

# Confessions of a Reluctant PrayerWalker

## What Happened to Me?

I received an invitation to lead a prayerwalk to India in 1998. I must confess that my initial response to the invitation was less than positive. Having participated in several evangelistic, international short-term mission trips, I wanted to do something more than just pray on my next trip. I resisted the idea of leading the prayerwalk for several days until a friend gave me a book on prayerwalking and asked me to read it. The more I read the more convicted I became. Finally, I asked God to forgive me of my wrong attitude and concluded that I needed the prayerwalk more than the prayerwalk needed me. I contacted three friends and a travel agent, and within a few months we were on our way to India.

As I traveled through India with my friends, the sights, sounds, and smells of our journey seeped into my heart and ascended to heaven in the language of prayer. The sight of women walking along the road from village to village carrying heavy loads on their heads became a reminder of the heavy burden of sin unreached people carry in their hearts. The sounds of music and conversations as we walked through villages served as a reminder of those who have yet to hear the sound of God's voice. As we walked

along a dark road late one night, I was reminded of the deep spiritual darkness that still covers much of this part of the world.

## What Does Praying On-Site Do?

• **Praying on-site taught me the harsh realities of poverty.** The poverty I witnessed in tribal areas was far worse than anything I could have imagined. The outstretched hands and longing eyes of malnourished beggars—many of them children—on the streets of the larger cities overwhelmed me. I realized that emptying my pockets

would provide less than a drop of help in their vast desert of poverty. Instead, I emptied my heart as I interceded on behalf of the vast

numbers of people in such desperate need. While I have read or heard reports about these kinds of realities in other parts of the world, praying on-site put me face-to-face with the people who live in those realities from day-to-day.

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• **Praying on-site made me aware of the challenges of reaching those with little or no access to the gospel.** The vast majority of the people we met were either Hindu or animists. One day we visited a burial site. The cremated remains of those who died without Christ had a sobering impact on each of our team members. The ashes and human bone fragments scattered on the ground before us represented people we would never meet in heaven. This sight prompted each of us to earnestly pray that the living relatives and friends of the deceased would be receptive to the gospel of life. As my friends and I traveled in remote areas we saw many Hindu and animist altars in villages and in rice fields. We were present in one village during the celebration of Divali—a major Hindu religious festival in which fireworks are exploded to chase away evil spirits. I realized more than ever the need to pray for those who have committed themselves to taking the gospel to people steeped in other traditions.

• **Praying on-site created within me an intense yearning for the salvation of unreached people.**

Being in the midst of so many people who have never heard about Jesus Christ moved me deeply. As an American I enjoy life in the comfort and security of our gospel-saturated borders. People in America have multiple access to the gospel. Every day people in America have the luxury of choosing which gospel television or radio program they will or will not listen to or which church they will or will not attend. However, the people I saw and met live precariously on the edge where there



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is little or no access to the gospel. Their choices are limited and often do not include the choice to hear the gospel.

• **Praying on-site enlarged my view of the world.** Today, almost one-third of the world's population lives in the 10/40 Window—the Last Frontier of missions. This geographical area stretches from North Africa across the Middle East to Asia. The ethnic and linguistic groups that live in this region are among the most isolated and hardest to reach in the world. Most of these people are kept in darkness by hostile cultures, governments, and religions. Most have never met a Christian, seen a Bible, or entered a church. The Wycliffe Bible translators estimate at least 400 million people in our world speak a language with no Scripture—not even one Book of the Bible in their language. Our visit to India put us in direct contact with one of these least evangelized people groups. At present, the people group we visited has only the New Testament in their language. However, we had the privilege of meeting the men who have completed the translation of the

Old Testament into the language of their people. We experienced a wonderful time of encouragement and prayer together. My view of the world has been enlarged. Even though I have participated in several international short-term mission trips, I

was reminded again of the multiplied millions of people outside the geographical boundaries of our country who are still waiting to hear the gospel for the very first time.

• **Praying on-site made me more keenly aware of my responsibility to take the gospel to**

**those living in the uttermost parts.** Today, 3 of every 4 persons in the world have not accepted Christ as Savior. One of the 3 unsaved has never even had the opportunity to hear about Him. Every hour approximately 1,400 people die without ever having heard about Jesus Christ. One third of the children in the area we visited do not live to the age of five. We learned that the life expectancy of the people in the area is in the low 50's. Sadly, many of these people will live and die without ever having heard the message of Jesus Christ. As I saw thousands of

people on the crowded sub-continent of India, I thought of Jesus who saw and had compassion on the crowds "because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matt. 9:36). This experience prompted me to repeatedly ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest field (Matt. 9:37-38).

• **Praying on-site caused me to reflect on the wealth I enjoy as an American and on the importance of investing that wealth to grow God's kingdom.** On more than one occasion I reflected on the words of Jesus in Luke 12:48—"From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded." My family and I have indeed been blessed with much. I must wisely invest what I have been blessed with to the end that the gospel reaches those living in the remotest parts of the earth. Praying on-site in India caused me to carefully consider my stewardship of all that the Lord has entrusted to me. I am convinced that I can do without many of the upgrades I think I need and instead invest those dollars in kingdom work.

• **Praying on-site caused me to become attached to the people I met.** My friends and I met Christians who are vulnerable to persecution and have little protection under the law. These believers live out their commitment to Christ in spite of threats and danger. They graciously demonstrated

hospitality and kindness to us and took the time to pray for us. We also met villagers whose daily lives are always preoccupied with thoughts of survival. And we met many people who are sincerely convinced that there are many paths to heaven. I

will always be attached to these people through prayer. I cannot erase their memories from my mind or their needs from my heart and will continue to pray for them with compassion and understanding.

• **Praying on-site in India taught me that praying on-site wherever I am must become a way of life.** I returned home deeply convicted of the need to pray on-site in my neighborhood and in places throughout my community. I must allow the familiar sights and sounds of my comfortable world to seep into my heart and ascend to heaven in the language of prayer. I must look at the people in my own village who are "harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" and be willing to go into the harvest field. I must continue to pray wherever I am to the end that all people everywhere will have an opportunity to hear and respond to the gospel and, by so doing, worship and enjoy God forever.



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