

NATIONAL PRAYER

Initiatives

MF STAFF

JOHN ROBB

John Robb serves as Chairman for the International Prayer Council, and International Prayer Connect, a network of regional and national prayer ministries and networks around the world. The IPC focuses on global issues of common concern to the Body of Christ such as war, terrorism, HIV/AIDS, and other humanitarian issues as well as on the fulfillment of Christ's Great Commandment and the completion of the Great Commission.

We talked with John Robb, coordinator of the World Prayer Assembly, about the impact of this gathering and his life-long ministry of facilitating national prayer initiatives.

MF: In 2012, you were involved in coordinating what may very well have been the largest interdenominational prayer meeting in history. Can you tell us a little about the background of this gathering and its significance?

JR: The roots go back to the International Prayer Assembly that was held in Korea in 1984. It was such a major catalyzing factor for the world prayer movement—a huge ignition happened there. One of the fruits was the formation of the International Prayer Council (IPC), which is basically a set of relationships which connect prayer leaders and ministries in many different nations and regions of the world. In 2009 the IPC agreed to organize a second international prayer assembly, this time in Jakarta, Indonesia. The only problem was we had no money!

MF: No money for a major international gathering? What did God do?

JR: One of my colleagues is a gifted prophetic minister, who gave wonderful words of assurance from the Lord to us. Then, in August of 2011, we began to see the money flow in. The intercessors had said, “Don’t worry, God is going to provide.” And that’s exactly what happened. Some well-to-do people began to write big checks and many others gave generously too. One person donated the use of the national stadium in Indonesia. Another donated the use of a convention center outside Jakarta that seats twelve thousand. To the glory of the Lord, it was just a story of His miracles that all of us, including thousands of Indonesian children, prayed for!

MF: What are some takeaways from the World Prayer Assembly?

JR: About 9,000 ministry leaders and intercessors from 86 countries came for the conference part of the WPA. In addition over 100,000 additional local believers gathered in the national stadium to pray. It was connected live with satellite dishes to almost 400 cities in Indonesia, where about two-million others participated. The Global Day of Prayer and God TV linked in many millions more around the world. It was one big prayer meeting! However, for me personally, it was the palpable presence of the Lord himself that was the really moving thing about the WPA. Also, the presence of tens of thousands of youth and children who took part as equal partners in the program, dancing, singing and praying. My colleagues and I believe a “tsunami of the Spirit” continues to flow out and that the Lord is particularly emphasizing the raising up of the younger generation in both prayer and mission. Prayer is the way we connect with God and are guided and empowered by him. It is the real catalyst for all mission and ministry. If we are not intimately connected with God, the author of mission, we will not see his grace and power manifested in our efforts.

MF: How do you see God using the next generation?

JR: We believe that, as children and youth connect with the power of the Holy Spirit through prayer, God is going to use them in all walks of life. They are going to be great missionaries. They are going to be great political leaders, as well as lawyers, doctors, or whatever he calls them to do. (...continued on page 26)

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If they become intercessors, God will definitely make them his agents of transformation. He did this with the child Samuel who became sensitive to his voice and later became one of the most influential leaders in history as prophet, priest and judge of Israel. Therefore, probably the biggest takeaway of the World Prayer Assembly, will be the impact the children and youth now in the prayer movement will have on the future of our world. Our next major project will focus on this, so we are now moving towards holding a World Youth Prayer Assembly in 2016. It will be tri-generational like the

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WPA, but will be primarily led by the youth and children, with the older generations in supporting roles.

MF: What have been some of the results from this involvement of youth in the prayer movement?

JR: We had been praying for Myanmar for many years, but nothing much seemed to happen. It was such a spiritually dark place, as well as being oppressed by its dictatorial government. In January 2011, 200 Christian leaders came together within the country and decided to include the children as part of their strategy for national transformation. A colleague and I were there with them for this purpose. They raised up many thousands of child prayer-warriors all over the nation, and within just a month or two, remarkable developments began to happen in the political situation.

In World Vision, a large international child-care organization, staff often observed the Lord's miracles when the children participating in our projects prayed. We surveyed this phenomenon in five very poor countries where staff asked the kids to pray for specific infrastructural changes, such as the resolution of community splits. They did this for two years, and all were astonished by the miracles that occurred. Our staff exclaimed, "John, this is so incredible, we have never seen anything like this. When the children prayed, the parents got healed from terminal illness, governments chose those villages for the wells or the clinics, or the terrorists were kept out of those communities where the kids were praying." The results were so extraordinary that the Children in Prayer program began to spread more widely within World Vision, going from five countries to

20 countries. Finally, 50 of the national offices wanted to investigate CiP as a resource for community transformation as well as for the spiritual nurture of the kids themselves.

MF: That's really amazing. We are reading through your book, *The Peacemaking Power of Prayer*. Can you tell us how God has used prayer to bring about reconciliation and national healing?

JR: It has been my privilege with others to facilitate national prayer initiatives for over 20 years. During consultations and seminars for Christian leaders on mission to the unreached in many countries, I began to see amazing results when normally competitive and distrustful ministry leaders would begin to pray together. When they got into little groups to pray before planning their mission strategies, the Spirit of God came into the room and knit their hearts together. All kinds of new mission partnerships were established for the unreached peoples in this way. Through observing this process over and over again, I began to realize that prayer is much more than just a devotional or liturgical exercise. It's the way we connect with God for his direction and empowerment.

This gradual dawning of realization began to impact World Vision's work in the midst of war and suffering in many countries. Colleagues and church leaders in those countries started inviting me to bring teams to pray because the situations were so desperate—awful atrocities and no hope of ending these bitter conflicts. Ministry leaders gathered from across the denominational spectrum for three days to seek God's face for the healing of their land according to his promise of 2 Chronicles 7:14. As we did that, we began to discover that the participating tribes and denominations weren't right with each other because of past mistreatment of one another. Because of this we began to facilitate times of reconciliation and repentance for historic, corporate sins so the participants and the groups they represented could confess and forgive one another, then pray in unity for God's deliverance and restoration of their nations. To the glory of God, over and over again, we have seen the Lord's intervention, changing the headlines, sometimes suddenly, with resulting peace agreements, governments of national unity and removal of evil leaders from power.

MF: The story about Bosnia is really incredible. What happened there?

JR: During the Bosnian Civil War in August 1995, we formed a five person international team to facilitate a prayer initiative for Serbs, Croats, and those from Muslim backgrounds who had come to Christ. About 120 participants were all seated in separate ethnic

enclaves within the gathering, and we were teaching about reconciliation and the need for confession and repentance of corporate sins. A Serb woman stood up with tears coming down her face, and said, “We Serbs have sinned against you Croats.” And then three Croats stood, replying, “No, we are worse than you Serbs.” And those from the Muslim background group also stood, humbly asking forgiveness for their people’s atrocities against the Serbs and Croats. At that point, they broke free of their own enclaves, running and throwing their arms around those from the opposing ethnic groups, weeping and asking forgiveness.

As heart unity was established, it was time to hold hands around the room and pray together. I reminded them of the Lord’s promise for such situations: “Jesus said if even two of us agree as to touching anything we ask the Father, it will be done. But the key thing is to agree in what we are asking, and we are really in agreement now.” So we agreed together, gripping hands around the room. “What do you want him to do for us, for Bosnia?” They all shouted: “Mir”—that means peace in Serbo-Croatian. “Mir, Mir” they again cried. So, I said, “Let’s all now agree in the name of Jesus Christ for peace to come to Bosnia.”

Four days later, a peace proposal was on the table. It was from the Serbian dictator, Slobodan Milosevich, a hard, wicked man that everybody thought would never allow peace to come. Richard Holbrooke, the American negotiator, later wrote that he could not understand what made such a hardhearted man soften. To our and the Bosnian Christians’ joy, we began to understand that the Lord Jesus Christ is one who can heal nations if his people will get right with Him and one another, then agree in prayer.

MF: That’s tremendous! Can you tell us briefly about what’s involved in organizing a national prayer initiative and how others can do this in their country?

JR: A national prayer initiative normally brings together ministry leaders and intercessors, sometimes with people from business and government, usually for a two to three day gathering. During those days, we are primarily seeking to identify, understand and pray for the issues of the nation. We have local people who have some expertise about the political, economic, and spiritual situation of the nation share. Our team members who are experienced prayer leaders and facilitators also give various teachings to encourage and build faith and understanding in the participants. We also find that in every country there is a battle with the “prince of this world” and those spiritual powers Paul describes in Ephesians 6 that seek to deceive, corrupt and destroy. We need to stand with the locals, using the authority Christ has delegated to us to overcome evil spirits (Luk 10:19-21).

Humbling ourselves before the Lord and one another is very important because humility leads to unity and unity enables us to exercise his authority. In Philippians 2, we see that if we humble ourselves, we can come into unity, no longer competing. It’s not about me, it’s about the Lord, it’s about the whole church, and it’s about what he wants to do for the nations. When we are in unity, we can use the awesome authority that Jesus gave us.

MF: What are some lessons you have learned over the last thirty years and any advice for the next generation of intercessors?

JR: First, a key thing is to not to get too bound with your particular denomination or organization to the exclusion of connecting with the rest of the body of Christ. It’s so essential that we look beyond the labels that we all bear because ultimately, when we stand before Christ, all of that will be gone in an instant. The Spirit of God is seeking to unite his people across denominations and traditions so they can be one body, connecting with him and one another in prayer that transforms us, our communities, and nations.

Secondly, there is the issue of praying with his authority because a lot of Christians shy away from doing that. I’ve heard so many say, “God, would you bind the devil in this situation?” But that’s not what the Lord said. He said that we his people are to do the binding: “Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven.” We believers have been raised up and are seated with Christ, even now, in heavenly places. Though we are not there physically yet, we are joined through the Holy Spirit to him. Because of that organic connection we can exercise his authority as he leads. He wants us to use that authority to break the influence of spiritual darkness in our communities and nations. This is not something we should undertake by ourselves, but when we get in heart unity with others, we can begin to pray in faith-filled, authoritative ways so as to see wonderful breakthroughs happen.

The spiritual atmosphere in our community or nation will change as we persevere. Dramatic increases in the receptivity to the Gospel among the unreached, spiritual revival in the Church, and real transformation in the midst of corruption or other social ills will result. To the glory of God, you will see such shifts happen as you partner with others in ongoing prayer, starting with humility and proceeding through to unity and authority. Learning how to do this with other brothers and sisters is simply revolutionary and world-changing!

For more information about the International Prayer Council or the World Prayer Assembly, please visit www.ipcprayer.org and www.wpa2012.org. 