

Volume Four

# City Prayers



Compiled and created by World Impact

Thirty days of reflections  
& prayers





Volume Four

# City Prayers

Thirty days of reflections  
& prayers

Compiled and created by World Impact





Dedicated to those who love  
the city in all her beauty and shame  
for Christ's name.

*Special thank you to:*

Andy Entz

Anna Hollingworth

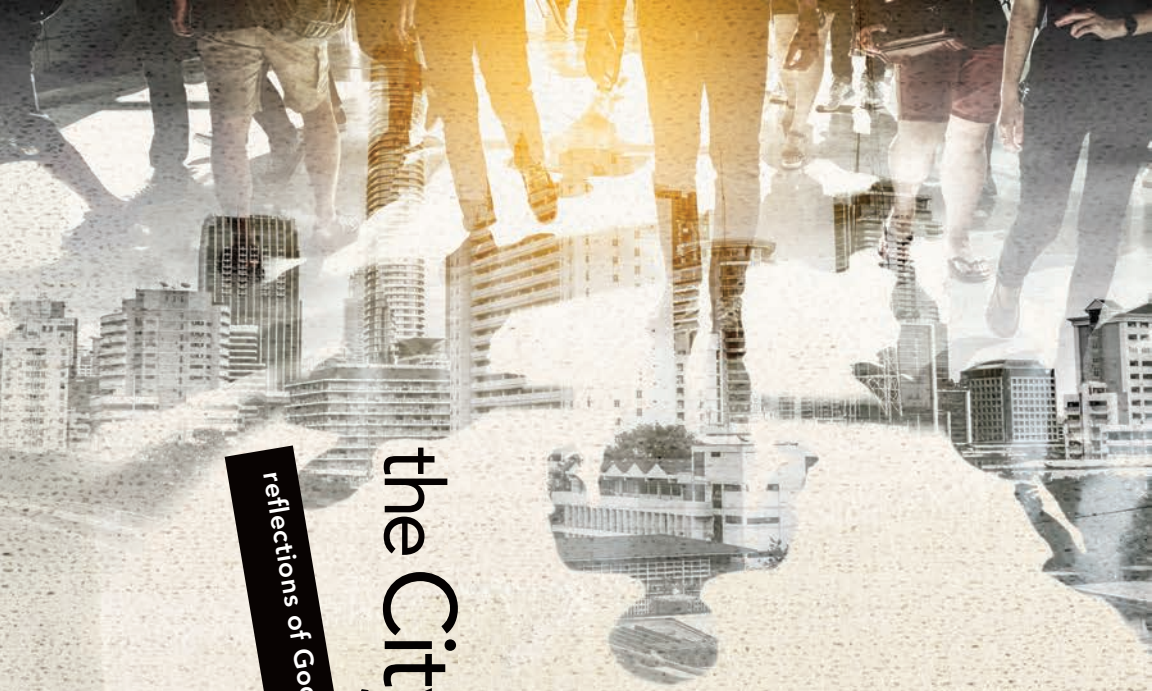
Ashley Hall

Jazmin Perez

Paula Pust

Ryan Carter





# the City

reflections of God's Kingdom





## Introduction

The city is a mixed bag of blessing and sorrow. Reflections of God's Kingdom can be found on any block you walk. And right around the next corner, you'll come across a glimpse of pain and suffering shaped by the brokenness of humanity.

We love the city...because the city is full of men and women made in God's image, and we all need a Redeemer.

We keep our eyes on the future city of God where "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Revelation 21:4). While we wait for this sure hope, we know that today God is calling to himself men and women from every city in the US and around the world.

Christ commissioned his church to reach the world with the gospel. World Impact focuses its missional efforts on equipping the local urban church because we know that if we can reach the concentration of men and women in the city for Christ, these men and women will reach the world. The gospel message will resound to cities around the world as they take this good news to their home countries.

This is why we pray for the city. I hope you will join me in praying for God to grow our love for the city, expand our strategy of equipping men and women to reach it, and that Christ's love will lead to flourishing communities.

In Christ,



Rev. Dr. Alvin Sanders  
President & CEO of World Impact



# the City

filled with image bearers of God



in the image of God he created them  
male and female he created them  
28 God blessed them and said  
them, "Be fruitful and increase  
robable reading of the original Hebrew text  
(LXX); Masoretic Text the earth





## The Cultural Mandate

— GENESIS 1:28 —

<sup>28</sup>“God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’”

### PRAYER

*Dear God, we grieve at the deeply embedded realities of sin in your world. Help each of us to take up the mantle of cultivating the resources and relationships you have given us for your glory. With the prophet Isaiah, we look forward to the day in which “they will neither harm nor destroy on all [your] holy mountain, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (Is. 11:9). Amen.*

### REFLECTION

God had just spoken the fibers of the world into existence, weaving them into an intricate ecosystem of fish and sea, bird and sky, beast, and earth. At the center of the glorious new creation, he forms a man and a woman. Filled with the breath (Spirit) of God, his image bearers are unmatched in all his works, and God gives them an equally unparalleled task: to exercise authority over the rest of creation, cultivating it for the glory of God. This is known as the “cultural mandate,” a privilege that continues with all of Adam and Eve’s descendants. In every era and every place, humans have been developing civilizations and cultures in God’s world.

What greater epicenter of human culture than the city? We are amazed to see the beautiful diversity, ingenuity, and cooperation found in cities around the world—manifestations of God’s image in us. But we are equally appalled to see the deviance, injustice, and cruelty that come from distorting God’s image. Filling and cultivating the earth was never meant to be separated from God’s presence and purpose. Everything we create apart from him will be saturated with sin.

## The City of Enoch

— GENESIS 4:16-17 —

<sup>16</sup>“So Cain went out from the Lord’s presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden. <sup>17</sup> Cain made love to his wife, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Enoch. Cain was then building a city, and he named it after his son Enoch.”

### REFLECTION

Sin always has consequences. In response to Cain killing his brother, Abel, God cursed Cain. This resulted in a separation between Cain and God – both physically and spiritually. Cain was driven from the land and hidden from the presence of God. However, God still cared for Cain and put a mark on him so that no one would kill him. Cain’s consequences did not change God’s love for him. When Cain left the Lord’s presence, he went out and built the city of Enoch.

In a similar way, sin separates us from God, too. However, in Christ, we can draw near to God, confess and repent of our sins, and he is faithful and just to forgive us of all unrighteousness.

The city of Enoch represents a physical separation from God. Take this opportunity to turn your heart to God and ask him to bring to mind any sins that need confessing. Then pray that your loved ones who do not follow Christ will come to faith. In James, we are instructed to draw near to God, and he will draw near to us (James 4:8).

### PRAYER

*Jesus, thank you for your sacrifice on the cross that paid the penalty for all sins. Lord, will you examine my heart and reveal to me any sins that I need to confess and turn away from? And will you please draw to yourself my loved ones who do not know you? Help me to remember that sin has consequences, but your care and concern for me will never end. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*



## The Birth of Culture

— GENESIS 4:19-22 —

“<sup>19</sup> Lamech married two women, one named Adah and the other Zillah. Adah gave birth to Jabal; he was the father of those who live in tents and raise livestock. His brother’s name was Jubal; he was the father of all who play stringed instruments and pipes. Zillah also had a son, Tubal-Cain, who forged all kinds of tools out of bronze and iron. Tubal-Cain’s sister was Naamah.”

### REFLECTION

After Cain killed his brother Abel and taken from God’s presence, God graciously spared his life and protected him from harm. Nevertheless, Cain sought security for himself and built a new dwelling place, a city named after his son Enoch. From the urban center of Enoch, Cain and his descendants carry out the cultural mandate: they are tentmakers, livestock cultivators, musical innovators, and workers of bronze and iron. The pillars of civilization—engineering, agriculture, art, and technology—are born in the city.

When humans come together, there is potential for a flourishing culture as we carry out God’s commission to cultivate creation. But there is also potential for destruction as we also carry out our hostility against God and fellow man. In the following verse (23), Lamech boasts of killing a man, just as his ancestor Cain had done. From the ancient city of Enoch to modern cities today, we see a heartbreaking juxtaposition of cultural advances and interpersonal violence. The city can be a place of productivity...or a place of corruption. The city can be a place of refuge... or a place of peril.

### PRAYER

*Dear God, we long for the redemption of all that has been broken by sin. Set us firmly on the path of service for your glory, that we would work for the curbing of evil and the flourishing of good in our cities. Amen.*



## *The Tower of Babel: City of Confusion*

— GENESIS 11:2-4 —

<sup>2</sup>“As people moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there. <sup>3</sup>They said to each other, “Come, let’s make bricks and bake them thoroughly.” They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. <sup>4</sup>Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth.”

### REFLECTION

Your ability to make a name for yourself will never outgrow God’s power to stop you. We see this with the city of Babel. The people set out to build a city for themselves with a tall tower. Their goal was to build themselves up, rely on their own wisdom, and cause other people to look on in awe. This was not pleasing to God, and he introduced confusion by causing the people to speak different languages.

The city of Babel should serve as a reminder of why we need to seek the Lord and his kingdom first – not our own. When we rely on ourselves and our best laid plans, we are saying that we do not need God to do the work. We are putting our own abilities ahead of God’s power. While we may not say this out loud, it is the message our actions proclaim.

Consider the work you are doing. Are you seeking God and his wisdom on the matter or are you confident in your own abilities? Let the confusion inflicted at Babel remind you of the importance of living humbly under the authority of the Lord.

### PRAYER

*Jesus, I am sorry for the times that I have relied on my own strength and sought to build a name for myself. Please forgive me and empower me to live for you and you alone. I do not want my life to be marked by confusion, but assurance that you are with me and guiding me every step of the way. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*



## *The City of Sodom*

— GENESIS 19:16 —

**16** “When he hesitated, the men grasped his hand and the hands of his wife and of his two daughters and led them safely out of the city, for the Lord was merciful to them.”

### **REFLECTION**

The setting for this Scripture is a moment of extreme intensity. Life and death, in fact. The verses preceding describe a dire situation: Lot and his family’s world is about to collapse. He wants to hold on to what was. To delay and somehow fix this unfixable situation. But there is no time. One version reads, “When he lingered...” Though Lot should have seen the urgency of choosing to obey the instructions that were being shouted at him, he hesitates. How often has this been my response?

Yet God saw Lot’s hesitation and reached out in mercy. This mercy was undeserved compassion shown to a family that was confused and no doubt in shock at what was happening all around them. For their own deliverance, God sent angels who grasped their hands and led them to safety. His kindness in this moment is overwhelming, undeniable. God’s actions speak of his mercy for this family.

### **PRAYER**

*Merciful Father, I ask today that you find me quick to obey your voice. Help me not hesitate when you say “go,” knowing that you always have my best in mind. Thank you for your mercy and tender kindness to me. Your compassion is undeserved, and I am overwhelmed by your love.*

## *The City of Deliverance*

— PSALM 107:6-7 —

6 “Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. 7 He led them by a straight way to a city where they could settle.”

### REFLECTION

Psalm 107 is a microcosm of the relationship between God and his people: they rebel against God, God allows their enemies to oppress them, they cry for help, and God delivers them. From the exodus out of Egypt into the Promised Land to the return to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon, God’s rescue is often characterized by leading his people out of oppression into free and dignified living in their own land, “a city where they could settle.” Surrounded by walls and watchtowers, the city signified God’s loving provision and protection for which his weary people longed.

Today, we might have a tough time seeing cities as places of safety. But for immigrants and minorities, people escaping oppression, those in transition and looking for a place to dwell securely—the city stands as a bastion of hope. Both then and now, God hears his people and provides a place for them.

### PRAYER

*We “give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind” (v. 15). Just as you delivered your people from darkness and distress in the past, we trust you will continue to provide for and protect us today. Help us follow where you lead in the places you have given us to dwell. Amen.*



a safe place to settle

a bastion of hope



a sanctuary



7 He led them by a straight path  
to a city where they could rest,  
8 Let them give thanks to him  
and his wonderful works,  
9 for he satisfied their hunger  
and filled their hearts with joy.

## Hope of a Future City

— HEBREWS 11:8-10 —

<sup>8</sup>“By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. <sup>9</sup> By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. <sup>10</sup> For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.”


### REFLECTION

Have you ever felt the Lord leading you to do something that you did not fully understand? Abraham was faced with such a challenge. When he heard the Lord's direction to “Go!”, he had a choice to make – would he obey and go, even though he did not know where he was headed, or would he shrink back in fear and doubt? Abraham did not know where he was to go, but he went anyway, fully trusting in the Lord. By faith, he set out on this adventure with God which required living in difficult settings. Though he did not know the location he would be led to and he had to live in tents, Abraham looked forward to a future city when he would receive his promised inheritance from God.

God is faithful to fulfill all his promises. We can rest on that truth, even in the midst of difficult circumstances that we struggle to make sense of. May we live by faith with hope of a future city where we dwell with the Lord forever.

### PRAYER

*Lord, I confess that sometimes I want to fully understand how you are leading before I obey. Please forgive me for valuing understanding over obedience. I know that you are faithful to your promises – now and forevermore. Help me to live with the hope of a future spent with you for all eternity, and allow that to shape my life, my service, and my obedience to you. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.*



## Day Eight

### *City of Refuge*

— NUMBERS 35:9-13 —

<sup>9</sup> Then the Lord said to Moses:

<sup>10</sup> “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘When you cross the Jordan into Canaan, <sup>11</sup> select some towns to be your cities of refuge, to which a person who has killed someone accidentally may flee. <sup>12</sup> They will be places of refuge from the avenger, so that anyone accused of murder may not die before they stand trial before the assembly. <sup>13</sup> These six towns you give will be your cities of refuge.

#### REFLECTION

Intentionally taking a person’s life has always been a high crime in God’s eyes. “I will demand an accounting for the life of another human being. Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind” (see Genesis 9:5-6). That is why in ancient Israel the relative of a murder victim, the “avenger of blood,” had the right to execute vengeance on the guilty party.

God is a just judge, however, and weighs the intentions of the heart (Jer. 17:10). For those who accidentally take another’s life, God provided protection from vengeance. How? Through cities of refuge. A person could flee to the nearest city of refuge and become a fugitive, protected by the city’s elders until he received a fair trial.

God is concerned about justice, and that should encourage us. He calls himself the ultimate avenger of blood: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay” (Deut. 32:35). God used the strength of the city to defend the fugitive against unjust retribution, protecting him until justice could be carried out.

#### PRAYER

*Dear God, we marvel at your wisdom and concern for people. We take comfort knowing that you are “our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble” (Ps. 46:1). May we be champions of your justice and compassion in our cities. Amen.*



## The City of Peace

— 1 KINGS 6:11-13 —

<sup>11</sup> The word of the Lord came to Solomon: <sup>12</sup> “As for this temple you are building, if you follow my decrees, observe my laws and keep all my commands and obey them, I will fulfill through you the promise I gave to David your father. <sup>13</sup> And I will live among the Israelites and will not abandon my people Israel.”

### REFLECTION

The Lord promised to live among the Israelites and dwell with them in the city. He also promised not to abandon his people. The Israelites had important work to do. They needed to build the temple, follow the Lord’s decrees, obey his laws, and keep his commands. However, the Lord is the one who upheld the promise originally given to David that God would dwell among them.

Similarly, God dwells among us. As we work for the good of the city, we can rest in the knowledge that God will not abandon his people and that he is faithful to fulfill his promises. That should impact the way we live and how we view our city. The city is transformed through God’s people who live in the city. After all, it is the Lord who establishes our appointed times in history and where we live (Acts 17:26). He will not abandon his people. Confidence in this truth should change our lives and the city in which we live and serve. Go forward today in boldness, knowing that God dwells in your city.

### PRAYER

*Lord, thank you for your promise to dwell among your people and to not abandon us. Help me to live a life that is marked by assurance of your presence wherever I go. Thank you that my city is different because of your indwelling presence. I praise you that you are faithful to fulfill all your promises. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.*

## Living Committed in the City

— 1 KINGS 8:60-61 —

<sup>60</sup>“so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord is God and that there is no other. <sup>61</sup>And may your hearts be fully committed to the Lord our God, to live by his decrees and obey his commands, as at this time.”

### REFLECTION

This passage takes place on the day that the Temple is dedicated to the Lord. These words are the end of Solomon’s blessing of the people who lived and worked in the city. They experienced the “daily grind” of needing to care for their families, their neighbors, their livestock. They lived ordinary lives. To these kinds of experiences, Solomon asks God to bless them so they can be “fully committed to the Lord” in all that they do.

So, it is with us today. There is a lot of “daily” in our routines, a lot of “ordinary.” Sometimes it is easier to commit the big stuff to God; there is a recognition that I need his help in the major decisions and lifechanging moments. But the mundane, everyday stuff – am I fully committed to the Lord in that? And for what purpose? “...so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord is God and that there is no other.” That is, it: all for his glory. There is no greater reason to get out of bed in the morning than to show through my words and actions that he is the Lord.

### PRAYER

*Holy Father, there is truly none like you. You are Abba Father, the Great I Am, Wonderful Counselor, Prince of Peace. I stand in awe of who you are, all powerful yet approachable. My God, how wonderful you are! May you find my heart to be fully committed to you today, in the big AND the little things. May I draw people to you, Jesus, in the way that I live my life. All for your glory.*



as God's  
yrian robe  
46:7-11 is n  
ysical term  
of uncertain  
s 7 and it

*... a psalm of the Sons of Korah.  
Great is the LORD, and most worthy  
praise,  
in the city of our God, his holy  
mountain.*

the City with God stands

without God falls





PSALMS

## Day Eleven

autiful in its loftiness  
the joy of the whole earth  
the heights of Zaphon  
Zion,  
city of the Great King  
in her citadels  
s shown himself to be  
rtrous

### *Joy of the Earth*

— PSALM 48:1-3 —

<sup>1</sup> Great is the Lord, and most worthy of praise, in the city of our God, his holy mountain.

<sup>2</sup> Beautiful in its loftiness, the joy of the whole earth, like the heights of Zaphon is Mount Zion, the city of the Great King.

<sup>3</sup> God is in her citadels; he has shown himself to be her fortress.

#### REFLECTION

To the ancient world, height signified the majesty of the gods. The Greeks thought Mount Olympus to be the home of a pantheon of gods. The Canaanites considered Zaphon to be the most sacred mountain. In contrast, Mount Zion—the dwelling of the LORD God—is the joy of the whole earth. From the Jerusalem temple atop this holy mountain, God does not dominate his subjects but provides a place of safety for his people to be a light to the surrounding nations.

God's presence and rule sets the lofty citadel apart as beautiful, strong, and joyful. "There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within her; she will not fall; God will help her at break of day" (see Psalm 46). With God, the city stands; without him, the city falls.

We carry God's presence with us in our cities today. The city is a cultural hub that extends influence in all directions, literally and metaphorically a high place that shapes the welfare of all who fill and surround it. When we reach the city, we reach the world.

#### PRAYER

*Dear God, empower us to live as a "city on a hill," visible displays of the beauty of your ways in an upside-down world. May our cities be shaped by your presence through your people, extending the riches of your goodness throughout the whole earth. Amen.*



JONAH

Day Twelve

## *Proclamation in the City*

— JONAH 3:1-2 —

<sup>1</sup> Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time: <sup>2</sup> “Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you.”

### REFLECTION

God’s heart for the people of Nineveh is shown throughout the book of Jonah. Multiple times God called Jonah and told him to go to Nineveh and share the message God would provide. The Lord chose to work through Jonah to draw people in Nineveh to himself and to repentance. This is a good reminder for us of the importance of gospel proclamation in our city and how we should aim to not be like Jonah.

Jonah did not immediately obey when the Lord told him to go to Nineveh. When you sense the Lord’s leading, are you quick to obey? Jonah was not. His personal preferences got in the way of his obedience.

Jonah was told to proclaim a message to the people of Nineveh. How are you proclaiming the gospel in words and deeds as you go about your daily life? Are you faithful to proclaim the Good News in your city? The Lord desires that none would perish but that all would come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). But how can they hear unless someone preaches to them (Romans 10:14)?

### PRAYER

*Lord, help me be faithful to proclaim your good news in the city. I want to be quick to listen to your voice, quick to obey, and faithful to proclaim. I praise you for the privilege of sharing about you with others. Help me to remember that you died for every person I encounter today and that you desire a relationship with them. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

## Compassion for the City

— JONAH 4:10-11 —

<sup>10</sup> But the Lord said, “You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. <sup>11</sup>And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?”

### REFLECTION

God’s mercy and forgiveness are limitless. No matter how far we have strayed away, God waits for us to humble ourselves before him. That is the story of Nineveh. A long-time enemy of Israel, Nineveh was a wicked city. God saw their wickedness and showed mercy by sending a warning through his prophet Jonah about the city’s destruction. Like many of us, Jonah disobeyed the Lord’s command. He felt the city should be destroyed because he believed that is what they deserved. Can we blame him for feeling this way? How many times have we asked, God why do you allow terrible things to happen?

The story of Nineveh is not about how Jonah felt, it is about God’s forgiveness. After a few mishaps happened to Jonah, he stopped running away from God’s instruction and delivered the message to the Ninevites. They humbled themselves, repented, and escaped the city’s destruction. God is merciful and forgiving. Let us extend that same mercy and forgiveness to those who do not yet know Christ.

### PRAYER

*God, we ask that you show us how to display compassion towards those who do not know you. Remind us that we, too, have fallen short and that we all need a Savior. Use us as a vessel for your kingdom and help bring those who are living in sin to repentance. We pray for those who do not know you, that they may know your forgiveness and mercy. We pray in Jesus’ name, Amen.*





## Day Fourteen

### *From Ruins to Hope*

— NEHEMIAH 2:17-18 —

17 Then I said to them, “You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace.”

18 I also told them about the gracious hand of my God on me and what the king had said to me. They replied, “Let us start rebuilding.” So they began this good work.

#### REFLECTION

Idolatry and corruption had brought the magnificent city of Jerusalem to ruins. The merciless Chaldean empire razed the temple and burned the city, carrying the people of Judah off as captives to Babylon. Through the prophets’ word, God encouraged his downtrodden people to build a life for themselves in the city of their foreign captors, maintaining their dignity and identity. He promised his people that they would one day return home and rebuild their city (Jer. 29:10-11).

That day came through Nehemiah. Burdened by the disgrace that marked the people of God, Nehemiah courageously requested his return to Judah to rebuild Jerusalem. God’s gracious hand gave Nehemiah success and empowered him to lead the challenging work of rebuilding the beloved city of God.

Are our hearts burdened for the ruin of the cities we call home? Do we trust God enough to bravely do our part to restore what has been broken?

#### PRAYER

*God, we eagerly await the day when our full hope will be realized, when your promise of a renewed creation and restored relationships between people will come to pass. We are still exiles in this city on earth. Help us to live with courage and hope for the day when you restore our fortunes (Ps. 126). Empower us to do all we can to rebuild right where we are. Amen.*



## Day Fifteen

# Work in the City for the Lord

— NEHEMIAH 4:6, 6:9 —

<sup>6</sup> So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart.

<sup>9</sup> They were all trying to frighten us, thinking, “Their hands will get too weak for the work, and it will not be completed.” But I prayed, “Now strengthen my hands.”

### REFLECTION

Have you ever tackled a project that you knew would be a large undertaking? You may start out enthusiastic and eager to get to work, but eventually you get tired and grow weary of the project. You may start to wonder why you ever thought it was a good idea in the first place! This can easily happen with our spiritual work too.

Just like we can grow physically weary from a project, we can also grow spiritually weary from the work. It is important that we put our heart into our work. The Bible teaches us that whatever we do, we should do as unto the Lord. It is also important to recognize that those who oppose us will highlight the fact that we will grow weary of the work over time. Just like in the book of Nehemiah, we should pray for our hands to be strengthened as we do the work the Lord has set before us. We honor the Lord with our work, and it benefits our city and those who live there too. Whatever you do today, do it unto the Lord and for the good of your city.

### PRAYER

*Lord, I thank you for the opportunity to serve my city. Please strengthen my hands as I do the work that you have called me to – for the good of the people and the glory of your name. May you alone receive all the honor and glory. Use me as you see fit, Father. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.*



## Worship in the City

— NEHEMIAH 8:5-6 —

<sup>5</sup>“Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up. <sup>6</sup> Ezra praised the Lord, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, “Amen! Amen!” Then they bowed down and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground.”

### REFLECTION

This was quite a moment. Imagine Ezra opening the Book of the Law as all the people stopped their regular routines to hear from the Lord. The scene was inclusive: nearly 50,000 people stood to their feet to listen (see 7:66-67, 8:2)! Men, women and children – God instructed them all. He cares for all people and gives access to everyone.

They stood and listened, hanging on these words that the Lord had given them to obey. The people’s posture goes from standing in reverence at the reading of God’s Word, to lifting their hands, to bowing down in worship with their faces to the ground. They recognize they are on holy ground.

Not only were the people reverent, but they were unhurried. They stood and listened for hours (see 8:3) – from early morning until midday. It was like a feast for their souls as they stepped away from their everyday lives to listen and linger, feasting on the words of the Lord.

### PRAYER

*Holy Father, may you find my worship to be reverent and unhurried. I want to linger in your presence, standing in awe at your greatness and bowing in worship at your unending mercy. Yet I do not want to leave others out. Help me to grow in my inclusivity of others as I learn to love all people better, following your example. Help me not grow weary in this journey of life but recognize that the gesture of stepping out of the routine to intentionally listen to your Word and worship you refuels me for the battle. You are worthy!*





...as he opened it, the peo-  
 ...Ezra praised the LORD, the  
 ...and all the people lifted their  
 ...responded, "Amen! Amen!"  
 ...ved down and worshiped the  
 ...er faces to the ground.  
 ...—Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah,  
 ...Shabbethai, Hodiah, Ma-  
 ...Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan  
 ...nstructed the people in the  
 ...people were standing in the  
 ...the Book of the Law of  
 ...and giving the men



# the City

a place of inclusion



## Jerusalem is Worse Than Sodom

— EZEKIEL 16:48, 59 —

<sup>48</sup> “As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, your sister Sodom and her daughters never did what you and your daughters have done.”

<sup>59</sup> “This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I will deal with you as you deserve, because you have despised my oath by breaking the covenant.”

### REFLECTION

Jerusalem—the city where God chose to dwell among his people, the place from which the blessings of God’s goodness would flow to the world, and home of the people whom God had given the revelation of himself—this Jerusalem had turned her back on God. Though God gave his people many opportunities to turn from idolatry back to their Creator, they chose their idols in the end and became more despicable than the surrounding cities that did not know God.

Knowing he was going there to die, Jesus lamented over the beloved city: “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing” (Luke 13:34). Instead, Jerusalem crucified her King outside the gates of the city.

Just as Sodom was barraged by brimstone, so also Jerusalem was ransacked by Rome. The city that rejects God will not stand long.

### PRAYER

*God, our hearts cry out for the true city of God, the New Jerusalem, where there will be no more idolatry and corruption (Heb. 12:22, 13:14). We grieve over the places in our cities where you are not yet known. Give us the compassionate heart of Jesus to reach our cities for your kingdom. Amen.*

## *City of Babylon: Seek Flourishment in Exile*

— JEREMIAH 29:5-7 —

<sup>5</sup>“Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. <sup>6</sup>Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. <sup>7</sup>Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.”

### REFLECTION

The Lord determines all of our steps – even the ones that lead to exile. In the midst of difficulties and hardships, the Lord instructed the people to seek flourishment in their new city. In this passage of Scripture, we see the role of the people, the role of the Lord, and the role of the city. God tells the people to build houses, settle down, grow food, get married, and have a family. Even though they are not in the place they wanted to be, good things can come from their new location.

Additionally, we are reminded of the Lord’s sovereignty over the exile. Indeed, he is the one who determined the city in which the people would live. It is a good thing to seek flourishment in exile for our own good and in response to the Lord’s faithfulness to us, but also for the benefit of the city. Praying for the city is a worthwhile endeavor because if the city prospers, so too will the people.

In a similar way, we should seek to thrive wherever we live and want the best for our cities. Whether you live your entire life in one place or your time in your current city is brief, may the city be different because you were there and left an imprint for Christ.

### PRAYER

*Lord, I lift up my city to you. I pray for its peace and prosperity and that I would leave a mark on it as your disciple. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*



## City of Babylon: A Future Blessing

— JEREMIAH 29:11 —

<sup>11</sup> For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

### REFLECTION

Did you know this well-loved verse is part of a letter? This letter came from the lips of God through the pen of the prophet Jeremiah, written to God's exiled people living in the city of Babylon. In Scripture, Babylon literally and figuratively represents the pinnacle of human pride, idolatry, and violence. Though we might expect God to warn his people not to get too comfortable among their new pagan neighbors, he delivers a different message:

"Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper" (vv. 5-7).

### PRAYER

*God, we eagerly anticipate the enduring city where idolatry and sin will be banished, and all will be set right. In the meantime, we submit to your command to seek the welfare of our cities, to serve our neighbors and pursue peace right where we are. Amen.*

Though these words were penned to an ancient nation facing generations of exile, we too live as outposts of God's kingdom awaiting a future blessing. Christ will return, bringing his people out of the oppression that characterizes the city of man into the glory of the city of God. God is preparing a beautiful future for his people.

## Confidence in the Lord

— PROVERBS 21:22 —

<sup>22</sup> One who is wise can go up against the city of the mighty and pull down the stronghold in which they trust.

### REFLECTION

Who do you think is stronger – one individual or an entire city? While you might be tempted to think that the city is stronger, the truth is that one person with God on his or her side can be stronger than the multitude. One wise person, with the grace and blessing of God, can make a significant impact on an entire city. We see in this verse that the wise person can pull down the strongholds in which the city trusts. This ought to encourage us as we work for the good of our city.

Empowered by God's grace, one single person can have a significant impact on the city if they are wise by God's standards. Are you living submitted to God and seeking to be wise? If so, recognize that God can work in and through you to make a Kingdom impact on your city. The wisdom given to you by God can topple the strongholds gripping your city. God's grace empowers you to make a difference right where you are for the good of the city and the glory of the Lord's name.

### PRAYER

*Lord, help me to be wise by your standards and to live a life that makes a Kingdom impact in this city. Thank you for being all powerful and for using one committed follower to impact a multitude. Please draw people unto yourself and use my words and actions to make a difference here in this city. May you receive all the honor and glory due to you. In Jesus' name, Amen.*



a beacon of refuge

# the City



...and put it under  
...its stand  
...in the house  
...light shine  
...you

NEW TESTAMENT





## Day Twenty-one

### *City on a Hill*

— MATTHEW 5:14-16 —

<sup>14</sup>“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

#### REFLECTION

We all face the temptation to hide. It feels safer to keep our head down and blend into our surroundings. But what happens to our witness in the world when we hide the light of our faith? The surrounding darkness only gets darker.

Doing good, sharing the Gospel, and serving others sets Christians apart in a way that can both attract and repel—repelling those who want to live in darkness (John 3:19), yet attracting those drawn to the light of God in us. The apostle Peter instructs believers to “live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us” (1 Pet. 2:12). God is glorified when our words and deeds are a witness to his truth.

#### PRAYER

*Dear God, forgive us for wanting to hide the light we have rather than share it. Strengthen us to relinquish fear and to stand out in a godly way by doing good. Just like an elevated town or city is an unmistakable refuge to those around it, may we draw others into your goodness, that you would get the glory. Amen.*



## *Live Good Lives in the City*

— 1 PETER 2:12 —

*12 "Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us."*

### **REFLECTION**

God call us to be set apart from the world. To be set apart is to live by the standards God has instructed believers to live by through the power of the Holy Spirit. Those who aren't followers of Christ will not have a complete understanding of what this means. As believers we must live out a godly life so that unbelievers may see and understand and one day come to Christ and glorify him.

A life marked by care and compassion for others is counter-cultural. Instead of being focused on our own gain, seek out opportunities to love and serve others. Living a godly life will be evident to all and will make an impact on our home, our community, and our city.

Each day we make choices to either do good or evil. Choose to be a beacon of light and hope in a dark world and let your light shine before men so that they will see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16). That kind of life will change a city.

### **PRAYER**

*Jesus, thank you for enabling me to live a life that is different. One that is marked by kindness and compassion for others with a love that only comes from you. Help me to seek out ways to serve and not to be served so that I can live a godly life that points others to you. May you receive all the honor and glory. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

## The Mission

— MATTHEW 28:19-20 —

<sup>20</sup> “Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,<sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

### REFLECTION

Eight billion people exist today but not all have come to know Christ as Savior. The church’s work is far from over. When Jesus walked the earth, he commanded his disciples “to go and make disciples of all nations...” and that command still holds true. If we have heard and accepted the Gospel, as Christ’s representatives it is our duty to teach and train those who have not heard the good news. People are hurting, living in darkness, and searching for something to fill their emptiness. You may think the people who have not heard the Gospel live somewhere remote. The truth is they are closer than you think. It can be your neighbor, co-worker, the postal worker, your sibling, cousin, the list goes on. Let us not grow fearful or comfortable in our own walk with Christ that we forget our mission. “...there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.” - Luke 15:7.

### PRAYER

*Father, we come before you through your son Jesus, and ask that you remind us that you are with us always, to the very end of the age. Let us not overlook those who still live separate from you. Let us be obedient to your command of sharing the good news. God, if we have grown weary or have lost sight remind us of our mission. Your son’s sacrifice was for all, and you take no pleasure in the death of the wicked. We ask that the Holy Spirit guide us when we are speaking to the lost. God, we can only plant the seed, but you can change the heart. We pray in your Son’s name, Amen.*



## *The City to Come*

— HEBREWS 13:12-14 —

<sup>12</sup> And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. <sup>13</sup> Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore. <sup>14</sup> For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.

### **PRAYER**

*God, we rejoice in the future city that will be filled with the light of your presence, where there will be no more sin or suffering. Help us to sacrificially follow the path of Jesus wherever he leads, even to the most difficult places, remembering that our ultimate home is with you. Amen.*

### **REFLECTION**

Why is it significant that Jesus “suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood”? The city of Jerusalem had a sinister past, having killed the spokesmen God sent throughout the nation’s history. Jesus was taken “outside the camp” as the Israelites had done for sin offerings (Lev. 4:12) because he was the final sin offering to cleanse his people and make them holy before God.

An earthly city is humanity intensified—a concentration of humanity’s finest achievements . . . and its worst sins. God’s holy city, Jerusalem, was not exempt from the pitfalls of pride and cruelty. Jerusalem sent their Messiah outside their gates to be killed. As he was led away, Jesus told the mourners not to weep for him but for themselves; the people’s place of safety and security, the city of Jerusalem, would soon be destroyed (Luke 23:28). The city of man will not last forever.

Yet, the author of Hebrews encourages believers to look forward to the city that will last forever. In a way, we are already there. “But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem” (Heb. 12:22a).



## Day Twenty-five

# Reach Nations Through the City

— ACTS 19:1, 9-10 —

<sup>1</sup> “While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples.

<sup>9</sup> He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. <sup>10</sup> This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.”

### REFLECTION

Cities had strategic value in Bible times, just like they do today. Because of people gathering in the city of Ephesus, individuals from all over Asia were able to hear the gospel. In a similar way, cities today provide a strategic opportunity to reach people from all over the world. It is important to remember that it is the Lord who determines our steps and where we live. The nations are truly at our doorstep in the cities! What a gift from the Lord that we need to steward well.

As you go about your day, pray that God would open your eyes to the nations around you and provide open doors to start gospel conversations. You may be surprised at the number of nations you cross paths with each day. Be mindful of who is working at the coffee shop or restaurant. Pay attention to other parents at your children’s extracurricular activities. As disciples of Christ, may it be true of us that people from all over the world hear the word of the Lord because of our work in the city.

### PRAYER

*Lord, thank you for the opportunity to reach the nations through the city. Give me eyes to see the diverse group of people living here and discernment for how to best reach them with the Gospel. Thank you for bringing hard-to-reach nations to my own backyard. I praise you for the work you are doing in this city! In Jesus’ name, Amen.*



## Born into God's City

— PSALM 87 —

- 1 He has founded his city on the holy mountain.
- 2 The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the other dwellings of Jacob.
- 3 Glorious things are said of you, city of God:
- 4 "I will record Rahab and Babylon among those who acknowledge me—Philistia too, and Tyre, along with Cush—and will say, 'This one was born in Zion.'"
- 5 Indeed, of Zion it will be said, "This one and that one were born in her, and the Most High himself will establish her."
- 6 The Lord will write in the register of the peoples: "This one was born in Zion."
- 7 As they make music they will sing, "All my fountains are in you."

### REFLECTION

The city of Jerusalem is holy and glorious because God is present there. Established as the focal point of God's special love and set apart for his work in the world, the holy city came to be recognized as the stage of redemption among all the nations.

We recognize this principle today: the greater our city is, the greater its impact on all that surrounds it and the greater pride we take in being its citizens. All the nations around Jerusalem experienced the blessing of God's presence among his people; their witness flowed outward, making citizenship in Jerusalem a desirable birthright.

Being born in Zion in this Psalm is akin to the New Testament expression of being born again—faith is the only requirement for one to be reborn into the city of God. "But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother" (Gal. 4:26). Both then and now, we are born into the city of God by faith.

### PRAYER

*Dear God, we praise you for your redemptive work in history, how you extended the birthright blessing of citizenship in the city of God to all who embrace you by faith. May our new birth motivate us to extend your blessing to all around us. Amen.*



...the Lord  
and  
...indeed, of  
"This o  
...and will sa  
...Zion  
...Cushc  
...100, an  
...those w  
...ord Raha



a place of rebirth for the faithful

# the City



## *Make Glad the City of God*

— PSALM 43:3-5 —

3 Send me your light and your faithful care, let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy mountain, to the place where you dwell.

4 Then I will go to the altar of God, to God, my joy and my delight. I will praise you with the lyre, O God, my God.

5 Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.

### REFLECTION

There is light and dark within our cities, and we feel this stark contrast every day. Living a poured-out life in service to our neighbors leads us through deep valleys and dark shadows (see Psalm 23). We need God's light to guide our steps (Ps. 119:105) and his faithful care to cover us on our journey.

Do you feel downcast? Is your heart troubled by the pain and suffering around you? "Put your hope in God" (v. 5) and praise him for how far he has brought you already. Let God be your joy and delight, knowing that he will never leave your side (Heb. 13:5). When we walk by the Spirit, we can trust that God will bring us nearer to himself, nearer to his heart.

### PRAYER

*Dear God, help us to live by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7). Strengthen us to serve our cities faithfully, leaning fully into your light and faithful care that follows us wherever we go. Amen.*

## God's City Will Heal

— REVELATION 22:1-2 —

<sup>1</sup> "Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb <sup>2</sup> down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations."

### REFLECTION

What do we see at the end of God's Word, the finale of God's revelation to his people? We see a heavenly city of God, majestic and beautiful, joyful, and healing. All of creation is restored here, all sin erased for good. Beside the life-giving river that flows directly from God's throne stands the healing tree of life. All that has been broken by sin will be restored and brought under the Kingship of God and the Lamb, Jesus Christ. The entire city will be filled with the light of his presence, and all its people will serve God joyfully and reign over his creation. Sounds a little like Eden, doesn't it?

This is humanity as God created us to live. This beautiful vision shows us the glory of multitudes of God's image bearers—the nations—enjoying rich relationships, receiving life, and healing from God, and serving him from grateful hearts. This is what the world can, and will, be. One day, complete healing will touch all of creation.

### PRAYER

*Dear God, we put our hope in your word, choosing to believe that you will make all things right in the end. While we are still living amid much brokenness, we long for supernatural healing to touch our cities. We long to see the effects of sin erased and complete restoration to your good design. Our hearts cry: "your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). Amen.*





## Day Twenty-nine

# *Citizens of the City to Come*

— HEBREWS 12:22-24 —

*22* “But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly,<sup>23</sup> to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,<sup>24</sup> to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.”

### REFLECTION

The author of Hebrews contrasts Mount Sinai with Mount Zion—the mountain of fear and fire with the mountain of glory and joy. The world we can see, hear, and touch is filled with all kinds of pain, suffering, and fear. But our pilgrimage does not end here.

We enter another world by faith, one filled with joyful angels and our perfected brothers and sisters. We get a glimpse of perfect justice, as God judges all, and assurance that we are declared innocent by Jesus’ blood.

We have dual citizenship: we dwell in our temporary cities that are filled with unmet needs, while we also live considering the eternal city that will be filled with the beauty, joy, and fellowship our souls crave.

### PRAYER

*Dear God, we confess that we sometimes feel fear when we see no clear end to the pain and suffering in our cities. Thoughts of a glorious future in the heavenly city are often far from our minds. Help us to remember our names are already written in heaven, and may that joy empower us to serve others. Amen.*

## The City Where God Dwells

— REVELATION 21:2-3 —

<sup>2</sup> I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.”

### PRAYER

*God, thank you for your relentless love for rebel humanity. Thank you for meeting us where we are and making a way to be near us. We rejoice that you dwell in Your people now by the Holy Spirit and anticipate the new city where you will see You face to face (1 Cor. 13:12). Amen.*

### REFLECTION

God has always desired to live among us. He crafted each of us in his image for intimate fellowship with our Creator. Though sinful rebellion drove a wedge in humanity’s relationship to God, he never once gave up on his desire to be near us.

God made a way to dwell *with* his people in the tabernacle as they wandered through the wilderness toward the Promised Land. A holy God so strongly desired fellowship with an unholy people that he provided the sacrificial system and law to bring them into right standing before him.

God made a way to dwell *with* his people in the temple in the holy city of Jerusalem. Through worship of him at the temple, God’s people could draw near to him, and he would hear their prayers from the house made with stones (1 Kings 8:29).

God made a way to dwell *in* his people by the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19). Together, the community of believers are “living stones,” built into a temple where God can commune intimately with us (1 Peter 2:5). We can enjoy unbroken fellowship with him wherever we are.

God is making a way to dwell permanently and openly with his people. He is preparing a new heaven and earth and a holy city—the New Jerusalem—God’s choice place to dwell among his people. This is the promise we can cling to. This is the hope for humanity.



hope, prayer & praise for . . .

# the City

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---





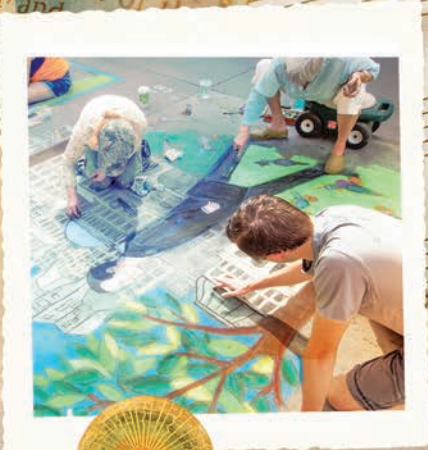


2001 S. Vermont Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90007  
(323) 735-1137 | [WorldImpact.org](http://WorldImpact.org)





...and as he opened it, the peo-  
ple praised the Lord, the  
people and all the people lifted their  
voices and responded, "Amen! Amen!"  
...and bowed down and worshiped the  
Lord with their faces to the ground.  
...— Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah,  
Shabbethai, Hodiah, Ma-  
shabiah, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan-  
iah, and Gedaliah— instructed the people in  
the law of the Lord. The people were standing in  
the street from the Book of the Law of the Lord.  
...dear land  
...the peo-  
...ad.  
...emiah th  
...her of th



**WORLD  
IMPACT**

Transforming Communities Together

[WorldImpact.org](http://WorldImpact.org)