



# THE CHICAGO CONNECTION

Connecting Chicago disciples with each other, the Midwest and the world

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## The Timeless Prayer Reflection on 9/11 Six Years Later

As they were being persecuted by fellow Jews, a gathering of the earliest Christians prayed to God with the question, “*Why do the nations rage?*” (Acts 4:25) The implication of their question is broad because the Greek word *ethnos* can be translated as either nations, races or ethnic groups. But the word definitely implies different cultures.

Since 9/11, I have often wondered if we Americans would be able to look beyond radical Islam’s Jihad to find answers into the other jihads (struggles or wars) that have burst into our neighborhoods, high schools and campuses. Since the most memorable event of this century, we have been in want of an answer—why do so many different groups of people rage? As we near another anniversary of that fateful Tuesday, I would like to invite you to consider some of my reflections about that prayer.

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### The Morning of September 11, 2001

Early on the morning of September 11<sup>th</sup>, I received a heads-up through a misdialed phone call from a mother in Canada. Intending to tell her son not to go to work in Chicago at the Sears Tower, she reached my number instead. She filled me in on the plane that had hit the north building of the World Trade Center.

I promptly turned on the television around the time when the South Twin Tower was being hit, about 9:03 a.m. (Eastern Time). I quickly told my wife, Tricia, and phoned fellow minister Tony Singh. We decided that we would convert our staff meeting that morning into a time for prayer, singing hymns and reading Scriptures. For about the next hour, Tricia and I were stunned as we observed the collapse of the South Tower at about 9:59 a.m. We then left for our staff meeting in Lisle.

The Chicago ministerial staff began gathering around 11:00 a.m. We saw the North Tower collapse as we held our devotional meeting before a large screen projection of the awful events taking place in New York City. It was

obvious that it was very difficult to get the “what happened” information correct, even with countless cameras and eyewitnesses. The first impressions were often inaccurate under the duress.

For instance, someone said they saw a missile enter the first tower, but another person was sure that it was an implosion, not a plane. Another saw a small plane. Early on, a correspondent described the first crash as something only “relatively devastating.” And someone wondered if

the second tower’s damage was due to a burst from the original tower. When the first tower went down, the plumes of smoke blocked one video angle so that they couldn’t

even tell that the tower was gone. One report came in that it was like being in a horror movie. But at the same moment, many high school kids who were able to watch the events on television at their schools nervously laughed and thought it might just be a prank. Even some teachers were unsure. Then there were those who took this all in seriously and were trying to estimate the possible death toll. The first estimates started well above 20,000 then gradually continued downward.

As our devotional continued, our prayers were enlivened by the images of people who were jumping out of the buildings. In shock and great sorrow, we were all aching inside for family members of the individuals who were on the planes that hit the Twin Towers and for all the people of New York City. Somewhere in the blur of these memories, we heard that the Pentagon had been hit at around 10:30 a.m. and that a plane had gone down somewhere in Pennsylvania.

In those days, I had been re-reading a book entitled, *It Is a Great Time to Be Alive*, by Harry Emerson Fosdick. This otherwise liberal New York minister used the Gospels of Jesus in an attempt to interpret what God might be doing during the harrowing events of World War II. I cited page one of his book for a brief devotional that morning.

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## Chicago Ministry Center Member Articles

*The following thoughts were written by Talia Staten and Corelle Perry, members of the Chicago Ministry Center.*

### Talia Staten

I grew up in the Chicago Church of Christ and have been a member of the church since 2000 when I was baptized into Christ. In this article, I'd like to share a few of the exciting experiences I've been blessed to take part in the past few years and how those events have caused me to take a deeper look into my commitment as a disciple of Christ.

Last summer, many of you prayed for me while I was in Israel. I am so grateful for those prayers, as I found myself very close to the fighting in the war that broke out between Israel and Hezbollah. As an undergraduate archaeology major at Wheaton College, I have been involved in excavations in Israel for the past two summers, first for 10 weeks in 2006, and then for six weeks in June and July of 2007. During both of those summer tours, I dug in Philistine cities and found material from the same time period as the Old Testament kingdom of Israel (about 3,000 years ago). Ashkelon, an ancient Philistine port city located about 40 miles south of Tel Aviv on the coast of Israel, proved to be a fantastic site this season, both scientifically and historically.

Using a steel hand trowel and a pick-axe, I spent most of my time digging in a metropolitan area of 4,000 years of occupation. This summer, we removed the Iron Age I material (contemporary with the United Monarchy of Israel) and uncovered Late Bronze Age II/III architecture (when the Philistines were settling in towns on the coast, land that was politically held by Egypt). Aside from the richness of the site, from a pure scientific and historical perspective, digging in Ashkelon and other Philistine cities has demonstrated to me the distinction between Philistine material culture and that of the ancient Israelites.

Finding pig bones, disposed infants and female goddess figurines in Ashkelon illustrated the consistency of archaeology with the picture the Bible paints of these people who rebelled against Israel's God. Even though I can objectively appreciate the artifacts we've uncovered for their historical significance, I can't help but also wonder how distinct the modern material culture of my life looks from that of godless people today. Besides owning some Bibles and other Christian literature, do my possessions and activities conflict with my Christian ideology, or does it clearly reflect a radical devotion to God, as drastic as the tangible difference between the Philistines and the Israelites? It's a question that each of us in the Chicago Church would benefit from asking, and one that causes me to make sure my life is both distinctive from those in the world and pleasing to the One who reigns in heaven.

Even though the cultural evidence in these sites is diminished by thousands of years of dirt and sand, it is both amazing and convicting to me how transcendent religion is still so materially and historically present.

### Corelle Perry

I have been involved in the Chicago Church for about 14 years now, beginning around the time my mother got baptized in 1994. By the time I was in high school, I studied the Bible and became a disciple on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1999. During my high-school years, I was very faithful and I tried to share the importance of God in my life with others, even though I struggled (and still do!) with a shy nature.

But by the time I started college, everything changed. My mother lost her job, and we lost our apartment as a result. And for the next few years, we were basically homeless. I felt so broken, just as if God had taken everything I needed away from me. I struggled badly in school, as well as in my faith. I was feeling sad, hurt and angry at God, and I began to seriously question God's purpose and plans for my life.

In the book of Malachi, we see that many of the people of Judah had little faith in God. They actually felt that obeying and worshipping Him brought them absolutely no reward. They would even sacrifice sick and wounded animals to Him. God had to remind them that that kind of attitude was not the way to love and honor Him. Sadly, I became one of those people. I was thinking that obeying God under the circumstances was pointless. My faith was nonexistent and I was beginning to drift away from God and His family. I was struggling with depression and even had some thoughts of suicide. Instead of holding on to God's word, I kept thinking I was worthless. But through it all, God was reminding me that He still loved me through the people he put in my life, great disciples like Xin, Jurema and Jules.

I often forget that God puts us in certain situations for our own good. I now realize that it's not about what's happening *to* you, it's about what's happening *in* you. I must remember that He's not out to get me. Even though I was without a home of my own for about five years, God was there to protect me and my family. Little did I know He could make me an example of faith, even when I doubted so much. Looking back on those events, I feel I have been developing a strong sense of character. Instead of losing faith when life just beats me down, I have decided to desperately pray and listen closely to God's encouraging words found in **Jeremiah 29:11**: *For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future.*

## Reviews and Previews

### Teen Fest 2007

Saturday, September 15<sup>th</sup> marks the day that teens come together from all over the Midwest for **Teen Fest 2007!** This event will be held from 1-5 p.m. at the Arabian Knights farm in Willowbrook. The afternoon features Christian rap artist, "Big City", teen performances and testimonies, and a message preached by Dave Pocta. There will be carnival games, a dunk-tank, hot dogs, soda, horse rides and a petting zoo after the program. We want teens to bring their friends from school, as this event will be very visitor-oriented! The cost is \$5 per teen. See your teen ministry leader for more information.

### "Steps of the Apostles" Tour

Disciples Today is pleased to offer the "Steps of the Apostles" Tour again for 2008! After a recent survey, it was obvious that more disciples want to take advantage of this amazing adventure connecting with the biblical past of the apostles and early disciples. Our tour/cruise for 2008 will take place in the Mediterranean Sea onboard the beautiful Royal Caribbean Legend of the Seas. We will begin and end our tour in Rome, with visits to Mykonos, Rhodes and Athens (Greece), and exciting days in Ephesus (Turkey), Alexandria (Egypt) and Naples (Italy). Classes taught by Roger and Marcia Lamb (Chicago) and Bill and Sally Hooper (Dallas) will be offered onboard the ship as we sail to our destinations. The devotionals and worship times onboard and in biblical places will no doubt enrich your life. We will also meet with disciples in a few of the cities we visit. Numerous offshore excursions are offered by the cruiseline as well. The tour will take place April 26-May 8, 2008. Complete information can be found on the Disciples Today website, [www.disciplestoday.com](http://www.disciplestoday.com).

### Kingdom Kids Teaching Resources

As a resource to teachers serving in the **Kingdom Kids** program, the entire curriculum is now available through our website (thank-you Chris Walquist!). Because of our license with DPI, a username and password is required to access the curriculum. To obtain a username and password, write to [info@chicagochurch.org](mailto:info@chicagochurch.org). After logging in, "Kingdom Kids Curriculum" appears in the Resources menu.

Also, the church has a license to use **Children's Worship Bulletins**. Designed for ages 3-12, these activity sheets can be used as a supplement to Kingdom Kids, for house church, etc. Visit [www.childrensbulletins.com](http://www.childrensbulletins.com) to view samples. For access to this resource, write to [info@chicagochurch.org](mailto:info@chicagochurch.org).

### Newly Baptized Disciples

We wish to welcome **Mark Denning** and **Felicia Mitchell** to our fellowship. Both were recently baptized and are part of the Central Ministry Center.

### Through Water & Fire

Coming this fall: **The 25th Anniversary Chicago Church of Christ Commemorative Compilation CD—Through Water and Fire**. We encourage you to visit the newly-redesigned web site where you can share your favorite church memories. You can also send us your photo(s) to be included in a slideshow that will be on the CD. Please visit [www.throughwaterandfire.com](http://www.throughwaterandfire.com) for more details.

## Campus Ministry Memories

Hundreds of members of our church were converted as young people in various campus ministries around the country. This month, the Chicago Ministry Center invites us to take a trip down memory lane of spiritual life in the campus ministry. Do you remember...

... all the retreats you attended? They were full of so much inspiration received from hours of late-night fellowship, encouraging and challenging messages and even the road-trips to get there.

... attending Bible Talks with many visitors coming to enjoy the lessons? Do you remember bringing your classmates, dorm-mates and even people you met on the way there to hear God's word?

... eating together, living together, late-night study groups together, attending church together? Our lives were full of great fellowship!

... meeting each other early in the morning to pray for an hour at a time, or praying those "impossible" prayers? Do you remember the first prayer that God answered powerfully?

... the first person you helped to become a Christian? Do you remember how studying the Bible with people and helping them come to faith built your own faith and convictions?

## The Timeless Prayer (Cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

“If only we could hope that war would solve the problems it has set out to solve, but war never does that. When this conflict is over and its immeasurable sacrifices have been poured out, Hitler, to be sure, will be gone, but the basic problems that confronted us before will confront us still, and endless new problems as well that the war itself has caused.”

Fosdick’s point was true for all wars against aggressors—there is a matter behind the headlines that must be resolved, one that war machines, personal anger and retribution cannot solve. And 9/11 is yet another event in our psyche that will haunt western civilization for answers.

We prayed the specific prayer, “Why do the nations rage?” that morning and many times since. As I finished my comments, I cautioned us not to focus on interpreting the events rashly. “Soon we will look for what God was doing in all this,” I said. “Today, we are to think about and pray for the people directly affected.” I wanted to understand the genesis of human rage.

### Why the Rage?

In the months and years that have followed 9/11, it has felt to me like so many have attained the who, what, when, where and how of the tragedy, but most still seem confused by the “why” of rage on the world scene.

We have learned as a nation that major problems such as terrorism do not just go away, even when it receives world attention from the experts, the media and the military. Real solutions to problems with rage must be sought elsewhere. Even the official magnum opus of the 9/11 Commission Report that came out in 2003 is notably deficient about spiritual questions of why.

Some have tried to secure the larger historical context to seek a consensus on the truer meaning of 9/11. This is good, but we must go further. I have since studied countless examples of rage from the first five books of the Bible that seem very similar to rage in modern civilization: The stories of Cain (**Genesis 1:16**), Lamech (**Genesis 4:19-24**), Hagar and Sarai (**Genesis 16:1-8**), Jacob and Esau (**Genesis 25:19-34**), Jacob’s family (**Genesis 37**) and other examples in Exodus and Numbers.

The stories in Scripture are telltale about human behavior—even in modern world events. And we surely need all the perspective we can get at home and abroad. It is no secret that beyond the struggle between radical Islam and the West, other kinds of jihads are at work in our own country, especially our largest cities. Nearly 30 school-aged kids have been killed by gunfire in Chicago during the first six months of this year. Therefore, we must ask, “Why do our children rage?”

We must be diligent about this answer because the church is supposed to offer God’s wisdom to the highest rulers and authorities. (**Ephesians 3:10**) Are we up to that task? Maybe we could start by asking what James, the brother of Jesus, would have to say. After all, James saw his brother murdered by a mob. And the book that bears his name was written, in part, to deal with a community that was fragmented between the favored and less favored—those who were content and those who wanted more. The words of James still reach into our century. In **James 3:13-4:2**, he indirectly explains the “why” concerning the rage of our world and the rage within our nation. Let’s consider his points and ask some vital questions of ourselves.

1. Bitter envy and selfish ambition lead to arrogance and lies, and they pollute all possibilities for peace. (**James 3:13-14**) *Are you involved in any rivalries?*
2. There is a demonic wisdom that comes from below which leads to disorder and every other kind of error. (**James 3:15-16**) *Are the Scriptures or newspaper headlines guiding your wisdom?*
3. God’s wisdom involves pure motives, is reasonable, merciful and not hypocritical. (**James 3:17-18**) *Do you only build high walls from your adversaries, or do you also build safe bridges to them?*
4. Conflicts between groups stem from envious desires for things that are out of reach, and they often end up exploding into violence. (**James 4:1-2**) *Do you satisfy your sinful desires, or do you confront them by confession and repentance?*

Addressing rage must happen with all of us. And the problem of rage begins with addressing our unhealthy inner desires. So to help us begin this process, consider the four italicized questions above and relate them to any group or individual with whom you might have possible differences—extended family, those at your workplace, your neighbors, former members of the church, your adversaries and the like.

The final answer to rage and attaining the real peace Jesus offers came on the resurrection side of the cross. After He absorbed the folly of human rage in death, He returned to life without bitterness. He sent his emissaries out to offer a message of peace to His enemies—those from among the Jews as well as the Gentiles. And that gospel message of peace still speaks to this generation.

Steve Staten