

PRAYER WALKING IS UNBIBLICAL

Prayer walking is practiced by many Christians today as a means to 'cleansing' geographical areas from demonic spirits in order that evangelism may become effective. Biblically there is certainly evidence for evil territorial spirits (principalities) ruling over various geographic locations. The book of Daniel identifies the '*prince of Persia*' (a demon) opposing Daniel's vision of a '*man*' (a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ) for a period of twenty-one days. The archangel Michael (*one of the chief princes*) was left contending against the demonic prince of Persia (Daniel 10). The prince of Greece and other princes are also mentioned in this passage:

Now I must return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I am through with him, the prince of Greece will come. But I am to tell you what is inscribed in the book of truth. There is no one with me who contends against these princes except Michael, your prince (Daniel 10/20-21).

But when the archangel Michael contended with the devil and disputed about the body of Moses, he did not dare to bring a condemnation of slander against him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" (Jude 1/9) The context is unclear but what is clear is that even the mighty archangel Michael did not dare rebuke the devil. It does need to be said that Satan (the devil) is a formidable enemy!

The little information we are given in Daniel is that there was demonic resistance going on in the heavenlies after Daniel had prayed and it was the Lord Himself and Michael the archangel who fought against demons, not people. The question is: Is it really our task to come against satanic strongholds over geographic areas or does God intervene personally or dispatch his angels against demonic resistance? The angels *are ministering spirits* (Hebrews 1/14) with varying roles. Michael the archangel is the protector of Israel (Daniel 12/1). Angels are very much involved in human affairs e.g. Daniel 12/1; Ezekiel 9/1; Acts 16/9; Acts 10/30; Matthew 18/10; Acts 12/15.

The idea of prayer walking originated in 1987 when the now discarded March for Jesus was founded by Gerald Coates, Roger Forster, Lynn Green with Graham Kendrick and Steven Hawthorne.

Prior to this there is no occurrence of prayer walking taking place in the body of Christ and it is *never* mentioned in the Bible. The purpose of prayer walking according to Hawthorne and Kendrick is:

- *To pinpoint geographic locations where God is already active and pray on-site against the strongholds that prevent Him from changing people's lives.*
- *To spot the lost and pray for their salvation.*

(Prayerwalking by Steve Hawthorne and Graham Kendrick, Creation House, 1993)

It is not wrong to walk and pray - the Bible says that we should pray without ceasing (Thessalonians 5/17). The difficulty arises when people invent formulae to achieve certain ends, which are not biblically sound. There is no biblical basis that prayer walking achieves the pulling down of demonic strongholds in specific geographic areas. We can pray anywhere: in our closet (room) (Matthew 6/6); Jesus prayed in the garden (Matthew 26/36); Jesus took Peter, John and James up the mountain to pray (Luke 9/28).

Geographic location is not the issue, the question is whether you abide in Christ: *If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.* (John 15/7) The only additional element that was ever added to prayer by Jesus Christ and the apostles was *fasting* (Matthew 4/2; Luke 4/2; 6/16 -18). In Antioch the church was worshiping the Lord and *fasting* when they got instructions from the Holy Spirit about the missionary journey of Barnabas and Saul (Paul) (Acts 13/2-4). Elders were chosen in each church with *prayer* and *fasting* (Acts 14/23). It is evident that important decisions were made and that the Holy Spirit spoke after prayer and fasting in the early church.

Prayer walking adds something in that is "extra biblical" and it also puts things in the wrong order. Prayer walking and optional fasting is done to get desired results, but prayer and fasting is done to seek the direction of the Holy Spirit. When the gospel is preached we rely on the Holy Spirit to move in the hearts of unbelievers for repentance and the new birth.

Prayer walking takes the focus away from God to how we think things should be done and adding God into *our* agenda– it is essentially a work of the flesh. Physical location is not necessary for God to reveal things. The apostle Paul was given a vision of the man from Macedonia when he was in a completely different location and wasn't even thinking about Macedonia (Acts 16/9). The Apostle Paul had terrible problems and opposition, but we do not see him taking dominion over demonic powers?

One of the supposed reasons for prayer walking is to 'spy out the land' (Numbers 13/2):

Spying out the land is essential when warring for a city...Christians should walk or drive every major freeway, avenue, and road of their cities, praying and coming against demonic strongholds over every neighborhood...(Engaging the Enemy: How to Fight and Defeat Territorial Spirits - C. Peter Wagner, p. 98).

- Firstly when the twelve spies went into Canaan they were going with the intent of *physically* occupying that land. (Numbers 13) The context is completely different.
- Warring for a city is not biblical.
- We are never told to come against demonic strongholds over every neighborhood – we are told to go and preach the gospel.
- We go where God sends us. God already knows the problems and we should be praying and relying on Him to sort them out in His way.

Even though the term "Prayer Walking" isn't in the Bible, the principles of prayer walking are very much there as you can see. Jesus said: "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come." (Matthew 24:14) The "end" refers to his Second Coming. We want to hasten his return so let us use every tool available to us to promote the gospel throughout every neighborhood and city in our land and all over the world. Prayer is such a powerful tool and Prayer Walking gives us an extra edge of effectiveness. I bet Abraham, Joshua and Caleb and Nehemiah would love to cheer us on. Let's do it!
(transformingsydney.org)

- The principles of prayer walking cannot be equated to preaching the

gospel – they are completely different activities.

- Jesus statement above in Matthew 24/14 does not say that His return will be hastened by anything we do, He simply stated a fact.
- Prayer is the most important thing we can do. To say that prayer walking give us an extra edge of effectiveness over prayer is unbiblical.

There are instances of demonic possession when the Jesus and the apostles commanded the demons to leave particular individuals and there *is* clear authority to do this, but it was never done over geographic areas by Jesus or his apostles.

The authority we have as believers is to cast out demons/unclean spirits and to cure diseases (on an individual basis of need). (Matthew 10/1; Mark 3/15, 6/7; Luke 9/1; Luke 10/17) When the disciples failed to cast out a demon Jesus said: "*This kind can come out only through prayer*" (Mark 9/29 NRSV {some translations say *prayer and fasting*}).

Prayer walking is supposedly an act of spiritual warfare:

Peter Wagner and others are calling "strategic-level spiritual warfare" is praying against these territorial spirits, seeking to "map" their strategies over given locations by discerning their names and what they use to keep people in bondage and then to bind them in turn so that evangelism may go unhindered. The idea of "spiritual mapping" is one in which people research an area and try to identify the spirit(s) who are in charge over it so that "smart-bomb" praying may loosen the hold of territorial spirits over the people in a territory who may then come to Christ more freely.(www.lausanne.org)

Here we have another add-on, namely '*spiritual mapping*'. Wagner claims that '*spiritual mapping*' identifies the territorial spirits. This focuses our attention on the demonic and activities which detract from the mission given to us of preaching the gospel under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

Banishing or warding off evil spirits is an occult activity. Pagans do various ritual acts to ward off evil spirits; Buddhists walk and chant incantations against evil spirits - but this practice is absent from the Bible. Instead of seeking demonic information about strategies and

demonic names - *should not a people inquire of their God?* (Isaiah 8/19) Other things advocated by the neoevangelicals are walking through labyrinths, prayer journeys, quests - all ideas which originate with paganism, rites of initiation, mythology and fables. If such strategies are truly necessary then why don't we find anything about them in the Bible? *Now this I affirm and insist on in the Lord: you must no longer live as the Gentiles live, in the futility of their minds.* (Ephesians 4/17)

Spiritual Warfare Defined Biblically:

.....to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbours, for we are members of one another. Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not make room for the devil. Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labour and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. (Ephesians 4/23-28)

- *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.* Paul goes on to explain exactly what the armour of God is and how to appropriate it personally. (Ephesians 6)
- *Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.* (James 4/7-8) The context of James 4 is repentance.
- See also Philipians 4/6-7; Hebrews 4/12; Romans 12/2.
- Jesus Christ responded to Satan with scripture when he was being personally tempted. Jesus did not dispute that Satan had dominion over the earth. (Matthew 4/1-11) Jesus response to Peter: *Get behind me Satan* was also a response to personal temptation. (Matthew 16/23)



WHO ARE THE PROPONENTS OF PRAYER WALKING?

Gerald Coates, Roger Forster, Lynn Green, Graham Kendrick and Steve Hawthorne have already been mentioned as the originators of prayer walking, but many others have joined them. It is appropriate to say a few words about the beliefs and practices of some of these people in order to discern where their ideas are coming from.

Graham Kendrick and Steven Hawthorne co-authored the book 'Prayer Walking: Praying on Site with Insight'. Kendrick's stated objective is to break down denominational barriers to create ecumenical unity. The ecumenical March For Jesus Program encompassed Roman Catholics and Mormons. Hawthorne is also very much involved in ecumenism through the Lausanne Movement. The Lausanne Movement was founded by Billy Graham, an admitted universalist who has strong associations with Catholicism and Freemasonry. The honorary chairman of the Lausanne Movement was John Stott now deceased, an admitted annihilationist. The Lausanne Movement and the World Christian Movement have shifted away from the primacy of the gospel by putting social justice and evangelism (*evangelization*) on a par. Biblically proclamation of the gospel always takes primacy - actions come subsequently. *Wherever they do not welcome you, as you are leaving that town shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.* (Mark 6/11; Luke 9/5; 10/11; Acts 13/51)

Similarly Gerald Coates theology throws up a number of concerns: He denies the infallibility or sufficiency of scripture. He is proven to be

a false prophet. He stated that the March for Jesus was a *prophetic act* which claims the ground for God *by shifting the spiritual powers that have been allocated in the nations....* (Gerald Coates, *March For Jesus*, p.131)

The Rapture idea is ridiculous...One has to conclude that the secret rapture theory may be evangelical, but is nonetheless unbiblical. It is a grotesque idea- the rapture may be a most agreeable doctrine for cowards, but it is nothing better than wishful thinking and must be relegated to the area of myth and fantasy” (Gerald Coates, *What On Earth Is This Kingdom* p. 36)

- Though the timing of the rapture of the church is the subject of some debate, there are clear Biblical references confirming the rapture of true believers: John 14/1-3; Acts 1/9-11; 1 Corinthians 15/51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.

Roger Forster's definition of fulfilling the world mission of the church:

*The structures of the satanic strongholds will be refurbished with a whole new personnel. I believe with all my heart that the rediscovery of territorial spirits is part of God's desire and design to get his people into the full knowledge of the sons of God so we can grow in stature geographically and territorially as well as powerfully that this will enable us to fulfil **the world mission of the church*** (Roger Forster, *Introduction to Territorial Spirits*).

The World Mission of the Church from a Biblical Perspective:

- And he said to them, *Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation.* (Mark 16/15)

- *From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”* (Matthew 4/17)

- *He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead.* (Acts 10/42)

- See also Mark 1/14; John 1/1-10; Acts 17/3; 1 Corinthians 1/17-23; 1 Corinthians 2/1-81; 1 Thessalonians 2/3-12; Galatians 1/6-10 etc.

Given the totally unbiblical beliefs and practices of all the above men it is impossible to argue that any of their ideas really do come from

the Lord. Should we take the lead from people who are entrenched in ecumenism just because they are well known 'Christians'?

GLOBAL DOMINIONISM

The fundamental error that many of these people are making is that they have a 'dominion theology' in that they envisage the church ruling prior to the return of Jesus Christ and facilitating His return. This is the exact opposite of the biblical texts which tell us that far from ruling on the earth, Christians will be persecuted more and more in the end times. Antichrist will rule the earth for a period of seven years prior to the return of Christ – things will get worse not better. The only 'church' that will be ruling and reigning prior to the return of Christ will be a one world religion under the false prophet which will counterfeit the real thing - we are witnessing the formation of this in our lifetime. Only upon Jesus' return will the world be restored to His leadership – God's kingdom is not of this world. Not until Jesus' return will we have authority over nations. (Revelation 2/26)

CONCLUSION

God has given us everything we need to win people to Christ, we are given the Holy Spirit, the blue print of his Son and also the example of the apostles. Why do we think we need another agenda in order to do things differently? Prayer walking, prayer marches, prayer mapping, circle walking, labyrinth walking, confronting powers and principalities, alignment etc., are distractions which undermine the mandate of the church to preach the gospel. If we add to scripture then we are acting presumptuously, and going beyond our remit.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28/19)

Precisely as the Bible warns, the most dangerous enemies of true Christians are not the obvious false religions, but those who claim to be Christians and are not. Satan's aim is to deceive *even the elect – if that were possible*. (Matthew 24/24)

Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come unless the rebellion comes first and the lawless one is revealed, the one destined for destruction. He opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, declaring himself to be God. (2 Thessalonians 2/3-4)