



THE PRAYER CLOSET

*Transforming Lives Through Intercessory
Prayer And Fasting*

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ISSUE 9

PRAYING FOR OUR COMMUNITIES

Do you want to have a righteous impact on the area where you live? Do you want to see the gospel transform people in your city, county, or area? This can happen. It will happen as you intercede for the area where you live. You may live in metropolitan city or a rural area. Yet, you can have a powerful impact for Christ through prayer.

Believers should intercede for individuals. The Bible does teach that individuals are accountable to God. Each person stands responsible before God. The Word of God declares in **Ezekiel 18:20**, "The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself." The New Testament boldly states this truth in this way, "So then each of us shall give account of himself to

God" (**Romans 14:12**). God speaks to and deals with the individual. Therefore, the individual is responsible and accountable to God. This is why believers should pray for individuals and their relationship to God.

Yet, the Bible also reveals that God deals with people corporately. This means that God speaks to and deals with large groups of people. This does not lessen personal responsibility and accountability. Yet, it establishes the fact that groups of people are responsible and accountable to God.

A city, county, state, or nation has a standing before God. Groups of people have a level of righteousness or wickedness before God. Groups of people can experience the blessing or the judgment of God. God does deal with groups of people. This should motivate believers to pray for the people where they live. This truth should fuel the praying of believers for their cities or surrounding areas.

This issue of *The Prayer Closet* will offer prayer strategies that you can use to pray for your city. Because groups of people are responsible and accountable to God, believers must intercede for their cities. You may not live in a city; you may live in a rural area. The principles and strategies offered can be applied to a county, a region, or a state. God desires that you have a practical and powerful influence on the people in your city, county, or state. Intercessory prayer is a crucial step in exercising this powerful and practical influence.

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**The Prayer Closet Ministries, Inc. Needs Your
Help**

Pastor Appreciation Month

Dr. Kevin Meador, 595 Stratton Road, Decatur, MS 39327 (601) 635-2180

EMAIL: prayercloset_1998@yahoo.com WEB PAGE - www.prayerclosetministries.org

God has compassion for the multitudes (Jonah 4). Do you have the same compassion? Ask God to give you a heart for the multitudes that are around you. Plead with Him to enable you to see that the needs are great and the harvest is white.

Does God Deal With Groups Of People?

The Bible reveals that God deals with large groups of people, particularly cities and nations. He speaks to them, deals with them, blesses them, and judges them. Groups of people are in a relationship with God, whether it is a right relationship or a rebellious relationship. What biblical evidence is there for this principle?

First, cities were addressed or prophesied to by God. God spoke to Nineveh through the prophet Jonah (Jonah 1:2). God later addressed the people of Nineveh through the prophet Nahum (Nahum 3:1). God cried out to the city of Jerusalem through the prophet Micah (Micah 6:9). Revelation 2 and 3 record Christ's messages to the "churches" of Asia Minor. Through these texts, you can see that God speaks to groups of people whether it is a city or churches.

Next, cities were spoken of as protected and preserved by God. Psalm 127:1 says, "Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless the LORD guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain." The text declares that God has to guard and preserve a city, a group of people. The Word of God also states, "And now, please let Me tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it shall be burned; and break down its wall, and it shall be trampled" (Isaiah 5:5). Jerusalem would be burned and trampled on by a foreign invader. Yet, how could this happen? The Lord declares that He will take away its hedge and break down its wall. God protected the city of Jerusalem. When God removed that protection, the city was destroyed.

Third, cities had divine purposes and callings. God filled the Temple in Jerusalem with

His presence so that people could approach Him and worship Him (1 Kings 8:20-53). God established the cities of refuge for those who accidentally murdered someone (Deuteronomy 19). There were three cities on each side of the Jordan. God established these cities as places of protection. These cities were set apart by God for a divine purpose.

God judges cities and nations. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah experienced God's judgment because of its wickedness (Genesis 19:24-25). God's furious judgment fell on Nineveh for its wickedness (Nahum 1:1, 3:1). The cities of Bethsaida, Chorazin, and Capernaum rejected Jesus Christ in spite of all His miraculous works and powerful preaching. For this reason, God judged these cities (Matthew 11:20-24). God judged and destroyed the nation of Israel for rejecting and crucifying the Son of God, Jesus Christ (Matthew 23:37-38). From these verses, it is apparent that groups of people can experience the judgment of God.

At the same time, the Word of God reveals that cities and nations were forgiven and spared from judgment by God. God sent the prophet Jonah to the city of Nineveh to declare a message of judgment against them. The people responded with deep repentance and God withheld his judgment (Jonah 3). The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah could have been spared if there had been at least five righteous people in them (Genesis 18:32). The sinful nation of Judah could have been spared and forgiven had there been one intercessor to stand in the gap (Ezekiel 22:30-31). The nation of Israel as a whole was spared on occasions. An example of this is Exodus 32. Cities, nations, or groups of people can be spared from God's judgment and receive forgiveness.

The Bible teaches that a group of people can have certain levels of corporate righteousness or sin. Proverbs 14:34 declares, "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." A group of people who strive to obey God and please Him will be exalted and blessed by the Lord. Yet, a group of people who sin and refuse to deal with it will face reproach and judgment. The Bible states that the sin level of Sodom and Gomorrah had reached the point of judgment, "And the LORD said, Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous" (Genesis 18:20). Notice that the text

says that “*their*” sin is very great. In **Genesis 15:16**, the Bible tells us that the Amorites would not be judged by God until their iniquity was full or complete, “But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.” The Amorites had a sin level, but it had not reached the point of God releasing His judgment against them.

In connection with this, a city can have a corporate faith or unbelief level. The Bible teaches this in **Mark 6:5-6**, “Now He could do no mighty works there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. And He marveled because of their unbelief.” It is important to notice that Christ did not do mighty works at Nazareth because of *their* unbelief. The majority of people in Nazareth did not believe in Jesus. Listen to their expression of unbelief, “Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?” (**Mark 6:3**). The people of Nazareth were filled with unbelief concerning Jesus. As a city, they had a high level of unbelief toward the Lord Jesus Christ. A city or group of people can have a level of faith or unbelief.

The Word of God also teaches that cities can experience or miss revival. In **Jonah 3:5-10**, the people of Nineveh responded to the preaching of the prophet Jonah. They repented of their sin and cried out to God. God withheld His judgment and blessed the people of Nineveh. This entire city experienced a powerful work of God due to their response to the preaching of the prophet. At the same time, a city or group of people can miss revival. This is exactly what happened to Jerusalem (**Luke 19:41-44**). The people of Jerusalem rejected Jesus Christ and His ministry. Because of this, they would experience the judgment of God. Jesus declares this sobering truth to them, “For the days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you, and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children with you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, *because you did not know the time of your visitation*” (**Luke 19:43-44**, emphasis mine). The city of Jerusalem would be destroyed because they did not receive Christ and His ministry. If they had received Him, God would have blessed them. Since they did not, they would face the judgment of God. Cities or

groups of people can experience or miss divine visitations of grace and power from God.

Cities or groups of people can have demonic strongholds. In His message to the church at Pergamos, Jesus says this about the city, “I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith, even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr who was killed among you, where Satan dwells” (**Revelation 2:13**). Jesus says that Pergamos is a place where Satan dwells and where he has a throne. In this city, Satan had built some powerful strongholds. Through these strongholds, he kept people bound by his grip and opposed and persecuted the church. The desire of Satan and his demons is to build strongholds in a city or among a group of people. Through these strongholds, he labors to keep people from hearing and responding to the gospel. He also uses the stronghold to oppose the church and to bring persecution against it.

Cities can experience the transforming power of God. There is hope for cities or groups of people that are bound by the power of Satan. Canaan was a cursed land. The Word of God says in **Genesis 9:25**, “Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants he shall be to his brethren.” Noah cursed Canaan and all that would belong to him because of his wickedness. Yet, this cursed land became the promised land for the people of Israel. It became a blessed land for the people of God. Before David took control of Jerusalem, it had been a city of evil giants. Jerusalem was a wicked city controlled by the giants (**Judges 1:21**). Yet, through God’s help, David conquered these giants and won this city (**2 Samuel 5:6-7**). This city then became a holy city, the place where God caused His presence to dwell. Cities and lands can be transformed by the power of God. No matter how wicked a city or area is, the power of God can bring genuine change.

Why Should Believers Pray For Cities or Groups of People?

In the previous section, we dealt with the fact that God does deal with groups of people. This is the biblical basis for praying for cities or groups

of people like a county, a parish, a town, or a group of churches. This is the foundation of intercession for these things.

Yet, for many believers, this may be a new concept. Most of our praying is concerned with individuals and their needs. However, our praying needs to extend beyond individuals to larger groups of people. There needs to be a part of our praying that focuses on our cities, counties, areas, and churches.

The following are some biblical reasons why you should pray for large groups of people such as the people in your city. Along with the truth that God deals with large groups of people, these truths provide a biblical basis for our intercession in this area:

- ◆ *God has called you to be salt and light (Matthew 5:13-16).* As a Christian, you are called to have a positive and righteous impact on those around you. How can you exercise this positive and righteous impact on your area? You can do this through prayer. Through prayer, you can make a righteous and eternal difference in the lives of people.
- ◆ *God has called you to be a good citizen (1 Peter 2:11-17).* You are to be in the world but not of the world. You will give account to God for the type of citizen that you are. As a citizen of a county, state, or nation, you are to seek the highest good for those around you. One of the best ways to do this is by interceding for those around and the institutions and circumstances that impact all of you.
- ◆ *People need Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12; John 3:15-16).* There are people in your city or surrounding area that need Jesus Christ. These people are lost and need to turn to Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord. Prayer is the vital and powerful instrument for bringing them into this right relationship with Jesus Christ.
- ◆ *You may be the difference between blessing and judgment (Ezekiel 22:30-31).* Your intercession may make the difference between a group of people experiencing the blessing of God or the judgment of God. Through Ezekiel, God says that He would have spared Judah if there had been one person who would

have prayed. This is a staggering truth. God would have spared a sinful nation if there had been one intercessor. One intercessor, pleading with God, would have spared an entire nation. This reveals the powerful impact that one intercessor can have. You can have a powerful impact where you live. You can make an eternal difference in the lives of people around you. You can have this impact with fervent, believing prayer.

How Can I Pray Concerning This Need?

The following are some suggestions on how you can pray for your city. These suggestions can apply to a variety of areas like a township, a county, or a state. These are suggestions to help you formulate a strategy to intercede for your area. These suggestions are based on the Word of God. You can use these or you can develop your own from them. You also need to consider combining these with intercession about specific needs and events in the area where you live.

- ◆ *Pray for a massive spiritual awakening among all groups of people (Jonah 3:4-10; Acts 2:37-38; John 16:7-8).* Plead with the Holy Spirit to awaken people to their need for Jesus Christ. Ask Him to convince people of their need to repent, turn to Christ, and follow Him. Pray that the Holy Spirit would invade your city or county with His transforming power. Call on Him to break through the hardness of heart in your area.
- ◆ *Pray that the churches in your area will experience revival (2 Chronicles 7:14; Psalm 80).* Pray that the Holy Spirit would breathe new life and power into the churches in your area. Plead with Him to do a fresh and powerful work among the believers. Call on Him to break through the deadness and coldness of the churches. Ask Him to give the churches a fresh love for Christ and the Word of God. Plead with Him to deal with each church (Revelation 2 and 3). Pray that He will work to remove all obstacles that would hinder the churches from experiencing genuine revival.