

The Battle for France

I believe one of the most encouraging spiritual developments in recent decades has been the emphasis on intercessory prayer. Ministries such as the World Prayer Center in Colorado Springs, Colo., have mobilized hundreds of thousands of believers to pray for unreached people groups around the world. And it has made a difference.

This month concerted intercessory prayer is taking place for a country that desperately needs revival. This is a prophetic call for believers in the United States to join others around the world in prayer for France—where today evangelical believers number less than 1 percent of the population.

I'm told this will be the largest prayer initiative for France in the nation's history. More than 1,000 French churches and prayer groups from various denominations will join with believers from more than 30 nations for 40 days of prayer and fasting.

From March 7 through Easter Sunday, April 15, they will be asking God to bring change to France. I believe that by joining them, we can make a significant difference in this nation.

France is one of the world's most unreached countries. Of its 36,664 communities, 34,500 have no resident evangelical witness. Christian friends have told me that the country's image of prosperity, harmony and happiness is contradicted by a reality where 1 in 4 people live alone, 10 percent take

antidepressants, 4 million are alcoholics, and 40,000 young people attempt suicide each year.

Yet France has a great Christian heritage. Birthed in book of Acts-style signs and wonders, the church in France was one of the strongest in the world during the early Christian era. Some of Christianity's most prominent leaders—including early church father Irenaeus, Martin of Tours and John Calvin—were from France.

France's history, though, is also marked by ruthless persecution of believers. The Huguenots, as the French Protestants were called, were almost martyred out of existence. This is of particular interest to me since my ancestors, the Strang family, were Huguenots who fled persecution in 1688 by coming to New York for religious freedom.

Today France prides itself on being a secular state. It is against the law to teach about Jesus and the Christian faith in schools. Those who try to evangelize others are viewed as belonging to a brainwashing cult.

However, God is raising up people with a heart for France. One example is Paul van der Hagen, who is working to plant a church this year in Paris under the leadership of Vincent Esterman, a Frenchman raised in Australia who went back to France to reach his own people with the gospel. Vincent has a vision to mobilize French expatriates who will reach France for Christ. He can be contacted through the special Web site mentioned below.

Believers in France are asking us to pray with them: (1) for

those who have never heard the gospel, that there would be significant conversions among all ages; (2) for the strengthening of the French churches, that every member may become fully equipped for works of service; (3) for unity among believers, who often are deeply divided; (4) for a healing of historic wounds and the removal of spiritual hindrances in the nation; (5) that the powers of darkness at work in France would be bound in Jesus' name; (6) that a living, vibrant church would be raised up in every community; and (7) that this nation would be transformed. For more detailed information logon to .

My goal is for 1 percent of our 220,000 subscribers to join me in prayer. We have created a Web page, , which gives information and a bulletin board to post what you feel God is saying as you pray. It's also a way for those of you who want to support the French church financially to get information on giving through Christian Life Missions, our nonprofit partner.

Many of us are believing God for a spiritual breakthrough. Together, we can make a difference for Him.

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