

Core Values
“How to Pray for the City”
Part 2

Intro: Years ago when I was finishing my Master’s degree at Multnomah, I had a professor that God used in my life in a profound way. He was the first person who put the idea in my head that we can reach entire cities. That God would actually use us to transform entire communities. Up until this point, I was only concerned about my church. Now my perspective got much bigger. Now the vision became more God-like. Now just seeing God grow a church was not enough. His heart is for the city and if a church is going to follow the heart of God, then our heart must be for the city as well.

- One of the key ways to see transformation in our communities is to be praying for the city. The transformational power of God does not show up without prayer. If we truly want to follow Jesus fully so we see Him transform the city completely, then we must know how to pray for our town (or your town/city). That’s what today is all about.
- I want to give you 3 specific ways to pray for our city...and see results!

1. Embrace God’s call to pray for the city

Why should we care about what happens in our cities? Answer: Because God does! Cities are filled with people and God loves people. God is looking for people to pray for cities (Molalla / Colton / Beaver Creek / Mulino / your city – area.) God doesn’t just ask Pastors to do this. He is calling you! We all need to embrace God’s call. God is looking for people...

- God looks for people to care about the city

Ez. 22:30 “I looked for someone who might rebuild the wall of righteousness that guards the land. I searched for someone to stand in the gap in the wall so I wouldn’t have to destroy the land, but I found no one.” (NLT)

- What a horrible description. God was looking for someone to care about the moral condition of the land. He was looking for someone stand in the spiritual gap between His blessing and His judgement...but He found no one.
- When God’s people no longer care about the condition of the cities they live in and refuse to stand in the gap and pray, the spiritual guard is removed from that city. (righteousness guards the land – without it negative consequences rush in.)
- Without the followers of Jesus caring about and praying for their cities, they become spiritually defenseless from evil. The city has no spiritual wall of protection around it. (Explain city walls in ancient times)
- We need to embrace our role as part of the wall around our cities.

- God looks for people to pray for the city

Jer. 29:7 “And work for the peace and prosperity of the city where I sent you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, for its welfare will determine your welfare.” (NLT)

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- God cares about the environments of cities. He cares about the peace and prosperity of cities. WHY? Because the environments of cities impact the people God loves who live in them. God's blessings come through the environments of cities.
- Therefore, as God's people we need to be praying about our cities as well. We need to praying about the issues that God cares about; the peace and prosperity of the city.
- This may surprise some of you. Peace, makes sense; but prosperity? This is why we continually say that empty storefronts is not God's heart for the city. This is why we care about economic transformation.
- It is God's heart that cities are peaceful, safe places for people to live as well as prosperous places for people to live. This is God's heart for Molalla. He is looking for people to pray this way. Will you?

- God looks for people who will endure for the city

Is. 62:6-7 "... I have posted watchmen on your walls; they will pray day and night, continually. Take no rest, all you who pray to the LORD. Give the LORD no rest until he completes his work..." (NLT)

- I love the wording of this verse. Notice the intensity; pray day and night continually / take no rest / give the Lord no rest... God is looking for people to pray and willing to endure in it until change takes place.
- What if we prayed for our city like this? What if you prayed for your city like this? Our cities need people who will refuse to stop praying. "Lord, I'm not going to quit until I see you answer."
- Explain PUSH – Pray Until Something Happens.

Can we as a church embrace this role for our city? Can we stand in the gap for our community?

2. Pray strategically for the city

We need to move beyond the simple; "Lord bless my city" prayers. We need to pray specific and we need to pray strategic. Five strategic ways God asks us to pray for the city.

- Pray for the city leaders

I Tim. 2:1-4 "I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them. ² Pray this way for kings and all who are in authority so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives marked by godliness and dignity. ³ This is good and pleases God our Savior, ⁴ who wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth." (NLT)

- Why should we pray for our leaders? Because everything rises or falls because of leadership. If we have successful leaders we have a successful city. If we have poor leaders, we have an unsuccessful city.
- It is important for the followers of Jesus to know who the community leaders are so you can pray for them.

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- This is why there is a community prayer guide in your bulletin that lists some of our community leaders so you can pray for them.
- What if I don't like them? Who cares! Wishing that leaders fail is like hoping the bus crashes that you are riding in because you don't like the driver! A good driver benefits the entire bus, just like good leadership.

- Pray for peace and prosperity

Jer. 29:7 "And work for the peace and prosperity of the city where I sent you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, for its welfare will determine your welfare." (NLT)

- Since this is God's heart for communities, let's get on God's agenda and pray this way. Will you begin praying for the peace and prosperity of Molalla? Will you pray this way if you are from a different community?
- Can we pray in economic transformation? The blessing on God upon a community comes through the environment of that community. Peace and prosperity are blessings from God.
- We believe transformation to be in 3 areas – Spiritual / Social / Economic. God cares about all three in communities and so should God's people.

- Pray for people's eyes to be opened

*II Cor. 4:4 "Satan, who is the **god of this world**, has blinded the minds **of** those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light **of** the Good News. They don't understand **this** message about the glory **of** Christ, who is the exact likeness **of** God." (NLT)*

- This is how we pray for people who do not yet follow Jesus. We pray that the spiritual blindness is removed from their eyes and hearts so they can respond to Jesus.
- Let's not forget that we are engaged in a spiritual conflict for our communities. There are spiritual dynamics at work and prayer is how we engage our spiritual enemy.
- Can we pray that the spiritual blindness on an entire community would be lifted? We don't pray everyone attends Foothills. I don't care where people go to church. I care they have a relationship with Jesus.
- People cannot have a relationship with Jesus until the spiritual blindness is lifted from their eyes.

- Pray for opportunities

*II Cor. 2:12 "When I came to the city of Troas to preach the Good News of Christ, the Lord opened a door of **opportunity** for me." (NLT)*

- Let's pray that God continues to open up more and more opportunities for the followers of Jesus to impact our cities. Remember, we are His ambassadors to this world. We need to be spiritually engaged and ready for these moments. Praying for opportunities keeps us prepared. They may be one on one opportunities or an opportunity to meet a larger community need.

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- Our philosophy is to look for community needs and meet them. The Molalla Adult Community Center / Loving Hearts Preschool / Backpack buddies / serve on city council / school board / civic club /
- We pray for open doors to love our community and we love our community by meeting needs. When we meet needs it creates conversations. People ask us why. “Why do you guys do things like this?” Opportunity! Open door!

- Pray on sight

Acts 17:16 “While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was deeply troubled by all the idols he saw everywhere in the city.” (NLT)

- Often, what we physically see stirs us to pray in a specific way. This is why praying on site is such a powerful thing to practice.
- We prayed on site several weeks ago in our soon to be new space.
- I have physically prayed all over this city (explain)
- Let me encourage you to walk around the city / run / drive / There are simply very unique ways God will prompt you to pray when you are on sight. It will allow you to see your city through a different lens...a spiritual one.

Can we pray strategically for our city?

3. Pray consistently for the city

Is. 62:-6-7 “...Take no rest, all you who pray to the LORD. Give the LORD no rest until he completes his work...”

Matt. 7:7-8 “Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.” (NLT)

Why does God ask us to pray consistently? Why isn't it good enough to pray once and forget about it? Why do I need to remind God again and again? Does He have a short memory?

- Our consistent prayers carry spiritual weight
 - Teeter-totter principal (On the platform) Illustrate the weight of our prayers that accumulate until finally it tips.
- Our consistent prayers keep us relationally dependent
 - Never forget that prayer is a relational experience first. Even though we are praying for results, those results come through our relational connection with Jesus.
 - When we have to go back to Jesus day after day / month after month / year after year pleading for Him to bring change, this grows our dependency on Him. This increases our connection with Him.

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- If God answered everything instantly, we would lose our neediness. God would become the cosmic vending machine. Our neediness keeps us connected and it is this connection that changes us.
- So, don't get discouraged if you are not seeing results. Keep staying connected.
- Our consistent prayers together result in transformation sooner
 - WHY? Because if more of us put weight on the other end of the teeter totter, it would have moved sooner. (Go back to the teeter-totter)
 - This is why we pray for the same things. This is why we pray in unity. This is why we pray over and over for the same areas. The more we pray and the more of us who pray for the transformation of our town the sooner it will happen.
 - The more of us who pray for the same thing the more we multiply the weight and the sooner things move.
 - It's not enough for the pastor to pray consistently. We all need to pray consistently for the transformation of the city.

Practical Application:

- Prayer Card in your bulletin – explain – we have 3 weeks until Easter. Will you make a commitment to pray 5 minutes for the community for the next 21 days.
- Prayer map – put pins in the places you have prayed (for or on site)
- Let's embrace our role and together and tip the scales in favor of the Kingdom of God.

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