

Strategic Prayer

A guide for apostolic church planting teams

Compiled by the Strategic Prayer Equipping Group (SPEG)

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1. Introduction

1.1 Prayer Brings Results in Church Planting (Next section)

Prayer is a key part of the apostolic work of planting churches. God-centred, faith-filled, worshipful, persistent, authoritative prayer is a hallmark of the apostolic work recorded in the Scriptures. It is also a critical factor in an increasing number of case studies from the field in which significant breakthroughs in church planting have occurred. Since the late 1990s, an increasing number of these prayer-related advances of the Gospel have taken place in the context of the Muslim world.

But few of us have been part of a team or a ministry that from its very foundation was based in prayer, where the defining strategies and characteristics of the team were shaped through significant amounts of time in prayer, and the daily activity of the team involved a significant focus on prayer. Rarely have we been able to put prayer into practice in a way that goes beyond simply putting the things we are already doing before God and asking His blessing on it.

This manual is based on the understanding that prayer is not an optional add-on to the process of church planting, but rather that it is intended by God to be a foundational component of any apostolic church planting effort, worthy of being allotted a significant portion of time, effort, and focus. It is not meant to replace the proclamation of the Word and the practical expression of God's love to those who do not yet know Him, but rather to take its proper place alongside of them.

From start to finish, prayer is about God. There are many different ways to pray, and many ways in which prayer can be incorporated into a team life and strategy. This manual will seek to provide encouragement and examples of how that can happen. The primary focus of prayer that will be covered here is the combination of intercession and worship that leads to breakthroughs in communities, people-groups, and nations.

In the end, prayer is about spending time in the presence of God, Sovereign King of the Nations, and intimate Friend and Joy of all who draw near to Him.

May the time you take reading through the material presented here sharpen and focus your desire to commune with and know God as never before! And may it lead to an unprecedented wave of Kingdom expansion among people groups waiting to hear the Good News.

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1.2 The Apostolic Task and Calling (Next section)

As we seek to live out and fulfil our calling as apostles ("sent ones") and members of apostolic teams, it is imperative that we have a clear scriptural view of what it is that apostles do. There are many passages in the New Testament that deal with the identity of apostles and the nature of apostolic work, but none more clearly describes the specific ministry priorities of the apostle than Acts 6:4.

...but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word. (Acts 6:4, NKJV)

The work of the apostle is to give himself *continually* to two things: Prayer, and the Ministry of the Word. In whatever location he is called to, among whatever people he is communicating the Gospel, the apostle is to continually press forward in two key areas - **prayer** and the **ministry of the Word**. These two areas operating together bring about powerful results.

As Kingdom workers called to the Muslim world, we have traditionally understood the second of those two priorities much more clearly than the first. The greatest portion of our time and focus has been given to the "ministry of the Word" - proclaiming the Good News, teaching and discipling new believers, providing leadership training based on Biblical principles, equipping teams to incarnate the Gospel in unreached communities, etc. For the most part, these efforts have produced limited fruit in our various contexts. In the areas where we have seen the most "success", if we are honest we have to admit that we still have witnessed little that approaches the kind of impact we read about in the book of Acts.

From a scriptural perspective, one reason for this may be that in practice, we are prioritizing only one of the two key elements of apostolic ministry. We develop team strategies and plans and then pray for them, rather than allowing God to birth and sustain our strategies and plans from within the place of prayer.

Apostles, and those involved in apostolic work, are to be Sent Ones who give themselves as much to continual to prayer as they do to the ministry of the Word. The promise of scripture and, increasingly, the testimony of case studies from the field, is that the combination of these two elements brings lasting fruit.

By affirming this, we do not in any way take away from the ministry of the Word. Some have shied away from this kind of prayer because they have been exposed to excesses in the Body of Christ where the Ministry of the Word has been neglected for the sake of prayer. Neither extreme is in line with the apostolic calling. Our aim must be to give ourselves continually to both.

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1.3 The Thread of "God-Sized" Prayer throughout Scripture

"God-sized" prayer is prayer that honors God by bringing Him requests of a magnitude that can only be brought about by His great wisdom, love, and power. It should not come as a surprise that this kind of prayer is a key focal point of apostolic ministry. The transformation of communities (cities, towns, villages, families, nations, and regions) through prayer is a consistent thread that runs through scripture from beginning to end.

From Genesis to Revelation, we consistently see a pattern of people partnering in faith with God through prayer to see breakthrough and change on a significant level. The acts of prayer recorded were not minor additions to already-fruitful ministries of the great men and women of the Bible. They were at the very center of the plan of God for these people, and were the source of the spiritual impact released through them.

Abraham pleaded with God over the city of Sodom. His requests were continually granted by God, and there is no indication that God would not have relented entirely from judgement if Abraham had not suddenly given up asking (Genesis 18:22-33).

Moses held the staff of the LORD over the battle against the Amalakites (Exodus 17), and through this intercessory act enabled Joshua to win victory in battle. When the people were led into idolatry, Moses' intercession led to God's sparing them (Exodus 30-31).

David's legacy is one of worship and passion for being in the presence of God. Many of his key victories were won through the wisdom and guidance given directly from God in the place of prayer (2 Sam. 5:17-25). Even as God used him to expand the borders of the Kingdom, David's greatest joy as King was to see the ark of God's presence brought into the center of the lives of his people.

Elijah's prayers were directed and used by God to perform supernatural signs and wonders that turned the nation back to the LORD. His obedience in prayer withheld and released rain, caused fire to fall, and resulted in the people falling on their faces and worshipping God.

Daniel spent weeks at a time in prayer, and his prayers unleashed nation-shaping shock-waves in both the seen and the unseen realms (Daniel 10).

Many other figures in the Old Testament were used by God to bring about significant community-level shifts for the Kingdom of God through prayer. Even the *King of Nineveh* - as a very first step in his allegiance to Yahweh - launches a national time of intense fasting and prayer (Jonah 3:7-8) that results in the deliverance of his city from God's judgement.

Jesus himself, Son of God and apostle (Heb. 3:1), ministered and taught powerfully in the spirit of prayer and intercession. He clearly models a life in which prayer is prioritized alongside and at times above proclamation of the Word (Mark 1:35-37), and ministry is carried out through prayer (i.e., John 11:41-42). Resurrected and living eternally, he now continually intercedes for those who draw near to God through Him (Heb. 7:25).

The *Apostles* of Jesus invested significant amounts of their team life and personal "productive" time in prayer. The first six chapters of the book of Acts highlight again and again how prayer was one of the most significant building blocks of the church. Prayer laid the groundwork for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1-2). It was practiced daily in the temple (Acts 2-3). It was accompanied by signs and wonders, and launched the church into greater acts of obedience, boldness, and proclamation (Acts 4-5). When the prioritizing of prayer came under threat due to increasing administrative pressures, the apostles created a new leadership model to enable them to continue to invest themselves in prayer, alongside the Ministry of the Word (Acts 6).

Peter, having been taught personally by Jesus how to pray, raised Tabitha from the dead through prayer (Acts 9:40). The entire town of Joppa was impacted by this, and many came to believe. Acts 10 shows Peter on the roof in prayer at the sixth hour of the day - right in the middle of his "productive work day" (cf. Matthew 20:5) as an apostle. His ability to hear God during this crucial time in His presence opens the door for generations of Gentiles across the world to become communities of Jesus-followers.

Paul's epistles make it clear that a significant portion of his focus in caring for the churches he planted was to pray for them. Virtually all of his letters include powerful apostolic prayers for those to whom he was writing. In Philippi, his initial strategy involved seeking out those whose hearts were already hungry for God in prayer (Acts 16:13). In the course of ongoing daily prayer with the new disciples (vs. 16), a community-shaking power encounter takes place with a spirit of divination. In the fallout of this, Paul and Silas' prayer and worship trigger a rapid chain of events that lead to the immediate establishment of an extended family into a house church. Prayer was not only an area of personal focus for Paul, but it also characterized the work of his church planting teams as a whole. Epaphras, a member of Paul's church planting team and a "faithful minister of

Christ" (Col. 1:7), is known primarily for his constant "wrestling" on behalf of the church in prayer (Col 4:12).

As we seek to live out the mandate of apostles (literally, "sent ones") in the communities to which we are called, we need to have a focus on prayer in our lives and ministry strategies that reflects the priority given to prayer by God in the Scriptures.

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2. What is Strategic Prayer?

2.1 Definition [\(Next section\)](#)

Strategic prayer is not a term that we specifically read in the Bible. It is merely a phrase that is being used to describe a certain type of prayer which we certainly do see in the Bible. So what is it and why is it important?

2.1.a What Strategic Prayer is not:

Strategic Prayer is more than our own personal prayer times
Strategic Prayer is more than asking God to bless what we are already doing
Strategic Prayer is more than spending a few minutes in prayer at the end of the meeting
Strategic Prayer is focused on more than individuals or a particular ministry or mission.

2.1.b What Strategic Prayer is:

Strategic Prayer is us joining God in His plans
Strategic Prayer is serious and persistent
Strategic Prayer is faith-full and expectant
Strategic Prayer is prayer for a whole people group, city or nation.
Strategic Prayer is praying and wrestling with God for a specific MUPG, city or nation
Strategic Prayer is praying until God commits Himself to release His foreordained plans
Strategic Prayer is what was called in the 1940's '*praying through*' for a place or people
Strategic Prayer is spiritual 'dynamite' (from Greek *dunamis* = power) specially placed for demolition! (2 Cor 10:4)
Strategic Prayer provides the 'keys to unlock' the spiritual destinies of nations and people groups (Matt 16:19)
Strategic Prayer fills the golden bowls in heaven until they are poured out and God's power is unleashed (Rev 8:3-5)
Strategic Prayer seeks to tear down and uproot the works of the enemy, and overthrow his rule while seeking to build, plant and restore the work of God in a nation's life (Jer 1:10)
Strategic Prayer is intercession which 'stands in the gap' on behalf of the people so that the Lord would be moved to move on them. (Ezek 22:30)
Strategic Prayer moves into the presence of God to discover God's redemptive purpose for the nation

Gen 18:22-33, Gen 32:24-30, Jer 29:7, Dan 10, Acts 4:23-31, 18:9-10, James 5:17-18

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2.2 Why is prayer so important? (Next section)

2.2.a Because God asks us to do it

- God commanded the people of Israel through the prophet Jeremiah to pray for the city to which they had been exiled (Jer 29:7)
- Paul enjoined prayer 'at all times' and wanted everyone to be prayed for, including political leaders (Eph 6:18, 1 Tim 2:1-8)

2.2.b Because God has promised to answer

- There are many verses in the Bible where God promises to answer us when we call on Him (John 14:14, 15:7, 1 John 5:14)

2.2.c Because of "if"

- God's work is often conditional on the response of human beings. He has not promised to work if we do not pray (2 Chron 7:12-14, John 14:14,)

2.2.d Because it is part of the apostolic calling

- The first apostles clearly felt that their main priorities were twofold: prayer and ministry of the word (Acts 6:4, Col 1:9, 2 Thess 1:11)
- There are numerous indications that prayer was a significant part of the apostles' lives and the life of the early church community (Acts 2:42, 4:24, 10:9, 12:12, 16:25, Phil 1:4)

2.2.e Because of the examples in the Bible

- These examples all display something of the quality of Strategic Prayer (See also Introduction)
 - Abraham - Gen 18:22-33
 - Jacob - Gen 32:24-30
 - Elijah - James 5:17-18
 - Daniel - Dan 10
 - The early church preached with increased boldness and changed the world - Acts 4:23-31
 - Paul's mission in Corinth was encouraged and taken forward by a prophetic vision – Acts 18:9-10

2.2.f Because it has been effective throughout history

- Perhaps the most startling story of intense, focused prayer for the nations was the 24/7 prayer of the Moravian movement centred on Herrnhut that continued for 100 years and saw hundreds of missionaries sent out to some of the hardest places on earth.
- All the great revivals appear to have started out of times of intense prayer and encounter with God.

2.2.g Because it is being effective in many different places today – including the Muslim world

- Bangladesh
- Columbia
- Korea
- Tunisia
- Egypt
- Uganda
- South Africa
- Indonesia

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2.3 Aims of Strategic Prayer

Strategic Prayer is not an end in itself. Whilst we are always called to pray and enjoy relationship with our heavenly father, Strategic Prayer has clear goals in mind. It is for the express of purpose of:

- Seeking first the powerful kingdom rule and reign of God (Matt 6:33)
- The salvation of many hundreds and thousands of men, women and children (2 Pet 3:9)
- Church planting and the formation of reproducing, worshipping communities
- The transformation of nations and societies so that justice will flow like a river (Amos 5:24)
- Unifying the body of Christ across different denominations, organisations and agencies (John 17:21)
- Seeing God's intervention in impossible situations (Matt 17:20)
- Ultimately displaying God's glory among the nations (Hab 2:14, Rev 7:9)

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3. Foundations of Strategic Prayer

3.1 CP happens in the seen & unseen realms (Next section)

The first assumption is that the unseen realm exists and is just as real as the seen realm (2 Kings 6:17). If this is the case then the unseen realm must be significant for church planting – even for westerners!

In order to understand the contribution that prayer has to make to the task of planting churches, we need to understand that fundamentally, the world in which we minister consists of two realms - the seen and the unseen. Our "skill" in church planting will depend on the degree to which we are able to effectively operate in both realms.

The reality of the unseen realm is a consistent theme that runs through the Old and New Testaments. There exists, apart from ultimate realities of Heaven and Hell, an unseen dimension of reality and existence that is interwoven with the seen realm here on earth. Things that take place in either the seen or the unseen realm can have a causative effect on the other realm.

This means that the work of planting churches and seeing the Kingdom of God expand among unreached people groups must also involve some activities that take place primarily in the unseen realm, alongside the activities that take place primarily in the seen realm.

Snapshots of the interaction between the two realms come up frequently in the Bible. Jacob's ladder (Genesis 28), Moses' meal on the mountain with the elders and the God of Israel (Exodus 24), Joshua's prayer that caused the sun to stand still (Joshua 10), David's unseen troops in the balsam trees (2 Samuel 5:24), the chariots of fire surrounding Elisha and his servant (2 Kings 6), and angels battling unseen spiritual powers over earthly territories (Daniel 10) are a few examples taken from the many in the Old Testament of how unseen-realm activity overlapped with seen-realm activity in advancing the purposes of God on the earth.

In the New Testament, the same kind of seen/unseen interaction can be seen in the encounters Jesus and the apostles have with various demons and spiritual powers. While teaching his disciples about the Kingdom of God, Jesus makes many explicit references to the clash of powers that takes place as the Kingdom expands. The "strong man" must be bound in order to plunder his property (Mark 3:27). Things bound on earth on earth are also bound in heaven, and whatever is agreed on in prayer by at least two of God's children will be done for them by the Father in heaven (Matthew 18:18-19). Natural processes such as death are reversed through prayer (John 11:41-43, Acts 9:40).

The epistles of Paul and Peter also provide numerous explicit teachings about the interaction of the seen and the unseen realms as related to the spread of the Gospel. The "god of this world" blinds the minds of unbelievers so they cannot see the light of the Gospel of Jesus (2 Cor. 4:4). Spiritual powers work among unbelievers to cultivate disobedience to God (Eph. 2:2). Unseen powers and spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places wage war against believers (Eph. 6:12). Jesus' resurrection not only brought us to God, but also culminated in His being seated at God's right hand - with angels, authorities, and powers in submission to Him (1 Peter 3:18-22).

Prayer is the primary means of accessing and influencing the unseen realm in the New Testament. The teaching on prayer in the gospels and the epistles represents a major focal point of scriptural teaching. Despite this, however, the majority of missions effort over the past two centuries have focused almost exclusively on areas related to the seen realm - evangelism, discipling, training leaders, teaching, and so forth. Areas of ministry dealing with the unseen, such as intercessory prayer, spiritual warfare, signs and wonders, deliverance and exorcism, have been largely avoided by the mainstream.

One of the primary reasons for this has been the spread of Western thought and philosophy as the dominant world-view within the church both in the West and in the non-Western churches that have come into existence through Western mission efforts. The past three centuries of "enlightenment"

in Western thinking have taught us that the only true realities are the things that we can see, touch, and measure. While scripture clearly does not stand against the natural sciences as a means for exploring our world, these sciences clearly are not adequate for fully understanding the realities behind the two realms of reality.

Our world-view must take into account the scriptural reality of the key role that the unseen realm plays in the spread of the Gospel. For workers coming out of a primarily Western mindset, this can at times be challenging. It will require us to walk in new paths of faith, to deepen our relationship with God, and to become humble learners. Seen-realm ministries we have been traditionally strong in will not be abandoned, but will move into appropriate balance alongside unseen-realm ministries (Acts 6:4).

Napoleon Bonaparte, when told of Robert Fulton's steamboat, responded with his famous quote: "What, sir, would you make a ship sail against the wind and currents by lighting a bonfire under her deck? I pray you, excuse me, I have not the time to listen to such nonsense."

As we come into a fuller understanding of the role of prayer and the unseen realm in the spread of the Gospel, may God give us wisdom to see this not as "nonsense" and a distraction from building the kind of ships we know and understand, but rather a harnessing of scriptural realities that have been there from the beginning but have been poorly understood by us.

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3.2 *God deals with nations and communities* [\(Next section\)](#)

The second assumption is that God does not just work with individuals but is concerned about whole nations and indeed deals with nations as entities. To move forward in Strategic Prayer we must acknowledge this fact as Strategic Prayer is prayer that focuses on entire communities.

The lack of anticipated fruit from our work among Muslims in the past decades may be strongly related to our inability to pray for families, communities, cities, and nations with the faith, authority, and imagination that come from understanding how God interacts with whole communities.

3.2.a The results of individualism

The understanding of communities that has been predominant in the Evangelical church and the modern missions movement has been that communities are the sum of the individuals within them. If communities are to be won to the Lord, they will be won one person at a time. If communities make collective decisions, it is because a majority of individuals within the community make the same decision. If communities commit corporate sin, it is the result of a significant number of individuals within the community committing the same sin. If we are praying for communities, we need to pray for as many individuals as possible within them.

In terms of prayer, the individualistic world view has resulted in:

- a. A preference for individual prayer over corporate prayer in our own prayer times
- b. A preference for praying for the salvation of individuals that the person praying knows and can picture as they pray, rather than whole communities
- c. A tendency to focus prayer primarily on the specific work that the individual, or his contacts, is involved in

d. A hesitancy to address issues of sin or deception through prayer on a community level, due to a feeling that attributing a certain sin to an entire community is racist, unloving, or unfair to individuals within that community

Individualistic thinking does represent a measure of Biblical truth. There should be a healthy amount of individualism in our minds and actions as we take the Gospel to broken and hurting people. On its own, however, individualism is an incomplete way of understanding the world from God's perspective. Each of the four results of individualistic thinking listed above are not wrong in and of themselves, but when they are not held in balance with the other scriptural ways in which we see God dealing with communities, they can slow down the spread of God's Kingdom.

3.2.b Biblical examples of community-focus

The Old Testament and the New Testament are full of examples of God dealing with communities as a whole. They also provide many examples of families, cities, nations, and regions having sin patterns, blessings, curses, and prophecies that relate to the community as a whole, not just individuals within it. Consider each of the following examples from scripture:

- God's covenant with the family of Abraham
- God's promises to the lines of Isaac and Ishmael
- The repeated patterns of sin and struggle in the households of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that is recorded in Genesis
- The judgments of God on Sodom, Gomorra, and Egypt
- God's blessings released through Balaam on the Hebrews, and His prevention of curses being released
- God's covenant with Israel as a nation
- God's judgments and promises to the various nations, cities, and tribes spoken of in the book of Isaiah
- God's interaction with the family of David
- God's dealing with Nineveh, and the community repentance that takes place
- The existence of angels and spiritual powers over entire nations and regions shown in the book of Daniel
- Jesus' pronouncements over cities such as Jerusalem, Capernaum, Tyre, Sidon, Nazareth, etc.
- Jesus' interaction with the Greek woman in the vicinity of Tyre
- Accounts of community repentance and transformation in Acts, including Ephesus, the families of Cornelius, Lydia and the Philippian jailer, etc.
- Comments and observations by Luke and Paul on the characteristics of communities such as the Athenians, the Bereans, Cretans, etc.
- God's appointing of angels and delivering of messages to specifically named communities in the book of Revelation

3.2.c Ways in which communities are corporately affected

The above list is not exhaustive; it is just a sampling of the many instances of God dealing with entire communities that can be seen in the Bible. From these examples and the many others in Scripture, we can see that communities can have the following characteristics:

1. Community character traits, where each person in that community has a measure of the trait
1. Community sins and strongholds of sin, where each person in the community is counted as having participated in the sin due to their identification with the community
2. Community covenants and decisions of allegiance, to both seen and unseen powers
3. Community judgments and wounds, where the entire community bears the consequence of an action or decision regardless of specific individual participation in the sin

4. Community repentance and deliverance, where mercy is extended by God to the entire community, regardless of specific individual participation in the repentance
5. Community destiny, where God has a specific purpose for an entire community to fulfill
6. Community angels, both upright and fallen, that exercise a degree of authority and influence on an entire community

3.2.d Strategic prayer for communities

Strategic prayer for communities does not take away the need for prayer for individuals. It comes alongside ongoing prayer for individual needs and issues, and adds focused, informed, sustained prayer for the entire community in which those individuals live. It is faith-filled, expecting God to answer in ways that transform not only the specific person that the intercessor can call by name and picture in his or her mind, but also the whole family, village, city or country.

Strategic prayer seeks to understand community characteristics, so as to pray God's will for the community in a more focused manner. It seeks to grow in love and thankfulness for the community, even as it brings before God's throne the cry for deliverance from specific community sins and strongholds. It asks God for the godly destiny of the community to be fulfilled, and for all of God's promises of life and fruitfulness for that community to be made true. It seeks wisdom and insight into the unseen warfare surrounding a community, and engages in spiritual warfare on behalf of the community. Strategic Prayer opens up and expands the heart of the intercessor to the love that God has for a community, and sharpens the desire of the intercessor to see sweeping transformation of entire communities for Christ.

As we grow in our understanding and intentional practice of Strategic Prayer, we can expect to see tangible results in the fruitfulness of our Gospel labor.

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3.3 *The enemy wars against God's destiny for the nations* ([Next section](#))

The third assumption is that God has a destiny for all nations but that there is a real devil, our enemy, who is warring against God's purposes. If we are seeking God's Kingdom and planting churches then there will be a battle and Satan will oppose us (Eph 6:12).

3.3.a God's destiny for the nations

In addition to God's destiny for Israel, the Scriptures lay out his destiny for all the nations. As we lay understand God's destiny for the community or nation for which we are praying, we will be able to pray with greater faith, confidence, and persistence.

Listed below are some scriptural references that indicate God's intentions for every nation. These can be used as a starting point for prayer.

1) To be blessed with the Gospel through Abraham

Gen. 18:18, Gen 26:4, Gal. 3:8,9, Mark 13:10, Luke 24:46

2) To have blindness removed

Is 25:7, Is. 60:2,3

3) To desire the Messiah

Haggai 2:7

4) To worship God and come under the rule of His Messiah

Ps. 2:6-12, Psalm 22:27,28, Ps 86:9,10, Ps 72:11-17, Psalm 148:11-13, Is. 11:10, Is 52:14,15, Zech. 2:10,11, Rom. 16:25-27, Rev. 15:4, Rev. 21:23,24, Gen 49:10, Psalm 67:2-7, Psalm 46:10, Mal. 1:11

5) To have God's peace

Is. 2:4, Zech 9:10

6) To receive justice

Is. 42:1-4 (quoted in Matt. 12:18-21)

7) To be healed

Rev. 22:1,2

3.3.b The battle

The scripture also frequently talks about the devil, fallen angels, principalities and powers and evil spirits. Together they form the "kingdom of darkness" (Col 1:13) which stands opposed to God's kingdom and thus to God's destiny for the nations. The devil is even referred to as the 'god of this age' and notably Jesus did not deny the power that he has over the kingdoms of this world (Matt 4:8-10).

The battle that rages between the forces of God and the kingdom of darkness appears to affect nations. Daniel 11 seems to indicate that there may even be spiritual principalities over nations, which at times oppose the purposes of God. In today's world it is perhaps simplistic to divide the world into 'good guys' and 'bad guys' and identify particular nations that are "evil". However, it does seem to be true that at different times the enemy appears to use various regimes and power structures for evil purposes resulting in much suffering and putting obstacles in the way of evangelism and church planting.

In particular people will often talk about *territorial spirits*. This is not a term that we read in scripture of course but is used as a kind of shorthand to refer to those spiritual powers assigned and given right through sin to rule a certain area (household, subdivision, city, country or people group). They have a hold over these people to keep them in darkness. The people will often exhibit clear characteristics of the rule of certain territorial spirits over their territory.

An example would be the fascination with death that the Egyptians have. Despite of, or probably because of, their extreme fear of death, the Egyptians still carry on many of ancient death rituals without even realising their roots in pharaonic practice.

3.3.c The history of a nation affects today

We believe that through movements of God (like church planting movements) His destiny begins to be actualised for a nation. However, what has gone on in the nation's history can thwart this destiny and has a strong effect on its current state. This can both be due to the activities of the kingdom of darkness and also to God's judgement on past behaviour and attitudes. These sorts of histories create unseen blocks to church planting movements. This is seen at various times in Bible for instance:

Lamentations 5:7, Micah 5:15, Jeremiah 18:7-10

3.3.d Unseen blocks to CP movements

A block may be caused because a nation or people group has opened the door to the enemy and unintentionally given him authority. This could come about through sinful acts, false worship, evil community decisions or wrong attitudes to other people groups. Some examples might include worshipping idols, publicly welcoming sin into the community (e.g. gay rights or abortion), oppression of the poor or wars and genocide.

When the enemy comes in, then God's judgement will come on the land until there is repentance and He is invited back in 2 Chron 7:13-14.

3.3.e Strongholds

Throughout a nation's history, strongholds are created and powers of darkness operate which block movements of God. God has provided what is needed to demolish strongholds and oppose powers of darkness.

In the Old Testament, the battle motif usually refers to literal war. In the New Testament, these passages are re-interpreted with the understanding that our real battle is not against flesh and blood, but is in the spiritual realm (Eph. 6:12). Physical enemy strongholds (places of refuge such as citadels or caves) in the Old Testament are re-defined in 2 Cor. 10 as arguments, pretensions and thoughts that set themselves up against the knowledge of God.

Psalm 18:43,44, 2 Cor. 10:3, Matt. 12:28, Eph. 6:12

Exodus 8:1 [God appointed Moses to command the enemy enslaving the nation to let them go. He had to do this repeatedly until it happened. We can re-interpret this entire story through the New Testament view of enemies being spiritual. We can say to God's enemies, "The Lord says, Let my people go!"]

A stronghold is not an actual physical place but a place in the mind. The apostle Paul in 2 Cor 10:4-5 seems to identify the strongholds that we are warring against with "arguments and pretensions that set themselves up against the knowledge of God". Certainly scripture tells us that it is Satan who blinds the minds of people so they cannot see and understand the truth about Jesus (2 Cor 4:4). This blindness usually begins because of a sin or trauma. Most often there is a common stronghold over a particular group of people for instance a family, city, country or people group. The stronghold can be identified because the "fruit" it bears has no rational foundation or explanation.

A strong hold is different to a "seat of power" that can be an actual place where the kingdom of darkness is particularly strong.

The powers of darkness battle to hold God's most precious "belongings" in bondage by strengthening the wrong beliefs that create these strongholds through "real" experiences. They contradict the Word of God through the experiences and circumstances of the people. As children of God, however, we base our reality on God's truth and do not let

circumstances dictate to us who God is. For us the seen should be less real than the unseen for we “we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (2 Cor 4:18). And so with Paul we set up about demolishing strongholds.

3.3.f Wounds

Wounds are also created in a nation’s soul throughout its history. These wounds can block movements of God, and need to be healed.

If an individual, group or nation is offended, it causes an unyieldedness.

Prov. 18:19, Jer. 6:10, Jer. 8:22

Wounds remain unhealed when a nation is far from God, or when it depends on something other than God for help.

2 Kings 18:21, Psalm 38:5, Is. 1:6 (speaking of the nation), Jer. 6:7

Other ‘wounds’ that a nation may carry stem from bitterness, rebellion, retribution or revenge, self-centredness and curses. These issues need to be addressed in prayer.

Our hope is that God wants to heal the wounded and broken hearted (Psalm 147:3)

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3.4 God intervenes in history [\(Next section\)](#)

The fourth assumption is that God is free to, and indeed does, intervene in history, time and space. This is evident not just in Biblical times but also in modern history.

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3.5 God works with his people to get his will done [\(Next section\)](#)

The fifth assumption is that God chooses to work with and through His people to achieve His purposes. He has graciously chosen to work with those who love Him for good to come (Rom 8:28). Amazingly we are called His ‘fellow workers’ (1 Cor 3:9). Not that we have power of our own. It is still God’s power at work – even in Peter and Paul (Gal 2:8)! It’s His authority that we go in (Matt 28:18-19).

Presumably most of us are church planters because we believe that in some way we have a God given responsibility to take the Gospel to our neighbours in the nations. It is not enough for us to sit back and ‘wait for God’ to reach the world. We have been given a ‘great commission’ which we need to obey (Matt 28:19). If we don’t warn the people then in some way we are culpable (Ezek 33:1-9). So it is right that we are ‘activists’ who have strong plans to see churches planted (Matt 11:12).

However, at the same time we recognise that we cannot ‘do it on our own’. Jesus has promised to be with us (Matt 28:20). It is God’s kingdom – his rule, reign and power – that we are seeking, not our own (Matt 6:33). We have to be like Jesus who only said and did the things that he heard and saw the Father doing (John 5:19, 8:26-29). So it is right that we are also people who wait on God to know His plans.

3.5.a God's part, our part

Strategic Prayer seeks to bring these two aspects – which often become polarised - together. It tries to give a proper balance to God's 'sovereign plans' and our 'human responsibility'. Strategic Prayer makes it a priority that we should know and understand God's plans – and then act.

There are many examples in the Bible of how God chooses to work in conjunction with His people. The battle of Jericho recounted in the book of Joshua provides some interesting parallels for Strategic Prayer. Consider these points:

1. **Prayer & worship:** Revelation for the battle came when Joshua encountered the 'captain of the host of the Lord' (Josh 5:13-15). It did not come in a strategic planning meeting with his generals. It was in the place of prayer (speaking to the Lord v13) and worship (falling down before the captain v14) that God gave Joshua the precise instructions that would win the battle (Josh 6:2-5). Daniel is another example of this. It was when he had been praying and fasting that the angel 'broke through' (Dan 10) and revealed God's plans.
2. **Revelation:** The instructions that the Lord gave Joshua were very specific. Joshua could never have come up with a plan like this in the natural way of things. In Strategic Prayer we expect God to reveal His plans – however bizarre they may seem! Another example is the instructions God gave David concerning battles (2 Sam 5:17-25).
3. **Obedience:** Joshua and the people were required to be obedient to the plans the Lord gave them. Jonah was also called to be part of God's plans and had to learn the hard way what disobedience entailed!
4. **Persistence:** Great persistence – even repetition - was needed. In all they had to walk around Jericho 13 times before they saw breakthrough. They had to press on despite boredom, tiredness and lack of understanding. Another example of persistence in prayer was King Joash (2 Kings 13:14-19). Elisha was angry that he had stopped after hitting the ground 3 times. He should have persisted.
5. **Action:** There was a practical outworking – something the Israelites were required to do. They were not just called to sit back and watch God do everything. They had to go in and physically take the city. It is essential that Strategic Prayer is accompanied by evangelism and acts of mercy etc. Others in the OT were required to do something – even as a prophetic statement (Is 20:1-6, Jer 13:1-11, Neh 2:1-8).
6. **Corporate:** Joshua was not involved in the battle alone. Everybody was called to be part of the battle with their different roles.
7. **Glory:** The glory all belonged to God
8. **Unique:** What happened at Jericho was not the new method for godly warfare. It was never repeated. And the battle of Ai clearly demonstrated what would happen whenever the Israelites decided that they knew what they were doing! We must beware 'cookie cutter' solutions. What 'worked' in one place at one time might not 'work' in another place at another time.

In this story it is interesting to speculate what would have happened if Joshua and the people had refused to obey God. Presumably another generation would have missed out on going into the land as when the previous generation refused to go in under Moses' leadership (Num 13:25-14:38). God chooses to work with and through us and not in isolation from us.

There are many other scriptures which suggest that God's work is – at least sometimes - conditional on man's obedient response or that God sometimes works in response to man's prayers. See for example Gen 18:22-33, Num 14:20, 2 Chron 7:12-18. In the New Testament we are even called God's 'fellow workers' (1 Cor 3:9) – amazing! The New English Bible translation of Rom 8:28 captures something of this idea: *God works together with those who love Him for good to come.*

3.5.b God gives His people gifts including spiritual gifts

Another aspect of this truth is that God gives all his people gifts – both natural and spiritual – to equip them to do His work. Everyone has a part to play and all of the gifts are important. So-called 'spiritual gifts' are not more important than other seemingly more mundane gifts.

However, it is the seemingly more ‘spiritual’ or ‘supernatural’ gifts that we sometimes find more difficult or unfamiliar. The classic passage on spiritual gifts is of course 1 Cor 12. Of particular importance to Strategic Prayer are the gifts of:

[Include stories and biblical examples?]

Word of wisdom or knowledge (v8) - This is when God reveals something very specific to someone that they couldn’t have known otherwise. In Strategic Prayer we often need some specific revelation to show us how to pray or act.

Faith (v9) – We often need faith to see specific answers to prayer and also to persist in praying even when it seems that nothing is happening.

Prophecy (v10) – This is all about being God’s mouth piece; speaking forth the things that He himself is speaking; bringing into the light things that have been hidden. It is often crucial in Strategic Prayer that someone with the gift of prophecy can ‘bring something to light’ that helps to inform our prayer or actions. Of course, these words do not carry the weight of scripture and have to be weighed and tested by others (1 Cor 14:32, 1 Thess 5:19-21) and can even be ignored without divine retribution (Acts 21:10-14)!

Distinguishing spirits or ‘discernment’ (v10) – This is obviously an important gift when praying and ministering to individuals but it is also a vital gift in Strategic Prayer for communities and nations. On the positive side we need to be able to discern when the Holy Spirit is at work and is prompting us. We need to be able to recognise His work in the community or country which we are praying for. On the other hand we also need to be able to discern the nature and work of evil spirits. We may even be called on to pray against or cast out evil spirits. So it’s important that there is someone on the team who has this gift.

3.5.c Authority of believers in Christ

Man (Adam) was originally created in God’s image and was given authority to “subdue the earth, and rule over it” (Ge1:28). He was to be at work in the garden on God’s behalf (Gen 2:15). However, in the fall, Man gave up that rule to the enemy by disobeying the Lord’s command (Gen 3). The New Testament confirms that Satan is now ‘the god of this age’ (2 Cor 4:4), ‘the prince of the world’ (John 12:31), ‘the ruler of the kingdom of the air’ (Eph 2:2) and seems to have power over nations (Matt 4:8-9) as well as individuals.

However, Jesus, the second Adam (i.e. the new exemplar) (1 Co 15:45), who is ‘the image of the invisible God’ (i.e. what Man was always meant to be) has now recovered that authority to rule (Matt 28:18). And Jesus shares that authority with His people (Matt 10:1, Matt 28:19-20) who are to be His body here on earth in order to fulfil His purposes (Col 1:24)

More than that, God’s program in Christ is that He would recover His image in us (Rom 8:29) and that will include us resuming His work under His authority which will one day find fulfilment when we will reign with Him (Rev 2:26). In the meantime Jesus expects that we will do even greater things than He did (John 14:12)!

Of course this authority is not just for the physical realm but also for the unseen realm, which are really all one in the Biblical worldview. It includes the authority to bind and loose things in the spiritual realm (Matt 12:29, Matt 16:19, Matt 18:18). This is something we need to grow into as we are transformed into His image and His glory, as we mature in our faith.

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3.6 Prayer alone is not enough

The final assumption is that prayer is not enough on its own. We have a responsibility to pray but we must also do much else besides: incarnate the Good News; actively share it verbally with others; demonstrate the love of Jesus, live exemplary holy lives; be humble and so on.

3.6.a Humility

What is the heart attitude and lifestyle of the intercessor? Being an intercessor is not a cause for spiritual pride. It is not a special position within a spiritual 'elite'. Those particularly called to intercession are not necessarily more mature and discerning than others. They are not God's favourites. Intercessors must be careful to guard against this sort of pride.

Rather our example is Jesus, our High Priest and Intercessor, who is at the right hand of the Father interceding for us.

Jesus is humble, reverently submitted to God. We can best take a nation before God if we have the same humble, reverent attitude that Jesus does.

Heb 7:25, Heb. 5:7, Phil 2:3-7

3.6.b Incarnation

We join Christ in bringing the nations before God. Jesus lived among us incarnationally, being tempted as we are (but without sin), so he can represent us before God, sympathizing with our weaknesses. There is a special place in intercession for those who live among the people of the nation they bring before God, understanding their weaknesses and temptations.

Heb. 2:17, Heb. 4:15, 1 Cor 9:22

Story: "If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray" (2 Chron 7:14). I was able to meet Ed Miller in the 1980's before he died. I began to say things like, "That sure was great the way the Lord used you to pray through for the nation of Argentina". He objected to me saying that. He said, "When I was younger I might have responded differently but now I know better. I didn't do anything. Nada." It seemed to me that he meant it from the bottom of his heart. When we get to heaven and are given a crown our first impulse will be to throw it down at Jesus' feet. In heaven we will know so perfectly well that we actually didn't do anything. He did it all. It was He who was working in us both to will *and to do* of His good pleasure. He does it all. Praise His name.

3.6.c Bringing Good News

And of course prayer is never a substitute for bringing good news. The intercessor-church-planter must still sow the seed by sharing the Gospel. The two activities must go hand in hand.

Matt 14:14, Matt 28:19, Rom 10:14-15, 2 Tim 4:2

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4. Elements of Strategic Prayer

4.1 *Worship* (Next section)

Worship is an essential part of Strategic Prayer. In fact Strategic Prayer is in some ways just a part of our worship! Worship is all about giving God His rightful place. He is “enthroned on the praises” of His people (Ps 22:3). He is worthy, not just of our songs, but of our obedience (Rom 12:1) and indeed the obedience of all peoples and all nations, which is why Strategic Prayer is necessary. John Piper says:

“Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't”.

In a sense worship is a higher goal even than CP. The goal is that the nations would come to worship the living God and that the whole earth would be filled with His glory (Ps 72:19). We see the fulfilment of that in Rev 7:9-12 as “every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues” worship before the Lamb. That is what Vision 5:9 is all about! This is our highest motivation.

Of course we also use the word *worship* in a more specific way to talk about something that we do corporately as we gather together. Maybe we talk about having *a time of worship* before we pray. This is important, as it is a time when we consciously give God His rightful place and ‘sets the scene’ for Strategic Prayer. It is much more than a time of singing our favourite songs. It is not a time for a worship leader or band to perform whilst others watch. It is not about us feeling good as individuals and ‘getting something out of it’.

Rather worship is about us all coming to give. In the Old Testament worship was centred around people bringing a physical sacrifice. In the New Testament it is focused around us exalting Jesus, the Lamb that was slain for the world.

Worship empties us of the world as we focus on Him. It opens up the spiritual atmosphere, as we enter into His presence. Worship creates a throne for the Lord and gives Him His rightful place to rule and reign. It lifts up the Lord for all eyes to see – both the eyes of men and the eyes of powers in the spiritual realm. Worship brings us into the Holy of Holies where we can see and hear Him more clearly, where He can share His heart with us.

As we gather for corporate worship everyone has a part to play and can bring their offering (1 Cor 14:26). Everyone should be encouraged to actively participate.

That does not mean that the role of a worship leader is not important. The worship leader needs to usher people into the presence of the Lord so that they too can bring their worship. They are there not to distract attention but to facilitate the rest of the body in worship. They build an atmosphere of open-ness to and intimacy with the Lord.

Story: As the priests would seek to enter the Presence of God they would offer incense up to the Lord. We must ask the Lord to give us at least one but hopefully several good worship leaders for our Strategic Prayer groups. They need to be ready to lead us into the presence of God. We need to ask the Lord for the same gifts and anointing that Asaph and Hedutun had in David’s day. In Colombia we prayed about this so often and with such fervor that we ended up with several dozen worship leaders who then went on to lead worship in many other places and settings. They should be ready with a plethora of songs. Ready to lead us in sweet times of loving the Lord or in raucous times of spiritual warfare.

Worship will include time for:

- Centring out attention away from our busyness and onto the Lord
- Confession and repentance as we get our hearts right with the Lord before we pray
- Thanksgiving as we remember what God has already done for us
- Declaration as we speak out truth about who God is and what He has done in Christ
- Praise as we rejoice and revel in His love

Adoration as we come in intimacy to express our love and appreciation

Quote

“Worship is an integral part of ‘getting there’. It happens before, after and during every significant act of intercession.”

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4.2 Listening to God [\(Next section\)](#)

As we bring a nation before God, we need to listen to God’s voice, so that we know what is on His heart at that time in the nation’s history. He knows what is necessary to bring the nation to the next phase of readiness for the Gospel. He speaks and gives us discernment in a variety of ways.

Rom. 8:26,27, Col. 1:9, Jude 1:20, Ps. 37:7, Ps. 130:5, Is. 26:8, Mic. 7:7

4.2.a Scripture

As He stood up in the synagogue Jesus knew that the Scripture from Isaiah 61:1,2 had immediate relevance for the nation of Israel at that time in history. When God led Daniel to a passage that had great significance for that time in history, Daniel responded by fasting and praying. God may put certain scriptures on our hearts for the nation we bring before Him.

Luke 4:16-30, Daniel 9:1-4

4.2.b Pictures

As we wait on God for our nation, we may have certain pictures come to mind which help us know how to pray. God often communicated via pictures in the Scriptures:

Ps. 23	God showed David still waters, a valley, a table before his enemies.
Gen. 28	God showed Jacob a stairway.
Gen. 40:9	God showed Joseph’s cupbearer friend a vine.
Gen. 41	God showed Pharaoh cows and grain.
2 Kings 6:17	God showed Elisha’s servant hills full of horses and chariots of fire.
Is. 6	God showed Isaiah the train of His robe.
Ezra 8	God showed Ezekiel a figure like that of a man, later an idol of jealousy and then all the idols of Israel portrayed on a wall.
Acts 2	God showed the believers fire on each other’s heads.
Acts 10	God showed Peter a sheet and animals.
Rev. 1-22	God showed John lampstands, scrolls, horses, bowls, incense, and a Lamb.

4.2.c Prophetic Acts

God may speak to us about certain symbolic or prophetic acts we can do to hasten his will in our nation.

Ezekiel 4:4-8, Jer 13:1-11, Jer 27&28

4.2.d Dreams

God may give us dreams, or even to pre-believers, to help us know how to pray.

Joel 2:28

Among others, God gave dreams to:

- Abimelech (Gen. 20:3)
- Jacob (Gen. 28)
- Joseph (Gen. 37)
- Pharaoh (Gen. 41)
- Gideon's enemy (Judges 7)
- Solomon (1 Kings 3)
- Joseph (Mat. 1 and 2)
- Pilate's wife (Mat. 27)

Story: When the heavens were opened over Jesus there followed a voice from heaven. When heaven is opened over us there will follow an outpouring of the gifts of communication in some form. God spoke to Moses in a very unusual way,- face to face. But during that time he spoke to Miriam and others through visions. Ever since then His preferred method is through pictures that we are to interpret correctly. This was true of most of the prophets and Jesus used this method continually in his use of parables. 25 years ago Alice was in a meeting and the Lord gave her the gift of being able to see things from the Lord in pictures. Several of the Colombians on our prayer team also received this ability to hear from the Lord through visions. These are impressions that come to us as the Holy Spirit reveals them to our inner man. They must always be judged by the others in the meeting. But then the question must be asked, "How do we come to this level of really hearing from the Lord and knowing that we are?" You have not because you ask not. Ask for these gifts for your group. Ask earnestly and continually and He will give you gifts of communication. He wants you to hear clearly from Him. It is one of the most essential parts of Strategic Prayer. Pray over each other that the Lord would open your inner ear so that we can hear. Finally, invite others in to pray over you and for you so that the gifts of the Spirit can be released on your group. God said to Moses, "I will take of the Spirit that is on you and will place it upon seventy others." There is a transference of the gifts and anointing that is transferred by the laying on of hands and personal presence of others who have those gifts from the Lord.

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.3 *Intercession* [\(Next section\)](#)

Intercession is the primary activity of Strategic Prayer. As we worship and hear from the Lord, we put the things that God communicates from His heart into verbal requests that we place before Him. Intercession, along with worship, usually takes up the largest portion of the time that teams spend together in corporate prayer.

4.3.a The Nature of Intercession

The word *intercession* is to do with mediating, going between, pleading for another or representing one party before another party. We stand between God and the communities and individuals for which we pray, pleading with God to intervene in their lives and bring about salvation, maturity, and the advance of the Kingdom.

Some pictures of intercession from Scripture include:

- standing in the gap
- watchman on the walls
- priestly sacrifice
- groans words can't express
- bows
- childbirth

Isaiah 62:1 For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem's sake I will not remain quiet, till her righteousness shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch.

Isaiah 62:6 I have posted watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the LORD, give yourselves no rest, Isa 62:7 and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth.

Jeremiah 9:1 Oh, that my head were a spring of water and my eyes a fountain of tears! I would weep day and night for the slain of my people.

2 Chronicles 7:14 If my people, who are called by my name, will 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. ¹⁵ Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place.

Laboring in prayer is more than just praying through the things we know we should be praying for. Sometimes the burden of intercession comes on us like a heaviness, where the Lord is putting on us the burden of the people, He breathes into our hearts what He feels for the people. It is like a woman in childbirth - the Lord is seeking to birth something through us. An embracing of our culture and incarnational love opens us up to be used of the Lord in these ways.

4.3.b. Understanding the seasons in intercession

There will be seasons of more intense prayer. We must be sensitive as to when the Lord would have us enter into these times. There is also a sense in which the act of prayer is man initiated but God empowered. I have always asked people, "What is the secret of prayer?" The secret to prayer is to set aside time to pray. There was a time in the mid eighties that the Lord had people praying all over Colombia. Not that people have stopped praying since but there was an intensity during that time that was unique. Sometimes the Lord will show us that the time for praying through for a nation is further down the road or two years away.

4.3.c. Perseverance in intercession

It is very important that we are prepared to persevere in intercession. It may take a long time before the answer comes. Jesus told some stories to demonstrate this. In Luke 18:1-8 it was because of the widow's persistence that she was answered. In Luke 11:5-10 it is again the man's persistence or importunity that caused his friend to get out of bed.

Some other biblical examples of those who persevered in intercession are Abraham who tenaciously 'bargained' with God (Gen 18:17-33) and Daniel who prayed for days before the angel appeared to bring him an answer (Dan 10:1-3).

4.3.d. Testing in intercession

We all love to go into a meeting where there is a great sense of the manifest Presence of God. But what sometimes precedes a time of the outpouring of a spirit of prayer is a time of testing. When the Lord sent us back to Colombia after a time of discouragement Alice would pray at home since she was nursing Nathan. Since I didn't want to go to sleep I would walk the streets of Bogotá and pray. I distinctly remember after praying for a full twelve months stopping and looking up to heaven and exclaiming to Heaven, "Lord, I know that *in the last twelve months I have not sensed your presence once*". In a short time that was to dramatically change but it seemed the Lord wanted us to walk through that dark night of prayer at the beginning.

4.3.e. Intensity in intercession

In every case that we studied there came a moment of divine intervention in prayer. Prayer became easy after that. In Colombia it was when we began to meet with a group of five university students every afternoon from three to eight. Five hours went by and it seemed like fifteen minutes. One day a friend who was an evangelist told me he didn't believe that we prayed every day for five hours. So I said, "Well, brother Gaviria why don't you come at 3 pm tomorrow and pray with us". The following day at a quarter to eight he exclaimed, "Aahhee, what did you do... it's almost eight and it seems like I just got here." We told him that it was just good fun to be in the Presence of the Lord and time just flies. In the case of Ed Miller it was when the angel of the Lord visited the students and faculty one day at the Bible School. Classes were stopped and everyone was filled with the Spirit to pray for Argentina. Long times spent in prayer were not a problem anymore.

4.3.f. Repentance in intercession

Repentance is a vital pre-requisite for the fulfilment of God's destiny for a nation.

There is a strong Biblical precedent for members of a nation to serve the priestly role for their nation, repenting on their behalf. What about outsiders praying repentance on behalf of a nation not their own?

Heb. 7:13-16 may hint at this, where Melchizedek, a figure or 'type' of Christ, not related to Israel in regards to his ancestry, was able to intercede as priest based on "the power of an indestructible life," whereas Aaron and his descendants were able to intercede based on their ancestry? Maybe both are necessary.

Is. 28:11- Could it be that if God does not find intercessors to fill the priestly role from within the nation, he resorts to calling foreigners?

Gal. 3:26-29 makes it clear that foreign and national intercessors are all one in Christ.

Story: This is a summary of a picture received at a prayer meeting for a Muslim nation in about 2002:- *Huge trees loom tall, shading the ground from the sun it needs for crops to flourish. Foreigners holding huge axes begin to chop down the trees. When they get part of the way through the huge trunks, nationals step up to take their places, until all the trees are felled.*

Repentance prepares the way for God's Kingdom to come and it seems that there is a role both for 'locals' and 'foreigners' to stand in the place of repentance and ask God for forgiveness on behalf of the nation.

Matt. 3:1-3, Acts 13:24, Mark 6:12, Num. 14:18,19, Ez. 18:30-32, Ex. 32:32, Ex. 34:9, Dan. 9:4-23, Psalm 106:6, Jer. 14:20, Neh. 9:1-37

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.4 Understanding the Unseen Dynamics at Work in a Community

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4.4.a. Benefits of Understanding Unseen Dynamics

If the expansion of God's Kingdom takes place in the Seen *and* the Unseen realms, then it is important that we understand the unseen, spiritual dynamics that affect a community. This is a process that requires a discerning spirit, an active mind, a prayerful heart, lots of personal interaction and relationships, prolonged study, and tenacious commitment. By taking time to study and understand the unseen factors that are shaping a city, town, country, or family, we become more effective in reaching it. Clear understanding of these issues has many benefits:

- a. Our intercession becomes more focused and informed. This allows us to call on God for very specific requests related to the community, and see the prayers answered. With God's leading, we can systematically work to influence and build key spiritual factors in our community.
- b. We grow in our ability to understand God's heart for our community and pray with his heart and mind for what we see. We grow in love for the community as we see it more clearly.
- c. We are more able to diagnose issues or problems around us that we would have otherwise been confused about, or have consigned to simple cultural or demographic issues. While culture, demographics, and other Seen realm issues are important, they represent only a part of the reality. Full reality is understood only when both Realms are taken into account.
- d. We gain insight into relationships with individuals we have within the community. Spiritual dynamics (whether good or bad) that affect a community will by nature also affect each individual in the community.
- e. We become more effective in our apostolic mandate to be Ministers of the Word. Understanding unseen dynamics in a community allows us to speak more effectively into the community's life in evangelism, discipleship, and gathering/training of churches.

4.4.b. Taking a correct approach

During the process of discerning a community's unseen spiritual dynamics, it is important to approach the process with a proper heart attitude and with a proper mindset. Wrong thinking and wrong attitudes can cause more harm to the person praying and to the cause of reaching the community than any positive gains that come through discerning.

The correct heart attitude to take is an attitude of (a) **love**, and (b) **humility**.

The correct mindset is one of (a) **hypothesis testing** and (b) **process orientation**.

An attitude of love causes us to view the community through God's eyes, not through critical or cynical eyes. As we work to understand what is happening in a community, we *will* see things that sinful and wrong. Every community in the world has areas of embedded evil, including the communities in which we were born and raised. We will also see things that are inspiring, encouraging, and praiseworthy in that they are God's fingerprints on the specific culture or community we are observing. We need to pray (and have others praying for us) that God will enable us to fully see and appreciate the positive things we see and build our love and appreciation for the culture through that.

We need to pray for protection from a heart attitude of cynicism, hatred, or despising what we see. People who are struggling with cultural adjustment or dealing with issues of anger, bitterness, or disillusionment toward their host culture should not engage in discernment of unseen community dynamics (note that this can also include people from that culture, not just outsiders).

An attitude of humility enables us to recognize first and foremost that each of us as individuals struggles with sin and spiritual strongholds in our own lives. Our own cultures and homelands have areas that are equally offensive and evil before God as anything we will see in the culture we are observing. As we recognize this, we ask God to mercifully deal with the plank in our own eye before we look to the speck in the eye of the community we live in. While we do not need to have attained perfection in our own self-understanding before embarking on the task of discerning the community around us, we need to make sure that we have opened ourselves up to God in this and that there has been at least a significant start in our journey to that kind of understanding.

We also need to pray for humility to avoid taking on a "know it all" attitude toward other believers who may hold different pieces of the puzzle than we will be given. God tends to give out important pieces of insight and discernment to different members of the Body of Christ, which means we need to have a spirit of unity and humility to gain access to all that He wants to give us.

An **“hypothesis-testing” approach** is what is best to adopt in terms of a mindset for discerning the unseen dynamics at work in our community. This means that we will not pray or research for a day or two and then form definitive conclusions about what we think we have learned. We will commit ourselves to a sometimes lengthy process of gathering all kinds of information through a variety of means, and seeing where the correlations are.

When we begin to see a pattern in what we observe, we form a *hypothesis* - a tentative conclusion about what we have observed. We then test that hypothesis with further observation from different angles, and over time we will either grow more confident of the correctness of our hypothesis, or will either modify it or reject it as we gain further insight. Premature conclusions can lead to off-target prayers, wrong attitudes, and over-generalizations that can be arrogant or hurtful.

A **process-oriented approach** rather than a results-oriented approach is also important. An orientation toward the *process* of discerning means that adequate time and effort is given to gathering data, comparing results, testing hypotheses, and seeking godly insight into what is found. This stands in contrast to a results-oriented approach, which in its eagerness for conclusive, "useful" results can easily overlook less apparent factors and draw hasty, incorrect conclusions.

4.4.c. What we are looking for

Here are some of the more common things we look for and often come across as we seek to understand the unseen dynamics of a community (specific information on [How to Gather Information](#) is contained in a later section)

Divine purposes and promises: Specific ways in which God desires or intends to use the community to glorify Himself and to bring blessing to the earth, as well as specific promises that have been spoken over the community (in some cases, communities may have specific passages of scripture in which promises for that community are revealed). Example: Isaiah 19:18-25 for Egypt.

Areas of blessing and God-given prosperity: Specific areas where God has clearly blessed and provided exceptional character, gifting, talent, or experience to the community. Often this will give us insight into the ways that God wants to work in the community or use it in the world. Example: Acts 17:11 for Berea.

History of the church: The way that God has worked to establish and build His church in the past may give significant insights into the spiritual dynamics of a community. Where the church has since died out and no longer exists, prayers of restoration and rebirth become powerful and effective. Where the church continues to exist but has yet to become the spiritual force that God wants it to be in the community, Strategic Prayer can unleash the potential. Example: Haggai 2:3,9 for the returned Exiles.

Patterns of leadership: Communities are shaped and directed by their leadership, but leaders are also shaped by their communities. Often patterns of leadership, whether godly or ungodly, will be repeated in a community's history over the span of years, decades, centuries, or even millennia. Exceptional leaders can also bring enduring blessing or judgment on their community. Understanding these patterns can give powerful insights into the community, and much fuel for effective, informed prayer. Example: 1 Kings 11:11-13 for the legacy of blessing that David's leadership left for Judah despite Solomon's disobedience.

Community covenants: Covenants (or mutual agreements) of allegiance or intent may be made by communities, and these covenants can have a significant impact on the unseen dynamics of that community. These covenants may be overt (such as a public ceremony dedicating a city to a spirit or god), or subtle (such as a agreed upon intent to attain greatness at any cost). Often they are re-ratified through annual celebrations or festivals. Example: Isaiah 28:15 - Jerusalem's covenant with death (a common Near Eastern practice), Genesis 11:4 - Babel's covenant to make a name for themselves.

Other power bonds: Curses, blessings, and dedications are other dynamics that can affect communities in a manner similar to covenants. Spiritual power can be unleashed in ways that make a tangible difference for a community through overt or subtle use of power bonds. Example: Numbers 23:11-12, where God does not allow a curse to be unleashed against the community of His people.

Community sins and strongholds: Although any given community will likely have individuals that engage in any given sin, communities can engage in corporate sins that take on a greater life of their own through the participation or complicity of a significant portion of the population. Such sins can be repeated in cycles that create strongholds in the mind of the community against the Gospel (2 Cor. 10:4), or hardening of heart (Eph. 4:18-19). Understanding these strongholds allows them to be specifically addressed in prayer, reducing the overall level of resistance to the Gospel in the community. Example: Acts 7:51 for the Jews, Titus 1:12-13 for the Cretans.

Community level demonic activity: Just as sin in the life of an individual opens the door for demonic activity in their life, so community sins open the door for demonic activity on a community level. Powers of darkness actively interact with communities to nurture sinful behaviors, reinforce ungodly power bonds and covenants, and fight off any proclamation of Biblical truth or application of prayer. Clear discernment of these powers allows for authoritative prayer that restricts their ability to keep the community cut off from the Gospel. Example: Acts 19:11-17 in Ephesus, Daniel 10:20-21 for Greece, Persia, and Israel.

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4.5 Body of Christ [\(Next section\)](#)

Strategic prayer is meant to be undertaken by the entire Body of Christ – not just individuals. In the context of apostolic missionary teams, this means that Strategic Prayer is meant to have a place within the life and ministry of the team as a whole, as well as within the life of the team’s sending churches.

4.5.a Two Tracks: Those Called to Prayer and the “Wider Team”

Everyone must pray but not everyone is called to an intense life of Strategic Prayer. We must never project guilt onto someone who is not called and has not been grace-gifted to pray in this way. That’s the reason I like to have five hour prayer meetings. Jesus said, “My yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Strategic prayer, for those who are called to do it, will be both a joy and a privilege as well as a grave responsibility. In this we have to be careful. Everyone should ask the Lord if this is part of their calling. It could be an undiscovered talent that they’ve never developed. How can we know if we have received the gift of being a Watchman to do Strategic Prayer? Spend some serious time in prayer with those who have this gift. You will know soon enough if this is not your calling. Those who are called will acquire a strong desire from the lord to continue in prayer until He comes to bring a great church planting movement in their land.

It may be helpful to think of it as two ‘tracks’. There will be some who are called to intense Strategic Prayer and will become part of a Strategic Prayer team. However, there will be others who are keen to pray and be involved but who are not called to make the same radical commitment. These may be seen as the ‘wider team’. Both have their part to play. One is not better than the other. It is just that the calling is different.

Story: In these last days we believe the Lord is raising up specific individuals to pray through for specific CUPG’s. So let’s talk about finding the Watchmen. In Colombia we were having these wonderful times of prayer every day. One day the Lord said, “Now I want you to go throughout Colombia and stir up the Watchmen to stand on the walls in prayer for the nation. Now Martin, who was our worship leader, began to complain to the Lord, “Now Lord we are enjoying your presence

so much, if we start praying twice as much could you please not send us out.” It didn’t work though. We still had to go out.

So we held 17 city wide conferences throughout Colombia on prayer. There was a certain number that the Lord was looking for and they had to be raised up. So we have to ask the Lord how to throw the net. Where do we go looking for the intercessors for our CUPG? Let me be practical about this. Let us say for instance that there is a sensing from the Lord that next year is to be a year of Strategic Prayer for your city or country. Which teams or groups could be visited with the message of Strategic Prayer? Who will take that message to them? What groups outside the country should be contacted?

You could then plan a time of training followed by an actual time of prayer. For example three days of training followed by three weeks of intensive prayer. A core group of God’s team could meet for five hours each day while others could plan special times of prayer over the week-ends. During the eighties Cesar Castellanos would plan for three days of fasting and prayer every time Monday was a holiday. At that time the church had about 1000 members. By the mid nineties when God visited revival on Colombia he had over 27,000 cell groups.

4.5.b Unity and coalition building

It is a wonderful thing when there is unity between God’s people and it can be a very powerful thing as God has commanded there to be blessing (Ps 133:3). This is why God often asks us to bring together believers from many parts of the body when we engage in Strategic Prayer. This reflects the richness and diversity of His body (John 17:11, 1 Cor 12) and means that we have all the gifts that will be needed to persevere in Strategic Prayer. This may well mean bringing together Muslim-background believers from local churches, Christian-background believers, workers from different agencies and other believers who happen to live in the city or country.

Of course it would be easier not to do this! Working together with others is always harder – especially if they are from other cultural or church backgrounds. There may well be misunderstanding and miscommunication but it is worth persevering until there is a good level of unity – provided that everyone is committed to the idea of praying through together for the country in a strategic way.

It is often particularly important to have natives of the country or city joining in the prayer. They will not only have deep insights into what is being prayed for but may also stand as representatives of their own people.

4.5.c Mobilizing prayer

Mobilizing prayer across a city or nation can be a time consuming business. Some question whether it is worth it or whether it is really a legitimate goal for a church planter. However, time and again, as some of the stories in this manual show, it is united, Strategic Prayer that brings the breakthrough in church planting. It is certainly worth the investment of the time that will be required.

Often when God is planning to move through prayer He will put a burden on certain people’s hearts. It may be that He calls one person to be the catalyst for the prayer movement. This person will carry the vision and pass it on to others. It will require time to go and share the vision with people, groups and churches in person. This is important as nothing can replace explaining the vision face to face. Letters or emails are undoubtedly quicker but they don’t communicate the same heart and often don’t meet with a positive response in today’s busy world. It may even be that Strategic Prayer becomes this person’s single focus for a period of time and that they are released by their colleagues to do this.

Strategic Prayer may happen in a multitude of different ways. It may require a small group of people giving themselves to intense prayer over a long period of time, maybe meeting to pray every day. It may mean bringing together larger gatherings of people from a wide area more or less

frequently. It may mean calling the church world wide to pray for a particular place at a certain time involving churches, prayer networks and thousands of individuals. The key is to listen to the Spirit and understand what the Lord is calling His people to do. It probably won't look like anything that you have heard of before!

Ultimately the vision has to be shared by all those committing themselves to pray. The perseverance to press on in Strategic Prayer cannot be sustained by 'someone else's vision'. Everyone needs to 'buy in' totally. The strongest and most beautiful prayer movements are those which don't carry a denominational or organisational label. Everyone agrees to leave aside their own agendas in order to pursue God's agenda together.

4.5.d Kids involved in times of strategic prayer

There is a tendency to underestimate the value of involving children in times of intercession, but this is a mistake. Children have an ability to believe God in faith for things that adults find difficult to believe. Their prayers can be highly effective. Involvement in a life of prayer from a young age also has the effect of shaping a person's life in a significant way. Joshua spent many of his younger years in the tent of God's presence before leading God's people to victory in the promised land.

The key to seeing children brought into a life of Strategic Prayer is to have gifted and anointed leadership that is able to communicate with them in a way that they can understand, but doesn't oversimplify the prayer content to the point of it losing its effectiveness. Most of the things that adults pray for can also be prayed for by children, often with less of the "baggage" attached to it! Pray that your children and children on your team will be effectively brought into a life of prayer and worship.

The question of involving children in strategic prayer is a matter of "how", rather than one of "if" they should be involved. The reason for this is that the "if" question is, rather, this one—If you are doing anything at all that is threatening to the kingdom of darkness, your children will come under attack by the enemy. So you must teach them to pray appropriately as it is the only way to truly teach them to engage the enemy and resist his attempts to steal and destroy in their lives.

There are several reasons why you would want your children involved in this ministry in any case:

- i. they have the imagination to see and expect great things from God
- ii. the Bible is clear on the value placed on little children having a place in God's kingdom
- iii. they can pray and praise God for His promises in ways that reflect a greater innocence and purity of motive than we are able to muster (at times)
- iv. it is one of the crucial elements of preparing them for a life that is fulfilling. Preparing them in this way is our responsibility as parents.

A well-respected, seasoned pastor of a thriving church in the UK once shared his three regrets for how he brought up his children. First, he regretted that he didn't consider alternative options for their education. Secondly, he wished he had taught them to listen to the Father's voice for themselves. And thirdly, he wished he had taken them on "adventures with God".

If we consider the first of these, education, it may seem irrelevant. But bear in mind that the best learning takes place when children have these three elements at their disposal—they "experience" what they are to learn (not just hear and write about it), second, they are given freedom to experiment and work out their own creativity in the topic, and, thirdly, they have their parents at their disposal as "consultants" (Smart Moves, by Carla Hannaford). Prayer now becomes one of the richest ways we can spend time with our children in a learning capacity. Be aware, you may learn more from them than they do from you! (I know—you already know that!)

The pastor's second admonition, teaching them to hear from God for themselves, is the one we would choose over the others if it came down to just one thing. This is a "skill" that will never

leave them and will enhance every part of their life. Even though we don't do this for the purpose of giving our children a good and happy life, this will be the outcome. A Canadian psychiatrist, Edward M. Hallowell, MD., has written that children who have a sense of connectedness to a larger purpose are more likely to grow up to be content and fulfilled as adults.

And finally, we are taking them on adventures with God when we engage them in "God-sized" prayers. As they grow in faith as children, this will launch them into a lifestyle of faith as adults. In addition, it is "efficient" to make use of their fertile imaginations before greater degrees of adult skepticism set in! Francis Frangipane says that so long as we can imagine it, we can pray for it, and God can do it! Children are "ripe" for this type of prayer!

Story: I once took my three children to a huge square in a city in Libya along with their ribbons and flags and, while they danced and sang songs to Jesus, I imagined the square full of people hearing the gospel in their own city! I described this to the children and told them to imagine it as well. The children were perfectly inconspicuous as worshippers, and I was set free by their enthusiasm to not question the ability of my imagination to see this scene and pray for it to become reality. (Hasn't happened yet, but I'm still waiting...)

How can you involve your children?

The first golden rule (and beyond that the sky is the limit) is to let the involvement of children be as experiential as possible. That is, let it take hold of as many senses and capacities as they have. Don't restrict them to sitting in a chair and processing it all with language....some kids will love doing it that way, but certainly you will get a better response if you let them "fly a kite" in the name of Jesus, and pray some imaginative, but meaningful (God-directed) prayer to go with the fun of that activity.

Here are a few things we have done:

- Praise walking
- Making a mosaic from tiles we picked up on praise walks
- Drawing pictures from a scripture passage
- Making a "tree of life" with names of people we've prayed for
- Dancing and flagging in worship and praise
- Burying scriptures in the ground
- Reading Scripture out loud in public squares
- Sharing communion in public places
- Breaking jars of oil in the "spirit of Gideon"
- Anointing walls and doorposts of gates with oil
- Ask God to give you pictures to draw
- Make a map on the floor and praise and pray over it

Ideas & stories

Praise walk the streets of your city, singing his praises, making up your own songs from time to time. Shout "Jesus is Lord" every time the call goes from the Mosque.

The other day we were walking home and my daughter picked up a small piece of black tile. Our mosaic is nearly finished so I wasn't sure we needed it, but one of our objectives has been to include tile from as many homes as we could. I forgot that objective and thinking we had enough black, I tossed it away, saying, "It's pretty old and beaten up looking. I don't think we need it." I knew my daughter had fully embraced the prophetic vision of our mosaic when she reprimanded me, "MOM, isn't that the whole meaning of our picture. The city is pretty beaten up and ugly, but God is making a beautiful picture of it." I was glad that this experience revealed her depth of understanding—better than my own!

Draw pictures from the scriptures that we believe God has given—we drew seven pictures from Isaiah 62, fabulous promises for our city. From this chapter, we called our prayer focus for this year “City of Praise”. It’s easy to remember all the promises now—just visualize our “art gallery”.

Make a “tree of life”—a pruned branch from our pomegranate tree was anchored in a pot and we add a leaf with a name on it every time we pray for someone. We have prayed for people we know want to follow Jesus, people who have heard something about Jesus from us, friends who have shown no interest, and names that we asked God to give us of people whose lives he is touching but we have never met them.

Bury scriptures in the ground in public places, or place them in the cracks in the walls. We try to do this somewhat inconspicuously.

Dancing and “flagging” or using ribbons to praise God is a great way for kids to get fully involved in worship and praise. Praise is a great weapon against the enemy. “All the darkness in the world cannot put out the light of a single candle.”

Read the Bible aloud in public open air spaces....kids come under little scrutiny for doing this, though a group of men might not be inconspicuous! Reading as a public declaration of God’s Word is powerful!

Share communion in a public place. As with all of our public things, we try to go when there are not a lot of people around, and where there is enough space that we can gather in a “knot” and be fairly inconspicuous. If people start to drift toward us, we pray them away unless God has a specific meeting he wants to bring.

Break jars of oil in the “spirit of Gideon” in public places—where it isn’t making a mess, just adding a little anointing to the mess that is already there.

Anointing the walls and gate posts of the city with oil. As we walk and pray and praise, we dip our finger in oil and run it along a city wall or gatepost. We try to be inconspicuous but one day we had someone ask for a drink from our bottle of oil and we felt pretty awful having to tell them “no”! But wouldn’t they have been surprised to take a gulp of oil!

Make a map out of masking tape on the floor and sing and praise and pray and prophesy over it. Draw the map yourself, don’t just use a little paper thing! Put down symbols inside it as you go along if you want to jazz it up! See googleearth.com for a great view of any city!

Ask God to give pictures to us of what he wants us to pray for! This is a little bit daunting for some children at first, so don’t give up after just one try—we all get better at things as we practice! Be sure to draw your own picture as well: my kids are encouraged about their art as they see how primitive my drawings can be, yet still with a symbolic message!

In addition to these very 3D activities, we have read and studied the lives of many “heroes of faith” and have looked up information about them on the internet, and watched some of their stories on videos. This history has been a rich source of learning and inspiration.

We have taken the story of Abraham and the story of Ishmael and have acted out those scriptures in small groups. We don’t write a script or rehearse, or gather many props—we just use what we can find in the fifteen minutes that each group is preparing (three groups, three different scriptures) and the promises and the presence of God in their lives become very vivid for us. Better than a sermon (yes, really! Sorry!)

Pray Undivided Heart Prayer with your children! It may not go like clockwork the first time or two, but don’t give up. It is a powerful experience for kids, too.

If you know someone who loves children and is creative, there is no limit to the things you can do to involve children in meaningful prayer activities.

Story: I have some PowerPoints I have made for kids—aimed for ages 4 to 14, I don't know if they can be put into a story box, or if my address could be put there and people could ask for them. I have made a “tutorial” how to pray for our city, and several stories of children in our city. All of these are designed to help children know how to pray for our city effectively, and some of the ideas above are incorporated or illustrated.

As you do this, make sure your children are safe

Here are a few tips on the safety of your children. First of all, be sure to pray protection over them daily. The pastor I mentioned above, said that he feels the Bible repeatedly teaches in a 24 hour cycle... “Your mercies are new every morning...” and that praying daily for the protection of your children is important. I can't imagine anyone doesn't agree, but it is worth being reminded!

Secondly, be sure to pray with them. At times they will need some guidance and wisdom to know how to pray for things. Be sure that you are there as the “consultant”—this is an important part of their learning.

Story: Some friends of ours were called in a dramatic way to China as intercessors, and their children were part of those adventures. On one occasion, when they had given away all their money, an angel, dressed as a soldier walked up to them in a crowded square and threw money down on the baby in his carriage, then disappeared. The whole family lived in the expectation that prayers were God's powerful weapon for change. One day, unbeknown to the mother, the kids went to an idol shrine on the side of a mountain trail and desecrated the food that had been left there as a sacrifice. They believed they were doing this to honour Jesus. A few days later the mother walked past and felt a physical force push her off the trail and over the side of the mountain. Her leg was shattered in several places and the local hospital wanted to amputate, but the family insisted on returning to Canada for surgery even though it was an excruciating 36 hour delay. Her leg was saved, but when she found out what the children had done she recognized that they had moved beyond their authority and had left her vulnerable. These are called Needless Casualties of War by John Paul Jackson—a good, short book if you haven't read it!

And finally, be sure to instill the relevant scriptures in your childrens' hearts. The first one that comes to mind, is “Submit to God, resist the devil and he will flee” James 4:7. Submission brings us to a place of purity as well as passion. If your children understand that our resistance of the enemy rests on this submission, they will be well equipped to find their way through the maze ahead of them. Another relevant scriptural point is to be sure that your children are filled with the Holy Spirit. This may mean a variety of things to different people, so pursue this in your own way, but be sure to teach them to pray in the Spirit as it is a powerful intercessory weapon.

Story: Shortly after a teaching on the Holy Spirit and his baptism, I decided to try out the “Jackie Pullinger” method of receiving the gift of tongues with my two young children. I asked them if they wanted to learn to speak in “God's language” and they agreed. I told them it was like babbling and had them ask the Holy Spirit to come and cleanse and then fill them. I prayed for them to be filled and started to speak in tongues, telling them to join me or copy me if they needed to copy. One of them copied and the other whispered....then I began to sing and we all sang together in the Spirit. It was pretty easy and exciting and they were both happy to have this gift that they had heard adults using in prayer times.

It is likely that having read this far, you are aware that your own life has been the greatest source of “mentoring” for your children in the area of prayer. I expect that as you have read all of this, you have had a “head nodding” experience—where you recognize what is already taking place in your life, and are agreeing with what is said.

However, if you have found this whole idea of involving your children a “big bite” and the idea of this is overwhelming, take a deep breath and ask God to help you find a mentor for this area. Parenting is bigger than any one of us is personally equipped to get right all on our own. Asking someone to mentor you in this area is a great idea—don't feel that you are inadequate if you feel

you need this. Or, if you just don't think you are imaginative enough, find a creative person to give you some ideas to choose from! You can choose the ideas you want to start with and go from there.

If you are not a parent, don't think this is all irrelevant to you! You have the opportunity to enrich both children and their parents' lives if you engage with team and church members in this awesome area of teaching children to pray "God-sized" prayers!

4.5.e Key anointed individual(s)/coordinators

In every case where Strategic Prayer has taken place there has always been a key individual. Often it is a married couple who share this burden together. One of the best examples of this was a friend of I.Q. Spenser's. As he passed through the Bible School on his way to Argentina in the late 40's he received the vision of praying through for a nation. His name was Ed Miller. His testimony in the book, "Cry for Me Argentina" shows his own journey from 1) a time of frustration to 2) a time of break through prayer to 3) a time of great revival.

This happened in the early 50's when Tommy Hicks, an unknown healing evangelist, went and prayed for President Peron to be healed. With his permission he filled the largest stadiums of the land. Hundreds of thousands of Argentineans came to the Lord that year and that land has continued to see mighty moves of God over the years.

Another example of this is Count Zinzendorf in Hernhut, Germany. Is it not possible that the roots of the Wesleyan revival of the 1700's had its own beginnings in the praying bands in Germany. Especially if we consider that they had a continuous prayer meeting 24/7 for 100 years! In each case there was a key individual that God used.

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4.6 The personal life of the intercessor [\(Next section\)](#)

4.6.a Personal spiritual life

It is vital that the intercessor has a vibrant personal spiritual life and is walking with the Lord in holiness. They need to spend time with God outside of the team prayer meetings. Their relationship with God must not be solely focused around the ministry and so become a task based relationship. They need to be 'friends of God' first and foremost.

This does not necessarily add up to having to have a traditional western 'quiet time' with a few minutes of structured prayer and Bible study. These sorts of times may be helpful for some people but for others they can be very dry and mechanical.

Here are some suggestions of things that some people find helpful in their personal spiritual lives:

- Intentionally praying whilst moving around either driving, walking or on public transport learning to talk with the Lord about everything
- Practising 'the presence of Christ' by finding reminders of His presence. This might be every time you pass a certain place, an object that you carry with you and setting your digital watch to beep!
- Sitting in God's presence – not praying, not talking, not reading – just sitting enjoying being with your heavenly Father
- *Lectio Divina* is a method of reading scripture which helps you to meditate on the scripture. It involves prayer, repetition and reflection.
- Reading scripture and imagining yourself in the story, asking yourself what is happening, how do you feel, what is Jesus saying to you?

- Some people find that liturgy can be very helpful especially in difficult times. Many people are finding new life in some of the old Celtic liturgy.

Of course there are many other ways of nurturing your spiritual life and different people will find different ways which help them. The important thing is that our personal relationship with the Lord remains central and alive.

4.6.b Prayer shields

Every person that is involved in Strategic Prayer needs a prayer shield. This is a group of people that are committed to pray for them and for their children. The best way to develop this is by asking people to be part of your prayer shield. This is especially true when the Lord begins to lead the group in times of binding and releasing. When a group begins to hone in on the things that the Lord wants to release over their CUPG the devil will know it.

In Colombia the Lord showed us very clearly that the devil had sent an evil spirit against us. He always showed us this spirit in the form of a panther seeking to destroy us. At one point things became so intense that we had to leave our home and go into hiding for one month. One day a man fired a Smith and Weston .38 directly at my heart from about 20 feet away as I was driving the car home. The bullet went through the metal, broke the window that was rolled down came half way through the inside metal and was stopped by a piece of cardboard and an angel's hand six inches from my heart. When I got to the prayer meeting that night I shared that spiritual warfare was not always just spiritual.

4.6.c Meditation

Christian meditation is to contemplate repetitively the Word of God, using a portion of scripture. It is a spiritual discipline which centres us on God. Whilst intellectual study is good and helpful, meditation roots God's word in us on a much deeper level than just reading it. It seeks to unleash the power of the word in us (Heb 4:12). Often as we meditate we gain added insight into the character and ways of God.

Ps 48:9, Ps 119:97, 99

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4.7 Dealing with the powers of darkness [\(Next section\)](#)

Whenever we are involved in spiritual battle it is important to remember to focus on God and not on the powers of darkness. Focusing on what the enemy is doing in order to see him defeated can sometimes consume our attention and become an unhealthy focus. It's almost as though we become more excited by the enemy and his work and are not so excited by God. If this becomes the case we must repent and make sure that we are focusing primarily on God's glory.

In everything we do we must make sure that we are following the leading of the Holy Spirit as closely as we can. It is the Spirit who will lead us into battle just as He led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted (Matt 4:1). Doing things out of our initiative is extremely dangerous.

Before we enter into the battle we also need to make sure that we have no doors of sin open in our lives. Otherwise we endanger ourselves and those around us like Achan did (Josh 7).

Before we enter into a specific time of warfare we must also count the cost. Are we prepared to finish it whatever the cost? Once we start we need to finish.

There are two aspects of spiritual warfare: a 'positive' building up and a 'negative' tearing down.

4.7.a Building up

We do this through proclamation, blessing and living in the opposite spirit

- **Proclaiming truth through Evangelism**
As we declare the Good News to people we are counteracting the enemy's lies and deceit. This is a very important and practical part of spiritual warfare. Entering into Strategic Prayer is never an excuse for stopping evangelism. We need to constantly speaking out the Good News.
- **Proclamation in prayer**
This is proclaiming the Good News but directed into the spiritual realm. We need to speak out truth into the heavenlies. Using scripture is obviously a great way to do this. When we speak out the truth of God's word then obviously demonic powers also hear – and hate it!

We can also speak the words out over a people group or nation if though they are not present. The prophets in the Old Testament often spoke out prophetically over nations not present with them.

- **Blessing people**
As a royal priesthood we can speak out blessing on people. Blessing and cursing are prominent themes in the Bible and we need to be careful to speak positive blessing and not to curse.

We can also call down God's blessing on people and ask the He would bless them. This is of course a key part of our intercessory prayer.
- **Living in the opposite spirit**
We are called to be the sweet aroma of Christ against the stench of death that comes from the enemy's reign (2 Cor 2:15-16). We are known in the heavenlies, and our presence, when we are walking in godliness and uprightness, is felt by other spiritual beings. So, as we live our lives our choices either bring the Lord's glory into what we are doing or they give the enemy more right to rule.

Also, as we begin to discern the presence and hold of certain spirits, one of the ways to come against these spirits is to purposefully live in the opposite spirit to them. For example, if we discern a spirit of impurity, we guard our heart against it and live in purity; if a spirit of fear, live in a spirit of boldness in Christ; if a spirit of depression and sadness, live in the joy in Christ. We actively seek to nurture these opposites in a very intentional way. This subverts and undermines the power of the kingdom of darkness

4.7.b Tearing down the work of the enemy

This may come about either directly or indirectly

- **Prayer to the Father to confront the enemy and strip him of his power**
Dealing with the powers of darkness does not necessarily involve direct confrontation with powers of darkness. Often we are praying that God our Father will deal with specific powers of darkness, principalities, demons, etc.
- **Confronting the powers of Darkness through prayers of breaking and binding**
However, God may lead us at times to direct confrontation with demonic powers. It is wise to only do this:
 - With others and not alone
 - When 2 or 3 people with a track record of hearing God confirm this independently

- In humility with a child-like dependence on our Father
- Without 'demon chasing'. We must wait on God to reveal what and why.

Knowing our place of authority in the spiritual realm allows us to enter in with confidence. The powers of darkness will know all about us and what authority we have as the story of the Sons of Sceva shows (Acts 19:13-16). The only authority that we have is that of Jesus Christ who has been given all authority (Matt 28:18). It is only in His name (i.e. representing His authority) that we dare to enter into spiritual battle.

We have been given the place of authority to bind and loose and to overcome all the power of the enemy (Lk 10:19-20). Notice that this should not cause us to rejoice. This is no fun hobby. The thing that we rejoice in is our salvation in Christ.

However our authority is limited. The powers in the heavenly realms also have rights and authority in certain areas. We need to know what rights the powers of darkness have been given in a specific situation before we can address them. If they have been invited in through sin or an 'official' invocation there must be repentance and cleansing before they can be dealt with.

Story: Jesus said, "How can you possibly spoil the goods unless you first bind the strong man who is guarding the goods.?" You can't "Do the Stuff" until you bind the strong man who is making sure the stuff doesn't even reach earth. Just as there are evil spirits who inhabit people and cause them some sort of suffering there are also evil spirits who have been assigned to whole nations and people groups. They are in a different world or dimension than the one which we perceive with our five senses. So we need to ask the Lord for the gift of discerning of spirits.

As we began to pray for Colombia in the 80's the Lord would show us a big fat evil spirit. We called him, "El Hombre Gordo". He was fattened by all the incredible sinning that the Colombians had been doing for several hundred years. So as we prayed the Lord showed us that He would have to deal with this strong man over Colombia before we could know revival in the land.

In Revelation 12 it was the devil and his angels that were fighting against the Lamb and his angels. What are we to do in prayer then? Why would the Lord show you an evil spirit if you weren't somehow to be involved in it's demise? So the Lord would say one day that we were to do some serious spiritual warfare that day. So we would get all geared up for it only for him to tell us that our part in the battle was just to love and worship Him for then next three hours. Another time He said the strategy for that day was to just play games in the Presence of the Lord. We got some balloons out and had a riotous time of loving the Lord with all our hearts. It was crazy, but somehow acting like little children in His presence gave Him what He needed to defeat the enemy.

I believe the secret of all of this is simply to obey the Lord. One day he told us to go up to a specific mountain that overlooked all of Bogotá and pray. Then He took us to Medellin and up another mountain there. Why? I don't know why. Why did David have to wait around for the wind to stir up the trees before he could go into Battle? Because that's what the Lord required of David to know the victory.

The secret to overcoming the strong man is to simply obey what the Lord tells you to do. If you are in doubt as to what he meant you can ask Him to confirm what He has said. He will! But I remember the very moment it happened. It was at three minutes to eight one evening and it came after many months where most of our days were spent in warfare type praying. We were so happy that for two weeks we didn't ask the Lord for one single thing. All we did was worship Him and celebrate His presence among us. It was after this that He began to reveal to us a white book that was written over Colombia. In it were all the things that He was wanting to bring to Colombia and that we were in Christ Jesus "to win" through Strategic Prayer.

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4.8 Fasting (Next section)

Fasting, when done with understanding and grace, can add a tremendous amount of focus and power to Strategic Prayer. Fasting is primarily about positioning yourself before God in a posture of voluntary weakness in order to receive a greater outpouring of grace.

Why fast?

Fasting is a Biblical practice that is often appears in Scripture alongside of prayer. In Matthew 6:16, Jesus gives instructions about fasting beginning with "when you fast...", assuming that fasting would be a normal part of the lifestyle of people who are pursuing God.

Fasting usually involves voluntarily abstaining from food for a specific period of time, although other types of abstention also occur from time to time. Fasting can be undertaken for a variety of reasons or purposes:

4.8.a. To know God more

Fasting sharpens and deepens your hunger for God and your dependence on Him. This is of great value to the intercessor, since it is intimacy with God and pursuit of Him that sustains the ability to pray strategically. Without a passion to know God, prayer becomes a burden and is usually dropped after a few weeks or months.

Fasting on a regular basis can help focus the heart into a path of continual pursuit of God - knowing Him, experiencing Him, taking delight in Him. When questioned about fasting, Jesus placed it directly in the context of relationship with Him, saying that as long as his disciples were directly with Him there was no reason for them to fast. In the future, however, when he would not be physically with them, "in those days they will fast" (Luke 5:35).

Examples of fasting to know God more:

Luke 2:37 The prophetess Anna has spent approximately 60 years worshipping night and day in the temple, with fasting and prayer. Her burning pursuit of God allows her to immediately recognize the presence of His Messiah, even as an eight-day-old baby.

Acts 13:2 The church leaders in Antioch are gathered in worship and fasting. The passage does not appear to be describing a planning session, but rather a regular part of everyday life where fasting was a part of their intimate relationship with God.

4.8.b. To receive an answer to prayer

One common reason for fasting is to receive divine help in a time of crisis or a key answer to prayer. When done in this context, fasting can increase the effectiveness of the prayer in a number of ways. It increases the intensity of the asking, as hunger pangs remind us to ask more frequently and more sincerely. It increases the reliance on God, as our hunger reminds us that we do not live on "bread alone" (Matt. 4:4) and that God's power is perfected in our weakness (2 Cor. 12:9). It also increases the expectation and faith that God will provide the answer needed, as our thoughts gradually shift from the meeting of our own needs on an ongoing basis (at three or more meals per day) to the priorities and possibilities of God's Kingdom.

Examples of fasting to receive an answer to prayer:

Ps. 35:13 David humbled himself with fasting as he prayed for the illness of his friends (later found out to be in opposition to him) to be healed

Esther 4:16 Esther calls all the Jews in Susa to join her and her maids in an intense 3 day fast for her, in order that she be granted favor and success before the King as she exposes Haman's plan to destroy her people

Nehemiah 1:4 Nehemiah fasts and prays for some days before the God of heaven in order that God will grant him favor in the presence of King Artaxerxes so that he may go and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

4.8.c To gain guidance, wisdom and insight from God

Fasting can also be undertaken when there is a need for wisdom or guidance from God on a specific issue. This kind of supernatural guidance often seems to be released in two different ways. The first is that as the mind and heart are gradually cleared from the clamor of meeting the body's need for food three or more times per day, God and his Kingdom come into clearer perspective. The second is that God simply honors the voluntary, passionate reliance on Him of the person fasting, and releases the required wisdom supernaturally.

The God-given release of guidance can take the form of a gradual or sudden insight in the mind or heart, a word of knowledge, a word of sound counsel or prophecy from a trustworthy source, a fresh understanding of how Scripture applies to the situation, a vision or a clear visitation from an angel or from Jesus himself, and so forth. Although fasting is not a condition for receiving wisdom and guidance (James 1:5), in the experience of the saints through the ages it has proven to be a great help in the process.

Examples of fasting for guidance:

Daniel 10:2 Daniel engages in a 3 week fast from choice foods and luxuries, as a way of "setting his mind to gain understanding" and to humble himself before God (vs. 12). A heavenly messenger is dispatched in response to his prayer and fasting.

Acts 13:2 As the church leaders are fasting and praying, God reveals to them a key, practical part of his plan for expanding his Kingdom to the Gentiles. Although in this case there is no indication that the fasting was undertaken with the intent of receiving guidance, it is significant that God chose the context of worship and fasting to release a clear understanding of His will.

4.8.d To consecrate oneself for a God-given task

Another common reason for fasting is for God's people to consecrate themselves for a specific task that God has given. When done in this way, fasting is a powerful declaration before God and before the unseen realms of devotion to God himself. It declares willingness to undertake whatever He asks and pay whatever price is required to fulfill the task, and reliance on His strength and power for the job. It focuses the mind, heart, and spirit powerfully on God's calling and God's power that is available for the fulfillment of that calling. This kind of fasting is an integral part of New Testament "sending", but is not widely practiced today in this context.

Examples of fasting for consecration:

Matt. 4:2 - Jesus is led by the Holy Spirit to fast for forty days in the wilderness prior to launching into his public ministry. This period is a critical time of focus and preparation for the task ahead, as well as a training ground to resist the increasingly intense attacks of Satan (up to and including Gethsemane) to abandon the task.

Acts 13:3 Having received instructions from the Holy Spirit to send out Barnabus and Saul, the sending out process includes fasting and prayer for God's provision, protection, and fruitfulness.

Acts 14:23 Paul and Barnabus fast and pray to commit the elders they have appointed to the Lord. Fasting in this case is a functional part of the establishment of new house churches in the cities mentioned.

4.8.e To confess and repent of sin

A final type of fasting that comes up often in scripture is the fasting that accompanies confession and repentance of sin. In this type of fasting, the heart adopts a posture of humility and complete abandonment to the mercy of God, as the mind and tongue confess and repent in words. This kind of fasting, when undertaken with a sincere heart and a willingness to obey Biblical truth, can lead to freedom from strongholds of sin, ungodly ways of thinking, and areas of spiritual bondage.

Examples of fasting for repentance:

Jeremiah 36:9 In response to the message of God's anger and imminent judgment, a time of fasting before the Lord is proclaimed for all the people of Jerusalem and Judah. It appears to be a grassroots initiative undertaken without the approval of the King, born out of true sorrow and repentance.

Daniel 9:3 Daniel's powerful prayer of repentance on behalf of his people is accompanied by fasting in sackcloth and ashes.

Joel 2:12 God calls his people to return to Him with all their hearts, with fasting, weeping, and mourning over their having turned away from Him.

Jonah 3:7-9 The response of the King of Ninevah to the proclamation of God's impending destruction of the city-state is to decree an urgent, complete fast for both men and animals, accompanied by a turning away from evil ways and violence. As a result, God's compassion is aroused and he does not bring destruction on them.

Story: You pray and you pray and somehow it's just not enough. There are some things that come about only through prayer and fasting. Actually fasting is not that difficult. It is entering a fast the right way that will help a lot. Let your tummy get reduced in size gradually. Take two or three days to begin the fast. The other secret that we found is that it is fasting and prayer and not fasting and working. When we fasted we would literally pray for up to twelve hours a day. We began by doing three and seven day fasts. Eventually we did some forty day fasts. We wouldn't eat during that time but we would have a milk and honey drink at night to help us sleep. Extended periods of fasting and prayer is a very potent tool for the intercessor involved in Strategic Prayer.

Practical Thoughts and Tips for Fasting

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4.9 Rising Faith

As we wait on God, he adds to our faith so that His will is done in the nation we are bringing before Him. He tells us His plans and secrets for the nation. Our faith rises and we believe Him for greater things, praying for greater things according to our faith (Is. 64:4). When God speaks to us, we need to take him up on his promises in full faith. More time in his presence tends to cause faith to rise in our hearts.

2 Kings 13:14-19, James 1:6-8, Heb. 11:6, Matt. 9:27

Story: Here is a summary of a vision God gave to an intercessor for a Muslim nation in 2001:

A group who had been praying together regularly for the nation was behind a huge plate glass window, looking out at a great harvest being gathered in. Some longed to be part of the harvesters directly, but God instructed them to keep praying since a black cloud was looming over the fields and needed to be prayed away.

The scene switched to a huge banquet where people dressed in Muslim clothing were sitting at low tables in a room, feasting and celebrating. The room was so huge that the far walls could not be seen from the entrance. The Lord said to the group of pray-ers, "*You have determined the size of this room.*"

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5. Practicalities of Strategic Prayer

5.1.a Assessing a team's prayer pulse [\(Next section\)](#)

It is helpful for leaders to be able to assess the "health level" of their team in prayer. This allows them to see where areas of strength and weakness are, in order that they may guide the team into more mature and life-changing prayer.

Team prayer is different than individual prayer. The maturity of a team in prayer goes beyond the sum of the maturity of the individuals in the team, although having more mature team members is a definite help. Building a prayer team that is cohesive, unified, and able to pray with consistent intensity, expectation, and persistence takes time and effort. Having a team that is made up of several experienced intercessors on an individual level does not guarantee that the team will necessarily be functioning at a mature level of prayer!

While there is no simple or formulaic way to assess a prayer team's maturity, there are a number of factors that can be helpful diagnostics in beginning to get a feel for where things are at. The following questionnaire is designed to ask some of the initial questions that relate to the "prayer pulse" of both the individuals within a team as well as the team itself.

There is no score for the survey. These are simply areas that are generally indications of a mature prayer life, and so the goal should ultimately be to score highly in each of them. This survey may be used most effectively when filled out by each member in the group, and followed by a time of sharing and reflecting upon the answers.

Prayer Pulse Assessment Survey

Assign a score of 1-5 to each of the statements below, based on the following criteria:

1 = never

2 = rarely

3 = sometimes

4 = often

5 = always

A. Individual Level

	Score
1. I have a sense of being close and intimate with God as I pray	
1. I am able to rest in God's presence and not be anxious about passing time	
1. I have a longing for worship and a love of worshipping	
1. I have a longing to know and meditate on God's Word	
1. When I pray, I like to use God's Word as the basis of my prayers	
1. I am able to hear God's voice (in any of the many different ways God speaks)	
1. I feel an eagerness to come to prayer	
1. I am consistent about being in prayer regardless of emotions or circumstances	
1. I spend significant amounts of time in prayer	
1. I am able to intercede with insight and am specific in my requests	
Total	

B. Team Level

	Score
1. There is a clear sense of God's presence as our team prays	
1. Our team loves to worship as we pray	
1. Our team uses the Word of God effectively in prayer	
1. We feel an eagerness to come together in prayer as a team	
1. Our team lives and prays with a spirit of unity	
1. Each team member takes initiative in praying out what God places on their heart	
1. Our team is collectively able to hear God's voice	
1. Our team is regular and consistent in praying together	
1. Our team spends significant amounts of time in prayer	
1. There is a clear sense of faith and expectancy as our team prays	
1. Team members make use of their spiritual gifts when we pray together as a team	
1. Times of silence when we pray as a team do not make us uncomfortable	

1. Our team has effective leadership that is exercised in appropriate amounts	
	Total

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5.1.b Prayer walking (Next section)

Prayer walking is a two-way dialogue with God in a specific location that is being prayed for. What distinguishes prayer walking from other types of prayer is that in prayer walking there is a progressive, real-time interaction between God, the intercessor(s), and the people and places encountered in the location being prayer walked.

It is this real-time interaction that makes prayer walking a powerful means of interceding for a community. In prayer walking, we are giving time to God to show us specific people, places, and situations that he would have us pray for. We are believing that the things that we encounter as we walk are not there by mere coincidence, but rather by God's divine pre-positioning, in order that they may be prayed for.

The effectiveness of prayer walking does not in any way diminish the effectiveness of praying for individuals or communities from afar (also a very effective form of prayer that has had a powerful impact on the world). Prayer walking is simply a different means toward the same goal of seeing communities transformed.

However, by placing the intercessor on-site, prayer walking has a number of key advantages that prayer-from-a-distance may not have:

- It allows the intercessor to pray for many of the specific elements that make up the community, in a way that is more difficult from afar
- It exposes the intercessor's emotions and senses to the community in a powerful way, allowing God to reveal His own heart more clearly
- It can be a powerful expression of faith in prayer, as each place where the intercessor(s) set their foot is claimed for God's Kingdom (Joshua 1:3)
- It allows for opportunity to immediately become an answer to prayer for specific needs that arise, whether by helping someone in difficulty, defusing an argument taking place, assisting an elderly person to get to where they need to go, giving comfort or dignity to a needy or homeless person, responding to an emergency situation, etc.

5.1.b.i What to Pray

Prayer walking, like all types of prayer, should be led by the Holy Spirit, with a responsiveness to His promptings. At times it is also helpful to have a specific set of items to pray for as you walk.

One model that can be helpful in this is the GEHARP model. GEHARP is an acronym that can be easily remembered, with each letter of the acronym representing a specific area of prayer that can be applied in any and every location. The model is shown below:

GEHARP

G	Glory
E	Expansion
H	Hearts and Minds
A	Authority
R	Revival
P	Prosperity

The acronym GEHARP can help you focus on six key focal points in prayer that are related to God's heart for all nations, as you walk through a place.

G: Glory of God

That God would be glorified and exalted and worshipped in this street/area/building

Hab 2:14 For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

*Ro 15:9 so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy, as it is written:
"Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name."*

E: Expansion of the Kingdom

That many people in this location will come to salvation, communities of believers be planted, insider movements ignited

Isa 9:7 Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end.

2Co 10:15-16 Our hope is that, as your faith continues to grow, our area of activity among you will greatly expand, so that we can preach the gospel in the regions beyond you.

H: Hearts and Minds

That strongholds and bondages will be lifted from the minds of the people in this place, and that hearts will be stirred with hunger for Jesus and truth

2Co 4:4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Ac 17:11 Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

A: Authority

Taking authority over principalities and powers in this location that work to defend and nurture spiritual strongholds, speaking prophetic words over the place, releasing visions, dreams, signs and wonders in Jesus' name

Mt 18:18 "I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Ac 19:15 One day the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but who are you?"

R: Revival

That believers living in this area would be awakened by the Holy Spirit, have love and passion stirred in them for the lost, and rise to meet the need in their neighbourhood

Lk 10:2 He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.

Eze 37:10 So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army.

P: Prosperity

That God would bring blessing and prosperity to this street/area/region that would show His eternal kindness, demonstrate the blessing of His Kingdom, and cause His people to prosper

Jer 29:7 Also, 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."

Ps 84:5 Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage. Ps 84:6 As they pass through the Valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools.

5.1.b.ii Systematic Prayer Walking

Another effective way to prayer walk is to systematically walk and pray through every street (alley/path/track) of a community over a given period of time. The advantage of this kind of an approach is that it gives the team praying a tremendous amount of insight into the community, and extended opportunities to interact with God about the community. Depending on the size of your community, a systematic endeavour to pray through the community could take weeks, months, or even years.

Some of the elements of a successful prayer walking plan include the following:

Planning: In order to systematically cover the area, a reasonably good street map is very helpful. In places where street maps do not exist, hand-drawn ones can be put together with the help of tools like Google Earth (www.google.com).

Leadership: It is good to have one person designated as the overall coordinator of the prayer effort. This person determines where the group will walk each week, or will designate someone on the team to do so.

Consistency: Having a regular time for prayer walking is best. Many teams have found that prayer-walking once per week is a good amount. Other possibilities are on a bi-weekly or monthly basis. For short-term teams, daily walks (or even twice daily) are possible.

Tracking: Take time after each walk to keep a journal of specific things that God showed you during the walk. This can provide valuable prayer material for the community that can be used in other prayer meetings later on, and can also form the basis of other strategic initiatives in evangelism, church expansion, etc.

5.1.b.iii Prayer Walking and Prophetic Acts

Prophetic acts are specific actions that God leads us to do that proclaim an aspect of His divine intent for a person, a community, or a region. Often, this proclamation is not done for other people to see, but simply as an act of obedience before God or as a proclamation in the unseen realms. Some of the acts that God sets in motion may seem strange or unconnected to the current spiritual needs of the community, only to make sense later on. In all cases, when a prophetic act is

undertaken in obedience to the clear prompting of God, His power is released in ways that can significantly shape and shake a community.

Although the concept of prophetic acts may be relatively new to some, examples of prophetic acts can be found in the Scriptures. Jeremiah was called to bury stones in clay in the pavement at the entrance to Pharaoh's palace, as a proclamation of coming defeat (Jer. 43:9-13). In 1 Kings 13, a man of God is called to speak a proclamation to an inanimate object - an altar. Ezekiel was told to prophesy to dry bones and command them to rise (Ezekiel 37:4). Agabus tied his own hands and feet with Paul's belt to deliver a specific message from God (Acts 21:11).

Prophetic acts are specific actions that God prompts his people to do in specific locations and times. They should not be undertaken in a place simply because they were used with power somewhere else.

Some examples of prophetic acts that have been done in various parts of the Muslim world in the past 10 years include:

- a prayer team sharing communion (bread and wine), and then burying portions of the remaining bread and wine in the northern, southern, eastern, and western-most points of the city
- a container of water being prayed over and prophetically poured into the sea next to a city
- a multi-week campaign of praise and worship - done in a low-key manner - through the streets of a city of key religious significance
- a prayer team designating one person to embrace a specific building with his arms as the rest of the team prayed for the influence of that building on the community
- The door-posts in a building being anointed with oil as a proclamation of God's presence and protection there

These examples are not meant to be used as a template, but rather to simply serve as a sample of the kinds of things God may call teams of intercessors to do by faith.

Story: One day the Lord spoke to the young people about a certain barrio in the city called Castilla. They were to walk around it and pray over it every morning before they went to their classes at the University. They did this faithfully for several weeks. Years later we simply marvelled at the number of useful servants of the Lord that have come from this barrio to go into all the earth to serve the Lord. When He says Prayer Walk, obey Him. You will understand why some time in the future.

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5.1.c Leading a time of worship [\(Next section\)](#)

Worship is one of the most important parts of Strategic Prayer. This section will provide practical insights about how to effectively incorporate worship into times of corporate prayer.

5.1.c.i The role of the worship leader

- The worship leader builds an atmosphere of open-ness to and intimacy with the Lord.
- They lead the way into the Holy of Holies and usher people in so that they can interact directly with the Lord, to bless Him and be blessed by Him.
- They establish a place for the Lord to be enthroned on the praises of God's people.

5.1.c.ii The preparation of the worship leader

- A worship leader is first and foremost a humble worshipper.
- They must have a servant heart to lead and facilitate others.
- Before a time of worship the leader will take (maybe considerable time) to prepare their own heart to hear and receive what the Spirit is saying and where He is leading.
- The Lord may give the worship leader a certain theme or scripture that will be important in the time of worship and prayer.
- They will prepare practically making sure that people have the words that they need to sing (books, OHP, video projector). Any technical equipment needs to be carefully checked to avoid distracting technical failures!
- The worship leader will probably find it helpful to have a number of songs prepared that flow together thematically and musically.

5.1.c.iii Leading worship

- It is always important that the worship leader stays open to the leading of the Holy Spirit and is prepared to depart from any prepared list or order.
- The worship leader needs to work closely with whoever is leading the prayer time. Often a closeness develops over time where the worship leader understands the overall direction the prayer leader is taking and is sensitive to lead the worship in that direction.
- The worship leader also needs to be responsive to the group of worshippers. Are they 'experienced' worshippers or is this new for them in which case they may need more encouragement and explanation? What background do they all come from? What are they used to? What will free them most in worship?

5.1.c.iv The time of worship

Times of worship should not just been seen as singing but may include many different elements as we use all of our strength and creativity to worship God. For instance they may include:

- Singing
- Instrumental music
- Speaking out truth
- Reading scripture
- Meditating on scripture
- Sharing stories of God's goodness and love
- Using our bodies dancing, jumping, bowing, kneeling, prostrating
- Applause and clapping
- Reverent silence

Worship in Strategic Prayer is also corporate, meaning that we do it together. It is not a time when we bring our own individual worship but we declare something together. Often there will need to be a progression in worship to help people to enter into the Lord's presence. Depending on the focus of the gathering this may look something like:

- Preparation - forgetting other distractions and focusing on the Lord maybe in silence
- Intent – speaking out or intention to worship together as His people (Ps 95:1-2)
- Repentance – A time to allow the Holy Spirit to search and convict people's hearts (Ps 139:23)
- Thanksgiving & praise – stirring people to 'enter in' and worship (Ps 100:4)
- Declaration - using worship to proclaim truth over the nations and declare the Kingdom
- Intimacy – sensing His presence and hearing His voice

5.1.c.v Sample outline for approx 45 mins of worship

Preparation:

A few moments quiet to focus hearts and give an opportunity for confession

A time of entering in: 2-3 songs:

Usually the best way to begin a time of praise and worship is with thanksgiving, praise, and declaring the rule of the Lord. Musically, this usually is done using upbeat, faster songs that focus on lifting up the lord, praising His goodness, proclaiming His rule and His Kingdom, etc. There can also be reading of scripture for example Psalm 100:4

A time of worship/meditation on a theme: 3-4 songs:

If this praise time is meant to be part of a gathering that has a certain theme, you need to incorporate songs that serve that theme in preparing people's hearts and minds to focus on that idea. Whether it's part of a theme or not, this time is usually more mellow and meditative. Slower songs are usually more useful here.

Closing 2-3 songs:

You probably don't want to leave people in a contemplative place. Bring people back with some upbeat, faster songs again, and finish on a note of victorious proclamation.

5.1.c.vi Suggestions for leading a time of praise and worship leading into a time of prayer and intercession:

- Usually shorter than the 45 min time slot
- May not have the worship/contemplative style section above but may have a somewhat quieter part that is focused on supplication or repentance
- Having songs of powerful proclamation often really opens up the atmosphere of faith.

5.1.c.vii General suggestions:

- Try to repeat songs just enough that people have a chance to think about the words but not so many times that they "check out" and disengage.
- Choose musical keys that are easy for both men and women to sing (too high is too hard for women, too low is too hard for men). However, keep in mind that lower keys have a psychologically saddening effect, as it brings down the 'mood'. So, aim to play them in the highest sing-able key!
- If possible have words for songs ready and easily accessible to people. PowerPoint is good because it lifts people's faces up and helps them to be part of the group rather than focusing on themselves as they stare into a book.
- Pray for gifted worship leaders to be involved in Strategic Prayer – not just in your city or country but in every nation.

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5.1.d A time of listening [\(Next section\)](#)

We are not always good at taking time to listen to God. We are very quick to start talking in our praying. However, we need to develop the discipline of listening to God. Here is an exercise that might help:

- a) Worship to help us come into God's presence
- b) 5 minutes of silence – wait on God – ask one of these questions:
 - What do You want us to pray about, Lord?
 - What is standing in the way of cp movements in our nation?
 - What is Your Spirit doing that needs further prayer?
 - Is there a Scripture that should be prayed through now for our nation?
 - Is there something You want us to ask for in faith?
 - Is there a battle needing to be fought in prayer?
- c) Each person shares what came to mind during the time of silence.
- d) The prayer leader discerns the direction prayer should take for the rest of the allotted time.

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5.1.e Leading different types of prayer meetings [\(Next section\)](#)

5.1.e.i 2 hour

This is a good way to get into longer times of Strategic Prayer and is good for those who have never spent prolonged periods of prayer. Try to keep the time moving with a variety of forms – sung worship, corporate simultaneous prayer, prayer in groups, prayer in pairs, silence, reading scripture etc. Take time at the beginning to explain to everyone what is expected and what time you aim to finish. This means that people can relax and know what is happening.

5.1.e.ii 5 hour

This is the regular time of prayer with the whole group. Obviously there is no set rule to this, but five is a significant number. In Colombia we would begin at three o'clock every afternoon and go until eight, six days a week. Vary the time as for the 2-hour prayer time. We would often take a fifteen to thirty minute break in the middle of the five hours to snack on some food and chill for a while. Ever since then our normal time of Strategic Prayer is for five hours. There is a need for continuity. The same people need to meet every day for this five hour time of prayer. You could begin with 21 days, five hours a day. Try it you'll like it!

*When five hours of prayer goes by
and it seems like it's been only fifteen minutes
and you're having fun
and the Lord is sharing His heart and plans with you for the nation
and people even hang around after the five hours to enjoy each others' company
and you can't wait for the next time you can get together for five hours to pray
and you enjoy these times in the Presence of the Lord more than anything else you do in life
then you won't need anyone to tell you how to run a five hour prayer meeting!*

5.1.e.iii Whirlwind

This is a time of prayer with two or three people. You can do it at home, at school or at work. It is not so much a prophetic time but a time for petitions. Most of the time is spent offering up strong prayers and petitions in the context of a one hour time of prayer.

5.1.e.iv Skype Prayer

The world is flat. So with an internet connection you can set up a time to pray on Skype (using the *conference* facility) with people from all over the country or all over the world (allowing for time zones)! Set up a time that is convenient for everyone and if possible keep to that time each week.

You might want to start with

- one prayer focus, (i.e. a particular people group)
- one other person or couple
- one hour – it will go quicker than you think

Then you can begin to add both time and people (up to 5 locations still works well) to that Skype prayer event. You will need a relatively fast internet connection and will need to adjust speaker volume, microphone level/position so you can all be heard and you don't have too much echoing. It is good to have clear instructions on how you will pray. For instance:

- Appoint someone to convene and facilitate the session
- Introduce yourselves so that everyone knows who is present including more than one person using the same microphone in one location (this also allows you to check microphone levels etc)
- Agree the security guidelines
- Decide the sequence in which participants will pray to avoid interruptions
- It may help to use the word "over" to indicate that you have finished speaking and it is someone else's term
- Make sure that you are all using the *chat* facility to communicate non-verbally so that a participant can indicate that they would like to interrupt the sequence
- Cut and paste any scriptures or ideas you want to share onto the chat screen
- Know who will reconnect the conference call if a connection is broken

More and more we need to use the internet for the purposes of God in Strategic Prayer. However, in the light of recent concerns over the security of Skype in some locations (particularly China) you will need to decide together what you are happy to say or not say during a prayer session. It will be important that all participants understand the security guidelines.

Skype is an amazing way to pray with people across the time zones. It can take Strategic Prayer into a totally new dimension! Try it out.

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5.1.f Organising a period of focused prayer [\(Next section\)](#)

Periods of focused prayer may include: gathering people together in one place to pray for anything from 3 to 21 days; or it may mean organising a month or year of prayer for a city, people group or country when you mobilise an international prayer focus.

5.1.f.i A three-day event

It's good to take a full three days. We talk about planting the banner of prayer in a particular city for those three days. Just as in the olden days of battle the captain would plant the troop's banner on a hill and then all the soldiers would see the banner and gather there to fight. Choose a suitable venue that is available for the whole time. People from all over the country can be invited. It's good to have a good number come in from outside because then the only thing they have on their agenda for those three days is to pray. We understand that the majority of the time we are together during these three days is to pray and not to receive teachings. We impart by doing so keep public teaching and preaching to a minimum and do the teaching by modelling times of prayer.

5.1.f.ii A twenty-one-day event

This is an extended time of continual prayer. It needs to be planned well in advance, if possible, so that people can prepare themselves to take time off from their daily activities of work and study. The way we like to do it is to have a four or five hour prayer meeting at the beginning of the day in small groups. Then we have a time of teaching in the afternoon after lunch that usually lasts one hour. Then we break until the evening when we all come together for a three hour evening “break through” session which usually goes from 7 to 10 pm. There will be times when it will be both fasting and prayer. Other times there may be a sense to have days of 24/7 prayer where people are praying around the clock. There may be some who can only pray for one week during the 21 days, but there should be a good core group that prays together every day right through the 21 days. One more thing needs to be said about this. We are literally meaning 21 days. Not 10 and not 28 but 21 days. Daniel understood that this was the time prescribed by God in order to bind the strong man and allow God to accomplish His purposes in the heavenlies. These battles in the unseen world will have great repercussions in the seen world.

5.1.f.iii A period of international focused prayer

The most important thing about organising a period of prayer for a city, nation or people group is to be sensitive to what the Spirit is saying. All the planning, networking, finance and effort cannot replace the wisdom and guiding of the Holy Spirit.

Whoever has the vision needs to clearly communicate it to others, preferably face to face as this is much more effective than letters or emails. For large projects it can be very useful to have publicity, PowerPoints and videos. But these are never a substitute for the raw enthusiasm and heart of the person who is carrying God’s vision.

It may be that a steering group needs to come together to facilitate and oversee the period of prayer. These people ideally need to be in the country on the ground where they are observing and sensing what is happening as the prayer progresses. If there are churches present then it may be good if national believers were involved in this group as well as expatriates.

It can be very effective to network together Christians in other places. In particular there are many prayer networks around the world that have a burden to pray for the nations. They are sometimes keen to partner with groups involved in Strategic Prayer on the ground.

If people outside of the situation are being asked to pray then it is very important to provide them with adequate material to pray over. It may be that prayer bulletins could be sent daily, weekly or monthly probably using email. DVDs and videos can provide a good introduction and overview of the situation. Flags and maps are good visual aids that can be given to people. Maybe a small booklet with background information, history and demographics could be produced.

One of the most important aspects of mobilising prayer is feedback. People need to know that their prayers are being answered. There is nothing more discouraging than praying for an urgent situation but then never hearing what happened. So when prayer requests are sent out they need to be followed up by frequent updates during the period of focused prayer and preferably afterwards too.

A Case Study

An example of an overview of a year of prayer

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5.1.g Gathering information [\(Next section\)](#)

5.1.g.i How to gather data and discern patterns

In order to build and test hypotheses about unseen dynamics in our communities, we need to gather data from the communities. The more data we have, the more we are able to draw conclusions that are helpful. When conclusions are based on insufficient or unbalanced data the conclusions are usually incorrect and can lead to frustration in the heart of the intercessor (when their prayer is not effective), or diminish their ability to love their community (by allowing stereotypes, generalizations, and grievances to take root in their heart).

There are three key ways to gather data:

- Research
- Relationship
- Revelation

Research: Many of the unseen factors that can affect a community's spiritual dynamics can be discerned through research of historical records, cultural accounts, anthropological studies, geopolitical documentation, etc. Patterns of sin and spiritual allegiance and the existence of spiritual strongholds or ungodly leadership are usually repeated generation after generation and can be found in various forms of documentation. Spiritual foundations, blessings, and God-given purposes also leave fingerprints in the recorded history of a community. Research can be conducted online, in libraries, in newspapers or literature, etc.

Relationship: Because spiritual dynamics that affect a community will by nature also affect each individual in the community, the second area for gathering data is by developing relationships with individuals in the community. Patterns of spiritual issues that appear in numerous individuals in the community may point to a community-level issue. The deeper the relationships with individuals, the more you will be able to gain insight into these issues.

Revelation: This word refers to the variety of ways by which God communicates directly with His children: through a sense of burden, a godly insight, a specific scripture placed on your heart, a word of knowledge or wisdom, a prophetic utterance, etc. God speaks regularly to hearts that are seeking him and his wisdom, and we can be actively asking him for this kind of insight as we look at our communities. Such "revelation" may come to you directly, or to someone else in the Body of Christ.

One of the most important points to understand in gathering the different types of spiritual data is that each of these areas has an important role to play, and no single area on its own can provide a sufficient basis for drawing reliable conclusions about the unseen state of a community. In seeking to discern unseen dynamics, we should be looking for patterns that are supported in all three types of data (research, relationship, and revelation). When we find a pattern like this, we can be relatively confident that we are on the right track of understanding a significant spiritual factor affecting our community.

In ancient times, ships at sea would be guided into a port by lighting a number of fires on a beach or in a lighthouse (usually 2 or 3 fires). When the ship at sea moved into a position where the fires appeared to be one, they would know that they were properly lined up with the safe route into the harbour, and could proceed with confidence. In the same way, when a pattern emerges in the data that is consistent in each of the three "fires" of Research, Relationship, and Revelation, we can proceed with confidence that we are on the right track. Moving into action (whether in the ministry of Prayer or of the Word) on the basis of only one or two fires can place us in a position of danger.

5.1.g.ii What to do with what you learn

Once you have come to understand one or more significant elements of the unseen realm in your community, you can begin to systematically engage in a focused campaign of Strategic Prayer. This can include:

- **Proclaiming** divine purposes and promises over the community (Dan. 9:19)
- **Agreeing with God and praying for multiplication** of areas of divine blessing and gifting (Eph. 1:15-17)
- Asking God to **restore ancient foundations** of the church in the community, or **breathe life into** the currently existing Body of Christ (Hab. 3:2)
- **Interceding on behalf of the community leadership**, for kings and those in authority, that conditions may be created where the Gospel can easily spread (1 Tim. 2:2-4)
- Proclaiming the **breaking and canceling the power** of ancient covenants through the power of Jesus' death and resurrection (Col. 2:14)
- **Demolishing strongholds** through prayer, and praying for God to **shine his light into darkened minds** and hearts (2 Cor. 10:4, 4:6)
- **Binding demonic powers in the name of Jesus**, so that the enemy's "possessions" in the community may be released from bondage (Matt. 12:29)

As consistent prayer is offered up in these areas, change will begin to take place. Do not stop your observation of the community once you have identified a number of unseen factors affecting it. Continue with your observation so that you can see and record changes that come about as prayers are answered.

Prayer is not the only area in which the results of discerning unseen dynamics can benefit your community. Other areas include:

- **Evangelism** will become more focused and effected, as proclamation of truth can be tailored to address unseen issues that are intimately linked to the heart and spirit of the community
- **Discipleship** of individuals and churches within the community can be taken to a deeper level more easily, through the recognition of unseen spiritual dynamics that may assist or hinder growth
- **Cultural understanding** and adjustment will become easier for cross-cultural ministers of the Gospel, as they discern areas of culture in their adopted community that would not be apparent otherwise. Understanding the unseen dynamics in the community around us also allows us to understand which areas of the culture we should embrace wholeheartedly, and which areas we should not embrace.
- **Seeing our own strongholds**, including many different areas of sin and disobedience, takes place on a whole new level as we ask humbly God to teach us about discernment.

5.1.g.iii Dangers to avoid

As we embark on the journey of understanding our community on a deeper level, there are a number of danger areas that we should avoid. These areas are attitudes and approaches we can take that if allowed to grow can lead us into sin, unfruitfulness, or frustration.

Some key areas to watch out for include:

- **A critical spirit** that experiences delight in finding areas of sin and weakness in the community. This is usually felt inwardly and may be kept secret for the short term, but it will eventually show to others in an outward way. It creates a subtle attitude of superiority over the community.
- **A know-it-all attitude** that is usually expressed as an eagerness to be known and recognized by others as the person who knows everything about the community. This attitude is not eager for input from other people's research about the community, relationships within the community, or revelation from God concerning the community.
- **An obsession with information** that becomes distracted by the information itself and loses sight of the purpose behind the research.
- **A formulaic approach** that operates as if the key to understanding all of the spiritual dynamics of a community can be packaged into a simple package of steps. This attitude often leads to the person missing some of the key factors that can only be discerned through a complete reliance on God's guidance and leading.

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5.1.h Fasting – Practical Considerations [\(Next section\)](#)

There are many different ways to fast that are mentioned in scripture and that have been practiced by the church throughout the ages. No single way of fasting seems to be given priority over the others; all can be vehicles of grace in the life of the follower of Jesus.

The primary focus of God is not on the outward form but on the heart. Fasting that is criticized in Scripture is fasting that is done insincerely, hypocritically, or while ignoring the fundamental commands of God to love others and show mercy and compassion.

5.1.h.i Types of fasting

Some ways of fasting that have proven most helpful for believers that are involved in fulfilling the Great Commission include:

- fasting from food (but not drink) for a short period of time (i.e., one meal, one day of meals, etc.) on a regular basis (weekly, monthly, etc.).

- fasting from all food for an extended period of time. Common lengths of fasting seem to be 3 days, 7 days, 10 days, 21 days, or 40 days.

- fasting from certain types of food or drink for a set time period. This includes the historical fast of Lent prior to Easter, but can be applied in a very effective way any time during the year. Common types of partial fasts include fasting from meat, animal products, caffeine, sweets, etc.

- fasting from all food and drink for short periods of time. The most common expression of this globally is the Ramadan fast of Muslims, where no food or drink is consumed between sunrise and sunset for a period of 30 days. Although typically attributed to Islam, this type of fast does have roots in the Bible and in church history.

5.1.h.ii Other Practical Tips on Fasting:

- Fasting does not necessarily have to focus on food and drink. It may also include abstinence from sexual relations with your spouse by mutual consent for a set period of time (1 Cor. 7:5), or abstinence from things such as television, computers, web-browsing, or sleep. Each of these approaches can be a powerful tool for positioning ourselves before God to receive grace, focus, and spiritual provision.
- In most situations, a person fasting should be careful to provide their body with sufficient amounts of water. Fasting from liquids can become dangerous to the body in a very short time, and are generally reserved in Scripture for extreme situations of need. For those who fast from liquids during the daylight hours (i.e., during Ramadan, etc.), care should be taken to rehydrate the body fully at night.
- Fasts for extended periods of time (more than 7-10 days) should generally be undertaken after consulting with a physician, at least initially.
- Fasts should be undertaken with grace. When a fast is broken prematurely for whatever reason, the heart of the person fasting can quickly fall into self-condemnation and either despair (stopping the fast at that point), or fleshly determination (starting the fast all over again with a grit-the-teeth determination not to fail this time). None of these responses are Biblical or grace-oriented. Instead, failure at fasting should be met by a quiet renewal of intent before God to complete the fast, thankfulness for His incredible grace and understanding, and a continuation of the fast from the point where it was broken. For example, if a seven day fast was broken on day four, the person would not start again from day one, but would simply complete the remaining 3 days.
- Individual fasting is meant to be done "in secret", according to Jesus. This does not necessarily mean that we should literally not tell anyone we are fasting (just as Jesus' command to cut off a hand that sins was not meant to be implemented as literal physical self-mutilation), but that we should not do our fasting "before men" for their recognition. When undertaking a prolonged or particularly difficult fast, it can be helpful to share what you are doing with one or more trusted friends and have them pray for you to experience God's abundant provision and grace.
- In Muslim societies, where certain forms of fasting is common, it is also common practice to not shy away from informing others that you are fasting. For believers in this context, being open about fasting can be a useful bridge for sharing the Gospel, but it should be done with humility and freedom from self-glorification.

5.1.h.iii Corporate fasting

Fasting as a group or community can be one of the most powerful ways to fast. Teams or churches that fast together often have an intensity and fire in prayer that is unique. When fasting as a group, the following pointers may be helpful:

- Make sure there is common agreement on the length of the fast, the type of the fast, and the purpose of the fast
- It is good to set ground-rules for talking with other individuals about the fast. One of the most helpful rules is that no one may ask another person "how they are doing" at the fast. This kind of question leads too easily to self-condemnation or self-glorification in the mind of both the person asking and the person being asked. The fast is not a task to be assessed, it is a positioning of the group in a direction of dependence and humility before God.

- Encourage one another and pray for each other in a very intentional way during group fasting. Powers of darkness will try to use the time to drive a wedge in the unity of the group. Avoid this by conscious application of love and encouragement.
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5.1.i Prayer journeys [\(Next section\)](#)

Prayer journeys are significant acts of prayer that normally involve a team praying across a large geographical location over a course of days or weeks. These types of journeys are usually carried out in response to a specific leading from the Holy Spirit, and often have a specific focal point.

Prayer journeys can be done by both short term or long term teams. They can cover various types of areas that are of demographic, historic, religious, or political significance to a community. Examples of prayer journeys that have been done in recent years include:

- A 3-day walk around a large city, proclaiming God's love and salvation for the city
- A week long trip over land to a town where a key religious site is located, with an intense period of prayer, fasting, and spiritual warfare at the site on behalf of the many people who are held in bondage by spiritual powers centered there
- A multi-week prayer journey by a short term team through a specific mountainous region where there is a complete inaccessibility to the Gospel
- The multi-year "Reconciliation Walk" in which a large group of believers from many backgrounds walked the overland route taken by Crusaders to fight Muslims a thousand years previous. The prayer walk focused on repentance and asking for forgiveness from the descendants of the people sinned against in the Crusades.
- A drive around the borders of a whole country stopping at the 'corners'
- to pray and erect stone monuments

Prayer journeys require a high level of planning and logistical support. They should not be undertaken without careful preparation.

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5.1.j Repentance 'events'

Sometimes it is appropriate to organise a time of prayerful repentance. This may be on behalf of current or historic issues. Ideally it is good to have representatives from the parties involved present at the prayer time. An effective prayer event focusing on repentance may include:

- Inviting an appropriate number of foreign and national pray-ers who have been praying for CP movements to emerge in the nation, starting small at first, working through existing relationships
- Foreigners confessing whatever part foreigners may have had in preventing the Gospel from entering the nation: neglecting to bring the Gospel, oppressing the people of the nation, offending the people of the nation, failing to pray for the nation, misrepresenting Christ to the nation, etc.
- Nationals confessing the sins of the nation, especially in rejecting the Gospel. Reading some of the Scripture passages mentioned in this manual may be helpful.

- Pronouncing forgiveness between groups if appropriate.
- Prayers (by everyone) of pleading for mercy and forgiveness for the nation.
- Prayers of blessing and further revelation for any groups in the nation that are known to be praying prayers of repentance

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5.2 Example prayers

5.2.a Taking thoughts captive

“In the name of Jesus I submit my thoughts under the authority of Jesus. I take all thoughts captive to the knowledge of Christ (2 Cor. 10:5) and do not allow any lies or whispers of the enemy to take hold of my mind. I claim now the mind of Christ, which is my rightful inheritance (1 Cor. 2:16)”

5.2.b Forgiveness & forgiving

“Father, in Jesus’ name I thank you that I have received your mercy and am no longer and object of your wrath. I thank you that I am washed and cleansed through the blood of Jesus. I desire to walk before you in the joy of uprightness, and so I bring before you now (any area of known sin) and ask you to forgive and cleanse me from this, and remove all iniquity from me. I ask that you would cleanse me from any sins that I am not aware of, and bring me into an awareness of them. And just as you have forgiven me, I now release complete forgiveness to anyone and everyone who has sinned against me. (If necessary: I intentionally choose to forgive ____ for _____. I release them completely from all condemnation in my heart and mind, and pray blessing on them in Jesus’ name).

5.2.c Cleansing from Spiritual Battle

“Lord, we have brought this nation before You,
and have opposed Your enemies in Your name.
Please prepare Your table of provision and blessing for us
in the presence of these enemies,
and let Your goodness and love follow us always (Ps. 23).
You are the Rock that is higher than we are,
You are our Refuge and strong tower against our foe (Ps. 61).
We run to You and trust You to keep us and our families safe (Prov. 18)”

5.2.d Breaking strongholds

“In the name of Jesus we come against the stronghold of (for example) fear. We tear it down in the name of Jesus and speak that God’s perfect love casts out fear and all the lies that the enemy has used to build up this stronghold are nothing but lies. Lord, we invite you to come and shine your light of love into the minds of these people that they might see the truth of what a loving, safe God you are. Come and remove fear that holds people back from wanting to draw near to you. We ask that you would come and remove the power the enemy has over people because of this stronghold in their lives.”

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5.3 Tips for leading prayer meetings

5.3.a Importance of leadership

Every prayer meeting needs to have someone who leads the time of prayer. Leaders are those who lead. Different ones can lead the meetings but there needs to be someone directing. The first rule of all times of Strategic Prayer is that everyone prays. A sister hasn't led in prayer for the past two hours. Ask her specifically to pray about something. Once the pump is primed she will continue to enter right in.

5.3.b Steps for opening a meeting

How the meeting is opened will depend a lot on who is present and their experience in praying together. A small committed group which prays together regularly need a lot less preparation than a large number of people drawn from different backgrounds for a one-off event. The leader needs to be sensitive to the different needs of the participants. This may include some or all of the following:

- People often need to time to re-focus. They come in busy with lots of things on their mind. They need to be reminded why you are together and given time to 'lay down' the worries and preoccupations that they have brought with them. Maybe a few moments of quiet would help. Or you could read a short passage of scripture to focus people, maybe reminding them of a great prayer or pray-er in the Bible.
- It may be necessary to pray for any individual needs before launching into intercession. For instance someone may be distracted by sickness and need healing for either themselves or a family member.
- If there is a plan for the intercession time then it is good to explain it to people at the beginning so they know where they are going and can follow the theme. There may be particular issues that will be prayed for or a progression that the leader has discerned beforehand.
- If there is no plan then prepare people for the idea that the Holy Spirit will be guiding and that He may speak through any member of the team – not just the leader. How do you anticipate that happening?
- People need to know the boundaries, expectations and practicalities – especially if they are unfamiliar with the normal procedure of the group. Are they expected to pray out loud one after another or all together? Are they free to share prophetic words and pictures? Could they bring a tongue? Do they need to 'clear' these sorts of things with the prayer leader before sharing with the whole group? Is it OK to move around? Can they get a drink if needed?
- Entering into worship then prepares people for prayer and focuses us away from ourselves and onto Jesus.

5.3.c Drawing people out

Some people may not be used to praying or have a rather shy disposition in which case the person leading the meeting may need to 'draw them out'. This should be done sensitively so as not to embarrass. The leader could ask if that person has something they particularly want to share or specifically ask that person to lead in praying about something.

5.3.d Organising the prayer time

A prayer time can be led in many different ways again depending on the experience of those involved. Some of these ideas may be helpful:

- Divide the prayer time into chunks, giving people ideas and thoughts and direction between each chunk.
- Pray in different ways. Sometimes pray as a big group with people leading one after the other. Sometimes get everyone to all pray out loud together at the same time (sometimes called 'Korean' style). Divide the group into smaller groups so that each person gets a chance to pray and so that each person feels safe and unembarrassed to pray out loud. Get people to pray in pairs.
- Occasionally pause and ask people to share what they feel the Lord is speaking
- Encourage people to use scripture while praying

5.3.e Slowing people down

- Put guidelines down so that one person doesn't pray for too long. If somebody has been praying for 5 minutes or more it may be time for someone else to participate!
- Make sure people know to stay with the one subject or line of prayer until it has been prayed through before moving on to the next subject.

5.3.f Prayer for all intercessors as they pray

In a meeting that has more than a small group of intercessors together, it is often helpful to have someone praying for the people who are praying. This normally takes place as the prayer meeting is going on. It can also take place on prayer walks, by having one person walk behind the rest of the group and cover them in prayer as the walk progresses (this person can also be rotated in and out of the group of prayer walkers).

When praying for the intercessors, pray for:

- Each one to be filled with the Spirit
- Each one to have insights and understanding from God
- An increase in faith and boldness in prayer
- Protection from distractions
- An understanding of their identity in prayer

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5.4 Building a prayer team

In every case that we have seen Strategic Prayer work effectively a group of committed people were involved. Many times because of the rigors of fasting and prayer they were young(er) people. Strategic prayer to be done properly needs to be done as a team. There is no rule for this but between five and fifteen is a good number so that everyone is actively involved all the time. You wouldn't have a very good game of football or volleyball with forty players on each team playing at the same time! But you wouldn't want to be caught on the basketball court with less than five.

Many people who feel naturally drawn to prayer are people who are comfortable being on their own. This can be a strength and a weakness. There will be seasons in prayer that are lonely and meant to be taken alone, just as Jesus experienced in the Garden of Gethsemane. But in order to maintain a focused life of Strategic Prayer for a community over a prolonged period of time, a team approach to prayer is essential. This is the model that we see in the book of Acts.

Again, this will not be easy for many intercessors. The reason, however, that intercession has historically been largely left to the “loners” is that the role of apostolic prayer in the advance of the Kingdom of God has been neglected. Prayer requires leadership that is equal to the leadership required for ministry in the seen realm (Acts 6:4). If you want to see your team advance in prayer and bring about Kingdom results in both the seen and the unseen realms, make sure that you do not neglect the critical aspect of team leadership in prayer.

Team-building in prayer takes time and commitment. Just as people take time to learn how to relate to each other and work together in any project, a prayer team takes time to grow together in relationship, spiritual depth, understanding of common purpose, and style of prayer. Do not be frustrated if you feel that your initial efforts to start a prayer team do not lead to spectacular results. A team that prays consistently together on a weekly basis (or more often) will usually take 2-6 months to really connect together and pray with spontaneity, enjoyment, an open ear to the Holy Spirit, and a truly unified spirit of faith.

Allow time for the process.

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6. Cautions

6.1 *There are no cookie cutter silver bullets*

There are no 'cookie cutter', quick solutions to seeing CP Movements in Muslim countries. We can learn from the experience of others but in the end it is not by might, nor by power, but by God's Spirit that we will see the breakthrough (Zech 4:4). And God has His own keys and plans for each nation. The key is to like Jesus hear and see what the Father is doing (John 5:19).

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6.2 *God will do it in the way He chooses*

As we take our nation before the Lord, believing for church planting movements to explode, we also die to our own plans for such movements. Will we play a certain role in emerging movements? Will a certain group be significant in starting a movement? Will the movement be according to our style, theology or desired level of contextualization? Will it begin in a certain part of the nation? Will certain methods be used to start movements? All these outcomes we surrender to God. Even when things turn in a direction we did not hope for or expect, we will be thankful to God. We are doing this for God's glory not for the enhancement of our own ministry or reputation.

James 4:14, Prov. 19:21, Deut. 32:52, Phil. 1:15-18

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6.3 *You might not get to be involved in the harvest*

This may even mean that we do not get to share in the visible harvest when it comes. As Paul says we all have a part to play but in God's way of doing things none of us do it all (1 Cor 3:6-9).

Story: Strategic prayer is very much related to the ministry of John the Baptist. When the Lord called us to this ministry He spoke to us several times that we would pray for revival and when it came we would have to leave Colombia. We were not permitted to participate in the revival. That alone was one of the hardest things I ever had to deal with. Simply stated the fruit of the revival that God asks you to give your whole life for in prayer will most likely be given to others and not to you. John said, "He must increase and I must decrease.". Heaven is where we get rewarded, not down here.

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6.4 *The cross, suffering and martyrdom*

There is a point you come to, after you've done everything else where you must simply embrace the cross. We had done everything we knew how to do. Confessing the sins of the nation, binding the strong man, receiving the revelation of all the things the Lord wanted to bring to Colombia and then praying through for these things with extended periods of fasting and prayer. But then we had to suffer. Even today it is too difficult for me to describe what we went through during that period but it affected every one of us for years afterwards. It wasn't until very near to the time of Jesus' death that He began to clearly tell His disciples about what was waiting for Him in Jerusalem. There can be no completing the task in any CUPG without the cross and suffering. He won't give us what we can't bear but by His grace we will bear what he gives us.

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6.5 Unbelief is a sin

Unbelief is sin and faith is hard work (John 6:29)! We are called to be those who live by faith and who do not shrink back (Heb 10:38-39). When we have prayed and God has spoken then we need to stand in faith and wait for God to do what He has said He will do.

Story: After we finished our times of intense prayer for Colombia in the eighties there was a period of about ten years of waiting. It was a testing time and I failed royally. I got so mad at the Lord for not doing what he said He was going to do that I entered into unbelief. No wonder I was sick in bed for the best part of those ten years. Unbelief is sin. We need to have faith in God after we pray through.

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6.6 Obedience is essential

Obedience to the Lord is key in Strategic Prayer. We constantly need to check that we are walking step by step behind the Lord. If we get ahead of Him or out of step with Him then we will expose ourselves to danger. This can include praying 'rash' prayers that He has not asked us to pray, going to places without asking Him about it first or a host of other things. It is also very important to not 'overextend' ourselves into areas which He is not asking us to deal with. We can only fight the battles that He is directing us to fight. This is reminiscent of King David in 2 Sam 5:19.

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6.7 Defensive Spiritual Warfare

As you move forward in the area of Strategic Prayer, you will face opposition on many fronts. Strategic Prayer is about the advancement of God's Kingdom, and therefore engaging in it will bring about a reaction from the three main elements opposed to the Kingdom: the world system around you, your own flesh, and spiritual forces of darkness.

The world system, that is built in opposition to the Kingdom values of Jesus (1 John 2:16), will seek to divert you from your focus on Strategic Prayer by:

- generating debate and controversy around you about the validity of investing "ministry time" in prayer
- distracting you through enticements to pride, impurity, and self-centeredness
- increasing the level of noise and distraction around you, making it difficult to pray

Your flesh, which is opposed to the work of the Spirit in your inner person (Gal. 5:17), will seek to weaken and shrink your ability to engage in Strategic Prayer by:

- goading you to nurture personal hurts and offences (real or imagined) from others
- preventing forgiveness and openness in relationships with team members and co-workers
- embittering you toward God through increased awareness of the things that you have "given up" for the sake of the Gospel
- discouraging you about prayer, making you feel it is too boring, difficult, costly, or impractical

Powers of darkness and spiritual forces of evil will engage in an all-out effort to abort and overthrow your pressing into their territory (Eph. 6:12) by:

- increasing the pace of "crises" in your family, ministry, relationships, and possessions that arise, to which you must respond
- directing attacks against the unity of your team and family, especially focusing on relational difficulties between husband and wife, and team leader and team members

- direct attacks of sickness and physical affliction
- direct attacks of fear, intimidation, and demonic oppression

When facing spiritual attack, it is important to be able to put into action all of the defensive weapons and tactics granted to us by God for our victory. Without an adequate spiritual defence, you will not be able to sustain the kind of ongoing prayer life and prayer strategy that will bring about the breakthrough you are looking for.

Although in a sense it can be said that all of the teachings, encouragements, and principles of scripture are an important part of maintaining a strong spiritual defence in times of spiritual attack, the following points have proven to be particularly helpful for people facing the kind of spiritual attack that often comes in response to a concerted and intentional advance in prayer.

6.7.a Maintain Purity

Jesus observed in Matthew 5:8 that the “pure in heart” are blessed because they will see God. Seeing God is something that is particularly key for an intercessor. The degree to which we are able to see God as we pray greatly effects the level of faith with which we request things of Him, and our level of endurance in seeking Him. Because of this, powers of darkness will work with extra diligence to incite us to give in to our flesh and to the world system by surrendering our purity.

Purity does not just refer to the area of sexuality, although that is a key area. Some of the areas of sin which will become most enticing to us when we are under spiritual attack include:

- Sexual immorality – whether in thought or in act, including impure thoughts and fantasies, unhealthy attachments to members of the opposite sex, lustful looks or glances, pornography, masturbation, etc.
- Pride – this can often come cloaked in feelings of having attained unique insights into God and his character through prayer that others do not yet have, or having seen God move in miraculous ways through prayer that YOU prayed. In particular intercessors can easily be drawn into the feeling that they are God’s ‘inner circle’ and have more insight than others and are therefore superior. This is always destructive.
- Judgmentalism – Focused prayer may give you “prophetic” insights or observations about a co-worker, a ministry, or the people group or community among whom you are ministering, and if you are not careful you may allow yourself to fall into the sin of judging harshly in your spirit, rather than using those insights to pray with mercy and tears.

God calls his intercessors to radical holiness. This does not mean that you cannot engage in a life of focused prayer if you are struggling with besetting sins, but it does mean that you need to have a heart that is actively pursuing purity and hungering for it. As you grow in holiness, you will grow in prayer. It is not the only thing that will help you grow in prayer, but it is one of the main things.

If you are struggling with sin that will not easily go away, then you should seek immediate counsel and accountability from a leader, your spouse, or a trusted friend. Do not underestimate the seriousness of your situation. Focused prayer and spiritual warfare can be very dangerous when undertaken while actively involved in areas of sin and darkness.

At the same time, there is hope in your struggle. Many times, the sin issue may not have been overcome until now due to an inadequate focus of attention on overcoming the sin, and using God’s tools. Do not drop out of an active prayer life due to besetting sins in your life, but continue to pray as you declare total war in your spirit against the sin, and seek the Holy Spirit’s help to overcome it.

Initially, a daily focus on the sin (alongside an even greater daily focus on Jesus, and feeding on the Word of God) is important. Begin each day with the “four R’s”:

- **Repenting:** If the sin still has active control in your life, bring this in repentance to the Lord, and receive forgiveness from Him each and every time you fail. If you fail throughout the day, return immediately to Him in repentance the very moment that you fall in sin.
- **Renouncing:** Actively declare out loud, before God, angels, and demons, that you renounce the sin of _____, and that you choose to hate this sin, and have nothing to do with it. Even if you just renounced the sin yesterday, actively renounce it each day. This is a key act of war in which you wilfully align your own spirit and soul with God's truth and will for you.
- **Rebuking:** Often the role of demons, curses, and generational iniquity in *inciting* habitual sin is underestimated. You are still responsible for your choices, but there may be spiritual powers that are working as hard as possible to nurture and maintain your state of bondage, and influence the decisions of your will. You can deal with these through praying something like "If there are any spirits, demons, curses, or generational sins that are assigned to incite me to the sin of _____, in Jesus' name I cancel their assignments and command them to silence. They may not influence me in any way".
- **Re-committing:** It is important to understand also that your choice to sin or not sin is a choice of *loyalty*. By choosing to sin, you are defaulting your loyalty to demons (this fact should cause you to return to God in repentance even more quickly). By choosing to not sin, you are giving your allegiance to God. Take a moment to verbalize your love and devotion to Jesus, and your choice to give your loyalty to Him and Him alone.

6.7.b Give and Receive Forgiveness

A lack of forgiveness has historically been one of the main ways in which powers of darkness have kept the church from becoming the dynamic force in prayer that God intended it to be.

While the lack of forgiveness is itself a failure in purity (see above paragraphs), it deserves specific recognition due to the great destructive impact it has had on the mission and identity of the church throughout the ages. For those who are seeking to push forward in the area of prayer, special attention should be given to keeping short accounts with others, and neither withholding forgiveness nor failing to seek forgiveness from others when necessary. When one believer withholds forgiveness from another, the scripture says that (among other things):

1. Our worship and prayers are not acceptable to God (Matt. 18:21-35)
2. Our prayers are hindered (Matt. 18:19, Mark 11:24-25)
3. Bitterness and unbelief spring up (Heb. 12:14-15)

With these outcomes, it is no wonder that lack of forgiveness is one of the key points of access that the enemy tries to gain in his efforts to destroy or limit Strategic Prayer. Be on your guard, and do not to allow this to happen.

Story: Whenever the priests wanted to go into the Holy of Holies they had to shed the blood of animals and present it to the Lord as an atonement for their sins and the sins of the people. I believe that every time we have a time of prayer we should ask the Lord to cleanse us from all sin through faith in His shed blood. It is a good habit to get into as we minister before the Lord as priests.

We should always live in complete forgiveness with all men everywhere. As you enter to pray, forgive all men everywhere with all your heart. One day the Lord just blatantly told us, "I can't come and be with you today." We said, "Why not Lord, what's wrong?" He said, "Do you see those two young men sitting over there? They have sinned against me!" So I took them into my office and asked them about it. Sure enough they had to leave the meeting that day and get things right. One of

the reasons that the ministry of “Undivided Hearts” had to precede the ministry of the Strategic Prayer Equipping Group was to have a people who were holy before the Lord. Holiness is essential to prevailing intercession.

6.7.c Cultivate Hope

One of the “occupational dangers” of engaging in focused, persistent prayer for a community is that the daily barrage of bad spiritual news from that community can wear down your sense of optimism, hope, and faith that God will indeed fulfil His promises among that people. This can happen even when the Kingdom of God is advancing (see Matt. 11:2-6).

Hope is a critical component of the intercessor’s outlook and perspective. Hope is the bridge between faith – believing that God will do all he has promised – and love – the grace of God poured out in the life of the intercessor to give his or her life on behalf of the people for whom they are praying. It is possible to pray with faith, but to have a heart that is dry and empty of love. This kind of prayer rarely sees notable results for the Kingdom of God, but can (and often is) maintained for the sake of “faithfulness”.

In order to keep love’s fire burning fresh in your heart, you need to cultivate *hope*. Hope is the ability to not only believe that God *can* move among the people for whom you are praying, it is also the ability to see that God *is in fact* moving in response to your prayers and actively bringing about the things you pray for on behalf of the people. It is having spiritual eyes to recognize the process God is using to save a people for himself from among those for whom you are praying.

Hope can be cultivated in a number of ways. Times of focused worship and lingering in the presence of God (without interceding for anyone or anything) are helpful. Spending time in the Word and interacting with the Word on a personal level and as a prayer team are also vital. It is also important to think about and discuss the answers to prayer that God has provided, and the positive aspects of what is happening spiritually in your community.

6.7.d Rest Appropriately

The apostolic ministry of prayer is intense, and can be quite tiring. People who pray little may criticize people who pray a lot by saying or implying that they do not work very hard. As anyone who has laboured before the Lord in prayer on behalf of a community knows, however, the opposite is true. Wrestling in prayer (Col. 4:12) can be exhausting.

The challenge that will face you when you commit to prayer and face tiredness or exhaustion will likely be one of two common errors:

1. Not resting when the Holy Spirit directs you to rest. There will be seasons where God leads you to a place of rest, and allows you to leave the wrestling in prayer with Him for a while (Ps. 23:2-3). This kind of rest is the rest of peace and faith, and is good. Not placing your subject(s) of prayer in God’s hand when He directs you to is disobedience, and will not only decrease the effectiveness of your prayers, but will also lead to emotional and spiritual burnout.

2. Resting beyond the season of rest that God tells you to take. While God does give times of rest and refreshing, He also calls us to *actively* participate in the expansion of His Kingdom through prayer. Take the time of rest that you need to refocus, but heed the promptings of the Holy Spirit when He tells you that it is time to get back to the battle. Not doing so can open you up to a spirit of laziness and compromise. Do not be like King David, who after years of successful military campaigning decided to extend a natural winter rest period into a prolonged absence from the battlefield God had called him to (1 Chron. 20:1). Before long, he found himself broken and fallen in the sins of adultery and murder.

6.7.e Focus on Jesus

This is a simple but important point – to keep the focus on Jesus. When praying about problems in a community, or seeking to break the power of the enemy over a specific group of people in bondage, it is easy to get more focused on the problems and on the enemy than on Jesus.

Our prayers are to always be lifted to God himself, in the name of Jesus, with confidence and joy and thanksgiving in His presence (Eph. 5:19-20). Stay focused on Jesus – His power, His provision, His death and resurrection, His coming back, His victory over all powers of darkness. Let Jesus fill your prayers. Fill your prayer times with much worship.

6.7.f Do not neglect action

One final area of danger to be avoided is the neglect of practical service and ministry while being focused on Strategic Prayer. Apostolic prayer goes hand in hand with apostolic ministry of the Word (Acts 6:4), and both are a part of the basic job description of an apostle (and by extension, apostolic teams). There are many different ways by which the balance between the ministry in the seen realm and the ministry in the unseen realm can be worked out, but the bottom line is that both aspects of ministry should be present. There are times when we should stop praying and start doing!

This does not mean that we should abandon prayer when we feel frustrated about the “impracticality” of it. This can sometimes happen, often in response to the subtle criticisms of others who do not see the “practical” value of prayer. We need to resist this line of thought. The expression “he’s so heavenly minded that he’s no earthly good” does *not* line up with scripture (see Colossians 3:2, Romans 12:2, Ephesians 4:17). After explaining to His disciples (apostles-to-be) about how “they should always pray and not give up”, Jesus asks the question, “When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:1-8). Jesus will be looking for people who “always pray and not give up” when he returns.

However, as we pray we need to *also* be engaged in practical ways with the world around us, ministering in real ways to the needs of people. We are not to neglect the ministry of the Word, lest the Message is not heard (Rom. 10:14). We are not to shut our ears to the cry of the poor, lest God refuses to listen to our prayers (Prov. 21:13). And we are not to keep praying about an issue when God has already given us clear instruction in regard to it (Joshua 7:10).

As a general trend, we have tended to err more on the side of not praying enough. However, as God continues to equip us more and more in apostolic prayer, we will need to make sure that we do not simply swing the pendulum to the other extreme and neglect the area of hands-on ministry in the seen realm. Both aspects are essential.

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6.8 Guard your children

As we take our nation before the Lord, we need to remember to constantly cover our children in prayer. The enemy hunts down the weak, and often we are weakest when we are very young, or when the father or parents of the family are away. Again, viewing warfare Scriptures through the Ephesians 6 and 2 Corinthians 10 interpretation, we can pray for protection for our children. In addition to using Scriptures like those below to pray for our children, we can pray prayers each evening for protection for their bodies, souls and spirits, for cleansing of their rooms, and for the breaking of any curses or spells spoken toward them. (In so many of the countries where we work, cursing and casting spells are common practices.)

Ps. 10:2, Ps. 12:5,7, Ps. 82:4, Is. 40:29-31, Ps. 59:1, John 17:15, 2 Thes. 3:3, Deut. 23:5

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6.9 Prayer shield

It is also very important that others are praying for our protection. It is good if each intercessor can have a 'prayer shield' in place. This could be a group of close friends who commit themselves to praying regularly for us. Or it may be a network of trusted people who we regularly send prayer needs to maybe on an email network.

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6.10 Don't leave in the middle of the battle – finish it

Engaging in Strategic Prayer on behalf of a community is not a quick and easy task. You will have times when you wonder why you entered into this, or why you are seeing no results. The enemy will tempt you to despair, and try to make you think that you will never make any difference.

Do not leave the battle before it is done. All of these discouragements are temporary. God rewards those who persevere, and you have an opportunity to rewrite history as you re-shape the unseen realm through prayer. Finish the task.

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A Case Study

The Country

Of all the Arab countries this country is reputed to be the most liberal. Although its official religion is Islam, in reality the country is quite secular. The first president after Independence discouraged the practice of Islam, removed Islamic programs from the TV and gave freedoms to women unheard of in many other Muslim countries (right of divorce, inheritance and ownership rights, outlawing of polygamy etc). This had the effect of producing a resurgent Islamic political movement. However, the current president, whilst making superficial changes such as re-establishing Islam in the media, has dealt much more firmly with the political opposition movement. The country is now characterised by control – political, intellectual and social – to ensure stability and the continuity of rule by The Party. It is officially a democracy but in practice there is little freedom.

However, the country has signed the declaration of human rights and there is religious freedom of a type. It is not illegal for a national to change religion and to become a Christian but there are restrictions on public gatherings. The official approach has always been to discourage Christianity and to control new believers through fear and intimidation, rather than physical violence and imprisonment. New believers of course do still often suffer rejection from the family, loss of job and social discrimination.

The Background

Christian missions returned to the country with the French well over 100 years ago.

However the church always struggled to get off the ground experiencing all the same problems as those experienced in other Arab Muslim countries.

A few people would become believers and a group would start to form. Then there would either be security trouble and pressure from the authorities; differences in theology and practice; or personality conflict. The group would divide; many would become discouraged and fall away from faith. Some believers left the country, often after marrying foreign partners. Only a small remnant would be left.

This cycle of growth-problem-dispersion can be traced back over the last decades of the post-war years.

“Awake ‘99” - A New Vision

In 1997/8 the Lord gave the workers here in the country a new vision. It stemmed from a picture on a beach of a small trickle of water in the sand quickly becoming a wide, fast-flowing river. The Lord seemed to be saying that He was going to work powerfully in the nation by His Holy Spirit and it would be something that was bigger than could be imagined and would not be contained. But what was needed was the initial breakthrough, the first small channel to be dug.

And so a plan developed to mobilise the church worldwide for a period of a year to focus on the country and to pour as much effort as possible into seeing that breakthrough. 1999 was chosen and the plan for the year consisted of:

1. Mobilising prayer
2. Spreading out the net in evangelism
3. Training the existing body of believers

It was a combined effort between all the different agencies and many people worked together in unity to make it happen both within and without the country. Publicity, information and prayer material was produced in 9 different languages. Many churches around the world signed up to pray. Special prayer meetings were held. E-mail prayer chains were mobilised. Over 35 small prayer teams visited the country. And God answered prayer!

At the start of the year there were maybe only 35 committed, active believers in the whole country. During the year special teaching weekends were held to teach and train the local church. 20+ attended the first weekend on the cost of discipleship. 30+ attended the second weekend on the life of the believer and 45 attended the third on prayer. The movement was beginning to snowball. Some were seeing 'church' for the first time. Others were beginning to share their faith. New believers were being added. This was probably the most exciting part of the year – seeing the local believers witnessing and bringing their friends to Christ.

During the year there were many conversions and baptisms. Without being able to put a figure on it, the church countrywide probably grew to over 100. Some came to the Lord through 'ordinary' evangelism. Others were touched in a more supernatural way.

Some stories

A young man in one town had the same dream 3 times. He would see a man dressed in white, who told him that someone was coming to tell him the truth. Shortly afterwards he met a worker who led him to the Lord.

A student who was an atheist decided to buy a Bible. Later the same day, he was reading the Bible under a tree and by 'chance' met some Christians. He started to ask questions and study. He decided that Jesus is the Truth!

Another worker decided to spend time in the Catholic cathedral to meet people coming in to look around. He met an older gentleman, also professing atheism. After being invited to a Bible study this man too came to know the Lord.

A lady in another city, who had professed faith many years before, was being tormented by a demonic spirit. She went to some Christians who prayed for her and she was delivered. She and her husband came to a new and living faith.

Some Christians picked up a hitchhiker and shared the Gospel with him. He went back to his village and led some others to the Lord.

A young student came to faith and a very visible eye defect was healed leading to a lot of interest among her university friends.

The situation in 2006

In 2006 there are probably around 300 believers in the country. There are several groups in the capital and groups in 5 or 6 other towns. One group in the capital has already planted a couple of new groups.

Some groups are centred around expat workers but most are becoming self-sufficient. Effective local leadership is developing and they have formed a sort of countrywide council.

There has been quite a bit of open discussion between leaders (both local and expat) on how to see the present momentum carried on into a “church planting movement” and in particular how to establish churches outside of the capital and urban centres.

Problems – now and then

In the past unity between individual believers and between different groups of believers has always been a problem. This became a major focus of prayer during 1999 and the situation is somewhat improved. Some reconciliation has taken place and by and large the groups are all co-operating together. Whilst they remain under separate leadership, the various groups under their own initiative have formed a countrywide council, which meets together once a month. There has been some dispute over the leadership of the council, the authority it has and doctrinal positions, but its long-term direction and effectiveness remains to be seen. In general there is a much better feeling of unity.

There is also a better level of co-operation between locals and expat workers. This has been an area of tension in the past (and will probably continue to be so) but, as the church grows and takes more responsibility, there is a better balance in working relationships.

One phenomenon that has occurred in the past and is arising again is mixed marriage (local-expat). In the past this has resulted in the emigration of key leaders for various reasons. Key leaders are again involved in mixed marriages (against the wishes of many in the expat worker community) and it remains to be seen how this might affect the church in the future.

Relationships with outside organisations have also always been a mixed blessing! Invitations to conferences, opportunities to study abroad and outside finance can all have an adverse effect on the local church. These are all factors in the present situation and the church here will need to learn how to handle (and distribute) finance, to discern which conferences to go to and to find an effective way of training leaders – preferably in country.

Some conclusions and lessons

There have been many contributing factors to the growth experienced in the country since 1999 and many lessons to be learned.

The authorities

Not least has been the softly-softly approach taken by the authorities. Whether as a result of prayer or official policy (because of sensitivity to foreign opinion?), they have given a

reasonable amount of freedom, whilst maintaining subtle pressure, and have stopped short of trying to stamp out the new movement, which they must be aware of.

God's thing

The year of concerted effort in 1999 came as a result of a (since-proven) God-given vision. It was organised in obedience to His prompting and found an echo in the hearts of the whole body in the country. Although there are many lessons to be learned, it should not be taken as a 'new method or pattern' of doing things. It should be an encouragement to all to pray and listen to God for His revelation and timing.

Unity

Unity amongst all the organisations working in the country was also crucial. There was not one organisation that absented itself – in itself a miraculous mark of God's grace! There is a spiritual power in unity (Ps 133).

Integration of approaches

Another reason for the success of the year was that it was always more than 'just' a year of prayer. It attempted to integrate prayer, training and evangelism into one unified, concerted effort. It was always expected that if 'the churches of the world' prayed then there would be 'open hearts' to be harvested and both new and old believers to be trained to cope with the growth. And this proved to be, and still is the case.

Media follow up

Another major factor for growth in recent years, unconnected in some ways with 1999, has been the success of radio and satellite "follow up". There has been much more trust and co-ordination between media groups and workers in the country with the result that those coming to faith through media outreach have been integrated into the church.

Not the end!

1999 was never meant to be an end in itself – only a beginning. And so it has proved to be. There is still a momentum within the local groups here and people are regularly being saved and baptised for which we all praise God.

Is there a "church planting movement" in the country? Probably not. We have to be careful about throwing around numbers and labels. There is still much to be done. Probably the most difficult times still lie ahead and there may well be setbacks and opposition to come.

What is certain is that the church has taken a huge stride forward in the last two years and that the Kingdom of God is now advancing.

Not a 'cookie cutter' solution

Finally we do not believe that this strategy will automatically work everywhere. God gave it for a particular place at a particular time. Whilst there are lessons to be learned, the most important one is that we need to listen to what God is wanting to do in the place where He has called us.

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