

Community Transformation Through United and Persevering Prayer

Community transformation is not an arbitrary event but the product of a cause and effect process. The certainty about this derives first and foremost from the teachings of Scripture as well as various case studies. The author knows this to be true because he has spent the last several years analyzing more than a dozen newly transformed communities.

by George Otis, Jr.

Transformed communities do not materialize spontaneously. If they did we might legitimately wonder why an omnipotent and ostensibly loving God did not turn the trick more often. We would also be left to ponder our own value as intercessors.

Fortunately, such thoughts can be banished immediately. This is because community transformation is not an arbitrary event but rather the product of a cause and effect process. My certainty in this matter derives, first and foremost, from the teachings of Scripture. God's Word makes clear that divine revelation and power are called forth by sanctified hearts, by right relationships, and by united, fervent and self-less intercession (see 2 Chronicles 7:14; Jeremiah 29:13; John 15:7; James 5:16; 1 John 3:21-ff and 5:14). Colorado Springs pastor Dutch Sheets adds that in the Old Testament era the fire of God was summoned by the presence of an appropriate altar and an acceptable sacrifice (See Exodus 24; Joshua 8:30-31; Judges 6:17-21; 1 Chronicles 21:25-26; Ezekiel 43:18-27). To meet this standard it was sometimes necessary to rebuild broken altars and/or tear down false ones (See Judges 6:25-26; 1 Kings 18:30-38; 2 Kings 23:3-15; Ezra 3:16).

In other words, there are definitive steps that we can and should take to position our communities for a visitation of the Holy Spirit. And if the above passages are not reason enough to believe this, you might want to consider recent evidence that shows God's people are acting on this proposition with great success. I know this because I have spent the last several years analyzing more than a dozen newly transformed communities.

Common Threads

Transformation case studies are best considered collectively. A solitary story, no matter how remarkable or inspiring it may be, inevitably comes with a nagging question: Is it reproducible? You are never quite sure.

Bump into this same story ten or twelve times however and your confidence will rise. You now have an established pattern, and patterns are compelling. Laden with reproducible principles, they transform inspirational stories into potent models.

My own investigation into the factors responsible for transformed communities has yielded several major "hits". These include, but are not limited to, the following five stimuli:

- Persevering leadership (See Nehemiah 6:1-16);
- Fervent, united prayer (See Jonah 3:5-10);
- Social reconciliation (See Matthew 5:23-24; 18:15-20);
- Public power encounters (See Acts 9:32-35);
- Diagnostic research/spiritual mapping (See Joshua 18:8-10);

Although each of these factors recurs often enough to be considered common, two of them—persevering leadership and united prayer—are present in all of our transformation case studies. This observation suggests a possible distinction between core factors and contextual factors. Core factors, given their ubiquity, appear to initiate (or at least signal) divine involvement. Community transformation simply does not occur unless they are present. Contextual factors, on the other hand, are measures commended by God on the basis of local history, habits, and ideology.¹ They are the unique and added touch that turns potential into victory.

With this distinction in mind, I want to take a closer look at the two core factors. If they indeed play a central role in community transformation, it seems prudent to become better acquainted with them.

Persevering Leadership

Determined leaders figure prominently in the Scriptural record. Noah spent decades constructing a massive ark while his neighbors mocked him as an eccentric fool. Nehemiah rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem in the face of persistent threats from Sanballat. Jesus ignored protestations from well-meaning friends in order to lay down His life at Calvary.

It should, therefore, come as no surprise that catalytic leaders associated with recent community transformations have also battled through strong opposition. Exhibiting a characteristic I call determined activism, these spiritual change agents have refused to accept anything less than God's maximum—even when the pressure has come from family members and ministry colleagues.

When things got rough for Robert Kayanja during his transformative ministry in a dangerous neighborhood in Kampala Uganda, his own parents were among those urging him to leave. "God wants to save these people," they said, "but he doesn't want you to die in the process." Christian activists ministering in the violent city of Cali Columbia have heard much the same thing. When pastor Julio Caesar Ruibal was gunned down in December 1995, well-meaning friends urged his widow to leave town before the same fate befell her. Ignoring this counsel (and persistent death threats), she became a rallying point for hundreds of city pastors.

Other warnings have been linked to perceptions about unresponsive attitudes and appropriate ministry venues. When Thomas Muthee announced that he was planting a church in Kiambu, Kenya his ministerial colleagues could only ask, "How will you manage?" One area pastor flatly declared, "The people here don't get saved. We preach, but they don't respond." Not persuaded by this

claim, Thomas went on to found the largest church in Kiambu's history.

Whether we view these determined activists as instruments of divine sovereignty or as magnets for divine intervention, their role is obviously critical to the process of community transformation. In every case their single-minded faith, demonstrated by importunate prayer and a steadfast commitment to the community, led to dramatic results. And while this may strike us as extraordinary, it has long been the promise and pattern of Scripture.²

United Prayer

The second core factor in community transformation is fervent, united prayer. In each of our featured case studies, breakthroughs occurred when intercessors addressed specific concerns in a common cause. Many of these group efforts took on their own unique identities. In Cali, Colombia, 60,000 intercessors held all-night *vigilias* in the Pascual Guerrero soccer stadium while others circled the city in mobile prayer caravans. In a daily practice they called the "Wailing Wall," prayer warriors in the "Beirut of Kampala, Uganda" cried out to God while holding hands around their church property. In Kiambu, Kenya believers petitioned God from a store basement they dubbed the Prayer Cave. Their stunning success led to subsequent intercessory campaigns like "Morning Glory" and "Operation Prayer Storm."³

In December 1995 Pakistani evangelist Javed Albert established a routine he calls "tarry nights" to counter powerful demonic influences associated with shrine pilgrimages and witchcraft activity.⁴ These prayer and praise vigils begin at 9:00 PM on Thursday and Saturday evenings and continue until dawn. Because participants stand through the entire affair,

they are also called *standers meetings*. The program, which began at Albert's modest church compound in Faisalabad, has since spread to twenty-five cities and 4,000 people.

United prayer is a declaration to the heavenlies that a community of believers is prepared for divine partnership. When this welcoming intercession is joined by knowledge it becomes focused—leading to and sustaining the kind of fervent prayer that produces results.

Stages of Progress

Recent case studies suggest that the road to community transformation passes through at least three distinct and measurable stages. These include:

1. *Spiritual beachhead*, an initial phase when revived believers enter into united prayer;
2. *Spiritual breakthrough*, a subsequent interval characterized by rapid and substantial church growth;
3. *Spiritual transformation*, a climatic season attended by dramatic socio-political renewal.

A fourth stage called spiritual maintenance could easily be added to this list. It is entered whenever liberated communities turn their attention to the business of preserving hard-won victories. For Christian leaders this means continuing to champion the things that attract God's presence, namely, unity, prayer, humility and holiness. For born-again politicians, journalists, businessmen and educators it means perpetuating Kingdom values through the institutions they serve.

The ideal is that spiritual transformation remains a permanent condition. Unfortunately, history shows that the blossom of revival (to use a loose definition of the term) lasts an average of 36 months.⁵ Exceptions exist—the Argentine revival has lingered more than fifteen years—but

these are few and far between.

My immediate goal, however, is not to discuss at this time the maintenance of transformed communities (this discourse will come in due time), but rather to examine the process of achieving them. As all true champions have learned, you can only maintain what you have first attained.

We will begin our journey by investigating the role of spiritual beachheads. And do pay attention! More high hopes have been dashed here than any other place on the road to community transformation. It is during this early stage that you must build the spiritual momentum necessary to carry you over the mountains of apathy, pride and unbelief.

Establishing Spiritual Beachheads

Beachheads are small plots of ground (often a beach) that serve as staging areas for invading military forces. Because of their strategic potential, defending armies will fight vigorously to prevent them from becoming established. As a consequence, most beachheads are secured at high cost.

Beachheads can also be established in the spiritual dimension. Like their counterparts in the material world, these staging areas are the work of warriors—in this case intercessors and evangelists—whose ultimate aim is to launch breakthrough assaults on enemy strongholds.

While beachheads can quickly swell with men and materiel, their initial occupants are typically few. In some cases spiritual beachheads have been established by a mere handful of intercessors. The transformation of Hemet, California began with twelve men praying through the night in a mountain cabin. Robert Kayanja's

church planting effort in the "Beirut of Kampala" started with five prayer warriors. Thomas Muthee established the spiritual beachhead in Kiambu, Kenya with but a single partner—his wife Margaret.

Although this modest level of participation appears to be incompatible with the primary characteristic of spiritual beachheads, namely united prayer, three things must be kept in mind. First, the population of beach-

**Without an increased
appetite for the things that
attract the presence of the
Holy Spirit, evangelistic
breakthroughs,
let alone community
transformation, will simply**

heads tends to escalate with time. Breakthrough drives are rarely launched before sufficient troops have accumulated. Second, in some cases even a modest group of intercessors can represent a high percentage of the church. This is especially true in frontier or under-churched areas. Third, united prayer has more to do with heart attitudes than mass movements. As Jesus reminded his disciples in Matthew 18:19-20, God's presence and power is manifest when just two or three believers agree in prayer. (See also Ecclesiastes 9:14-15 NIV.) Although numbers are not essential to successful intercessory beachheads, spiritual passion is. Believers who wish to position their community for spiritual breakthroughs must pour their heart and soul into the effort. Unless the church is consumed with a burning desire for divine visitation, united prayer will become merely another project.

As I have taught seminars on this

subject throughout the world, people often ask me to provide examples of genuine spiritual beachheads. Although they are inspired by stories of evangelistic breakthroughs and transformed communities, the results-oriented emphasis of these accounts sometimes obscures important formative details.

The good news is that contemporary spiritual beachheads abound, but do not expect uniformity. Depending on their developmental status, they can appear quite different. Newly formed initiatives are typically small, unpublished affairs in which a handful of dedicated intercessors seek to stimulate a renewed hunger for unity, holiness, and prayer, especially among community pastors. The stakes here are enormous. Without an increased appetite for the things that attract the presence of the Holy Spirit, evangelistic breakthroughs, let alone community transformation, will simply not occur.

Successful beachhead builders are content in their role as supporting actors. They have no craving for the limelight. This characteristic, however, should not be misinterpreted as indifference. Foundational intercessors are also passionate about doing whatever it takes to prepare their communities for divine visitation. Their unceasing petition is that God will replace the Church's bird-like appetite for prayer and unity with a ravenous hunger.

Latter-stage beachheads by contrast are nearly always characterized by intense groundswells of corporate repentance, social reconciliation, and united prayer. In many instances these developments are sustained by intelligence acquired through cooperative spiritual mapping campaigns.

Given the enormous pent-up energy displayed during latter-stage

beachheads, observers have likened this season to a shuddering rocket just prior to launch. Others refer to these exciting days as the “hard labor” that necessarily precedes the birth of a new era.

The bad news is that very few spiritual beachheads ever last long enough to realize their potential as breeding grounds for revival. Most start with good intentions and then fizzle out.

Among the more common reasons for this attrition are weak leadership and the tendency to make unity an end in itself. Pastors gather for prayer but their rendezvous are often lacking in passion. This is because the emphasis is placed on corporate assembly rather than corporate vision. Trying to attract the widest possible cross-section of participants, they create an environment in which personal agendas proliferate like mushrooms. In the end, unity is trumped by cordiality. Unable to achieve a common vision, they settle for a common place.

Happily, there are exceptions to this trend. In Oklahoma City, for example, over half of the community’s spiritual leaders gather monthly to petition God for a spiritual breakthrough. A principal catalyst for this focused prayer and fasting was the April 1995 bombing of the Murrah Federal Building which claimed 168 lives. In the aftermath of this tragic event the intercessory prayer force in the city jumped from 9 to more than 140 pastors and ministry leaders.

Another important development occurred in September 1996. As the leaders gathered one day for prayer, God revealed to them that their newfound “unity” was still superficial. There was almost no Native American participation—despite the fact that Oklahoma hosts more than 60 tribes and the second largest Indian population in the US. Deeply convicted, one

Anglo believer with deep roots in this state of “soil, oil, and toil” repented publicly for the way his ancestors, both in and out of government, had swallowed up land set aside for displaced Native Americans.

The consequences of this Spirit-led action were quick in coming. Welcomed and empowered by this public gesture, Native American attendance at the monthly prayer meetings tripled. Today their voices are heard alongside 1,200 other intercessors that have covenanted to pray for a spiritual breakthrough in Oklahoma City.

While reconciliation between believers and between the church and the community is an important catalyst for evangelistic breakthroughs, the history of revival—a term which has been defined so loosely to at various times apply both to spiritual beachheads and spiritual breakthrough—reveals that general unity is not as critical. Since believers of differing backgrounds and persuasions can and do come together in intercessory common cause over the issues of revival and evangelistic breakthroughs (see Acts 1:14 KJV), unity and united prayer are not necessarily synonymous. In a recent article entitled “Prayer: God’s Catalyst for Revival,” Robert Bakke wrote:

[In the 18th century] Count Nicholas Von Zinzendorf gathered an incredibly diverse group of Christians (Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists, etc.) from across Europe. He was able to forge and sustain their union as a single movement (the Moravians) only when he called his community to a life-style of united praying.⁶

It should be pointed out, however, that united prayer is not always unanimous prayer. A spiritual critical mass can be achieved even if some members of the community choose not to participate. This was certainly the case in Charles Finney’s day.

When the great evangelist launched his ministry in New England over a century ago, many conservative clergy opposed his efforts. Despite this hesitancy, enough intercession was mobilized to usher in the most dramatic season of community transformation in American history.

Achieving Spiritual Breakthroughs

While united prayer is a potent catalyst for revival, community-wide evangelistic breakthroughs require that intercession be fervent and sustained as well. Like many things that start well, petitions that lose their focus or fervor soon become pipe dreams.

This is not to say that fervent prayer is always articulate. God is a heart reader, not a lip reader (see 2 Chronicles 30:18-20; Matthew 6:5-8). When I petitioned God for the life of my two-year-old daughter, who, in 1996, nearly drowned in a swimming pool accident, I did not pause to consider my words. In fact, there was nothing eloquent about my cries and groaning.

At the same time, my prayer was fervent. And it was fervent because I was consumed with the details of the case. As I looked down on my daughter’s lifeless face, I recognized every tiny crease. I had mapped them over the past two years as I paused to kiss her good night. I was also familiar with her budding gifts and idiosyncrasies, and I could recall each word spoken over her when she was still in the womb. In short, I prayed hard for this little girl because I knew her (and the situation at hand) intimately.

Community intercession is not much different. To pray fervently for a neighborhood we must first familiarize ourselves with its history and features. And since reality is often painted in shades of gray, this requires us to linger in spaces both

dark and light. It is not enough to merely acknowledge the community; we must become acquainted with it—even intimate. True lovers do not refuse to look at their partner's blemishes. Indeed, fervor is bred of familiarity.

And perseverance is no less important than fervor. History shows that spiritual breakthroughs are often delayed reactions, their spectacular fireworks the result of an intercessory match struck months, or even years, earlier. The challenge is to keep the fuse burning to the point of ignition.

Two factors that have proven particularly effective in sustaining fervent corporate intercession are *progressive revelation* and *positive results*.

In the first instance, people are motivated by new details about the case at hand. The psychology is the same as that which pulls readers through a good mystery novel, or a hobbyists through a challenging puzzle. In both situations, participants are rewarded with a sense of momentum toward an ultimate solution. Incremental disclosure is not only tolerated, it is enjoyable.

This was certainly the experience of a spiritual mapping team operating out of the El Shaddai church in Guatemala City during the early 1990s. Their mission was to identify obstacles to revival in their community. To accomplish this, team members were divided into three working groups that investigated respective historical, physical, and spiritual factors.

The process began when God led the historical team to a Mayan archaeological site. As they reviewed the weathered remains, it suddenly became clear that their spiritual challenges were part of an ancient continuum of idolatry and witchcraft. At this precise moment, the physical factors team (which had been operating inde-

pendently) located a vacant house adjacent to the ruins where occult rituals were being practiced. A third team comprised of intercessors received a revelation that the territorial spirit over that place was linked to a human co-conspirator whose lifestyle included idolatrous and occult practices.

The next series of developments, which pastor Harold Caballeros describes as "truly exciting," began when the Lord indicated His intention to disclose the man's identity in the city newspaper even going so far as to

door" for ministry (see Colossians 4:24).⁸ Evangelistic breakthroughs and church growth often follow.

Answers to prayer offer equally potent motivation for corporate intercessors. Like progressive revelation, timely results encourage prayers to stick with the reassignments. Besides the pleasure associated with seeing desired changes take root in broken communities, there is an exhilaration that comes from knowing our words have moved the Almighty.

To find an example of results sustaining fervent intercession we need look no further than Cali, Colombia. Forty-eight hours after that city's first all-night prayer vigil the local daily, *El Pais*, reported a notable decrease in homicides. Corruption also took a major hit when, over the next four months, nine hundred cartel-linked officers were fired from the metropolitan police force. "When we saw these things happening," one participant told me, "we had a strong sense that the powers of darkness were headed for a significant defeat."⁹

In June 1995, this sense of anticipation was heightened when several intercessors reported dreams in which angelic forces apprehended leaders of the Cali drug cartel. Six weeks later the Colombian government declared an all-out war against the drug lords. By August, federal authorities had captured all seven targeted cartel leaders: Juan Carlos Arminez, Phanor Arizabalata, Julian Murcillo, Henry Loaiza, Jose Santa Cruz Londono, and Gilberto and Miguel Rodriguez.

Emboldened by this success, Cali's Christian community decided to fuel their all-night prayer rallies, now 60,000 strong, by launching spiritual mapping campaigns in each of the city's 22 administrative sections. The

As an ever-increasing percentage of the population comes under the Lordship of Christ, the sin-wrought citadels of corruption, poverty, violence, prejudice, and oppression are transformed into ghost towns.

reveal the date and page on which the information would appear. When the team finally turned to the appropriate page they were stunned to find not only the name of the suspect, but a photo matching a precise physical description the Holy Spirit had provided earlier. "To cap it off," writes Caballeros, "we discovered that this man was also the owner of the vacant house where the occult rituals were taking place, right across the street from the archaeological site!"⁷

Where believers are united in their desire to see a community transformed by the power of God, spiritual mapping can provide the kind of revelatory focus that sustains fervent and effectual prayer. When this intelligence is carried into spiritual warfare, God is released to provide an "open

compiled results soon gave the church an unprecedented picture of the powers working in the city. "With this knowledge," one veteran missionary explained, "our unified intercession became truly focused. Praying in specific terms, we began to see a dramatic loosening of the enemy's stranglehold on our community and nation."¹⁰

While these abbreviated examples do not detail the community-wide church growth that resulted in Cali and Guatemala City, it is this level of expansion that defines them as authentic spiritual breakthroughs. Growth that is confined to individual churches, while generally desirable, is not the same thing. This is because there are any number of reasons short of divine visitation that might explain proliferating numbers (including charismatic leadership, quality management, and appealing programs). Genuine evangelistic breakthroughs, on the other hand, tend to spread spontaneously across geographic, ethnic, and denominational boundaries.

From Breakthrough to Transformation

Given the heady atmosphere that accompanies spiritual breakthroughs, some Christians misinterpret these seasons as the climax of divine activity and intention. This is an understandable, if unfortunate, error. For while spiritual breakthroughs are by their very definition advanced achievements, they are by no means the end of God's ambitions for a community.

If intercessors continue to press in during the spiritual breakthrough phase, a point of critical mass will eventually be reached where community transformation occurs. At this level the social, political, and economic fabric of the entire community begins to metamorphose. As an ever-increasing percentage of the popula-

tion comes under the Lordship of Christ, the sin-wrought citadels of corruption, poverty, violence, prejudice, and oppression are transformed into ghost towns. Confirmation of this new heavenly order comes not from Christian triumphalists but from the evening newscasts and banner headlines of the secular media.

This is not to suggest that transformed communities are perfect communities—at least not in a millennial sense. Even sympathetic observers will have little trouble locating blemishes. Violence, immorality, and apathy are ubiquitous in our world, and this includes cities that have been visited by Divine Grace. Spiritual transformation is not a total absence of sin but rather a fresh trajectory with acknowledged fruit. Communities that have been so touched should be measured not by what they still lack, but by what they once were.

Asia has arguably experienced more divine visitations than any other region in recent history. This has led to phenomenal church growth in various parts of China, South Korea, India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Less encouraging is the fact that the continent has only one documentable case of community transformation—the state of Mizoram in eastern India (three other cases are currently under investigation). Noting the sharp drop off between breakthrough and transformation one cannot help but wonder about the factors responsible for this attrition.

Two reasons stand out. First, as we mentioned earlier, there is a tendency for Christians to misinterpret breakthroughs as the climax of divine activity. If people are getting saved and our churches are growing, what more could we ask for? How could these blessed and exciting developments be anything other than God's maximum intent?

The second reason is closely

related to the first. Community transformation fails to occur because local inhabitants do not perceive a need for change. Affluent societies in particular tend to be self-sufficient and self-satisfied—qualities that make them poor candidates for divine intervention. They are the collective embodiment of Jesus' teaching about it being easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God (Matthew 19:23-24). While the obstacle of affluence (or security) can be overcome, history has shown this to be a rare occurrence.

Of the case studies consulted for this study it is noteworthy that only one—Hemet, California—is located within the Western world, and even it is faced with significant maintenance challenges. While Asia has long been viewed as distinct from the West, the region's economic growth (recent downturns notwithstanding) has blurred this distinction. Places like Singapore, Japan, and Taiwan are now a wash in the same abundance and political stability that one finds in Europe and North America. Unfortunately, they have also begun to adopt the self-satisfaction that so often accompanies these blessings.

This problem is compounded in churches with large memberships. When the pastors of these congregations survey their ministry they see little that would suggest a need for change. Competent staff are busy running well-conceived programs and the sanctuary is filled every Sunday with a sea of eager faces. While the status quo is not perfect, neither is it a rationale for extreme measures. Change, if and when it is needed, is best sought in manageable increments.

The danger in this perspective lies in its introversion. Because their sphere of influence is large, the leaders of well-heeled mega-churches tend

to view their community from inside that circle. They see other churches in the community not as partners in a collective vision but as competitors for market share. There are exceptions, of course, but not many. The mirror of history reveals that the grander a church becomes the more likely it is to fall victim to the Laodicean Syndrome. One of the primary symptoms of this complex is a subconscious shift from kingdom mentality to empire mentality.

While many churches today are preoccupied with growing their circle, God's focus is on the area between the circles. He worries not about the one sheep that is found, but the ninety nine that are lost. He wants to break out of our churches and into area boardrooms, classrooms, and courtrooms. In short, He wants to introduce His kingdom into every area of society and transform it.

Some time ago I took a wrong turn on my way to Sunday church services and found myself on unfamiliar streets. This caused me to pay attention to my surroundings in a way I would not have otherwise. The sights disturbed me. A pair of homeless drunks staggering down the sidewalk; a video arcade filled with troubled teens; and hordes of preoccupied antique shoppers.

When I finally pulled in the church parking lot I noticed something that had escaped me on previous Sundays. A simple sign announcing "Celebration Services" at 9:00 and 11:00 AM. On this morning, however, I did not feel like celebrating. Whatever blessings I might count clearly did not extend to the streets of my community.

Most of us want to see things change in our communities. Unfortunately, few of us ever have. We do not seem to know how to get where we want to go. (Theories on community transformation have always been

more abundant than successful case studies.) In an effort to remedy this confusion we need to take careful note of the role of Godly persevering leadership and fervent united prayer as indispensable tools to change lives and whole communities.

End Notes

1. God's practice of dealing distinctly with different cities is seen in the unique messages He spoke to the seven churches featured in Revelation chapters 2-3.
2. See Genesis 32:26, 1 Chronicles 16:11, Daniel 6:10, Luke 11:5-10, Hebrews 11:6, James 5:16.
3. In the early 1990s, a group of Japanese intercessors rented six railroad coaches, which they dubbed the "Glory Train", and rode the mobile prayer platform through all of Japan's prefectures.
4. Witchcraft is widespread in Pakistan. Initiates learn to control their emotions, particularly fear, during the course of intense encounters with demonic powers. During the final initiatory stage the demons appear in a variety of terrifying forms. If fear gets the best of the initiate, the demon(s) will kill him. If the initiate controls his fear, the demon(s) will be his to "command". The only requirement is that the initiate "entertain" the demon(s) every Thursday night. This entertainment takes the form of a ritual, known as *chowky*, that involves dancing and/or violent head and neck shaking (almost like seizures). Many witches die when they get older and are no longer able to fulfill their Thursday evening vows.
5. Documentation for this is available from Peter Wagner's research.
6. Robert Bakke, "Prayer: God's Catalyst for Revival," *Pray!* Premier Issue, 1997; p. 16. Mr. Bakke directs the National Prayer Advance for the Evangelical Free Church in America.
7. Harold Caballeros, "Defeating the Enemy with the Help of Spiritual Mapping," in C. Peter Wagner, *Breaking Strongholds In Your City* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1993), p. 144.
8. As I noted in my recent book *The Twilight Labyrinth* (Grand Rapids: chosen, 1997), pp. 281- 282:

In asking intercessors to petition God for an "open door," Paul is acknowledging three important truths: 1) Unsaved people are bound in a prison of deception; 2) God must breach this stronghold if the Gospel is to enter; and 3) Prayer is an important means of persuading God to do this.

If we want to practice effective spell bending-liberating enchanted minds so they can understand and respond to the Gospel—we must first neutralize the blinding influence of demonic strong men. Jesus talks about this process in Mark 3:27 when he says, "No one can enter a strong man's house (the human mind) and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. *Then* he can rob his house" (emphasis added).

We are not asking God to "make" people Christians, or to expel demonic powers that have become objects of worship. Such requests violate man's free will and God will not honor them. What we are appealing for is a level playing field, a temporary lifting of the spiritual blindness that prevents men from processing truth (the Gospel) at a heart level.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 300.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 301.

[Editor's note: This article is an adaptation of chapter 2 of Otis' forthcoming book *Informed Intercession*, (Regal, Gospel Light). Used with permission.]



George Otis, Jr., is the author of The Last of the Giants and his new book The Twilight Labyrinth. He has served as senior associate with the

Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization and is coordinator of the United Prayer Track for the A.D. 2000 & Beyond Movement. He also is the president of The Sentinel Group—a Christian research and information agency located in Seattle, WA. For more info., (books, videos, etc.) call 800-668-5657, or use email <Sentinelgp@aol.com>