

Intercessors and Cosmic Urban Spiritual Warfare

Taking our cities with the Gospel is one of the greatest challenges facing us in the '90s. It will require intense intercession, sacrifice and prolonged spiritual warfare. Although this article focuses on cities rather than peoples, the author believes "the warfare for the unreached peoples will largely be fought in the cities."

By Viv Grigg

This morning my friend, a political leader in exile from an Asian city, told me that God wanted him to destroy the prostitution trade in his city. I wept to myself in the quiet of my office. For eight years *I had waited for God to answer prayer* (1) and raise up such a man.

It had been eight years since I first entered that city. On that day I had sat on my bed in the guest house and *waited in the presence of God* (2)¹ He took my hands and used them to form the shape of the spirit over that city. A spirit that was deeply sensuous, and one giving power to the very kingdom over the land had entered. Later I went out, and there on the sidewalk saw the images of this goddess.

We read that "Jesus became a man and dwelt among them." Peter, later in life said simply "we touched him." *Out of the incarnation, came the warfare* (3). There is no intercession unless we die for a people. So *I asked God for a person* (4) for someone who would go to this city and rescue the victims of the prostitution trade—for the Kingdom of God is manifest in service to the poor.

And God spoke to a woman. Within a few months of her arrival, and the beginning of her evangelistic ministry, the wives of some of the rich in the city came to her asking how they could help. For their husbands were part of the structures that perpetuated the trade, and they were ashamed. Spiritual encounters now moved to a second level, beyond the victims to the people in power in the structures. *A level of authority had been earned through incarnation, evangelism and service to the poor* (5). Gradually other ministries formed. A city prayer movement was developed.

But I asked where was a national leader of sufficient political standing to carry the spiritual warfare into the very centers of power. This morning I wept for I had my answer. *Eight years of carrying the burden of a city in my spirit* (6).

This paper is about intercession and its impact on issues of completing the unfinished task of reaching cities. For many years it has been a privilege to walk with my family behind the Lord in the dark side of the mega-cities slums of the third world and to intercede for many of these cities.

Out of intercession has come the emergence of movements, missions and churches. These have not been the result of any particular charisma, nor because of massive resources, for we have lived as poor people, *without significant resources, just daily bread* (7) and what he has provided to catalyze each new work. *These movements are the result of the sovereign hand of God moving in answer to prayer* (8).

Strategic Focus for Intercessors in the Next Decades

Where do we strategically focus prayer? As coordinator of the Cities Resource Network of the AD 2000 Movement, some very simple comparisons of existing research has resulted in an estimate of 1736 such unevangelized cities. By AD 2000 there will be over 400 cities over 1 million, and over 300 of these could be classified as unevangelized. Some 30-90% of the population of each of these live in highly responsive slums, *colonias, favelas, bustees, bidonvilles, shantytowns, squatter areas...*²

The exciting thing as data has come

in from around the globe is that almost every one of these cities already have churches. The gospel must go to the ends of the earth. But none of these cities have sufficient numbers of believers and churches to effectively evangelize each major sector of the city.³

Today we are moving into what Dr. Paul Pierson calls the fourth era of the modern missions - reaching the cities. In the last decade over 1 billion people have careened down rural roads into multiplying concrete highways to be disgorged and disoriented into the city and its slums.

Most mission leaders are aware that almost all population increase in the next decades will be both urban and urban migrant (rural population growth will remain static), that the majority of this will be in the slums and squatter areas and that these will increase far faster than the rate of industrialization of these cities.

Therefore, the penetration of these cities and these receptive urban poor communities define the target of missions for the next decades and will probably require more energy and more suffering than has been seen in the whole of the modern Protestant era. We can foresee that the future of missions is urban, and that it is to the poor.

Intercession Involves Entering the Sufferings of the Poor

Any cursory look at worlds A, B, C, or the 10/40 Window, shows that the least evangelized are the poor of the earth. As Bryant Myers has pointed out, "the poor are the lost."

As an intercessor, I have to call you

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to enter into the poverty of the poor, for that was the model of him who now intercedes for us. As a strategist it is evident that the responsive migrant poor are the key to the cities - biblically, historically, sociologically, and in terms of church planting and growth.

The Great Mission of Jesus

Given these contexts of massive urbanization, globalization and impoverishment of city populations, what is our goal in praying? Let us look to our Master to find the answers.

He came preaching the Kingdom of God. Preaching, teaching, healing and delivering were his primary activities. He trained his disciples in the same central issues of methodology. *We are to pray for laborers who can do the same* (9) (Matthew 9:37,38).

In Luke 4:18 He declares His mission and ours, the great mission. It is to preach good news *to the poor*. The central activity is not giving bread. The central focus is not the middle class. *An apostolic focus, on the poor, in a holistic context and manner* to the apostolic ministry needs to be central. Luke 4:18 is the heart of the great commission of Matthew 28, and Mark 16 which define *the extent* and further expand on methodology.

Penetrating the Least of the Least Evangelized Cities

He had been a language helper for a foreign man of God. One day he refused to give money for the *puja*, the celebration of worship of the goddess, "I have been reading this holy book and it says we are to have only one God." Then he fled from the *bustee* (*slum*). He gave his life to the only one God. During those days a train smashed into the community, two houses caught on fire. The people said it was because he had turned against their goddess – perhaps it was, they would know.

The one to whom he taught language was *a man of prayer, and a man who walked among the poor, and in prayer God spoke* (10,11) to take flowers and

fruit to the families of those hurt by these events. As he did the people saw God come among them.

And the first *bustee* in another city is penetrated with the gospel. What was the cost of initial penetration? One worker lost her hearing, one worker lost her health, fifteen workers gave from three to seven years of their lives with severe *sicknesses, frequent demonic activities* (12) surrounding them. And behind it, *several hundred people praying* (13). Today in six *bustees* there

are emerging groups of worshipping people. And what will be the cost of a movement? Somebody giving 15 to 20 years of their lives for this people, building upon the penetration. *Every step bathed in prayer* (14).

In this city of 12 million we estimate there are 150 movements needed to penetrate each major sector of the city. So far in the last 18 months we have prayed in three pioneer teams. Some 60,000 people have prayed for a month for the city. Every month we have asked God to send in an *intercessory team of pastors*. He has answered in diverse ways.

How Long Has it Been Since Someone Took a City?

Wagner has popularized the work done by Ed Silvano and Harvest Evangelism⁴ with stories of cities that evangelistically have had significant city-

wide responses. Wagner and others

A lot of people are talking about taking cities today.

- * What do they mean?
- * How do we measure success?
- * What do we mean by closure in this comic urban warfare?
- * What is the role of intercession?

relate the *success to spiritual mapping* (15), and spiritual warfare.

R.A. Torrey, preached back in 1904 in my home city of Dunedin, New Zealand. It was a city founded by a shipload of Presbyterians to be a city of God. When he preached, the city closed down. Shops were closed with signs "gone to the crusade." Trams full of people would burst out into singing of hymns. Torrey saved a city by a revival in the power of the Holy Spirit. Old men *kept a city under the sovereign grace of God by their consistent prayers* (16). Is this taking a city?

Nehemiah, *soaking in the word of God* (17), prayed for a city. God gave him the opportunity of rebuilding Jerusalem after a godly manner. Is this what we mean by taking a city?

Jonah was reluctantly spewed up to a city. *His prophetic word* (18) stayed the hand of God for 400 years, all repented from king to slave. The story is told of St. Francis of Assisi, that wandering Pentecostal evangelist of earlier years, as to how he saved Assisi. The city was in civil war. He sent Bernardo ahead of him to *declare to the spirits over the city* (19) that Francis of Assisi was coming and to depart and to gather the leaders of rich and poor. They then sat down and negotiated a contract that saved the city. The Wesleys saved cities and nations through preaching a holistic gospel of the Kingdom to the poor. Is this taking a city for God?

Jesus, like Abraham, looked forward

to a city but was thrown out from a city for which *he did battle in prayer* (Matt. 23:37), and to which he *prophesied* (20). The outcome was its destruction 40 years later. Did he take a city? Did Abraham when he prayed for Sodom take a city? We cannot preempt the judgments of a sovereign God by some model of success in how we take cities.

Intensive Goals for Prayer

I would propose specific prayer goals for cities that have different levels of spiritual life and resources:

**Penetration evangelism* in cities less than 0.5% evangelical.⁵

**Kingdom movements* (including discipling movements, churches, and new denominations) within major sectors of cities less than 3% evangelical.

*Saturation evangelization of cities resulting in *revival movements* in every major sector and urban poor mission-sending thrusts in cities from 3-20% evangelical.

*Discipling of whole cities, bringing whole cities under the socio-economic-political principles of the Kingdom of God, *transforming the very structures and culture* of the cities where there are more than 10% evangelicals (Jesus and Paul did not have this opportunity, but many through history have).

Extensive Goals for Prayer:

*3500 cities over 100,000.

*Focus in on 1736 Cities Less than 3% Evangelical.⁶

*Primary focus on 51 cities over 1 million and less than 0.5% Christian.

brought to the notice of the Western nations the strategic place of Iraq (Babylon) and Iran (the Kingdom of Persia) in the Biblical end time scenarios, as being strongholds of two immensely powerful spirits. While hesitant about George's unique interpretation of Revelation, the reality of these two powerful spiritual centers seems verifiable. There are other centers of tremendous power in the 10/40 region. I would identify

at least five - Calcutta (center of Kali and Brahmanic Hinduism), Varanasi, Iraq, Iran and the Tibetan region. *Penetrating these is done only through death* (21). These powers are centered in cities, control countries or whole regions and extend their influence through the "isms" of philosophy and religion. The level of demonic activity in the context of these centers of principalities could be far greater than that of past Protestant missions focused on tribes. It is certainly greater than in easily accessible countries or Christianized or Catholicized contexts.

At the same time as we face a higher level of intensity of opposition, the world is moving to the cities, where all the depravity of man coalesces in giant grotesque forms that enable the spiritual powers to wreak great destruction in increasing levels. And so in general, reaching and transforming the cities becomes increasingly difficult.

A Biblical Theology of Cosmic Spiritual Urban Conflict

Biblical history is a history of a cosmic spiritual conflict between two cities – the city of God, and the city of man – of power struggles taking place in two centers of demonic powers – (the rich and the poor): The principalities over the military elites who rule the world's city-states from the mega-cities (for most countries have only one city

High Intensity Intercessory Warfare

Not only demographically but theologically many are aware that the final Biblical battles are battles between cities, between God's people in the cities (the bride of Christ, which is the city of God) and biblical Babylon as it represents the emerging interglobal network of cities – the global city itself.

The casualties will be greater than even in these least unreached cities. The level of direct confrontation with the powers will be more intense. George Otis⁷ in his artistic style has

to which the nation's resources flow. There are few true democracies even today). The powers are manifest in the urban slums, where the victims of the oppression, violence, corruption and mismanagement of countries and cities find their dwellings.

Cities as Covenants Between Peoples and God

Jerusalem was a city built from a covenant with a patriarch whose eyes were fixed on a heavenly city. Cities today frequently retain some of the effect of covenants made in former days.

When I was a child, there was a group of old men who used to pray for our city in York Place Hall in the center of the city. They were the fruit of the revival led by R.A. Torrey in 1904. In my 14th year they died. That year the Presbyterian churches of the city founded by migrant Presbyterians to be a city of God. Later however, sensuous dancing was started in the churches. By the end of the year the youth were dancing into sexual relationships in the town hall, and had left the churches.

That year the spiritual life of the city died. The city has never recovered. Even today I can count on one hand the spiritual churches in that city. God upheld covenants made with Torrey and with these men throughout their lifetime as they prayed. It was here I was first struck to the floor by the Holy Spirit into a wonderful sense of his presence. They were praying in another room, nevertheless, such was the power of Holy Spirit in their prayers.

Taking cities has to do with *re-establishing the covenants of the cities* (22), destroying the covenants made with devils and re-establishing covenants with God. As for Torrey it began with the preaching of the gospel which is the power of God for salvation.

Cities As Centers of Demonic Principalities

Jacques Ellul⁸ in perhaps the most significant theology on the city since Augustine's *City of God*, grippingly portrays this theme from the first city built by Cain in rebellion against God. His descendants built Babylon. Which, in the Scriptures begins as the name of a city but takes on the meaning of a principality far larger than any city, and becomes representative of a world urban system warring against God. In a similar manner, Jerusalem comes to represent not just the geographical location of the city of God, but a picture of the universal city where God dwells.

Today in the same manner, we find Bangkok, the "city of the angels" and in regular daily ceremonies, every portion of its land is dedicated to the spirits, for whom small houses are constructed. Kalikata or Calcutta, is named after a goddess. This city of death, is a servant of the goddess of death and destruction.

Discernment of these spiritual powers helps in preparation for the battle. It occurs by the preaching of the word, the word of our testimony, the signs that follow, and "loving not of our lives unto death." As Luther understood, "He who would true valour see, let him come hither...there's no discouragement can make him once relent his first avowed intent to be a pilgrim."

While the nature of principalities dwelling over territories may be inferred from the Scriptures, Berkhof, Walter Wink,⁹ and others coming from a variety of theological perspectives, indicate that the primary biblical categories are not simply geographical thrones and dominions but the warfare is against the philosophies and religions of the people. Thus Hollywood has been the name not only for a place but for a demonic intrusion into the homes of millions, propagating licentiousness, adultery, immorality and undermining

many forms of restrictions on human sexual practices that are necessary for holding the family together. New York is known for the financial philosophies and the structures they produce around the globe, while Washington is known around the world for the misuse of power and oppression of poor nations.

It seems that each city has a philosophical focus that defines it. Frequently the powers are "*isms*" that seem to have a territorial center. This seems logical when considering the finite nature of demonic beings in contrast with the omnipresence of our God.

Through the proclamation of the gospel, the Kingdom impacts the very structures of the cities. The Scriptures are consistent that working for justice in society is both part of a righteous person's lifestyle and lays the basis for intercession. Colossians tells us that Christ is the integrator of the structures of the universe.¹⁰ He holds cities together. Romans tells us to obey the instituted authorities for they have been appointed by God.¹¹

But what of the institutions not founded by God, such as slavery of much of North Africa and many Asian cities, or the structures of prostitution or child labor and abortion? This tension of "City of God, City of Satan" to use Robert Linthicum's term¹² is one that requires constant discernment. Structures are not usually neutral. They may be ethically corrupted, or ethically good. Or they may have life birthed into them at points by the Holy Spirit, or death by demonic powers.

For example we may break down into components the educational structure of a city-state. The policy (1) set by the governing parliamentary chamber (2), under the leadership of a secretary of education (3), is then set into operating procedures (4) by bureaucrats (5), and implemented (6) by educators (7). At any point demonic

activity or the life of the Spirit of God can enter into individuals and through individuals into the policy, philosophy, or administration. Aspects of this structure can be demonized.

Cities may be ethically good (1), bad (2) or neutral (mixed (3)), governed by godly people by God's principles (4) or infiltrated on the other hand by demonic powers (5) operating through people and philosophies.

Strategic Issues in Intercession for Cities

1. Common Progressions in City

Partnering Processes

For each city God has a purpose. And for each city God has a battle plan. It is our task to discern it. It then is our task in unity to walk with him in the obedience. Listening, unity and timing are crucial factors.

We need to know the processes involved in partnering churches together for establishing of the Kingdom in every sector of a city. Every step in such a process is of necessity the working of the Spirit, as we work with him. Every city is different and will follow a different pattern with a different time frame and style. Every battle is different.

2. Spiritual Unity of the Church Key to Spiritual Warfare

In most evangelized cities (with a significant number of churches), there will be a movement of the Holy Spirit that brings pastors of the city together. There may be many networks of pastors, Christian interest groups, prayer networks, women's networks etc., scattered across the city. Linking the leaders of these together around some common goals is a central element of reaching a city.

This must be birthed by the Holy Spirit. The spiritual unity of the leaders of the Church is a key to spiritual power (see Acts 2, 4). The Holy Spirit may not work significantly in a situation where he is grieved due to their disunity.

3. A Shared Theology of Brokenness

If there is not significant unity, the first step is to bring together the pastors in prayer or in renewal and teaching until there are reconciliations and brokenness occurs between each other.

A few weeks ago as I spoke with the pastors of one city, and as I looked around the room, I realized I had heard negative stories about every one of them. In their culture people say nice things about others but then end with cutting comments. As I began to talk about this, some 50 pastors then covenanted together to never cut down another. It had taken seven years of suffering and work to bring us to this point.

The riots in Los Angeles were the key to catalyze the unity of the church of that city. After the riots Korean and Black pastors, Hispanic and Afro-Americans and Anglos *publicly confessed their sins to each other* (23) and began to work on issues of transformation of the city together.

4. Prayer Movements

Prayer births visions of what God can do in the city (24), and *builds mutual trust and relationship* (25). It is a common denominator around which many diverse Christian groups can work in unison.

Citywide prayer, prayer walks, prayer marches, neighborhood prayer strategies, prayer triplets (26) are some of the components of such movements of prayer, that are included in the *Cities Strategy Manual*.¹³ Concerts of Prayer are effectively working in many cities. The Intercessory Prayer Manual developed by John Huffman of "Christ for the Cities in Latin America" is one of the best tools for integrating prayer and research at a local church level.

5. Released From Worldly Powers

Many sins prevent effective intercession (27). Some stand out. Penetrating centers of affluence (cities), requires the *Biblical renunciation of wealth* (28). St. Francis of Assisi has been the universal model of apostolic poverty. It was his release from the powers of greed of his times that enabled him to move into levels of spiritual power and save whole cities.

6. The First Issue In Spiritual Authority

Out of our sufferings God has given a level of authority for part of the warfare in this city. Jesus gave an absolute principle that "unless the grain of wheat dies it does not bear fruit". He modeled it, for, "Jesus became a man and dwelt among us..." Incarnation among the poor releases the power of

the Spirit. Choosing suffering with the poor produces the character of the Spirit, enabling an outflow of his power.

7. Intercessory Leadership Begins In Reaching The Poor

From the ministry of preaching among the poor emerge those with truly pastoral hearts. Again and again we find the spiritual leaders here of the city began with planting the church among the poor. We find that God raises up those who work among the poor to be the spiritual leaders of the pastors of cities. Jackie Pullinger-Chan began with drug addicts in Hong Kong and today thousands in that city owe spiritual life to the ripples of her ministry. Roger Forester began by taking needy people into his home and is being used across London and the world.

"Why?" we might ask. One reason is that a qualification of an elder is that they not be greedy.¹⁴ Perhaps also other pastors see that these are not hirelings but truly care for the sheep. Thirdly, being among the poor proves to be a training ground for understanding the structures of the city, which oppress the poor, and cause poverty, and leads us into the emergence of a prophetic powerful ministry. Luke 4:18 tells us that God unleashes his Spirit especially on such servants.

8. People Group Thinking: Necessary but Not Sufficient

We need to mobilize massive movements of prayer (29) in Latin America for the unevangelized cities in Asia. To do this requires city profiles, profiles of "peoples in cities" and profiles of "the cities of the mega-peoples" to be developed and disseminated along the lines of people profiles.

It also requires changing the format of people group profiles so that the cities of the peoples become focal, for they are the entrance point to most peoples. For while the people group movement has picked up steam, (and rural peoples will remain a major item for world evangelism), the unreached people groups have been moving to the cities. The warfare for the unreached peoples of the world will largely be fought in the cities.

Some would contend that people group thinking is all that is needed to strategically reach them. But this is a

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reductionist error. Citywide thinking is required to reach cities. Part of this is to develop an analysis of the people groups in each city. But while cities have linguistic groups, and ethnic communities, they also have networks, economic and class, and caste barriers and many other forms of social groups. Diversity, not reductionism, is the way to urban evangelization.

Is There Still a Place for Western Missions?

There is new power in the "Charismatic" leaderships from the West. Unfortunately they do not know the issues of poverty. They have heard the Lord speak about the poor, and are seeking to obey, but so far have been unwilling to pay the price of changing their lifestyles, structures and message. Decadence and greed take their toll. Yet there are pockets of significance – such as the commitment of the New Zealand churches to the poor that has resulted in seven missions now sending long-term teams to the slums of Asia.

Apart from teams in the slums of Manila with International Teams and the commitments of Action International, and the growing focus of YWAM and O.M. on the urban poor, it is difficult to find a large U.S. mission society with a strategy for sending teams of church planters in to the slums of the cities. If they do not reach the poor of these cities, how will they know the issues of the city? *And if they do not suffer with the people, how can they pray for a city? and so how will the cities be reached?*

The Lord is turning to others. Perhaps the future is with missionaries from newly developed countries to the cities of the poorer nations. People

who know how to plant the church among the urban poor in the power of the Spirit and are able to live simply, going from economies that are beginning to have sufficient support base to sustain them. In such a statement I am also predicting that the Lord will stabilize several Latin economies as the church begins to move from simple evangelism to transform the structures of those nations, and that they will have the economic base for sustained mission sending.

The resources are available. The potential workers are available. Presence among the poor, proclamation with power and prevailing prayer remain the methodologies to bring about closure, to bring about a discipling movement in every major sector in 3500 cities on the globe. We need to move from *Penetration to Church-planting to Movements of Transformation* of these cities, and before the Lord returns. Mobilized, strategically focused, informed, trained and incarnational intercession is our starting point.

End Notes

¹Principles of intercession are in italics and with a (number) beside them.

²See Grigg, Viv, "Cry of the Urban Poor," chapter 2. MARC, 1992, for a more extensive summary of research on the extent of the slums.

³As a rule of thumb we are looking at major sectors as any people group (as defined by a people themselves) consisting of over 100,000 people. This is generally based on language and ethnic background, but also by occupation, and to some degree by economic status (e.g. street children, slum communities), and to some degree by

community in the city (e.g. suburbs in America).

⁴Wagner, Peter, *Warfare Prayer*, Regal Books, 1991.

⁵The percentage levels are purely rule of thumb. It seems that around 3% evangelical in a city some kind of sustainable processes begin to take shape. It seems that beyond this point increasing levels of transformation of society begin to occur.

⁶We could redo this ranking on the basis of Barrett's % Christian. His figures are based on an integrity of sociological definitions. Percentage Evangelical from Patrick Johnstone is an estimate, also with integrity but measuring a variable more readily perceived by front-line evangelists. Basing a ranking on Barrett's model gives roughly the same rankings but leaves out re-evangelization of Catholic and Orthodox cities.

⁷Otis, George, *The Last of the Giants*, Chosen Books, 1991.

⁸Ellul, Jacques, *The Meaning of the City*, Eerdmans, 1977.

⁹An excellent summary can be found in McAlpine, Thomas, "Facing the Powers: What are the Options," MARC, 1991.

¹⁰Colossians 1:16-20.

¹¹Romans 13:1-7.

¹²Linthicum, Robert, *City of God, City of Satan*, Zondervan, 1991. A Biblical theology of the city from the perspective of Christian community organization.

¹³Available from Urban Leadership, 127 N. Madison Ave, #20, Pasadena, CA 91101 (\$20 incl. tax, P&H).

¹⁴1 Timothy 3:3.