, and finally an impact on community. An unhealthy spiritual community leaves no lasting impact.

Humility and unity emerge only from time in *God's holy presence*. The harvest is indeed great and the sociocultural implosion around us is daunting. But neither of those realities can adequately motivate us. Ultimately only God can change us—and our cities. And only out of a vision of heaven itself will we have the strength and resolve to complete our mission.

Mission began for Isaiah when he saw God as sovereign and unspeakably holy. Seraphim flew from heaven's altar with live coals, cleansing and enabling the prophet (Isa. 6). The sight and sound of heaven—the touch of God—emboldened him.

Similarly, while Nehemiah was leading the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem, the people grew weary due to the depth of the rubble and the crescendo of threats. In the midst of an overwhelming task and fear of escalating consequences, Nehemiah exhorted, "Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight " (Neh. 4:14). A colloquial rendering might read, "Don't panic. Have you guys seen our God? Get in there and fight!" Vision inspires hope. Truly seeing the holiness and grand sovereignty of God simultaneously humbles and inspires us.

POWER OF GOD'S PRESENCE

Holiness and humility change the spirit in which we seek community transformation. Arrogance and overconfidence fail. They produce competitive models. The tools in our arsenal are weak without divine power, which is only possible through unified prayer. And unity forms in the atmosphere of humility.

Anyone can walk on water when it's frozen. But when spiritual warfare shifts the atmosphere and the temperature spikes, the ethos of humility can be easily lost to prideful, self-centered, independent actions. Pride and self-assertion always assume a better plan but diffuse the unity. When we move away from deep, prayerful reliance, discord and disappointment result. Transformational, humble, dependent prayer is crucial.

Too often, community transformation initiatives are merely plans salted with prayer. Prayer is an additive to the "more important element" of collaboration—a flawed notion. Prayer cannot simply be delegated to intercessors. Nor can prayer be just bookends of our strategic planning. Instead, with humble, holy, unifying prayer at the heart of both relationships and mutual endeavors, we can become a healthy community, a basket into which God places His glory. We may pray and plan, and then work our plan and witness—but we need God to come to town!

When a "great awakening" occurs in a community, God is *unavoidable*. The heightened God-consciousness is evident even among unbelievers, especially those who were previously the least likely to become believers. God changes hearts.

There is no arguing with God. Rather, there is conviction, a renewed reverence—a fear of God. Simultaneously His compelling love draws people to Him. They cry out to Him spontaneously. Salvations occur by the dozens, then the hundreds and thousands. It is God who breaks addictive behavior patterns. It is God who restores marriages. It is God who recalibrates decency and morality. It is God who shifts cultural appetites to the spiritual. Church attendance soars. Ungodly establishments shut down. And we stand in awe of our holy God.

STAGES OF TRANSFORMED COMMUNITIES

God's impact on a community progresses through stages:

1. The *romanticized stage* fails to grapple with the enormity and complexity of the task. In a Pollyannaish fashion, it asserts, "We will hold a prayer rally with thousands and see our city transformed." It relies on simple, singledimensional, quick-fix tactics—one this year and another the next. The hope in a visitation of God both visible and measurable is positive. However, when quick-fix ideas fail, cynicism emerges and many give up.

2. The *disillusionment stage* tests the resolve and unity of the core group. Simultaneously, some defect from the cause, but the central leadership solidifies its commitment. The result is vision clarification, long-term strategy, and fresh tenacity.

3. In the *Rambo stage*, fracturing accelerates. Seizing early breakthroughs, splinter groups promote narrow causes and exploit the movement. Impatience drives independent action.

4. The *perseverance stage* cycles back to the basics—the sovereignty of God, deep dependence in prayer, humility and unity, and long-term vision.

5. The *renewal/death stage* is the turning point. Again, some give up, but core leaders commit to seeing their city touched by the hand of God. They don't care who gets the credit as long as God gets the glory. What follows is deep determination. The prophetic message sharpens. Leaders complete a reassessment of the harvest field and labor force, and they realign resources. The expanding core makes fresh relational and resource commitments. Values inform behavior.

6. The *trajectory realignment stage* results in increased credibility. The steady growth and development of a significant number of congregations in the city create a tipping point. Intercessors connect and focus. Laypeople unite at workplaces and in neighborhoods, resulting in a rising tide of prayer and confidence that God is working in the city.

REALITIES OF WAR

Our generation has never seen a Great Awakening, but previous generations have witnessed transformed communities. It can happen again. Yet, all we do praying, living in caring relationships, and sharing the gospel—will fall short unless God comes to town.

Remember: *Community impact* is dependent on a *healthy spiritual community*, and that is dependent on the quality of the *unity*, which is in turn dependent on the depth and sincerity of our *humility*. All of this rises from our ongoing, consistent exposure to *God's holiness* and *sovereignty*—in prayer—both individually and corporately.

The prince of darkness is here. An evil force is determined to invade our land. At some point we will find ourselves at the threshold of the ultimate battle foretold in Scripture—an unavoidable war that cannot be averted.

But God calls us to take a stand now or lose our cities. We must not shrink back. We need to mobilize ongoing prayer—watchman prayer—that will never be finished. Should God grant us another Great Awakening, millions will be saved and brought into His Kingdom. Even though we cannot divert the coming storm of end times, we must have a prayerful and systematic commitment to fulfill the Great Commission.

Is there hope for genuine community transformation? Yes—if we, in desperation, truly see God in His holiness and sovereignty, if we, in desperation, seek *Him* more than a *plan*, and if we, in desperation, humble ourselves to pray and work in unity for His glory. That will be God-coming-to-town transformation!



HOW DID THE APOSTLE PAUL

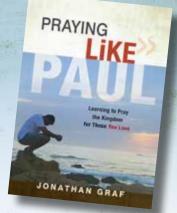
P. DOUGLAS SMALL is president and founder of Alive Ministries: Project Pray. He is the author of numerous books and the founder of the Praying Church Move-

ment. He also serves the prayer ministry of the Church of God, Cleveland, TN.

God used Paul to change the Gentile world. Prayer was the key. What did he pray for those under his care? What did he ask friends to pray for him? Now you can learn to pray like Paul.

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Prayer Patterns for Community Transformation

LONGING

FOR **CHANGE**

How can we, as intercessors, pray both personally and corporately for transformation? How can we develop a longing for the presence and glory of Christ to flood our communities?

Although the past is set in stone—its events cannot be relived—the future of your city and mine and the future of our nation is not yet determined. Many Christians, however, seem to have only a vague understanding of how God interacts with cities and nations. Both the Old and New Testaments describe this interaction:

• In Genesis God mandates that men and women become stewards of the land (Gen. 1:28; 2:15). This all-encompassing command means guarding, keeping, protecting, watching over, and retaining God's plan for creation. Even after sin entered the world, He never rescinded His stewardship edict for each one of us.

In the Book of Acts, during Paul's discourse at Athens, he reveals that this divine purpose for mankind continues today: "From one man he [God] made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him" (Acts 17:26–27). Simply put, God made every nation and appointed a place in time for each so the gospel might go forth. He always intended His people to be involved in shaping history with Him. Many Scripture passages build upon this theme (e.g., 2 Chron. 7:14; Jer. 18:7–8). Even those people who consider our era to be the "last days" would agree that until the very end, God calls believers to steward the land and its resources for God's glory.

However, many Christians don't believe they have a role in stewarding their city's *moral development* as well—or they no longer think beyond their own family or church. Some evangelicals believe "the church should do something" to become more effective, while others want their church to "stay out of politics."

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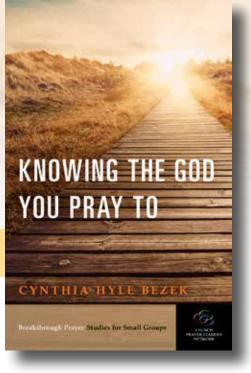
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UBLISHING

OWNING YOUR COMMUNITY

A huge obstacle to pursuing a transformed community is the lack of *owner-ship*. This is a growing problem because "spiritual incrementalism" no longer works! Spiritual incrementalism is the idea that effective societal norms will be shaped incrementally by increased church effectiveness. We live in what sociologists and missiologists call a "post-Christian" era. Some mainline denominations that once upheld biblical moral standards and *did* influence society have now caved in to political correctness resulting in theological fuzziness about marriage, sexuality, and gender identity.

Most Christians agree that we need a mighty move of God! As much as we have tried the latest strategy to be sensitive people, win the city, and elect Christian candidates, our cities and country continue to decay, both spiritually and morally. Isn't it time to try something different?

First, a few questions about your community:

- Are you satisfied with the advancement of the Kingdom of God in your community?
- Do you know its spiritual history?
- If your community once experienced the work of God as a recognized revival, were there social changes as well? If so, presumably Christians were awakened and their lives and homes changed. Did unchurched people notice? Might both the churched and unchurched alike say that God had done a significant work in your community?
- What about today? Is there any ongoing, visible conviction of sin and fear of the Lord?
- Are the churches in your community heathy, seeing people coming to faith in Christ regularly?
- Do business practices reveal ethical standards?
- Do local government officials legislate in the fear of the Lord?

The answers to such questions can reveal spiritual needs for which we can intercede. Second, God cares for cities:

- Jesus wept over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41–42).
- Nineveh, a city of unbelievers, repented with fasting after being warned by Jonah. Uncertain whether their repentance would help, they said, "Who knows? God may yet relent" (Jonah 3:9), and then they experienced forgiveness.
- Out of God's love, the prophets declared blessing and revival for cities and nations in ruin (see Hosea 14 and Joel 2).

So how can we be faithful stewards of the communities in which God has placed us to make a difference?

INQUIRING OF THE LORD

Obviously, hearing from God is the first step—rediscovering His holy presence, and learning again to commune with Him at a heart-to-heart level. And hearing from God leads to a new type of prayer—*interrogative intercession*.

Interrogative intercession inquires of the Lord without preconceived notions about how to pray. Its form begins with a question, followed by the Lord's reply, which in turn generates the next question. This form of intercession consists of more questions than requests. It begins with asking God for the right questions!

It's God's responsibility—not ours to provide a plan to transform your community and mine. Releasing ourselves from the responsibility to be "creative," we can, instead, make ourselves available. The greatest honor and privilege in life is to complete an assignment from God. The most tiring activity is to vainly construct and execute what we think God should be doing.

Here are ten practical ways we can pray, through interrogative intercession, for transformation:

1. Begin by asking God to reveal

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"COME AND SEE WHAT GOD HAS DONE"

Nestled in the mountains of Guatemala is a community of several thousand people called Almolonga—a place where residents claim God's presence has brought transformation of society and a healing of the land (2 Chron. 7:14). Several years ago I learned about Almolonga while watching the *Transformations I* video, produced by The Sentinel Group (*sentinelgroup.org*).

I wanted to travel there and see with my own eyes if such transformation was true. As I prayed about it, the Lord confirmed by issuing an invitation based on Psalm 66:5: "Come and see what God has done, his awesome deeds for mankind!" So with three traveling companions (including a tenyear-old boy and his mom), I set out to investigate the claims. I contacted a family friend in Guatemala City, and he agreed to drive us three-and-half hours through the mountains to Almolonga near Quetzaltenango (Guatemala's second largest city).

After driving through village after village plagued with obvious poverty, we noticed a dramatic difference upon entering Almolonga. There was no denying the immediate change in the physical nature of the community. The streets were cleaner with less litter, the homes were better constructed and cared for, and many of the businesses had biblical names. In fact, a banner over the main street declared, "Jesus is Lord of Almolonga."

It was market time, and the streets were bustling with farmers carrying their produce. I was taken back by the abundance and enormous size of the carrots, cabbages, beets, and other produce. Just as the video had described, God had blessed the people of Almolonga with a healing of their land. The quality of their produce far surpassed the produce for sale in the market a few miles away in Quetzaltenango or in other villages we visited.

But more than that, I was impressed with the people of Almolonga. This community was once known for crime, alcoholism, poverty, abuse and hostility to pastors, churches, and missionaries. But when God's people were most desperate, they cried out to Him in prayer. And now an estimated 80 to 90 percent of the people are followers of Jesus Christ. We sensed the accuracy of that high estimate as we initiated conversations. We asked questions and invited them to give us an explanation for the obvious differences between their community and other villages nearby. The vast majority gave all glory to God for the transformation of their families and town. Many of them spoke of physical healing. We met just one person over the course of two days who said she wasn't a believer.

We also talked with a police officer who said that the police in Almolonga have no need for guns because there is no crime there. I had noticed that just a few miles away in Quetzaltenango, many of the businesses were guarded by officers with automatic weapons.

The townspeople sent us away with a message we heard over and over again the need for humility and desperate prayer. "When you go home," one pastor said, "you must tell the people that it is not a program or strategy. Tell them that they must humble themselves and pray. There is no other way."

I "went to see," and I came away convinced that God's heart is for the transformation of communities. He stirred a new level of prayer and hope for my own community, although transformation will undoubtedly look different from what I experienced in Almolonga.

I, too, want others to "see what God has done" in answer to prayer. **CAROL MADISON** is editor of *Prayer Connect*. the key questions. We may think we see the problems, but in reality, our personalities and background may cause us to see our city through cloudy lenses. Interrogative intercession begins with asking God to make us curious about the steps that will produce fruit. God still says, "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know" (Jer. 33:3).

- 2. Ask the Lord to show you His heart for the city. When we look at our cities, we see problems and challenges, but do we understand the depths of what sin has done in people's lives? Ask Him to show you His desire for change. John 3:16 still applies: "For God so loved the world. . . ."
- 3. Ask the Lord to help you find others who have a heart for your city. Unity is a key to city transformation. But it must not lead the process. Unity for unity's sake rarely accomplishes anything. Find those whose primary desire is the pursuit of God for His sake and the sake of His purpose. Unity is the outcome of people desperately seeking the Lord (Psalm 133).
- **4. Ask the Lord to give you a plan.** Remember, only God's wisdom can give you a working plan. Simply pursue the Lord, seeking His holy presence. But be cautious about pursuing "a plan" more than pursuing *Him* and *His* perspective (Jer. 29:13).
- **5. Listen before you do anything.** Gather with others who have the same desire to see God move in your community—and listen *together*. In the midst of corporate praise and adoration, pause to hear what He has to say. He cares more about the transformation of your city than you do. You are not responsible to birth the plan! Decide beforehand that you will not attempt anything before hearing from Him. At Jesus' transfiguration, God

exalted Jesus as His Son and said, "Listen to him!" (Matt. 17:5).

- 6. Ask the Lord for His wisdom. We do not have the resources in ourselves to effect change. How foolish to seek God's help as though looking for a handyman on Angie's List-bringing to Him our understanding of the problems. We seek Him because He is worthy to be sought. City transformation is the byproduct of our pursuit of God and His wisdom (James 1:5).
- 7. Pray for the faith to expect nothing short of a miracle. Most cities are past the point where Christian incrementalism will work. Expect and seek nothing short of God working miracles in all aspects of your city (e.g., the economy, the morality, and the government). This is what He is doing around the globe. It is God's direct activity that

gets people's undivided attention (Heb. 12: 2, Psalm 107).

- 8. Ask the Lord questions. The past is often the key to the present. What is on the surface today comes from the depths of the past. Divide into teams and walk the city. Then, come back together and listen to what God has to say. Research the history of your area (e.g. crime, witchcraft, drug use, false religions), asking the Lord to guide your spiritual-needs discovery process. Appoint someone to keep track of what you find and the ways the Lord directs you. Take note of root causes and entry points of problems (Jer. 21:2, Josh. 7:7-8).
- 9. Take action after "prayer and agreement" among your group. Act in faith on whatever God shows you (see Jer. 42:5), even if it seems crazy!
- 10. Look for positive results from your prayers. Publicize what you

are experiencing. Often, leaders of transformed communities report that they have seen answers to their prayers on the front page of the newspaper (Ex. 9:16).

We know that only the gospel's power can change the human heart (Rom. 1:16). But in God's mercy, if we intercede, as faithful stewards, in fervent interrogative intercession for our morally plummeting society, there might come a quickening—even a dramatic move of God. We may yet see the presence and glory of Christ flooding our communities. Will we at least try? 🖭



FORGOT

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DAVE KUBAL is president of Intercessors for America, a ministry founded in 1973 to focus on prayer and fasting for the nation (*ifapray*. org). He is also a member of America's National Prayer Committee.

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Stories of Transformation in Process

ON THE

WAY

When a hurricane blew through Bartow County, GA, community officials were so impressed with the way believers assisted in the clean up that they changed their official Emergency Management Plan. Based on what emergency leaders called "the finest disaster response in the history of the state," the county emergency plan now includes "the vital involvement of houses of worship."

Schools in Corvallis, OR, have benefited from strategic prayer and involvement by pastors and local churches. One district has invited pastors and youth pastors to be trained and used as crisis counselors. When realtors in the Branson, MO, area ask people why they are moving into the community, common answers include, "This place is like a breath of fresh air," and "Our family feels safe here." Pastors can trace the changes in their community back to the 1990s when an intentional prayer movement started. Typically about ten percent of the population turns out for National Day of Prayer events.

When hopelessness pervaded Tucson, AZ, some Christian leaders noticed race issues escalating and teen suicides on the rise. A group of Anglo pastors met regularly to talk and pray about matters affecting relationships in their city, and they developed a growing sensitivity to race and other issues. Through prayer for the schools,

BY DENNIS FUQUA

they began seeing an impact. Attendance and academic scores have increased dramatically. School administrators point to specific answers in response to the church rallying around their schools in prayer.

Many similar Kingdom-advancing stories play out in communities around the U.S. And they all have one thing in common: prayer. Lots of prayer. United prayer. Strategic prayer. Believing prayer. Relational prayer. Persistent prayer.

TELLING THE STORIES

I interviewed pastors and ministry leaders in these cities and asked them to tell me about their growing transformation movement.

Though none would say their cities are transformed, neither would they deny that significant Kingdom progress has taken place in recent years. As David Franklin of Bartow County puts it, "We are about at the five-mile mark of a 100mile journey."

As I listened to their stories, I identified four specific prayer traits consistent with a city transformation movement:

- developing a prayer rhythm for their city
- praying consistent with their history and spiritual heritage
- letting prayer flow from trust and relationship
- praying with specific purpose.

The following stories capture a portion of what God is doing in each city and how these prayer traits are specifically manifested in their midst.

CORVALLIS, OR

Corvallis is a university town of about 50,000 people, more than half of whom are college students. Three ministers shared their stories with me: Tom White, veteran city leader and director of Frontline Ministries, who has lived and ministered there for decades; Ron Johnson, former pastor of Corvallis Evangelical Church who recently retired after nearly 30 years of ministry, and Bryson Lewis, director of the Heart of the Valley House of Prayer.

Over the years Corvallis pastors have developed **a prayer rhythm for their city**. They began praying in unity in 1981. And from 1991 on, their prayer rhythm has included an annual Pastors' Prayer Summit. In recent years they have added a simultaneous women's summit. Typically, 100 people set aside these three days each year to go away for a time of Spirit-led, worship-based, Scripture-fed, corporate prayer. The Sunday night following their summit, all the believers in the city are invited to enjoy Adoration, a time of corporate worship and prayer.

In addition, each Thursday morning the pastors and other ministry leaders gather for prayer. They often invite significant city leaders, such as the mayor, superintendent of schools, and university leaders, to join them. This gathering has become the fountainhead of all the other prayer activities in the city.

The most recent addition to this rhythm has been something called Light Corvallis—26 hours of continuous prayer and worship. Light Corvallis's intentional merging of the city's various prayer streams and styles helps all prayers find ways they can contribute to the vision for their community.

BRANSON, MO

Branson influences far more people than the average city of its size. Its population, about 10,000, hosts between six and seven million visitors each year. But the influx of tourists also brings some unique ministry challenges. John Baltes, president of the Silver Dollar City Foundation, and Howard Boyd, who has pastored in the city for more than 30 years, told me some of their story.

In Branson, the prayer leaders

understand their community's spiritual heritage and **pray consistent with that history**. They can point to key events that have shaped Branson's spiritual history, including the founding of the College of the Ozarks (1906), the publishing of the popular novel *Shepherds of the Hills* (1907), the opening of a premier Christian camp (1926), an autobiography of Guy Howard titled *The Walking Preacher of the Ozarks* (1944), and the purchase of land that has been turned into Silver Dollar City (1949).

Despite this rich history, leaders discovered a multidecade gap in significant prayer and cooperation between believers. That changed in 1994 when, through the leadership of the Christian Businessmen's Committee, intentional prayer returned. Two years later the first of their annual Pastors' Prayer Summits took place. In addition, since April 21, 1999 (the day after the Columbine tragedy) pastors have prayed weekly, one Wednesday morning each month in the high school, the other Wednesday mornings at the Old Stone church, the first church built in the area.

Since 2002 the Uninterrupted Prayer Team (the UP Team) has been praying for the "seven mountains" of business, education, entertainment, government, medicine, ministry, and social services. For the past ten years Pastor Howard has rallied the community to take the first seven days of each year to pray at, and for, groups representing the seven mountains.

These times of prayer have led to the most recent development that will undoubtedly impact the future: the Ozark Mountain Legacy (OML). This group resulted from the input of about 400 community leaders. They concluded that the five key values of Branson are family, faith, friends, flag, and future. The OML is tracking how these five values are being lived out. And it is encouraging more people to embrace them. Believers in Branson are aware of their history, and they are shaping their future.

BARTOW COUNTY, GA

Bartow County has tripled in population in the past 40 years (currently about 102,000 people). Cartersville, about an hour northwest of Atlanta on I-75, is Bartow County's largest city, population: 20,000. Keith Wood has been a bivocational pastor since the early '90s. David Franklin, the denominational district overseer for the Southern Baptists, has lived there since 2007. These two and about ten other pastors form an informal "Jerusalem Council," from which much of the activity there flows.

God's work is **moving forward with the building of trust and relationship**. In 2009 about 135 pastors from across the county gathered together to pray prior to the National Day of Prayer rally. Then they walked together to an outside location where hundreds of people were waiting. When the crowd saw the pastors come around the corner together, many wept openly because they never thought this unity could happen.

In 2014 about 3,500 believers participated in reading the entire Bible out loud in every city in the county. In one small town—the one where General Sherman developed his famous March to the Sea—the mayor was so moved that he invited a denominational evangelistic team to minister in their city. Where doors were once closed, they now stood wide open.

Even the county commissioners asked the pastors to pray for a specific city in their county because it was very needy. These events all came about because of the relational connection between pastors and then between pastors and government leaders.

TUCSON, AZ

Dave Drum and Matt Merrill both grew up in Tucson, AZ. Dave pastored there for 20 years and now serves as the Church Domain director of a ministry called 4Tucson. Matt is the Transformations coordinator for Gap Ministries, which focuses primarily on assisting foster kids. They offer this background:

Tucson (population 526,000) is a desert metro area where immigration is on the front burner. The three major ethnic groups are Anglos, Hispanics, and African-Americans. 4Tucson, an organization birthed by ministry and business entrepreneur Mark Harris, states their mission is to "transform our community by mobilizing the Body of Christ." They have identified, and work with, 12 domains—or areas of cultural influence—in their city.

A lack of hope characterized Tucson schools. Many Christian leaders began praying with specific purpose. Matt saw the hopelessness and suicides in the schools and was heartbroken. His brokenness and burden turned into prayer-specific, purposeful prayer to bless everything related to the schools: attendance, academics, students, finances, administration-everything. He rallied intergenerational prayer at, and for, the schools. To date there have been extended times of prayer at about 150 schools. Some of these times lasted four hours. Some lasted 26 hours. Specific answers to prayer were recorded.

Some kids mentioned they have stopped thinking about suicide. Some administrators said things changed "the day you prayed." Other changes include greater attendance, finances, and hope—as well as fewer actual suicides. Fear between the schools and the church has diminished. Christians in the schools are bolder and better equipped to live godly lives. One administrator states, "I have never seen such a sense of hopefulness here."

Among the pastors and racial groups in Tucson, real fellowship is replacing isolation and ignorance. The pastors not only pray with each other in large groups (up to 100 at times) but in smaller pockets as well. Those participating conclude these things are happening because they prayed with purpose.

IT'S WORKING

There is "good" traction and "God" traction in each of these cities. The people behind these stories would agree with this paraphrased quote from John Bunyan: "We must do more than pray. But we can't do more than pray until we have prayed."

By developing rhythms of prayer, praying consistent with their history, letting prayer flow from trust and relationship, and praying with purpose, leaders testify that the Church is working. And because of that, God is working.



DENNIS FUGUA pastored for 25 years in Gig Harbor, WA. He is the director of International Renewal Ministries (*prayersummit.net*) and the director of Clark County

Prayer Connect (*ccprayerconnect.net*). His three books on prayer are available at *lppress.net*.

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When the Impossible Confronts You

ne Sunday afternoon, while I was training a prayer team for a trip to Indonesia, my dad called. That was rare on a Sunday because my folks (in their 80s) worry they might catch me in a meeting or during a teaching time. I knew something was up.

Dad left a message that sounded like he had just gone through an atomic bomb. "Paul," he said, his voice shaking, "we just went through a tornado. It is all gone. The house, barns, and the garage they are all gone."

After a long pause he said, "Call me." At that moment, everything was beyond our control and we felt helpless. We had so many questions. Where were they going to live? What do you do with the few things that were not destroyed in the storm? Why them? The house a quarter of a mile north and the one to the south did not lose even a shingle. Why did God take their dream house and turn it into splinters?

It was a time that called for unusual faith and trust.

Simply Not Possible

The setting in 2 Kings 7 is an equally desperate situation. The Arameans have laid siege to the city of Samaria, there is a famine in the land, and the people are in crisis. In the midst of the darkness, the prophet Elisha matter-of-factly predicts that by this time tomorrow there will be an abundance of food. In verse 2, the officer attending the king scoffs at Elisha's prediction. "Look," he says, "even if the Lord should open the floodgates of the heavens, could this happen?"

Even if. In other words, this is not even in the realm of possibility. Does Elisha not realize how desperate they are—and that even a little food is not an option?

The story's action continues at twilight with four lepers making a desperate decision to go over to the Aramean camp. They reason with each other (v. 4): "If we stay here, we will die of starvation. If we go over there and they spare us, we live, and if they kill us, we have lost nothing" (my paraphrase).

But when the lepers reach the Aramean camp, what they see is beyond their wildest belief: the Lord had caused the Arameans to hear the sound of chariots, horses, and a great army. The Arameans had become so afraid that they dropped everything and fled to their homeland.

So the lepers eat and drink and loot some tents of valuable items. They hide some of the spoils but then decide to tell the others in the city about their good fortune.

They go back and call out to the gatekeepers, telling them everything that had

By Paul Covert

transpired (v. 10). The gatekeepers relay the message to the king, but he is convinced it is a trap. So he sends out a few soldiers to investigate. They return with news that verifies the lepers' story.

Pandemonium breaks out among the starving people as they rush madly out of the city to get their share of the plunder from the Aramean camp. And what happens to the officer who seemed so confident this could not happen? He is trampled to death as the people run out to get their share of the bounty.

He underestimated the power of the God who reigns in heaven!

"Even If" Faith Principles

I have been processing this passage for a number of years. I believe the simple words *even if*, and their implications, can teach us several valuable lessons:

1. The king's officer looked at the situation through natural, faithless eyes. The king's officer isn't the only one

who has lived faithlessly. I sometimes do the same thing. Unfortunately, I reside there more often than I want to admit.

This kind of weak praying and faithlessness is the opposite of the way we are called to respond to desperate situations. Biblical heroes demonstrate a different kind of faith and prayers.

When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego faced the blazing furnace, they had a different take on *even if.* They spoke confidently: "Even if [God does not save us from the furnace], we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up" (Dan. 3:18). These three young men looked at their dire straits through eyes of confidence in their God. He was the determiner of their futures, and they completely trusted Him.

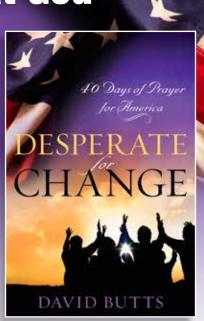
Queen Esther exhibited this same "even if" mindset. Approaching the king on behalf of the Jews that Haman was

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about to destroy, she confidently proclaimed, "If I perish, I perish" (Est. 4:16). She was willing to move forward even if it cost her very life.

2. Faithful praying and living are not based on circumstances or people. My wife Ann and I have needed to put into practice this kind of faith and praying several times during recent years. After my dad's desperate phone call, we left the following morning to help dig out from the tornado devastation. Along the way we needed a new level of faith and a different kind of prayer posture. The prayers we prayed on behalf of my parents demanded an intensified trust and faith level.

After the tornado my parents decided to summer in Missouri and winter in Arizona. So they packed a few things in a U-Haul, and I flew out to get them and drive the U-Haul to Arizona. Seventyfive miles from home their vehicle was rear-ended by an 18-wheel truck. Mom's back was broken, and she had to have a four-inch titanium rod placed in her back. The accident also ripped the leads of Dad's pacemaker from his heart. Later we learned that his back had been broken. Neither of them was paralyzed, but both needed a big rig's worth of care.

Again we moved into that unique kind of praying and faith we learned from 2 Kings 7: Lord—even if we don't understand how my parents can experience even more devastation—we still pray and trust that You will meet them in this situation.

3. We can learn to capture our struggles and missteps under trial. When I was in high school biology, I remember dissecting a frog. After each incision we would peel back some flesh and use large push-pins to hold the flesh in place so we could see more clearly the organs of the frog.

In crisis it is as if God is peeling back the layers of protection we've strategically placed in our lives—those ways we want to be viewed positively by others. With those layers out of the way, the difficulties allow us to see motives, plans, thoughts, and actions that are not pure or that need work to bring them into submission to Christ. The key is to capture those offensive thoughts or actions as they surface so we can deal with them when the storm passes. These fleshly parts of us are hidden unless we are in the worst of trials.

Capturing those thoughts and actions helps us pray over them and repent where we need to. We learn to view trials as our loving Father's allowing us to see our struggles clearly—and then helping us step up to greater maturity. We all have a long way to go, but we can be grateful that God goes before us.

4. The goal is to be continually grateful. I have witnessed people who are fearful or angry or have shut down their emotions. It is clear they are still siding with the king's officer of 2 Kings 7, living without trust or deep prayer.

By contrast I have met a few who trust the Lord so completely that nothing fazes them. When something happens they shrug it off with words like, "The Lord has protected me so beautifully before, He will do it again," or, "I am so grateful that the Lord handles all my struggles so wonderfully." These people are rare—but, boy, do they stand out! We admire their grateful hearts and trust in God.

My friend Jake (not his real name) is like that. He is the most grateful man I know. Nothing rattles him. His faith, trust, and prayers cannot be shaken because of his appreciation for what Jesus has done for him already. Learning this level of gratefulness has opened unusual doors for him. Recently the monarch of a wealthy country invited Jake into his home, introducing him to the monarch's family and close friends. Jake's gratefulness and trust are magnetic to the people around him—even people of different faiths.

New Level of Effective Prayer

True confessions: I am certainly not there yet. I complain and whine too much. I am too often like the king's officer in 2 Kings 7, expressing that something can't be done. But I have in my sights the goal of greater faith, and I am striving for it. I want to be like my grateful friend Jake and those biblical heroes who could not be shaken.

We need a new level of the faithfilled prayers that Elisha and others demonstrated. This is the kind of faith that says from the heart, "Even if I can see no hope in my surroundings, I will trust in God. I will pray to Him for what I need. And even if everyone else is faithless and against me, I will have faith."

God can open the windows of heaven at any time and display His power and grace to us. *Even if.* 🖼



PAUL COVERT is the prayer pastor at Central Christian Church, a multisite church in the Phoenix, AZ, metropolitan area. He is the author of *Threshold: Transformational* mational Drawn Los doubit

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the clock" with God. If the need is urgent, ask God to respond quickly.

friends may become more receptive to the gospel truth. S stands for "Save Them Completely." Hebrews 7:25 promises that Jesus

we pray for the heart to become soft, our

TIPS&TOOLS

Ideas to Stimulate Prayer

is able to completely save all those who come to God through Him. What great news! No one is out of reach to be saved.

Here's a sample of how to pray the CROSS: "Lord, I bring _____ to the CROSS. I ask that You convict him of sins and comfort him by Your Spirit. Remove the blinders from his eyes, in Jesus' name! Open a door for him to hear the gospel and soften his heart for the message. Lord, save ___ _completely!"

PIERRE EADE is pastor of outreach at Washington Crossing, PA. His articles on Christian growth can be found at christiangrowthnetwork.com.

Praying the CROSS

lthough I know praying for unsaved friends and family members is important, I find it difficult to pray in a consistent, biblical, and in-depth way. Too often, I pray with a sense of despair and weariness: "Just save them, Lord!"

No doubt, God listens to all our petitions and pleas, even the simplest prayers. Recently, while preparing for a sermon, the Lord gave me an effective and easy-toremember way to pray for unbelievers. I simply pray the CROSS.

→ stands for "Convict and Comfort." In John 16:7–8, Jesus promises His disciples that the Holy Spirit will come to bring comfort and also conviction of sin. Praying for conviction and comfort of the Spirit is asking God to begin to

move the hearts of the unsaved people we're praying for-to draw them to Him and away from sin.

R stands for "Remove the Blinders." In 2 Corinthians 4:4, Paul teaches that Satan has blinded the minds of unbelievers so they cannot see the light of the gospel. Pray with authority and faith for God to remove the blinders from your loved ones so they may see Jesus clearly! stands for "Open a Door." In Colossians 4:3, Paul requests prayer so God will open a door for his message. In the same vein, I ask God to open opportunities for my friends and family to hear the gospel.

🔇 stands for "Soften Their Hearts." In D Ephesians 4:18, we learn that the heart of an unbeliever is hardened. As

Prayer that Changes History

eorge Otis, Jr. has documented the transformation of communities in cities and nations around the world. His organization, The Sentinel Group (sentinelgroup.org), has researched the effects of transformation and produced documentaries featuring such places as Fiji, Uganda, and Cali, Colombia. In his observations of places where remarkable transformation has taken place, he summarizes:

Finding success in the place of prayer is critical-particularly in those situations where time is of the essence and much is at stake. This is when intercessors must become difference-makers-replacing generalized petitions with transformational prayer.

In the simplest of terms this means praying with specificity . . . within an urgent time frame . . . with an expectation of results.

There is a difference between religious chatter and prayer that changes history. If you want your intercession to be effective, act upon these truths:

- God's hardest task is to get our undivided attention. Give it to Him.
- What counts is not how many are praying but who is doing the praying.
- Pray until God speaks to you. If He

hasn't spoken, you're not finished.

- Ask specific things of God so you can determine if He has answered.
- Pray expectantly. Put yourself "on

-Taken from Global Prayer Resource Network (globalprn.com).

Will You Pray with Us?

With the elimination of the July/August issue of Prayer Connect (to keep the magazine financially stable), the staff has had time to be refreshed and rejuvenated. Praise God for His provision during this time!

- Pray for Dave and Kim Butts of Harvest Prayer Ministries, as they come back from their sabbatical in September. Pray they will be rested and ready to reengage in ministry.
- Pray for Bridget Rennie (art director) and Carol Madison (editor) as they begin work on the November/December issue. Pray for renewed creativity.
- Pray for wisdom for Jon Graf (publisher) as he makes financial and marketing decisions.



PRAYERLEADER Encouragement for Prayer Mobilizers

Resenters, Resisters, and the Pride Divide

here was a time I believed every church member would automatically and wholeheartedly embrace the call to prayer. I have since learned otherwise.

The culprit that has spoiled my expectations is pride. I call it "the pride divide." Because the enemy is always counterattacking any renewed emphasis on prayer, the insipid infection of pride can infiltrate the hearts of both those who embrace the prayer initiatives and those who do not.

Scripture describes pride as the snare or trap of the devil (1 Tim. 3:7). The snare makes its way into the prayer movement so subtly that it is hardly noticeable until the symptoms show up in serious conflict.

Two camps can easily emerge in any church. The first group I call the "resenters" and the second, the "resisters." No one *plans* to join either camp, but the signs of subtle pride are obvious once they occur.

A Snare Emerges

Resenters can surface among those who jump wholeheartedly into the prayer ministry. As they relish their new experiences, they share the blessings of prayer with great enthusiasm. Prayer is something that must be experienced and can seldom be adequately explained, so others who aren't as involved may not share the excitement.

This lack of participation can be interpreted as a lack of spirituality—or a failure to support the leadership of the church. Soon the prayer-energized saints begin to resent the nonparticipants. Without great care and sensitivity a pharisaical pride can surface.

As a response, the resisters—nonparticipants—begin to dig in their heels and even become antagonistic to the new initiatives. Typically, they are reacting more to the overbearing zeal of the enthusiasts than to the actual call to prayer. Pride unfortunately enters on both sides.

Deconstructing the Pride Divide

In my years of prayer leadership as a pastor, the following lessons have helped break down the pride divide, keeping everyone focused on the right goals:

1. Honesty is the best policy. Church leaders must acknowledge the divide, or at least the potential for it, and determine to address it openly with understanding and grace. Several times over the years, I have spoken openly from the pulpit on a Sunday morning about this dilemma. Just the act of exposing this danger allows people to talk about it, recognize it, and find greater resolve to avoid it. It also serves public notice on the forces of darkness that we are all alert to their schemes.

2. Understanding goes a long way. It is helpful for the resenters to remember that just because individuals cannot participate in the prayer programs does not mean they are less committed to seeking the Lord. The "holdouts" may have a variety of legitimate reasons for not participating in the call to united prayer.

Leaders would do well to explain to the resenters that public prayer activity is not the only gauge of spiritual authenticity. And resisters need reminders that the extreme outward zeal of the prayer adopters often reflects a sincere and seeking heart, for which we should always be grateful.

3. Prayer is intimacy, not activity. As prayer ministry develops, we can easily get wrapped up in the activity of prayer and lose focus on the core issue of relationship with God. This is the contrast By Daniel Henderson

we see between the prayer approach of the Pharisees and that of Jesus. In His Sermon on the Mount Jesus reprimanded the Pharisees for reducing prayer to a public display of religious superiority. In contrast, He told His followers to humbly gather in a secret place to experience intimacy with their Father in heaven (Matt. 6:1, 5–13). Similarly, we can fall into the trap of making prayer a "program for God" rather than the pure and simple pursuit of His person and presence.

4. Only the Holy Spirit can motivate people to pray. Ultimately, only the Holy Spirit can draw people into a deeper commitment to prayer. Jesus wants His Church to be a house of prayer, and His Spirit is able to make it so. Each of us must find his or her place in this plan, and graciously pray that others will do the same. In an environment of humility and grace the pride divide cannot thrive for long.

Grace for the Pride Divide

Real humility works in concert with honesty, understanding, intimacy with Christ, and a focus on the power of the Holy Spirit. Humility invites grace and allows us to express mutual submission. Resenters can trust Christ for the grace that will draw others into prayer. Resisters can receive the grace that will lead them into prayer.

Together they will be exalted to a higher level of spiritual understanding and intimacy as they learn to seek the Lord on the common ground of humility.



DANIEL HENDERSON is the president and founder of Strategic Renewal, a ministry that exists to ignite personal renewal, congregational revival, and leadership restoration

(strategicrenewal.com).





The Law of the Coming Movement | By James Burns

n Christian history, no phenomenon is more clear than the recurrence of revivals. Such movements witness to us the supremacy of spiritual forces. They reveal the spiritual instincts in humankind that are often clouded by less worthwhile pursuits. They encourage faith by showing God's hand in history and in His guidance of the Church.

These movements prove that God is working through His laws, for the salvation of His people and for the world's good. In a revival, a few, then dozens, then thousands say with David: "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me" (Ps. 138:7, NKJV).

Loss of Spiritual Power

No one pretends that all is well with the Church today. When allowance is made for exaggeration, there are enough problems left to arouse deep soul searching. On every side, there is complaint of the Church's loss of spiritual power, the increasing indifference of its people, and a decrease in membership. While there is not decline, there is a conscious arrest of its influence, and in the world a hostility to its claims.

The Church is still active. Never was there more activity and less result. There is abundant energy, but it is not conquering energy conscious of its power, but feverish energy, conscious of its impotence. The message of the pulpit has largely lost its power to convince, and the preacher his power to lead to conversion.

Much, if not all, of the message of Christianity has been silenced. Passion is simulated. Energy is directed toward useless things. People in the pew are unconsciously affected by the absence of certainty, and of intense conviction. So pulpit and pew are united in a common misgiving. People find it easy to drift from the Church. Their consciences are

unaffected by their relapse, because there is not the atmosphere of reality which makes neglecting the Church a sin.

If this is true, then it is a fact which should awaken the dullest heart concerned about the welfare of the world and his or her own spiritual life. Of course, a weakening Church means that the forces working against the Church are growing stronger. It makes us turn to the future and ask, "What is before us? Is the day of the Church over? Must we live on to see the decline, until it results in death?"

Eve of Revival

From such questions we can turn away with a smile. The Church is not on the eve of destruction. It is on the eve of a revival. Like the day that comes when the long night is over, so every revival comes after times of tribulation. Nothing in the world is more certain than this. The question is not "if," but "when." It is not for us to know the times which God has hidden. At the same time, there is much to give us hope.

The Church today appears helpless to cope with its growing responsibilities. The problems are so great that the Church seems to sink under the weight of them. It is the Church's duty, not to solve the problems, but to give an inspiration. It is a flood of new spiritual life that is needed. When the heart is alive, the hardest problem becomes solvable. Love awakes and finds its own channels. It is the Church's coldness that makes problems unsolvable.

The solution is a revival of spiritual religion-a new breath which will pass over the valley of dry bones and make them live. The world is ready for this revival, whether or not the Church is. For the Church, revival means humiliation, a bitter knowledge of unworthiness, and an open and humiliating confession of sin. It comes to scorch before it heals.

No revival can come from below. All attempts to create a revival fail. Nor can we bring a revival down, since prayer is not the cause of a revival, but the human preparation for one. By prayer we prepare the soil.

Is there a disposition to pray for revival? Are devout men and women everywhere becoming alarmed, not for the success of the Church, but for the glory of Christ? If not, then the night is not far spent, a deeper darkness is yet to come. For what use would a revival be, if we were not prepared for it? It would pass over us without doing its work. J. Hudson Taylor affirmed this when he wrote, "The spirit of prayer is, in essence, the spirit of revival."

Simplicity of Christ

Whatever form the coming awakening may take, we may be certain that it will bring us back to the essentials. This is the result of every true revival. It cuts through the trappings until it gets to the core of life. It leads men and women back to simplicity. When the heart earnestly seeks God, it takes the shortest route. Above all, it will bring us back to Christ.

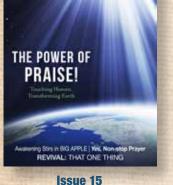
The day may be near. Even now He may be preparing His messenger. 🖭

JAMES BURNS wrote Revivals, Their Laws and Leaders in 1909. This article is condensed from the booklet The Laws of Revival, republished in 1960.



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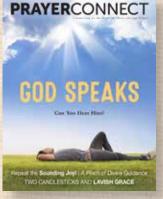
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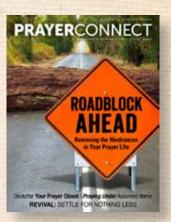
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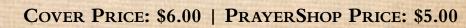
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