

# God's Generals

**While American troops fight the war on terror, Dutch Sheets and Chuck Pierce are helping mobilize an army of intercessors to pray for the nation.**

Naturally, they were on a plane. Dutch Sheets, who spends three weeks out of a month traveling across the country to meetings and conferences, and Chuck Pierce, also a frequent flier, were headed for Washington, D.C.

Sheets, as he always does when he sees his friend, asked, "What's God saying to you?"

Neither expected that Pierce's response would change their lives—and, they hope, the direction of their country.

"God's telling me to go to all 50 states," Pierce said.

Sheets couldn't believe what his friend was telling him.

It was the same prompting God had been giving Sheets.

So began an unlikely, unexpected and unprecedented 18-month journey across the country, with Pierce and Sheets bouncing from state to state to unite and inspire a praying body of believers with the intent of igniting a revival similar to Azusa Street—the revival that swept this country in the early 1900s. From Florida to Alaska, from Maine to California they traveled, spending a day or two in each state to pray with intercessors and prophesy over each state.

“At first, I thought we could go separately,” Pierce says. “We both keep busy schedules. I tried to say, ‘Well, I’m going to speak in Hawaii and you’re going to West Virginia—maybe that counts.’”

But it didn’t. These longtime friends and ministers became convinced it was God’s intention to have them travel together around the nation, forming an army of intercessors as they went. They completed the 50-state prayer tour in Philadelphia on August 3, 2004.

“I believe revival is coming,” Pierce says, now that they have completed their assignment. “This is the year the Lord wants to visit us.”

Pierce, with his prophetic insight, and Sheets, with his broken heart and passion for this country, began their whirlwind prayer tour in Alaska and finished at St. Mark’s Episcopal, a Philadelphia church that had 2,500 members in the early 1900s and has dwindled to 17 today.

Pierce prophesied over each state they visited. He declared that Alaska will become an open door to God’s movement and referred to it as the “alpha and the omega.” In Pennsylvania, he said prophetically that the state is the keystone that holds everything together.

Some states were not as Pierce and Sheets had anticipated they would be. Utah wasn’t as difficult as expected, Arizona was the most cold spiritually and Washington, which is considered to be one of the least churchied states in the country, was easy to “tap into.”

"There were places like Arizona I was blindsided," Sheets says. "I was thinking, What is this? We couldn't tap into anything, as far as discerning and anointing."

Wherever they stopped on their prayer tour, Sheets and Pierce met with several hundred intercessory prayer leaders, usually in a church. Typically, they went with no planned message, waiting instead for the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Sheets always spoke first, often not knowing what he was going to say until he got to the microphone.

"We were totally reliant on the Holy Spirit," he says.

Pierce frequently interrupted Sheets' comments with a prophetic word, jumping up from his seat and taking the microphone.

God often confirmed that Pierce was hearing from Him by bringing about an almost immediate fulfillment of the prophetic word he had spoken. In Florida, Pierce prophesied about a terrorist cell group working in Tampa Bay. In less than a week, four U.S. residents in the Tampa area were arrested for supporting, financing and relaying messages to a Palestinian terrorist group.

In San Antonio, Pierce prophesied that the "strongman [in the Middle East] that has not been found will be found in the next seven days." Pierce had also prophesied that the state of Texas would partner in the capture.

Three days later, soldiers based in San Antonio found Saddam Hussein hiding in Iraq.

“Those were signs, and they were important,” Sheets says. “Those were things God did to honor what we were doing.”

What they were doing was nurturing a nationwide revival.

### **A Burden for America**

In their co-authored book, *Releasing the Prophetic Destiny of a Nation*, Pierce and Sheets talk about their prayer tour, mentioning the prophetic words given over this nation at each place they stopped.

“I’m laying my life down, and it’s to see revival in America,” says Sheets, who has been in the ministry for 27 years, the last 13 of them as the senior pastor at Springs Harvest Fellowship in Colorado Springs, Colorado. “My calling and heart is for America to experience another great awakening.”

For Sheets, preparation for the nationwide prayer tour actually began in 2000 during a service at his home church. He was walking up to the platform to preach when he was struck by such a strong sense of grief that he felt physically ill. Then he began to weep uncontrollably.

“People weren’t sure what to do,” Sheets says. “They sang another song. They waited to see what was going to happen.”

Sheets continued to weep and was taken to another room, where he was left alone. He cried for the next three and a half hours. “I cried so hard that I said, ‘God, You have to do something or I’m going to die of a broken heart,’” Sheets says.

God was giving Sheets a heart for this nation. Not a red-white-and-blue patriotism, but a burden for the hearts and souls of the people of America.

“It wasn’t God’s anger I was feeling,” Sheets says. “It was God’s love—a father’s broken heart over his child.”

During the first few weeks after his encounter with God, Sheets carried a heavy burden, sometimes pulling off to the side of the road while driving because he was overwhelmed with grief. Eventually, he cried out to God: “I don’t want this anymore. You’re going to have to take this off me. It’s killing me mentally, emotionally.”

But rather than lift the burden, God revealed to Sheets how to carry the burden in his soul, not his emotions. It was the only way Sheets could function.

“If there is a true burden from the Lord, whether it’s someone God is sending to Afghanistan or someone going to the streets of New York, there is a part of us that we have to let it consume,” Sheets says. “I don’t think you can be used by God for something like this unless you let Him do that. At some point, you have to experience the broken heart that God feels for people.”

Sheets had been asking God to give him a burden for America. “Dutch had passed the tests [God had put before him] and proven he was ready to move into a new season,” says C. Peter Wagner, director of Wagner Leadership Institute in Colorado Springs and longtime friend of Sheets and Pierce. “His leadership position is also an important part to this. The guy

down the street might not be a leader.”

Sheets is a leader now—longtime pastor of a church, traveling minister, prolific author. But he was a rebellious pastor’s son for two years while attending Miami University in Ohio in the early 1970s before recommitting his life to God and entering the ministry.

Pierce, the son of a successful businessman who became an abusive alcoholic, is president of Glory of Zion International Ministries in his hometown of Denton, Texas. He has co-authored 11 books.

Pierce has revisited about 40 states since completing the original prayer tour two and a half years ago. The one-day stops have fanned a flame of prayer.

“Here’s the amazing thing,” Pierce says. “I’d say we’ve doubled our prayer efforts since Dutch and I first went.”

The prayer chain is growing as it connects with people such as Kimberly Daniels, pastor of Spoken Word Ministries in Jacksonville, Florida, and director of another prayer movement.

“The army of the Lord is beginning to increase,” Pierce says. “Now I believe we need a vision of clarity in how to advance.”

### **The Necessity of Prayer**

Sheets says prayer—not voting, not an outreach scheme, not

door-to-door knocking, not congressmen—is what will bring change in America. But prayer, the lifeblood of a Christian's life, is often the last option Christians take in facing a problem or challenge.

Sheets and Pierce say there are several reasons Christians don't pray the way they should. One is that they are content because their material needs are met. Indifference, or apathy, is another—and of course, lack of faith.

But according to Sheets, another explanation for Christians not praying is too much faith, or a misunderstanding of God's sovereignty. "Christians believe that God is in control and He's going to get what He wants anyway no matter what we do," he says.

But Sheets says that's not an accurate view.

"God doesn't always get what He wants," he says. "There are thousands of things that happen on this planet every day that aren't God's will. There are rapes, killings."

God has made a choice to limit Himself, he explains, to allow for free will—mankind's freedom to choose. A misunderstanding of this principle causes Christians to hold back.

Eventually, Sheets points out, God's will is fulfilled. But in the day-to-day journey, throughout history, His will isn't realized. Lives are lost. Satan wins battles.

"I believe we determine a lot of the events along the way, for our life, for our city, for our nation," Sheets says. He

believes Christians must link prayer with fulfilling God's will and realize that prayer changes things.

"I believe we're going to have an awakening come," Pierce says. "Awakening comes when we're stirred so we can see, and we're out of our dullness, our passivity and our slumber."

But for revival to occur, Sheets says, there needs to be a return to fervent prayer and a renewed reverence for God. He believes today's seeker-friendly church culture has substituted a "God is my buddy" perspective for a sincere reverence for God and a holy fear in relating to Him.

Melting the "awe" factor was necessary to encourage believers to "develop a greater intimacy" with God rather than maintaining a distant religious relationship, Sheets says, and the focus on praise and worship during the charismatic movement helped accomplish this. "I think all those things were necessary," Sheets says. "But I think somewhere along the line you need to balance ... being a friend [to God] with a holy fear."

In addition, Sheets believes Christians have to see and acknowledge the spiritual void in this country. "I think the average Christian in America would think that things are pretty good," he says.

"They're not. America is in a desperate condition. I think we need to experience a great awakening."

Calling America a secularized nation, Sheets says there is no hope unless Christians sense an urgency, an imminent danger. Revival, he claims, comes only out of a sense of need.



"We have completely lost our bearings as a country," he says. "We have to have another great awakening, another outpouring of the Holy Spirit. And I think that's coming."

But revival, he insists, begins with fervent prayer. "I just think somewhere along the line someone has to care enough to weep."

In addition, Pierce says, a Christian's sphere of prayer has to move beyond requests for his own family to issues of national scope. He believes God is urging Christians to "increase their boundaries."

"He might tell you He wants you to pray for the government of your state for a month," Pierce says. "He might tell you He wants you to pray for all the churches in your city."

It's fervent prayer that can usher in revival. But is revival on God's schedule, or is it to be prompted by the prayers of the church?

It's the church partnering with God, Sheets says. "It's not just a matter of a certain people obeying and God will pour out His Spirit," Sheets says. "It's a matter of what is happening in the spirit realm that allows Him to pour out His Spirit."

Obedience and repentance are part of the forerunners to revival, creating a spiritual climate in which God can pour out His Spirit, Sheets says. "It's never a question of God holding back and Him saying now is the time. ... It's God and man working together."

Pierce adds: "I believe God has a time for visitation. Yet we have to respond. If we don't respond, we miss God's timing to bring change to the earth realm. I believe it begins with God, but it is dependent on us responding to Him correctly."

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Gail Wood is a reporter and freelance writer living in Lacey, Washington.

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### **Dutch Sheets, Age: 53**

**Ministry:** Senior pastor of Springs Harvest Fellowship in Colorado Springs, Colorado; president and co-founder of Dutch Sheets Ministries ()

**Church involvement:** Pastor for 27 years, the last 13 at Springs Harvest Fellowship

**Education:** Attended Miami University in Ohio before becoming a youth minister

**Wife:** Ceci, a trained vocalist and ordained minister who manages and directs her husband's ministry. The couple will celebrate their 30th anniversary on November 24.

**Children:** Sarah, 20, and Hannah, 18

**Hobbies:** Fishing, hunting and outdoor activities

**On prayer:** "I have a friend in Congress; he tells me he'll fight there. He means with laws and legislation. But if the church doesn't pray, he says nothing he does will matter. He still believes in the power of prayer. He says we're fighting a spiritual war, and if the church doesn't pray and get him spiritual power, he can't make a difference."

**On Chuck Pierce:** "He's one of the best administrators I've found. There's no one I trust more than Chuck Pierce when he gives prophecies. He's a lot of fun. Very balanced, a very normal person."

**On experiencing God's favor:** "I asked God to give me His heart for this nation. Why me? I'm not exactly sure why. But ... there was this knocking and I kept opening, and He kept knocking and I kept opening."

**Chuck D. Pierce, Age: 53**

**Ministry:** President of Glory of Zion International Ministries () in Denton, Texas; vice president of Global Harvest Ministries in Colorado Springs, Colorado

**Education:** Degree in business from Texas A&M, master's in cognitive systems from the University of North Texas and a doctorate of ministry (.) degree from the Wagner Leadership Institute

**Wife:** Pam, who has co-authored a book with her husband about keeping your faith in a world of chaos. The couple has been married for 33 years.

**Children:** Six children

**Hobbies:** Travel, which is actually part of his job. He's been to Finland, Korea, England, France, Ireland and Luxembourg in just the last few months.

**On prayer:** "I believe the Lord is trying to increase our sphere of authority in prayer. There's nothing wrong with praying for your family. But if you just pray at that level, those are the boundaries you've set for yourself to influence spiritually."

**On Dutch Sheets:** "My role has been to make sure we are gathered and connected. That forms a platform for someone with a burden like Dutch to tell his message."

**On experiencing God's favor:** "I have to depend on God daily. This isn't me. People already know about my idiosyncrasies. I'm totally dependent on hearing the word of God. I wouldn't hear Him if I let myself get exalted."

**Igniting Prayer for Reconciliation**

An old black kettle that was once used to muffle prayers is now being used to spark them.

Urging racial reconciliation within the church, William L. Ford III travels the country to speak about the power of prayer, delivering a message that was sparked more than 200 years ago in a slave master's barn.

The co-founder of Texas-based Hilkiah Ministries, whose mission is to "restore the privilege of intimacy with God in intercessory prayer," inherited a large cast-iron kettle used by enslaved ancestors during forbidden late-night prayer meetings held in a dark, unassuming barn.

"The slave master would beat them for any reason, and praying was one of them," Ford explains. "But in spite of this man's cruelty and because of their love for Jesus Christ, these folks would take this kettle pot and pray underneath it so that the kettle would muffle their voices."

Today, Ford says he is experiencing the fruit of their prayers. "The story they passed down with this kettle," he says, "is that they didn't think they would see freedom in their time, so they prayed for the freedom of the next generation."

Though his ancestors' prayers were answered when future generations gained their freedom, Ford believes that a meeting with Dutch Sheets was the beginning of yet another freedom—a spiritual freedom that began with racial reconciliation.

Sitting in a conference Sheets led, Ford heard a message about

synergy. "When you take two separate things and you place them together, they don't only create an additional power but a multiplicity of power," Ford says.

"So I'm thinking, I can come in agreement with the prayers of my forefathers for the freedom of the next generation in this nation, and I thought about the synergistic power that could be released."

That day, Ford shared the story of his family's kettle with Sheets. As he did, he fully grasped the big picture of what the kettle symbolized.

"I love to tell people that if my ancestors had been Muslims or Buddhists, I'd have no connection to that pot or its history. But ... because you are a Christian, not only are these my ancestors and forefathers, they're yours, too, because we're united by the blood of Christ."

Ford adds: "Why would God take a white man named Dutch and a black man named William III and connect them? Because the Dutch were the ones to bring the first slaves into America in 1619 and William III, the king of England, was the first king to send slave ships into America. [God] was basically saying, 'I want to use your relationship to show that I want to reverse the effects of yesterday's pain.'"

Their meeting spawned the Kettle Tour, a 15-day prayer tour launched in 2001 to "re-dig the wells of revival" in the Northeast. During the tour, the same kettle that was once used to quiet prayers was used to ignite them.

"When we come together in that kind of unity and prayer,

something powerful begins to happen,” Ford says. “A corporate anointing [is] released on the body of Christ. More importantly, the bowls in heaven are tipped over a nation and God begins to shift things.”

More than six years after the tour kick-off, Ford continues to travel with the kettle, preaching a message of reconciliation that begins with the healing power of prayer.

Says Ford: “With all the stuff that’s going on in the earth right now, there is still hope for America because God hasn’t forgotten about the prayers of our grandfathers and grandmothers.”

**Suzy A. Richardson**