

Global Prayer Digest: Fill the Bowls of Incense with Buckets, Not Thimbles!

by **Keith Carey**

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“After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb’ (Rev. 7:9-10)

When the GPD started in 1982, no one anticipated the opportunities that could come our way. The goal then and now is to fill up the bowls of incense (see Rev. 5:8-10) for the unreached people groups (UPGs). In the years to come we have the opportunity to fill the bowls much faster than ever before.

In 1982 there were an estimated 17,000 UPGs. Since that time, there has been a tremendous amount of research done by groups like the IMB that have revealed a much clearer picture of the situation. Gone are the days when we have to rely on estimates. During the last 20 years experts and field missionaries scrutinized lists of unreached people groups and developed much more accurate information than we ever thought possible. Their information has been collected by the Joshua Project (See page 35) and made available on the Internet (see JoshuaProject.net). The results include statistics, locations, maps, and (usually) written profiles. The beginning of the Joshua Project brought GPD's first accurate litmus test for whether or not we were praying for a group that is actually unreached. No more guesswork! We will continue to use Joshua Project's website as our litmus test, and their information will continue to grow more accurate.

As essential as new information has been, there are other changes that are affecting the worldwide prayer movement. The advent of the digital age has made it possible to get information to people without the constraints of paper and the time it takes for printing. Social media allows people to distribute information in an instant. There are bound to be more changes as the Information Highway goes into overdrive. Such changes have made it possible for GPD materials to become available to small prayer groups in Africa and large prayer movements in the Chinese-speaking world. Prayer materials can go viral, and there is no one who can stop it from happening.

Expanding the Worldwide Prayer Movement

Who uses GPD prayer materials? To the surprise of many, myself included, only about four percent of GPD readers are native English speakers. About 5,000 of the 115,000 intercessors are using printed, email, or web-based materials. The Spanish-speaking world is about 10,000, the Korean intercessors are at 40,000, and Chinese is at 60,000. In the near future, GPD hopes to get prayer materials from these intercessors to share with GPD readers all over the world.

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GPD looks forward to accelerating these worldwide movements by adding other languages and cultures to the chorus of prayer for the nations. Africans often begin their church services on Saturday night and pray all night. Could we exchange prayer materials with these amazing intercessors? India is the country with by far the highest number of UPGs. Will they partner with us by providing prayer material for their work, and by directing us as to what we should pray for?



International is our key word, and it fits the direction God has been taking us since the *GPD* was first translated into Spanish and Portuguese in 1988. We have had a close partnership with Ethne to Ethne since 2006. They have close ties with key international mission networks like MANI in Africa, SEANET in Southeast Asia, COMIBAM in Latin America, and others. These are among the best contacts we can ever hope for! Will there be other mission networks that provide us with prayer fuel in the future? We hope so.


Because of these networks, we are able to get prayer materials directly from field missionaries. They are able to tell us which UPGs need prayer and which ones are most urgent. In some cases they write some or all of the prayer entries. In other cases we rely on the fine materials posted on Joshua Project and other websites to collect information on the UPGs they suggest. When a *GPD* edition is ready, it can go to the international and domestic prayer networks. I look forward to developing our relationships with these networks in the future so we can have all of our prayer materials determined by field workers.

Here at Home

In the 28 years I have worked with the *GPD*, I have never seen a generation like the one I am seeing emerge today! At long last there is a new generation in America that is eager to fill the bowls of incense for the unreached

nations. Their zeal has led them to fill up Mott Auditorium on our campus with worship and prayer 20 hours a day, six days a week. These young intercessors are eager for knowledge about the unreached nations. That's where the tools we have at Frontier Ventures provide exactly what they need. They could easily join the international prayer movements that use *GPD* materials to pray for unreached people groups on a daily basis.

The Houses of Prayer Movement will continue to accelerate as they have since their inception in 1999. With this acceleration will come the need for accurate prayer materials for the UPGs. I look forward to the day when members of various Houses of Prayer will join their brethren in China, South Korea, Bolivia, El Salvador, and other places in praying for the completion of the Great Commission.

When will the bowls of incense be filled for the various UPGs? God only knows. But when we pray for workers, and for hearts to be open to the transforming work of the Holy Spirit among various UPGs, we are bringing the Great Commission another step closer to being completed. That is what Ralph Winter wanted to see happen when he founded the *GPD* in 1982. In the years to come we will take his dream a step further! 



www.globalprayerdigest.org

Photo by **Yalin Xin**