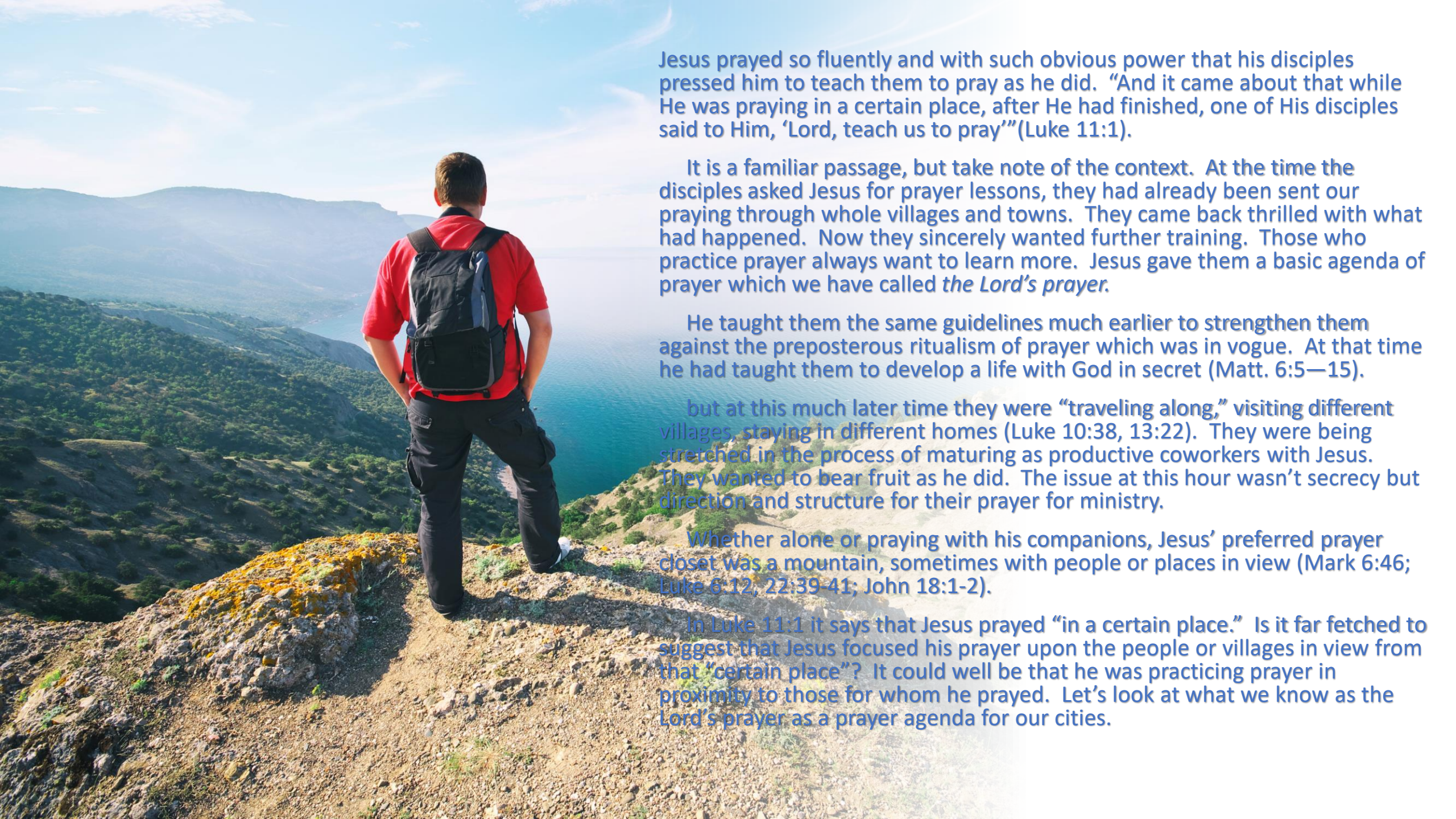




An Intercession Agenda

Chapter 7



Jesus prayed so fluently and with such obvious power that his disciples pressed him to teach them to pray as he did. “And it came about that while He was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray’”(Luke 11:1).

It is a familiar passage, but take note of the context. At the time the disciples asked Jesus for prayer lessons, they had already been sent out praying through whole villages and towns. They came back thrilled with what had happened. Now they sincerely wanted further training. Those who practice prayer always want to learn more. Jesus gave them a basic agenda of prayer which we have called *the Lord’s prayer*.

He taught them the same guidelines much earlier to strengthen them against the preposterous ritualism of prayer which was in vogue. At that time he had taught them to develop a life with God in secret (Matt. 6:5—15).

but at this much later time they were “traveling along,” visiting different villages, staying in different homes (Luke 10:38, 13:22). They were being stretched in the process of maturing as productive coworkers with Jesus. They wanted to bear fruit as he did. The issue at this hour wasn’t secrecy but direction and structure for their prayer for ministry.

Whether alone or praying with his companions, Jesus’ preferred prayer closet was a mountain, sometimes with people or places in view (Mark 6:46; Luke 6:12, 22:39-41; John 18:1-2).

In Luke 11:1 it says that Jesus prayed “in a certain place.” Is it far fetched to suggest that Jesus focused his prayer upon the people or villages in view from that “certain place”? It could well be that he was practicing prayer in proximity to those for whom he prayed. Let’s look at what we know as the Lord’s prayer as a prayer agenda for our cities.

An Agenda for Prayer in Proximity

The top points of this prayer agenda are too long to be contained in private devotions. They are as deep and high as earth and heaven, and as wide as the cities and peoples of earth.

.Pray for God's glory. "Father, hallowed be Your name"(Luke 11:2, NAS revised)

Of course, this cry has ultimate fulfillment at the culmination of history, but clearly we are to pray with expectancy for the coming of some measure of heaven's liberating dominion amidst the families and cities of earth. The Father in heaven is addressed, but the desired answer is to be visible on earth. Enormous outbreaks of heaven's life here are in view.

This eager cry for God's kingship stands as a dominant theme of all Scripture. God's steady desire has been to entrust the earth to a kingdom of devoted servants (Ex. 19:5-6; 2 Sam. 7:12-19; Rev. 1:6). Generations unfold with patient urgency to defeat his enemies and to establish his rightful reign as the Messiah (Ps. 2, 110, 145; Dan. 7:9-28; Matt. 12:15-29; Rev. 12:10-12).

Pray for reconciliation. "Give us each day our daily bread" (Luke 11:3). The rest of Jesus' prayer agenda continues to rise above our customary individualism. We are to call open windows of heaven's provision to provide "our" daily bread for "us."

Forgiveness cannot be experienced apart from being extended to others. Hence the line, "and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us" (Luke 11:4). Perhaps we unduly privatize the prayer, as if it said, "forgive me my sins." Jesus' instruction provides us a mandate to appeal for the forgiveness of others, at times the accumulated wrongdoing of whole families and generations. We need to stand ready to identify and forgive sin on this scale as well.

.Pray for God to release and to lead. "And lead us not into temptation" (Luke 11:4).

Spiritual war at its simplest is to pray that people be rescued from evil to follow God. We find this reflected in the final request, by Luke's account, that God would lead us. The term us can refer to a family, a church or perhaps a neighborhood or a city. It's a request that the process of testing (one way of rendering the word *temptation*) be curtailed and instead that we may find that God has rescued us from the ravaging forces of evil. ("but deliver us from evil" [Matt. 6:13].) This prayer is suitable to pray on behalf of believers as well as the pre-believers of your community.



Two Fundamentals of Prayer on the Streets

The key to effective prayer on the streets lies in the two fundamentals of praying Scripture and praying with the Spirit of God. The prayer agenda of Jesus evidences both these fundamentals: His prayer for God's glory and kingdom was centered in the mainstream of biblical promises, but the prayer is presented in condensed form. To pray authentically for God's name to be sanctified and for Christ's kingship to prevail requires dynamic help from the Spirit of God to flesh out your praying. How will God's glory shine? How will his kingdom be manifest? The Spirit of God helps us pray with specific clarity.



Pray With the Word

As you discipline your mind to follow the thoughts of Scripture, you will find your prayers gaining weight and coming to life.

. **Carry Scripture with you.** You'll find a small pocket Bible to be a valuable item to bring along. Of course, large study Bibles are cumbersome. Carry a smaller portion with you. Don't miss out on the wealth of Old Testament books because you lack an easily carried version. Instead, premeditate your prayers from books which may not be included in a small new Testament. Photocopy favorite Old Testament passages for one-day use. Many prayer walkers write out beforehand on small cards or in notebooks passages which they feel will be useful during the walk.

Praying from Bible memory verses keeps my mind on track. With my eyes open I'll sometimes get distracted in the midst of my prayer. Sometimes I end up praying only two or three verses. Other times I'll do a lot of verses if I'm having trouble keeping my mind on what I'm doing.

--Candy Spears, homemaker and homeschool teacher in Chandler, Arizona. She carries a "verse pack" with her when she prayerwalks her neighborhood in the mornings.



Read Scripture aloud in God's hearing. Scripture is powerful because God has breathed it and loves to bless it. He loves to hear his Word. Read it over and over again as if God were listening intently.

Some people can read fairly well while keeping a normal walking gait. A group can designate a reader for those who have trouble reading afoot. The pace of most prayerwalks allows many pauses to read the Bible together.

Restate the truths in your own words. The place to begin with any passage is to recognize the glories of God's character and restate those same excellencies in your own vernacular. Try to do it in first person, directly to God's face. Paraphrasing is a skill which increases with the doing. Keep using the Bible, and you'll soon find your own best eloquence: voicing prayers with God's thoughts but in your words.

Base petitions and praise on select passages. Stick with particular passages for a while. If you pray for one mile from one choice verse, you well might feel that you have delved a mile deep in biblical truth. As you discipline yourself or your prayer band to stay focused on preselected passages, you will soon grow accustomed to grounding your petitions and praises in Scripture. Soon you won't want to do it any other way. Prayer without roots in Scripture will seem feeble to you. Because the promises of God give basis for worship as well as intercession, you'll soon find yourself fluently passing from exultant praise to ardent petition.

We prayed one week from Psalm 67. All of us agreed during the one- to two-hour prayerwalk that we would pray Psalm 67 especially the part that says, "Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise You" [v.5, NKJV]. We would pray for houses that there would be Bible studies started there. We would pray for the people we'd see that God would raise up praise songs and worship from among them.

-George Parvis, a member of a short-term prayer and research team to the city of Samarkand in Central Asia.



Walk With the Spirit of God

The Spirit of Christ lovingly dwells in us always but seems to draw nearer to us when we pray. As quiet as light he probes our souls and divulges the Father's heart. He exposes the authentic cry of our hearts and thus helps us pray.

Listen to the Spirit of God

Revere the Spirit rightly: He is a divine person rather than a disembodied force. His control is non-coercive. He does not commandeer bodies as our hands might fill gloves. We are his valued servants, not utilized as tools. He honors us by the gentleness of his leading. How sad to ever grieve him! Consciously submit to him by resolving to hear him in all that he might say.

You won't have to strain your ability to hear, but you will need to learn to listen. Sorting out spiritual or psychological signals is important but not difficult. Communication from the Spirit of God will at all times exalt Jesus and reiterate the written Word of God.

.Practice silence. Most accomplished prayerwalkers still consider themselves learners in the relational art of listening to the Spirit. Learn to pray with the Spirit by building disciplines of silence. Spend time walking or standing in hushed attention.

The Spirit gives through his gifts. Listen to each other to hear the Spirit. Someone with a gift of discernment may describe an impression they have. Weigh their words with a receptive heart along with what others may say. Someone with a strength in teaching may offer scriptural grounds for a prayer offered by someone with a prophetic gift. No gift stands alone. God's life flows through the concerted voice of the body.



Follow the Spirit of God

Prayerwalking is simply walking with God. He comes alongside by his Spirit in order to help us pray.

.The Spirit helps us pray together. Use gifts wisely. Views differ on spiritual gifts, but nearly all agree that God gives spiritual gifts to build up the church. Each of the gifts that the Spirit gives can come into play while prayerwalking., yet no single gift is essential for prayerwalking. We are each uniquely equipped by the Spirit for Prayer.

Those who do pray in tongues might find it suitable to do so while prayerwalking. Many consider praying in tongues indispensable during prayerwalks. As valuable as this mode of spiritual prayer may be, it is more essential that the body of Christ not be sundered, especially while putting our fellowship on display in the courts of heaven and on the streets of earth.

Paul gives instructions about practicing spiritual gifts in the presence of “unbelievers” and “ungifted” (1 cor. 14:20-25). These guidelines may well apply to prayerwalkers since the walks usually take place before unbelievers and some walks involve many churches, resulting in a mixture of giftings. When many churches walk together, it is often God’s wisdom to energize a diversity of gifts. Paul urged his readers to consider other people’s impressions when speaking in tongues or prophesying. People are in charge of their giftings. This may be an appropriate time to curtail the most exuberant prayer in tongues. Christians are called to walk the higher way of love, building up the body toward peace rather than confusion.

Steward every gift, not just tongues, in wisdom. By using language everyone can understand we can aspire to exercise together the higher gift of prophecy in prayer (1 cor. 14:39). And what faith-filled prayer is not in some way a prophetic statement if it expresses God’s mind and heart?



.The Spirit helps us to pray physically. God's Spirit may prompt you with ideas about gestures with prophetic significance. Though you may at first feel self-conscious, it is always best to be obedient.

On the other hand, do not attempt to repeat a prophetic act that you or someone else may have done in the past. Some of God's finest children have obediently done some outlandish things which have been greatly honored by God. However, God may never want that faith-gesture to be repeated. The key is to seek fresh guidance from the Spirit.

While we were praying across Germany recently, our whole group paused at an overlook point over the city of Potsdam. As Graham Kendrick led in singing. I lifted my hand to bless the city. As I prayed for the German people to fulfill their destiny as a servant nation, I sensed God stirring me to turn my palm upward, with a lifting gesture. After doing this obediently for a few times, I realized that I was turning upside down the notorious "heil Hitler" salute. If let my praying was reinforced because I was able to act out symbolically the answer to a specific prayer for exalted humility.

There seem to be at least two orders of prophetic symbol in prayer. First, there are the *basic prayer postures and gestures* found in Scripture, such as standing (Deut. 10:8; 2 Chron. 20:5,13, 29:11), lifting hands to heaven (Ps. 28:2, 63:4, 134:2; 1 Tim. 2:8), lifting eyes to heaven (John 11:41, 17:1), bowing (2 Chron. 20:18; Acts 20:36, 21:5) and, we would suggest, walking.

As you become comfortable with some of the standard physical dimensions of prayer, you will find yourself at ease with the other order of prophetic symbol, the *special prayer actions* that God prompts from time to time. God may use these prophetic symbols more than we may ever know. Even if they make little sense to us, obedience to the Spirit is what is required. A little bit of faith goes a long way when reinforced with the total concentration of spirit, mind and body.



.The Spirit helps us pray intelligently. Prayerwalkers often fortify their praying with researched information, but not every data point should be prayed. The difficulty in using researched insights lies in the sheer volume and diversity of factors that can be learned. Information does not equal agenda. Look to the Spirit of God to help sort out what needs to be emphasized in prayer. Bona fide intercession is always uneven. We do not otherwise need to pray uniformly through entire databases.

I had the same week been reading a book on the history of London. I noted how greed often seemed to be a feature of the history of London. I shared this with the group, and we took it back to prayer. Prompted by this, I began to do some more systematic research. The whole project was a mixture of prayer and study.

-Peter Adams, from his book Preparing for Battle: A Biblical Strategy for Spiritual Warfare (Kingsway Publications, 1987). In the book Peter describes how he did research for intercession and prayerwalking in London sponsored by Youth With a Mission. He used reference and history books, newspaper clippings and memories of older residents of London. Eventually Peter's research helped inform citywide prayer efforts, which God used to break the spirit of unrighteous trade.

We need to re-pray the old prayers. We need to find out what God got men and women praying for and pray along with them. If they took the time to write them down, they probably had a sense that they were being heard from what they asked. Daniel prayed Jeremiah's words generations after him.

Jonathan Edwards prayed that all of New England would become a powerhouse for the end—time revival.

-Mark Pritchard, a leader with the Boston Prayer Foundation which has introduced themes from some of the prayers of Jonathan Edwards at citywide prayer rallies in Boston.



Widen the scope of information. Many prayerwalkers have emphasized historical research, targeting specific sites of past incidents. Open your research efforts to include sociological trends, demographic data or even a current newspaper.

Our investigation of the social structure helped us pray with a sure-footed compassion through the streets. We came to know which homes were Chinese and which were probably Thai. We knew that the sweatshop laborers in some of the dark one-room factories were from rural villages in the Northeast. We knew that many of the prostitutes put on display throughout Bangkok were from those same villages. It hurt to know that many had been virtually sold by their parents into this. A five-minute conversation could confirm our hunches and fuel prayer for half an hour. That kind of first hand acquaintance with the community helped us pray with real urgent sorrow and hope.

-Steve Chism, speaking of a prayer effort in Bangkok, Thailand