

# Longing for Change

## Prayer Patterns for Community Transformation

By Dave Kubal



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

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

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

rescinded His stewardship edict for each one of us.

- In the Book of Acts, during Paul's discourse at Athens, he reveals that this divine purpose for mankind continues today: "From one man he [God] made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him" (Acts 17:26–27).

Simply put, God made every nation and appointed a place in time for each so the gospel might go forth. He always intended His people to be involved in shaping history with Him. Many Scripture passages build upon this theme (e.g., 2 Chron. 7:14; Jer. 18:7–8). Even those people who consider our era to be the "last days" would agree that until the very end, God calls believers to steward the land and its resources for God's glory.

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

## **Owning Your Community**

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

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

First, a few questions about your community:

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

The answers to such questions can reveal spiritual needs for which we can intercede.

Second, God cares for cities:

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

Joel 2).

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

## **Inquiring of the Lord**

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

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

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

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

1. Begin by asking God to reveal the key questions. We may think we see the problems, but in reality, our personalities and background may cause us to see our city through cloudy lenses. Interrogative intercession begins with asking God to make us curious about the steps that will produce fruit. God still says, "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know" (Jer. 33:3).
2. Ask the Lord to show you His heart for the city. When we

look at our cities, we see problems and challenges, but do we understand the depths of what sin has done in people's lives? Ask Him to show you His desire for change. John 3:16 still applies: "For God so loved the world. . . ."

3. Ask the Lord to help you find others who have a heart for your city. Unity is a key to city transformation. But it must not lead the process. Unity for unity's sake rarely accomplishes anything. Find those whose primary desire is the pursuit of God for His sake and the sake of His purpose. Unity is the outcome of people desperately seeking the Lord (Psalm 133).
4. Ask the Lord to give you a plan. Remember, only God's wisdom can give you a working plan. Simply pursue the Lord, seeking His holy presence. But be cautious about pursuing "a plan" more than pursuing Him and His perspective (Jer. 29:13).
5. Listen before you do anything. Gather with others who have the same desire to see God move in your community—and listen together. In the midst of corporate praise and adoration, pause to hear what He has to say. He cares more about the transformation of your city than you do. You are not responsible to birth the plan! Decide beforehand that you will not attempt anything before hearing from Him. At Jesus' transfiguration, God exalted Jesus as His Son and said, "Listen to him!" (Matt. 17:5).
6. Ask the Lord for His wisdom. We do not have the resources in ourselves to effect change. How foolish to seek God's help as though looking for a handyman on Angie's List—bringing to Him our understanding of the problems. We seek Him because He is worthy to be sought. City transformation is the byproduct of our pursuit of God and His wisdom (James 1:5).
7. Pray for the faith to expect nothing short of a miracle. Most cities are past the point where Christian incrementalism will work. Expect and seek nothing short

of God working miracles in all aspects of your city (e.g., the economy, the morality, and the government). This is what He is doing around the globe. It is God's direct activity that gets people's undivided attention (Heb. 12: 2, Psalm 107).

8. Ask the Lord questions. The past is often the key to the present. What is on the surface today comes from the depths of the past. Divide into teams and walk the city. Then, come back together and listen to what God has to say. Research the history of your area (e.g. crime, witchcraft, drug use, false religions), asking the Lord to guide your spiritual-needs discovery process. Appoint someone to keep track of what you find and the ways the Lord directs you. Take note of root causes and entry points of problems (Jer. 21:2, Josh. 7:7–8).
9. Take action after "prayer and agreement" among your group. Act in faith on whatever God shows you (see Jer. 42:5), even if it seems crazy!
10. Look for positive results from your prayers. Publicize what you are experiencing. Often, leaders of transformed communities report that they have seen answers to their prayers on the front page of the newspaper (Ex. 9:16).

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

Will we at least try?

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This article and the one below are from *Prayer Connect* magazine. You can purchase a copy of the issue these appeared in, which has more articles on the theme of “Transforming Prayer: Inviting God’s Presence to Your Community.” Click on the photo or the link for more information.

## “Come and See What God Has Done”

**By Carol Madison**

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

I, too, want others to “see what God has done” in answer to prayer.

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