

Emailed Reports and Testimonies to the Central Region Regarding the Everything Changed Prayer Tour

by Carolyn Butler

7.12.17: "... all the towns and places he planned to visit"

"The Lord chose seventy-two other disciples and sent them ahead in pairs to all the towns and places he planned to visit." Luke 10:1 NLT

On June 19-25, seventy-eight women signed on for what I feel was a divine mission—tour the six regions of our ministry network and pray for our cities and communities. Twenty-one women signed up for the full seven days; others joined the tour for a single day or for a partial tour. Everywhere we went, we prayed, *"God, visit this city! Intervene in this city! This city needs you, Lord! Change the course and destiny of this city!"* As the tour progressed, our prayers became bolder and bolder. The Everything Changed Prayer Tour ended June 25, but the effects of our prayer efforts will continue to unfold, because **we are fully expecting God to visit "all the towns and places" where we prayed.**

So many God moments. So many divine appointments. So many confident prayers. So much bold faith. So many prophetic promises. So many stories. And for the next several days, I will be telling you some of those stories. But for now, just let me say thank you to all of you who prayed for us. I cannot express how important it was to us to know that you were praying for us.

When we pray, everything changes so... *"Always be joyful. Never stop praying."**

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* I Thessalonians 5:16-17 NLT

7.13.17: Everyone on the bus raised their hand!

Heroin and opioid abuse and overdose. Drug addiction. Crime and racial tensions with police. Homelessness and joblessness. These were some of the answers from our local pastors in Hagerstown when we asked, *"What are the greatest challenges in your city?"* With their help, we mapped out a portion of the city and started the Central Region tour by prayer walking in downtown Hagerstown.

We circled the center of Hagerstown's business district where scattered across the cityscape were artistic sculptures of butterflies. We walked past the cultural, government, and social services centers of this city and began to pray for Hagerstown's families; for the next generation; for wisdom and blessing on government leaders; for the police; for the entertainment, education, and economic sectors of culture; and for the joblessness and poverty that plagues this city. We prayed with both pro-abortion and pro-life advocates who were on the streets that day. We prayed over Jonathan and Prospect Streets, areas known for drug abuse and prostitution.

When we got back on the bus, the women began to write in their journals what God was saying to them about their experiences in Hagerstown. Later that day they shared with one another what God was speaking, and one word was repeated over and over. HOPE!

- *“H is for Hagerstown. H is for hope.”*
- *“I have come to give Hagerstown a hope and a future for the next generation.”*
- *“A caterpillar endures great pain trying to break out of its cocoon. This city is in great pain right now, but soon there will be freedom as this city transforms.”*
- *“There is going to be a metamorphosis in Hagerstown--a transformation of hope.”*
- *“Hagerstown will become a city of hope!”*

When the women were asked, *“How many of you wrote down the word ‘hope?’”* everyone on the bus raised their hand! I think God is trying to tell us something about Hagerstown!

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7.14.17: We renamed the city gates!

Martinsburg was the second target city on the Central Region leg of the tour. More than 100 overdose deaths were reported last year in the Eastern Panhandle of WV, with 79 of them occurring in Berkeley County according to data compiled in January by the WV Health Statistics Center. From one end to the other, the county is just littered with strip clubs, some of them right next door to elementary schools. In addition to the drug problems, local pastors reported to us their community’s challenges with brokenness, lack of hope, families remaining in cycles of dysfunction, financial stress, and people looking for something to satisfy their hunger—in all the wrong places.

But as the women on the tour began to drive through Queen Street and Route 11 to the Virginia state line, we were reminded that as a Spirit-filled Christ follower we carry the glory and presence of God (Colossians 1:27 NLT). So we began to boldly intercede for this area, asking God to release HIS presence into our city and communities as we prayed. We renamed the city gates! For so long Martinsburg has been known for “addiction, poverty and brokenness” but on June 20, a tour bus full of women with audacious faith began to declare Martinsburg as a city of “freedom, innovation, and increase!” And we are fully expecting God to answer our prayers and visit this city!

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7.15.17: “Ever’ thang becomes easier after you git that top layer”

On the first day of the Everything Changed Prayer Tour, the Western Region team had scheduled a visit to a coal strip mine in western Maryland. At the time I thought to myself, *“Why in the world are we visiting a coal mine?”* But God had divine purposes in this visit and showed us things at this coal mine that became visual lessons for future prayer stops.

It was too dangerous for us to get off the bus so Rusty, an extremely knowledgeable, down-to-earth, plain-speaking coal miner, jumped on board and began to talk to us about the nature of strip mining. He pointed out the high part of the mountain, and told us that the top layer was the hardest layer to penetrate. It required the strategic placement of dynamite, and then it was necessary to wait for the right conditions before the dynamite could be discharged. *“Once you git through that there top layer, you can git at all the coal underneath. Ever’ thang becomes easier after you git that top layer.”*

Later that day we stood in a circle on the West Virginia University campus and as we prayed, one of our leaders cried out, *“Dear Lord, I’m reminded of how Rusty told us that the top layer of the mountain is the hardest to penetrate, but once you get through that top layer, everything becomes easier. So I boldly pray today that you would get through to the most anti-God professor on this campus. We ask you to reveal yourself to the most persuasive party person, the most influential student here. Penetrate that top layer, Lord!”*

“Penetrate that top layer, Lord!” That became a rallying cry for the last three stops in our Central Region—Shenandoah University in Winchester; James Madison University in Harrisonburg; and the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. Some of these universities are in transition, looking for a new president, and we prayed for search committees to be drawn to godly men and women as their leaders. Some of the universities have no Chi Alpha presence at all, and are resistant to allowing a Christ-centered organization on campus. *“THERE WAS A MAN SENT FROM GOD...”* was the beginning of a strong prophetic utterance and prayer on the JMU campus declaring that God was already raising up a leader with a passion and calling to bring a Chi Alpha presence back to this campus.

Our prayer for the next generation is that they experience a personal revelation of God that leads to a life-redeeming personal relationship with their Creator. You can’t argue people into the Kingdom. You can’t protest them into changing. But when God radically confronts leaders (like Saul, aka the apostle Paul) who are convinced they *are* doing what is right, everything changes, and an enemy of the Way becomes an advocate (Acts 7:58-8:3; 9:1-31; Galatians 1:13-24; Philippians 3:4-7). So we are praying for the Lord to turn the hardest skeptics into His staunchest defenders! Please join us in that prayer, because...

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7.17.17: “... before the sun rises tomorrow we expect her to be healed”

My go-to worship station on my Pandora radio app is heavily seeded with R&B gospel and a couple of days before the prayer tour began, I was listening to Marvin Winans lead worship in a medley of “Draw me Close to You/Thy Will Be Done.” Toward the end of the song while the backup team sang the phrase, *“Thy will be done...”* he kept repeating, *“I’ve seen you work in others and I want you to work in me...”*

That one phrase just resonated with me, and as I sang along, I broke down and wept in my kitchen. I’ve been in ministry almost all my life, so I’ve done my fair share of praying with others, but there was a longing in my heart to be bolder, to pray with more conviction, and to pray with confident faith. So I cried out, *“Lord, I want to pray **really bold prayers**—prayers for healing, prayers for deliverance—and see results. Increase my faith, Lord.”*

After every night’s rally, we closed the service by inviting people with personal needs to come forward for prayer. On Wednesday night, the leader asked for all the women on the tour to come up front to be available to pray with people. There was one woman in the audience who just made a beeline for me and I thought, *“Ok Lord, I need you to pray through me. Help me to be bold and pray with confident faith.”* She had a granddaughter who had been rushed to the hospital after collapsing at a family function that day. The granddaughter couldn’t breathe and no one seemed to be able to diagnose what was wrong with her.

As I began to pray, it was as if the Lord just downloaded these bold statements of faith and I began to pray Scripture. *You promised in your word, Lord, that we could ask anything in your name and you would do it (John 14:14 NLT). You said that by your stripes we are healed (Isaiah 53:5 KJV). You said that you would direct the steps of the godly and that you delight in every detail of their lives (Psalms 37:23 NLT). You said in your Word... You said*

in your Word... You promised and we fully expect you to make good on the promises in your Word because the Psalmist said, "The word of the Lord holds true and you can trust everything He does" (Psalms 33:4 NLT) so we're trusting you tonight to heal Jessie and before the sun rises tomorrow we expect her to be healed and return home to her family!

I could barely believe I had actually said those things! The grandmother was visibly moved and said, *"I'm going to the hospital right now. I think she's healed!"* The next day I was curious about the outcome of our prayer, so I texted the pastor, described whom I had prayed for, and asked if he had an update. He wasn't aware of the situation, but said he would find out for me. Within minutes, he texted me back, *"The granddaughter is doing much better. She is at home!"*

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7.18.17: "I want to tell the women a story..."

For the first four days of our tour, we had a bus driver who had been in the charter bus business ever since he returned from military service. His specialty was "flipping" charter buses. He would take an old bus and reconstruct it from the ground up—new engine, new tires, new bodywork, brand new upholstery, the works. We were riding in style in a charter bus that he had just completely renovated.

He was a quiet man, silent and reserved. If you said hello, he would barely respond to your greeting. It was hard to engage him in conversation even on a surface level. He just seemed withdrawn and preoccupied and didn't appear to "warm" to this group of women he was chauffeuring.

Every time anyone spoke or prayed or testified, they had to use the bus microphone in order for everyone to hear so he *had* to listen to every devotional. He was a captive audience for both the quiet, earnest prayers of individuals at the microphone, as well as the collective swell of prayers when we "stormed" God's throne together. He heard us pray in the Spirit. He listened to our songs of praise and our worship anthems as we, in one mighty chorus, sang out, *"The heavens are ROARING, the praise of your glory... You have NO rival. You have NO equal... What a powerful name it is, the name of Jesus!"* He heard every excited testimony from every excited woman when God answered our prayers, some almost instantly! He had witnessed all this for three straight days.

Then, as we were traveling through Virginia Beach, he turned to the tour leaders at the front of the bus and said, *"This city brings back painful memories. After lunch, I want to tell the women a story..."*

TO BE CONTINUED

7.19.17: "You won't believe what just happened!"

We were on a tight schedule and weren't sure we could even make all our prayer stops that day, but this was a breakthrough in our relationship with this man, and we wanted to hear his story.

He apologized for appearing withdrawn, and confessed that he had experienced some setbacks this year in his personal life, including a painful breakup with "a good, Christian woman" he had been dating. But what was weighing heavy on his heart as we drove through Virginia Beach was his anger and disappointment with a failed business deal that had cost him significantly. He didn't know how he was going to recoup his losses, and he wanted us to pray for him!

So we gathered around this man who had so expertly and safely driven us through dangerous coal mine sites and crowded interstates and narrow city streets. We prayed for God to bless him and his business; to supernaturally provide for his needs; to give him favor and open doors; and to help him recover the deep financial losses from this disappointing business partnership.

Our first prayer stop the next day was the city hall in Richmond. As we filed out of the bus, we saw a production crew filming on the steps and had to make our way around the cameras and filming crew. When we returned, our bus driver took the microphone and said, *"You won't believe what just happened! That film crew just came up to me and started asking me questions about my bus. They want to hire me for their next job!"* We laughed and rejoiced with him about this answer to prayer, and prayed for the Lord to continue to bless him until all his debt was gone. Later that afternoon, we returned to the bus from a prayer stop, and he took to the microphone again. *"While I was waiting for y'all to return, this really weird thing happened,"* he said in a perplexed voice. *"I got a call out of the blue from a friend of mine that I haven't talked to in years. He has a group that wants to hire me this summer for a tour!"* That night we had to change buses and say a bittersweet goodbye to a bus driver we had come to love, but our new friend left with a very personal and powerful God truth...

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7.20.17: "We need to pray again!"

It was 6 o'clock in the morning. We were in a hotel in downtown Baltimore—a hotel we would be at for the next two days. I had finished getting dressed and was ready to turn the bathroom over to Linda, my roommate. I flushed the toilet and the water just wouldn't stop rising (You know that panicked feeling, right?) and within seconds, the entire bathroom floor was flooded with almost an inch of water! While we were calling the front desk and trying to manage this little challenge, Linda, who is a nurse, got a call from Carrie, one of our team members, asking her to come and take a look at her roommate, Denise, who was sick.

Denise, a diabetic, was pale, clammy, nauseated, and dizzy. Linda suspected it was low blood sugar but Denise didn't have any test strips with her so she couldn't accurately diagnose her, but she knew Denise was in no condition to travel with us that day. Linda stayed behind to take care of Denise, and after the women gathered on the bus for the trip into DC, we prayed for Denise.

I texted Linda before lunch for a report on Denise. *"She is still dizzy but the nausea and clamminess has subsided. Resting now."* This was somewhat encouraging but not what we wanted for our friend. I texted again in the afternoon and the report came back, *"Napping right now. Unable to get from bed to bathroom without dizziness which creates nausea. But she is alert when awake and not having typical low blood sugar symptoms like this morning. She has nibbled and drank a little at a time."* This was progress, but I thought to myself, *"We need to pray again!"*

I was reminded of the time when Jesus prayed for a blind man and then asked him, *"Do you see anything?"* The man's response was, *"I see people; they look like trees walking around."* So Jesus prayed again until the man's sight was fully restored (Mark 8:22-25 NIV). We said, *"Let's do that for Denise!"* We prayed again, *"We thank you for this progress, Lord, but this is not our heart's desire. We are praying again for our friend, and we will accept nothing less than a complete recovery. Complete recovery, Lord! Complete recovery in such a way that only you can get the credit!"* Or something to that effect.

About thirty minutes later we arrived at the site of that night's rally, and settled into the "crash" rooms provided for us by the host church. Brenda, our tour manager, came into the room and said, *"I just got a text from Denise. She says, 'My world has stopped spinning. Can you send someone to the hotel to pick us up? I want to come to the rally tonight!'"*

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7.21.17: "This was just icing on the cream"

For the past few days, I have been telling you stories from our Everything Changed Prayer Tour. But these are just *my* stories—the things I personally witnessed. All the women on the tour have their own personal stories of answered prayer, some of which we heard at our Sunday celebration service.

Joy, originally from Nigeria, testified on Sunday about the things she had experienced, some of which I was hearing about for the first time. She ruffled through the pages in her journal and said, *"I have my pages full of what God has done... I don't even know where to start and this was just done while God was depositing his Spirit everywhere we have come... This is just a deposit. Can you imagine what God is going to do when we begin to see the fruit?"*

"During this tour I have experienced the power of believing in what God can do. I have witnessed Sister Yemi pray because of someone who was in ICU. This was not even part of the things we were supposed to be praying for! This was just icing on the cream. Or how do you say it? (And the congregation responded, "Icing on the cake!") Icing on the cake! However you say it. But this was just something that God gave us. There was a man in ICU that we prayed over and before the afternoon, we got the message that he was out of ICU! And someone who was going to go for surgery, he went to the doctor, and the next day, the surgery was cancelled! I could go on and on..."

Like Joy, "I could go on and on..." I think all the women on the tour feel a bit like the gospel writer John when he wrote, *"Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written"* (John 21:25 NIV).

This prayer tour was a faith-building game changer for us. In addition to all the *"icing on the cream"* prayers that God answered on this tour, **we are fully expecting God to visit "all the towns and places" that we prayed.** As Joy testified, we have *"experienced the power of believing in what God can do."* We will never be the same. The husband of one of our leaders told his wife, *"You women are ruined forever! You will never be able to go back to what was before."* He's right about that. And God was right when he spoke to our district superintendent in a dream and told him, *"Everything changed when the women went on the prayer tour."*

And now we encourage YOU to start praying some bold prayers—for your personal challenges, for your family, for your church, and for your city! Because when we pray, everything changes so... *"Always be joyful. NEVER stop praying."**