



*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.*

II Chronicles 7:14

CHAPTER 1

NETWORK OF PRAYER

Have you ever felt like your relationship with Christ is on autopilot and that you're at a plateau? You know the Scriptures fairly well; you're living a life of following Christ and yet you desire to go deeper with Him. Sometimes it isn't until God changes your surroundings or plucks you out of a situation that you see Him and His Word in a fresh new way. He brings someone or something into your life to model a higher level of spiritual maturity. In the most surprising way, that's what He did for us.

As I write this, I am hearing the call to prayer from a nearby mosque. You see, we moved to Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia. And it was in this place that God took us to a new level in our walk with Him by teaching us to keep the secrets of Jesus.

In Matthew 6, Jesus asks His disciples to give, to pray, and to fast in secret. Keeping these secrets will begin to form God's character in you. Some of those character traits are humility (dealing with our pride), discretion (not giving ammunition to the opposition), spiritual perception (recognizing a counterfeit), wisdom (to store treasure in heaven),



and intimacy with Him (drawing us into a close fellowship). And these are just the beginning.

Until God took us to Indonesia, we didn't even know those traits were underdeveloped in us. But because He loves us and wants the best for us, God began to work on these issues in our lives. It started with an unexpected invitation from David's company to make the move to Indonesia.

When David first told me the news I couldn't believe it! My mind began spinning. Would God ask us to leave our children and grandchildren (our grandchildren came to our house every Wednesday morning for a special play time) and move to the other side of the world? Could we leave our growing ministry in the States and the new translations of our materials into other languages? Why would God do that?

We began to pray for God's direction and for two months felt like our prayers were hitting a glass ceiling. Neither of us received an answer or direction as we prayed. We have learned over the years never to move on a "yellow light," but to wait until we have a clear "green" or "red" answer from the Lord. The deadline for a decision about the move was drawing near and we still didn't have an answer. The company offered to send us to Indonesia for a short visit to help us with the decision and while in Jakarta, one morning the Lord spoke through His Word.

David had suggested we read aloud from the book of Psalms to each other on the last morning of our trip. We desperately wanted to hear from God. We began with familiar Psalms and it was my turn to read Psalm 139. Verses 9 and 10 leapt off the page, "*If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.*" We both instantly knew we were moving across the ocean to Indonesia!



NETWORK OF BELIEVERS

Before we made the move, we made another trip to Jakarta. Only a few days before we left, I received an email about a huge network of believers who had been praying for the transformation of Indonesia. For twelve years this powerful network of intercessors had been fasting and praying for Indonesia, taking literally the promise of II Chronicles 7:14, *“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.”*

The network was holding a week-long conference in Jakarta during the time we were to be in the city. I was curious how a huge prayer gathering could take place in the largest Muslim country in the world. We faxed in our registration for the conference with anticipation.

We walked into the conference and were met by a lovely English-speaking tour guide. “You must be from Houston,” she said. We were in shock. No one knew us. How could she know we were from Houston? Later we were to find out that the Indonesian prayer network had been praying for the city of Houston in America as a gift in exchange for the prayers Houstonians had been praying for the nation of Indonesia. They had been specifically praying that God would send Houstonians with ministries needed in Indonesia to move to their country! We were privileged to meet the humble leader of the prayer network. He was not at all surprised to see us at the conference. I told him, “I think you prayed us here!”

We began to sense that God was getting ready to challenge us like never before.

At the first session of the conference where over eight thousand powerful intercessors were gathered, the praise and worship time was amazing. These precious believers sang with whole-hearted abandon about the glory of God’s greatness. I had seldom heard such bold, heartfelt singing from so many believers in one place. When the last note of the music faded, a speaker quietly approached the microphone. “All of



you who have fasted for forty days in preparation for this week, please come forward. You have earned the right to open our prayer conference.”

I thought to myself, “That’s a bold way to start. What if no one comes forward? How many people would really fast for forty days?” I looked around, expecting to find one or two brave souls who had actually fasted for the full length of time. But to my shock, *hundreds* of people (very thin people, I might add), streamed to the front of the auditorium. Some knelt down, some stood, and some stretched out on the floor at the base of the stage. Together, they began to pray aloud. It was orderly and calm, but these prayer intercessors meant business.

As the intercessors prayed, electricity went through the whole meeting. We felt the almost tangible presence of God, sensing His nearness and power in a way we had never known before that time. The prayer warriors cried out to God, asking Him to work His wonders to heal Indonesia and bring about complete transformation of the nation that so desperately needs Him. No one hurried them as they “*made their requests known unto God*” (*Phil. 4:6*). The rest of us sat in awe as we eavesdropped on a divine conversation.

These very humble, powerful believers had my attention. I was sold. I had to find out, “What was the secret of these passionate believers? How did the church leaders talk all these people into fasting and praying so fervently?” Growing up in America I came to believe that Western nations were to be the main ones sending Christians to spread God’s kingdom, but I quickly learned that my thinking had to adjust to reality. Western Christians have much to learn from our passionate brothers and sisters in Christ around the world.

INDONESIAN BELIEVERS

After settling in Jakarta, I began talking to some of the prayer intercessors and opened my home each week for prayer. A group of dedicated women of many nationalities came, prayed and fasted. I began to



search the Scriptures to learn more. The search led me to Matthew chapter 6, where I found the heart of Jesus' teaching on the subjects that had riveted my attention: giving, praying, and fasting. These were the very activities that consumed the lives of the Indonesian believers.

In this passage, Jesus instructs those who wish to follow Him: *“Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.*

“So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you” (Matthew 6:2-6, 16-18).

As we began to absorb the message of these verses, we realized we had much to learn. Our move to Indonesia was to be a great exchange. One of the reasons God sent us was to have our Bible study materials translated into Indonesian and to train national leaders to use them. There are relatively few Bible studies available in their language for thousands of Indonesian believers. We have seen God work through dedicated believers to translate not only the book, *Wisdom for Mothers* into Indonesian, but He made it possible to film the video series with a



beautiful Indonesian Bible teacher who trained with me for two years.

But the other half of the exchange is what God would teach us from our Asian brothers and sisters in Christ. We didn't know that God would use the Indonesian believers to model for us a mature walk with Christ in the disciplines of the faith that we had casually read in our Bibles, but had not taken seriously enough. As we observed the faithful lives of these dedicated Christians, God was training us for a more authentic walk with Him and for more effective ministry.

When we did research for this book, we could not have known that God was preparing us even then not only to personally grow in Him, but also to be ready to respond in Indonesia's hour of need during the greatest natural disaster in more than a century.

TSUMANI

As I'm sure you remember, on December 26, 2004, Indonesia became front page, headline news when a huge 9.0 earthquake in the Indian Ocean caused a tsunami that rushed onto the shores of Indonesia and other nearby nations. Then on the day after Easter 2005, only three months later, a massive 8.7 earthquake once again rocked Sumatra and nearby islands.

We may never understand God's viewpoint of those historic, devastating days until we get to heaven, but one thing is clear: As the world rushed support to the victims, borders that had once been tightly closed against all foreigners (especially Christians) were suddenly swung open wide.

When we watched the terrible scenes on our television, as you did during those days, our hearts cried out, "What can we do?" Almost immediately, it began to dawn on us that God had already shown us what to do.

First, He had taught us by the example of the godly prayer warriors in the prayer network of Indonesia. They had modeled exactly how to prepare for a crisis and how to respond to it. They had been sacrificially



giving, praying, and fasting for years, and had humble hearts ready to respond immediately, appropriately, and lovingly and sensitively when the waves receded from the shores.

Secondly, God also showed us how to respond to a crisis through His Word. The principles we had been studying could be applied to either physical disasters like the ones we experienced in Indonesia or to anyone's personal disaster—divorce, death, a prodigal child—or any number of other problems both great and small in families or in nations. In His Word, we found three keys that provide answers to unanswerable dilemmas.

The secrets of Jesus are simple yet profound. When we come against an impenetrable wall—either in a human heart, a church, a city or a nation—there is but one plan that will gain the victory: We must keep the secrets of Jesus. We are to give, to pray, and to fast “under the radar,” in secrecy. Those who are willing and know best how to practice these disciplines outlined by our Lord are best equipped to gain the victory.

You may be preparing yourself even now to go on a mission to one of the nations in the “10-40 window” affected by the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami, for we know the work of rehabilitation and reconstruction will be ongoing for many years.

Perhaps, instead, you are struggling to come up for air from your own tidal wave of grief from personal hurt, or perhaps you are ministering to one who has experienced the waves of despair. Or maybe you are simply watching and waiting for God to reveal His plan for your future. Your personal “tsunami” may be one of confusion and doubt, not knowing which way to turn.

Some of you are called to be ministers, teachers, intercessors, or missionaries, seeking the ground of hearts, homes and nations to be surrendered to Christ. You want to go deeper with the Lord. Perhaps you have been praying for a more effective ministry, but you need new tools to energize your kingdom work. If any of these scenarios describe



where you are, we think God has crossed your path with ours to lead you to discover some sacred truths about a godly response to your world.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, I open my heart to You. I now place all my worries at Your feet. Please teach me through Your Word, through godly counsel, and through prayer how to serve You as I serve others and how to respond appropriately to the troubled world. In Your blessed, precious name I pray these things. Amen.

KEY QUESTIONS

Read Matthew 6:1-18, the focal passage of our study, and circle the words “secret” and “reward” each time you find them your Bible. What captures your attention as you read this passage?

What about these secrets are new for you to consider?

What “tsunami” are you dealing with today?

You may not be living near an area devastated by a physical tsunami, but you may be experiencing your own personal storm. Feelings of being overwhelmed by problems or grief, by a too-busy schedule, or by a load of heavy responsibilities may engulf you. Your heart may also be crying out, “What can I do?” From what you have read today, what are the key principles you might apply to your situation?

Which of the secrets challenges you most?