

Connecting to God's Work in Your World Through Prayer
Janice McClung

Perhaps the most widely used prayer tool for global intercessors is the highly successful Operation World prayer manual. In the introduction, the editors highlight the international impact when multiplied millions call upon God (*italics mine*):

The book in your hands weighs less than one kilogram, yet if all the desires, requests and goals expressed in it were to be implemented it would radically change the nations of this world. Wars would be ended, ethnic hatreds tamed, politicians become honest, ecological restoration begun, global warming and AIDS halted, poverty reduced. The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ would be provided with godly leaders, it would be renewed, revived, united in vision, mobilized for mission and readied for the return of its Head. Jesus would return with the world evangelized and the Church complete! *How much of the earthly and how quickly the eternal agendas would be achieved depends on ONE activity – prayer in the name of Jesus to a loving, sovereign Father...*

Hans von Staden, the man of God used to instigate and name Operation World, often quoted these words:

*When man works, man works;
when man prays, God works. ¹*

The purpose of this essay is to review how God works when we pray and to give encouragement and prayer guidelines on more effective intercession for our world.

In 2001, some 45,000 Christians gathered in Cape Town, South Africa for a unified service for the nations. There, the vision for the annual “Global Day of Prayer” was born and is now observed every year on Pentecost Sunday. Within ten years this worldwide prayer effort had grown to exceed 50 million participants in 220 nations. ² In addition to the actual counts and estimates of these kinds of prayer efforts, there are countless and multiplied millions of Christian believers making intercession to God on a daily, regular basis.

The phenomenon of the Global Day of Prayer is only one example of numerable prayer efforts and global prayer networks. In the last decade there has been a veritable explosion of global intercessory prayer! This is an indication of the outpouring of God's Holy Spirit and the corresponding desire of Christ-followers to seek God in prayer. Surely, something significant is happening because of their prayers!

¹ Patrick Johnstone and Jason Mandryk, Editors. Operation World: When We Pray God Works (Waynesboro, Georgia: Paternoster Publishing 2001), p.xiii. The prayer resource is also available online at www.operationworld.org.

² History, reports, updates, and prayer resources are available at www.globaldayofprayer.com.

It is God's Will that We Pray for Our World

God wants all peoples to be saved and has, "...sent his Son to be the Savior of the World" (1 John 4.14). God is patient, "...not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3.9). Our unifying vision for global intercessory prayer is provided by the "Revelation of Jesus Christ" in the closing pages of scripture. In Revelation 5.9, the Lamb (Jesus Christ) is, "...worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth." In Revelation 15.4, the angels ask, "Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your Name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed."³

Simply put, it is God's will and it is pleasing to Him when we lift up nations and national leaders in prayer. "Ask of me," God says, "and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession" (Psalm 2.8). Paul reminded young Timothy, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (1 Timothy 2.1-2 King James Version).

What happens when we pray for nations?

Prayer is a proactive, not just a reactive, force. Prayer takes an offensive position that accomplishes things – it is not just a defensive reaction to things happening to us. Although we cannot know and document all the things – invisible and visible – that are being accomplished through prayer for our world, at least eight overall trends or results can be listed.

1. God is glorified when we pray. We enter into His will and His heart for the world and pray the things that bring him glory and honor.
2. As we pray, we enter into the example and heritage we have received from the early Christians who made intercessory prayer a regular group worship and personal devotional practice.
3. An actual difference is made in the life and welfare of nations. Church history and contemporary life are filled with positive changes that happen in nations and societies when Christians pray.
4. As we pray for our world, we are led beyond politics and geography that may divide and separate us and we begin to focus upon the *people* in those nations. We begin to pray specifically, by name, for government leaders, opinion influencers, and those in Christian leadership.

³ All scripture references, unless otherwise noted, are from the New International Version of the Bible (1984 Edition).

5. As we pray, the Holy Spirit leads us into effective spiritual warfare, reminding Satan of Christ's lordship over all nations and peoples, pushing back darkness with the advance of God's kingdom, power, and light.
6. Intercessory prayer for nations broadens our hearts and minds with new vision and faith. Our personal horizons expand as we are transformed from narrow views to see the wider expanse of God's work in the world and our active involvement in it through prayer.
7. As we pray, the Holy Spirit leads us and commissions us to put "shoe leather to our prayers" through Christian activism. Through prayer, the Lord leads us to concrete acts of witness, encouragement, and service that makes a difference in persons and nations. It has been said that every great work of God can be traced to a kneeling form!
8. Global intercessory prayer brings a spirit of unity among God's people. ⁴

"Prayer Changes Things"

Many of us have walked through our grandparents and parent's homes and have seen the simple wall plaque reminder, "Prayer Changes Things." It is an observable fact of redemptive history that prayer changes things in nations and in our world. Evangelist Billy Graham recounts that:

John Knox prayed, and the results caused Queen Mary to say that she feared the prayers of John Knox more than she feared all the armies of Scotland.

John Wesley prayed, and revival came to England, sparing that nation the horrors of the French Revolution.

Jonathan Edwards prayed, and revival spread throughout the American colonies. History has been changed time after time because of prayer. I tell you, history could be changed again if people went to their knees in believing prayer. ⁵

Norman Grubb relates many amazing answers to prayer in the life of Rees Howells. During the time of the rise of Hitler's Nazi regime, Howells was the head of a Bible college in Wales. Led by the Holy Spirit, Howells and a dedicated band of students began to pray against the spread of the Nazi regime and for the release of the people of Germany from such tyranny. The Nazis were deterred from coming to Britain at that time.

⁴ Grant McClung, [Globalbeliever.com: Connecting to God's Work in Your World](http://Globalbeliever.com) (Missions Resource Group 2010), pp. 213-214; The book is available free in English and Spanish as an online "eBook" at www.Globalbeliever.com ("Read the Book") and www.creyenteglobal.com ("Lea el Libro"). In addition, see "Resources" for prayer articles and helps by Janice McClung at www.MissionsResourceGroup.org.

⁵ Billy Graham, [Hope for Each Day: Words of Wisdom and Faith](#) (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers 2002), p. 37.

They did attack a year later but by this time Britain was ready. Why were they delayed? Grubb states that the British Ambassador to Germany, Sir Neville Henderson provides historical background in his book, Failure of a Mission. According to Grubb, Ambassador Henderson said that Hitler was being advised to attack England while they were still unprepared but, he was “strangely moved” to sign the Munich Pact, even though he was irritated with himself for doing so--- and verbalized it. ⁶

On May 2, 2004, history was made when Christians from all 56 nations of Africa participated in the first ever continental Day of Repentance and Prayer for Africa. Numerous communities, villages, towns and cities united in non-denominational prayer gatherings at different venues. In South Africa, 277 communities participated. The impact in the Body of Christ was huge. In Cote d'Ivoire, leaders from evangelical and charismatic backgrounds reconciled on stage and established a platform for unity in the Church that stands until today.

On Saturday, March 15, 2009 in Kenya, there was a repentance forum that brought together intercessors, bishops and other praying folk for a whole day. The Vice President of Kenya attended, shared from Matthew 23 about the seven woes and the spirit of hypocrisy in the church. He then offered repentance on behalf of the government of Kenya and led them on behalf of the government in handing over the nation of Kenya to Jesus Christ. This took place after tribal clashes in 2008. ⁷

Samir and Lewiza Youssef lead Church of God Arabic ministries and have a television ministry that communicates the gospel over much of Northern Africa and the Middle East. They testified:

For the new TV program, 'What's Happening?' we wanted to shoot outdoors to change the format. To do this, we needed government permission to use the Egyptian Media Production City. This is Cairo's equivalent to Hollywood's indoor and outdoor studios. God gave us favor with the Muslim director, Osama, who told us that we were the first Christian program to use the Production City. He provided security officers and he himself watched all the recordings. The format and content came together in a way that says this truth is for real life. Following our last day of shooting at the Production City, Osama called everyone together from the extras and crew to celebrate completion of our work.

We received government permission to film in several different areas of Cairo. Two cameras followed me walking and talking with people in cafes, in the streets and on the promenade along the Nile. In each location, the police questioned us, but we had the right documents so in the end, we had no trouble.

Praise God! We completed the interviews for 26 programs. We had many people praying and God provided a miracle! These TV programs will impact an entire region for Christ! ⁸

⁶ Norman Grubb, Rees Howells: Intercessor (Fort Washington, Pennsylvania: Christian Literature Crusade, 1952), p. 249.

⁷ Reports from Africa taken from www.globaldayofprayer.com.

⁸ From the Youssef prayer newsletter. More on their ministry at www.inarabic.org.

Eight Steps toward Connecting to Your World Through Prayer⁹

After moving to Cleveland, Tennessee in 1985 my husband and I were asked to begin a Wednesday night missions prayer group at Westmore Church of God. It was meant to be a temporary Summer quarter class in order to measure local church interest in praying for nations and missionaries. As of this writing (in 2012), the prayer ministry has continued for 27 uninterrupted years! We have had scores of missionaries and national leaders as guests, as well as many from our local church who have participated in short-term missions ministries. Only heaven knows the multiplied answers to prayer. For all this, we give God the glory!

We spend 90 minutes together every week with dedicated and interested intercessors (many of them retired missionaries). When we tell the story of that faithful prayer group, one of the questions we are asked is, "How do you spend 90 minutes in prayer? What do you do and how do you go about it?"

We have used the following seven steps or concepts as guidelines and philosophy of global prayer ministry. We believe that we should pray (1) scripturally, (2) spiritually, (3) systematically, (4) sensibly, (5) spontaneously, (6) sensitively/specifically, and (7) strategically.

1. Scripturally

It gives solid strength to our prayers when we realize that intercessory prayer for missionaries and nations is scriptural and that there are numerous Biblical examples and models to follow. We begin our time of prayer with scripture reading, usually a passage about prayer. Periodically, we will give our entire time to a Bible study on global prayer. We remember that Paul and his missionary team made frequent requests for prayer and instructed believers on how to pray.¹⁰ When we read various prayers and accounts of prayer in scripture, they are an example for us on how and what to pray. We have great assurance in our praying when we realize that we are praying what God desires. The story is told of an elderly Methodist lay preacher named "Uncle Am" who always had assurance that his prayers would be answered. A young preacher asked for his secret. "Young man," he said, "learn to plead the promises of God."¹¹

As we pray, we pray according to the Word of God.

2. Spiritually

It may sound redundant to say that we pray "spiritually" when it is evident that prayer is a spiritual exercise. We use the term "spiritually" to convey the truth that intercessory

⁹ Outlined in Grant McClung, Globalbeliever.com, p. 215

¹⁰ See Grant McClung's chapter, "Encouraging and Equipping Missionaries Through Prayer," elsewhere in this book as well as prayer resources from Janice McClung at www.MissionsResourceGroup.org, "Resources." In addition, numerous prayer articles and Bible studies are found at such websites as www.operationworld.org and www.globaldayofprayer.com.

¹¹ Grant and Janice McClung, "How to Pray for Persecuted Believers," in [Church of God Evangel](#), April 2011, p.16.

pray begins with a time of personal cleansing, devotion, and consecration to God. We do not launch immediately into taking prayer requests or reading prayer concerns from various newsletters and emails. We spend time in corporate worship.

We remember that the disciples worshipped Jesus before He commissioned them into the world (Matthew 28:16-20) and that the first missionary team was sent out only after a time of worship and fasting (Acts 13:1-3).

Personal and corporate worship is more than mere preliminaries; they are indispensable preparations for effective intercession. Worship and intercessory prayer flow together in symbiotic relationship. Charles Spurgeon said, "There is but a step from rapturous worship to the flowing missionary spirit."¹² Jack Hayford reminds us that Jesus Himself gave us the example: worship first and then petition. In the "Lord's Prayer," Jesus worshipped: "Our Father Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name." Then, he began His petitions: "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done."¹³

Effective intercession begins with individual and corporate worship.

3. Systematically

We believe that intercessory prayer for our world is a regular, normal part of Christian discipleship. Just as we are taught to read our Bible, attend church, pay our tithes and offerings, and give an evangelistic witness to others, we should also see intercessory prayer as something we do on a regular basis. Remember that Jesus used a parable (Luke 18) to teach his disciples that they should always pray, and not give up.

Effective prayer meetings are organized and have a basic system. In time, people are trained in systematic and consistent prayer, learning various methodologies. Naturally, being Pentecostal/Charismatic, we pray a lot using the traditional method of "concert prayer" with everyone praying out loud together. In addition, we have helped people learn how to pray in "conversational prayer," praying in turn one after another - either in small groups or one person leading while the rest agree silently. One benefit that we have observed in this method is to see individuals, who normally would be reluctant to pray in a larger worship service, begin to lead out in prayer in a smaller group setting. People grow in their self-confidence as they learn to lead out in prayer.

Global intercessory prayer is a systematic part of Christian discipleship.

¹² Charles H. Spurgeon, Spurgeon on Prayer: How to Converse With God (Alachua, Florida: Bridge Logos Foundation 2009), p. 43.

¹³ Jack Hayford, Prayer is Invading the Impossible (Alachua, Florida: Bridge Logos Foundation, 1977), p. 20. Dick Eastman has practical and helpful teaching on worship and intercession in "Worship Realities for a New Millennium," included as Chapter 19 in Grant McClung, Editor. Azusa Street and Beyond: Missional Commentary on the Global Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement (Alachua, Florida: Bridge Logos Foundation, 2012), pp. 271-280. Eastman is President of Every Home for Christ (www.ehc.org) and author of numerous publications on intercessory prayer. One of the best known is The Hour That Changes the World: A Practical Plan for Personal Prayer (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Chosen Books, 2002).

4. Sensibly

By praying “sensibly” we mean praying according to basic information and facts. Paul said, “What is it then? I will pray with the Spirit and I will pray with the understanding also” (I Corinthians 14.15 King James Version). Informed Christians make the best intercessors. Know the facts. For this reason, we glean news and reports from missionary prayer letters and emails. Some, knowing that we pray every week, have even phoned or skyped internationally to make a specific prayer request known.

We try to have a special guest every week. Living in the international headquarters city for our movement gives us many personnel who can be with us. Some are missionaries on furlough. Others are national leaders who are here to attend college or seminary. Others may be passing through from another city or state and we learn of their availability to share. After their presentation, we pray for specific requests they have highlighted.

For prayer groups that may not have the benefit of available human resources, there are many media resources that provide prayer information. In our prayer group meeting room, we keep a supply of the Operation World prayer handbook. From there, we can highlight specific countries and people groups and pray “sensibly” for them (i.e. knowing the facts).

Many times, the current events and headlines from the daily news provide us facts, needs, and issues about which to pray. One prayer information newsletter claims that, “One of the most valuable habits prayer leaders and intercessors can develop is to watch, hear and read the news not as spectators, but as participants. We should be looking to learn things we can apply to our intercession.”¹⁴ Basically, praying “sensibly” means staying aware and praying about what we see and hear. Ruth Graham was fond of saying that she prayed with a newspaper in one hand and her Bible in the other.

Sensible prayer is made according to facts and information.

5. Spontaneously

On the other hand, there is a wonderful serendipity, a “surprise of the Holy Spirit,” as we enter into prayer. This is what we mean by “praying spontaneously.” Often, the Holy Spirit will burden us to pray about something we had not planned or to pray about a dimension of something that we had not anticipated. Many times, while praying for a specific nation or missionary family, one of our members will move into another issue or sub-topic related to what we had already requested. For this reason, we should always pray for the Holy Spirit to lead us as we move into prayer.

Jack Hayford offers this practical instruction:

Pray first for the Holy Spirit to give you direction as to a nation or geographic region to make as your focus. Praying for the world begins with praying for a part of it. You may find guidance coming in varied ways. One man I know was given

¹⁴ “Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin,” www.rlprayerbulletin.blogspot.com, January 6, 2010.

the name of a province in China, which he had never heard of. He had to find it on the map to verify it existed, yet the Holy Spirit had whispered it to his heart while he prayed.”¹⁵

Spontaneous prayer follows the creative leading of the Holy Spirit.

6. Sensitively/Specifically

We believe it is important to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit and to pray specifically for nations and individuals. Our prayers should go beyond the generic, “God bless the world” or “God help all those missionaries over there.” It helps us in our intercession, for example, to pray for people by name. Through Operation World and many other sources, we not only know the name of a country, but we have the names of their Prime Minister or President. Through Church of God World Missions (or other denominations and agencies) we can find out the specific name of a country leader and/or the names of missionaries working there.¹⁶ As we correspond with individuals or read their prayer requests, we can pray specifically.

Over the last two decades, there has been a growing movement of prayer for the new opportunities in the Muslim world, certainly one of the largest blocs of unreached humanity in our world. Instead of praying, “God save the Muslims” (which is also a good prayer!) try these ideas in praying for them (specifically, after you have located a dominantly Muslim country or people group). Pray:

- a. that they will “succeed” in their religious quest by discovering Christ.
- b. that God will intervene with dreams, visions, miracles.
- c. that they will have eyes to see beyond Christians to behold Christ.
- d. that their suspicion of Christians will be replaced with trust and love.
- e. that God will help them forgive Christians, past and present.
- f. that they will understand the mystery of God’s revelation in Christ.
- g. that they will acknowledge their sin and express repentance in faith.¹⁷

Sensitive and specific prayer prays for nations, leaders, missionaries by name.

7. Strategically

Praying “strategically” recognizes the fact that effective, Spirit-led, intercessory prayer opens up new doors, often breaking through spiritual resistance. It realizes that vision for new ministry and leading into new areas proceed out of times of intercessory prayer (Acts 13.1). Wesley Duewel asserts that “Prayer was never meant to be

¹⁵ Jack Hayford, “Hidden But Not Unreachable,” in Grant McClung, Azusa Street and Beyond, p. 269.

¹⁶ See www.cogwm.org - the Church of God World Missions website - for country and personnel listing, specific prayer requests, and links to other prayer resources.

¹⁷ See www.operationworld.org and www.globalinitiativeinfo.com for additional prayer helps.

incidental to the work of God. It *is* the work. In all work for God, prayer is the working power of all that God would do through His people.”¹⁸ Preaching about prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit, Church of God statesman James A. Cross declared, “Here is the enabling source. Here is the fountainhead of all strength. Here is boldness to enable them to go into every village, every town, every city, and every nation and declare the wondrous works of God.”¹⁹

We don’t pray to receive the strategy; prayer *is* the strategy.

Conclusion

The eternal consequences of God’s kingdom agenda await the action of prayer from God’s people. It is God’s will that we pray for nations. We connect to what God is doing in our world through intensive intercessory prayer. Prayer changes things in our world. Prayer resources and the examples of experienced intercessors are available. Let us pray!

When man works, man works;
When man prays, God works.

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¹⁸ Mighty Prevailing Prayer (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing, 1990), p. 21.

¹⁹ James A. Cross, “From Jerusalem to The Uttermost,” in Lewis J. Willis, Compiler. Sermons That Guided The Church, Volume 2 (Cleveland, Tennessee: Pathway Press, 1986), p. 131.