

United Prayer Transforms Situations (from page 1)

formed and becomes a praise in the earth (Isa. 62: 6-7). Persevering intercessory prayer brings God's protection and transformation.

As the director of prayer mobilization for World Vision International, I have seen this happen countless times as a result of national prayer initiatives.

You can read the report of the prayer initiative in Burundi, East Africa, in the May 2000 issue of the *MARC Newsletter*.

Within four days of a breakthrough in prayer, one rebel leader who had never participated decided to join the peace talks; within seven days, another rebel leader followed suit; and in ten days, Nelson Mandela, moderator of the peace process proclaimed they were on the edge of a breakthrough. After a year they still are not out of the woods, but much progress has been made.

The Democratic Republic of Congo is known for the worst humanitarian situation in the world. In three years, 2.5 million people have died.

Last December members of our prayer initiative team drove three land rovers through the war zone, down a road often attacked by rebel factions that include the same killers who carried out the genocide in Rwanda.

We undertook the trip with a strong conviction that the Lord wanted us to stand in solidarity with His suffering church and with a settled peace that God would protect us.

More than 400 church leaders from many ethnic groups and churches of eastern Congo came together for three days of repentance for ethnic and church sins and for moving times of united prayer and reconciliation.

As they humbled themselves and got right with one another and God, an amazing breakthrough occurred on the political level. During the very same time, the occupying foreign armies decided to begin a process of disengagement, pulling back their forces and putting the peace process back on track.

A few weeks later, the main hindrance to peace, President Laurent Kabila was

removed from power by assassination and replaced by his son, a strong proponent of peace and reconciliation. Since January UN peacekeepers have gradually been put in place and an inter-Congolese dialogue between the warring parties is about to commence.

God is so utterly, incomprehensibly and awesomely great. His love is as great as his power. He is eager to heal nations and transform our lives.

What is he waiting for? Our prayers are the critical link.

In 2 Chronicles 7:14 God promises: "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

Notice that there are four conditions we need to meet, and as a result, God promises to do three things to redeem us and our land.

Even two or three believers uniting in

prayer can be used by the Lord to change history — the history of our organization, our community, our nation, our world. (See Matt. 18:19.)

For the last 13 years my prayer partner and I have relied on this promise numerous times and could fill a book with all the miracles we have seen God do. The most simple, practical and powerful thing we can do is to find one or two others at work or in our church with whom we can pray regularly until we see the transformation of our families, our workplace and our world.

All of us are unbelieving by nature, but if we pool our scrawny, infinitesimal faith, that same power that created the universe will be unleashed. The history of nations can be changed, as can our own lives, families and work efforts.

Prayer is not magic, nor is it a vending machine. Transformational praying involves a relationship with the Father that includes intimate listening, depend-

(continued on page 4)

Security Manual Offers Sound Advice

In recent years, more aid workers have been killed in the line of duty than have peacekeeping troops, according to Charles Rogers, co-editor of the *World Vision Security Manual*.

The headlines and present world events offer no comfort to those who heed the call to international mission. Those workers continue to serve, knowing that God will give them the courage and strength to accept the risks involved.

There are practical steps that can be taken to better prepare for many of the unimaginable dangers inherent in cross-cultural mission work. An estimated 70 percent of humanitarian workers live and work in

high-risk environments.

World Vision's pocket-sized security manual covers such important topics as safety in vehicles or on foot, safety for women, how to react during a shooting and what to do when a grenade rolls near your feet. It offers many other important instructions.

Written by and for World Vision staff members, this manual is applicable to any international organization that cares about its people. It also is ideal for companies, mission organizations, aid workers and international travelers.

This security manual is available through World Vision/MARC Publications.



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World Vision



Reflections from Bryant Myers

Reflecting on the horror

The second horseman of the Apocalypse rode through history yet again in the form of the terrorist attack on New York and Washington, D.C.

Given the authority “to take peace from the earth and to make men slay each other” (Rev. 6:4), the horseman continues the work he has been carrying out throughout human history. We caught yet another glimpse of the Evil One, unleashed in a way that is new to this generation.

I teach an inductive Bible study at my church. We meet every Sunday when I am home. And so we met the Sunday after the horror of September 11.

I began the class by asking a single question. What images or lessons from Revelation came to mind this week as you struggled through the shock, fear, confusion and anger that roiled up unbidden in your heart?

What follows is a kind of a summary. I don't offer it as good theology, although I hope there is some of that here. I offer it simply as what a small group of ordinary Christians said, thought and felt as we struggled as Christians to comprehend the unimaginable.

I write this on the following Monday, six days after that horrible morning. As a father and as a leader in a global organization whose staff members now are at risk in a new way, I am still traumatized, seeking to work my way through this emotionally, psychologically and spiritually. Bear with me if I make a misstep.

The Lord's Prayer

The first thing that Revelation offers to us is the simple reminder that we know how the story ends. The revelation of Jesus Christ to John tells us that evil is allowed to take its best and final shot and that evil fails and is destroyed forever. “Those who destroy the earth” are themselves destroyed (Rev. 11:18).

When history is fulfilled, and God is announced as the one who is and who

was, the heavens announce, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ” (Rev. 11:15, 17).

The Lord's Prayer, the prayer that Christians have been praying for the last 2,000 years is finally answered: “Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

The Beast

In Revelation 13, John tells us that in his vision a Beast came out of the sea. The Beast had authority and uttered “proud words and blasphemies.” Evil has been like this since the Fall.



The ideologues in al Qaeda are totalitarians



The network of terrorists responsible for this recent horror follow in the same footsteps. In the name of Allah and the Koran they justify their actions.

And when they do so, the Evil One tempts us to demonize Muslims and their faith.

This is wrongheaded. Our anger is misdirected if we fall for this deception and look with suspicion at the Muslim faith and the one billion human beings who hold it dear.

The ideologues in al Qaeda are totalitarians. They believe that their vision of the best human future is so true and pure that they are justified in using any means necessary to impose this vision on others.

They stand in the tradition of Stalin, Hitler and Pol Pot, justifying any level of human suffering and death in the name of a puritanical ideal.

These terrorists do indeed utter proud words. They worship their malignant

vision. And, when they justify it all in the name of Allah, they blaspheme.

The caution to us is that we do not do the same.

No human solution

It is also clear from Revelation that eradicating the Beast and the Dragon is not something we can do for ourselves. Humanity's best efforts to reform itself, to seek justice and peace simply are never enough.

It is only the “one who sits on the throne” and the “slain Lamb” who finally ends the dominion of the Evil One and those who choose to follow his lies.

What does this say to Americans? It's a hard word, I'm afraid. We don't want to wait. We don't want to believe we cannot do it ourselves. “We will end evil,” read one of the headlines three days after the attack.

No we won't. We cannot. For the evil is in us as well as around us. Only the one who is without sin can do what needs be done.

If we try, we will simply be yielding to yet another lie of the Evil One, who is quite pleased that we would try. We will become what we hate.

The slain Lamb

The revelation to John reveals an intriguing transformation in God's economy of power. As one who is worthy to open the scroll is sought, no one is found, and John weeps.

One of the elders tells John, “Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed” (Rev. 5:5). Turning, John sees a Lamb which looks as if it had been slain.

The slain Lamb has replaced the Lion. The power to defeat evil is in the cross, not in the American eagle or the British lion.

Message for us

What does this have to say to us in a
(continued on page 4)

Reflections (from page 3)

time such as the one we're facing?

First, it is good news. There is one who can carry the day. There is one who can unleash the scroll that scripts the final days of human history, dealing once and for all with evil.

The situation is not hopeless, and evil does not have the final word.

But, second, it is a warning. Power, as we tend to understand it, is not the answer. Turning to our money, our technology or our military strength is to turn away from where our strength truly lies.

These things may make us feel safer. They may make us safer in the near term.

They may limit evil. And this is good. But they will not *deliver* us from evil.

The role of the church

The revelation of Christ to John articulates a clear role for the church in God's ending of evil. We are to be witnesses — witnesses to the point of being willing to die for our faith.

The role of the church is to emulate its Lord as a suffering servant. Oh dear.

Thinking about the church in response to the horror of September 11, it seems that we are to offer a prophetic voice that points to what and whom we know to be true, that is the slain Lamb who sits on the throne.

Yet counseling an angry nation to love its enemy and to seek peace is not a popular position.

My son attends a Jesuit high school. After being closed for two days, the school opened with a Mass at which the school's president preached a wonderful homily on the gospel's demand that we forgive our enemies and pray for those who persecute us.

In a class of four students taught by

the president immediately following the Mass, my son said, "I agree with you. We need to pray for our enemies and love them. The Bible says so. And I will, right after we bomb the crap out of them."

The president replied kindly. "James, as a priest I am obligated to say what the gospel demands. As president I am obligated to do the same in front of the whole school.

"But as a private individual, I'd be lying if I didn't tell you that I feel the same way. But living the gospel means sometimes separating our feelings and our faith.

"Faith is all about being able to hold up the truth of the gospel and accepting the fact that you don't feel like it at the same time."

Grace and invitation

My Bible class has a lot of complaints about how God tells us the world will end. "Why all the destruction? Why all the suffering for everyone, even the Christians? Why not just wrap it up, do the judgment and get it over with?" These are fair questions.

Yet in Revelation 10 we learn of two interesting things. First, the seven thunders are sealed up. The earth is spared the impact of yet another set of tribulations.

Why? Because we could not handle it, I think. Even in the midst of tribulations we deserve because of our sin, there is grace.

Second, we are told that "the rest of humankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands."

The intent of the catastrophes was to provide a final wake-up call, a final chance to say yes to God and no to our-

selves and the lies of the Evil One. One last call to repent and enter the kingdom of God. God really desires that none will be lost.

In the aftermath of September 11, in addition to the horror, we saw a glimpse of this wake-up call, too. For a moment in time, a radically new and true perspective was forced upon the American nation.

The issues of the week before were rendered trivial by what happened. The superficiality of our lives was abruptly washed overboard, and we stood clean and clear-minded for a moment.

We knew, at least for a moment, that we could not save ourselves. We could not make our world safe. In that sobering moment, there was the opportunity to know how desperately we need a God who is as big as the God of the Bible.

And yet how quickly we began to speak and act as if we could handle this "with the work of our hands" (Rev. 9:20).

We so quickly affirmed our military strength. We so quickly accepted the claim that money and technology, properly applied, could make us safe once again.

Am I saying we should ignore military strength and not use money and technology to increase airport security and to seek out those who desire to do more evil? Of course not.

These too are gifts from God for use for life and the protection of life. And evil is to be resisted, the Bible makes this clear.

What I am saying is that the revelation to John forces us to the deeper question: In whom and on what do we place our faith? To whom and to what do we turn for deliverance?

United Prayer Transforms (from page 2)

ence on God and loving obedience.

The secret of Moses' ability to do awesome signs and wonders and deliver the people of Israel was that he was a great listener. Forty-seven times in the early chapters of Exodus it is recorded that God spoke to Moses, giving him specific guidance of what was to be done. Only 11 times does Moses speak back to God.

How are our listening skills? What is God saying to you and me right now at

this time in our life's journey?

One helpful practice that reminds us of our frailty and dependence is fasting. When we go without food, it aids our listening and concentration in prayer. It keeps us from the distraction of self-indulgence, slowness and sleepiness that eating brings with it. It helps our spirit be dominant over our body so we can better respond to God's direction.

In 2 Chronicles 20, when the people of God were attacked by enemy forces, they

came together to pray and fast. As they sought the Lord, they experienced swift deliverance in a war they did not have to fight themselves. God threw their enemies into confusion and flight.

God will do the same in this battle with terrorism if we will fast and pray. The spiritual forces of darkness and hate that deceive and foment terrorists to carry out acts of wanton murder and destruction will be bound and put to flight.

✦ John D. Robb

