

LRBA Prayer Walk Testimony From Pastor Chris Turner

For the past 3-4 years, even before Covid, God was really dealing with my heart about being more gospel focused and taking Jesus to the people around our church. Our church was growing, but it was almost completely churched people transferring their membership and we were not reaching lost people. God really convicted me about this and put a burden on my heart.

God kept pointing me to get into neighborhoods around our church and in my mind that meant going door to door. All I could think about was how old fashioned that was and how it might have worked in the past but wouldn't work now. All I could envision was a few brave souls going out knocking on doors, getting the door slammed in our face, getting cussed out, getting the police called on us, and coming back totally discouraged and defeated.

So, I talked with Marty about the strategy for doing a neighborhood outreach and he pointed me to prayer as the key that makes all the difference. Instead of the focus being on door to door evangelism we made the focus to be prayer walking these neighborhoods—praying for every home and every family. God began to show me the lostness, the spiritual darkness, the dysfunction, and the brokenness in homes and families within just a few miles of our church campus. In prayer one day, I sensed an urgency from God—a Holy Spirit prompting—Chris if you don't take the gospel of Jesus to these people, then who will? There are drugs, alcohol, pornography, suicide, broken marriages, abuse—all these things in these homes—who is going to take Jesus to them? I knew it was time to stop making excuses, stop delaying, stop trying to figure it all out—and just obey God.

In January 2020 Neill's Creek Baptist launched a strategy for neighborhood outreach through prayer walks. We started with the Pinecroft neighborhood, literally within walking distance of our church. For the entire month of January we rallied our people to pray for Pinecroft and had people prayer walking and prayer driving this neighborhood. On the last Sunday in January 2020 we gathered at our church campus that afternoon for orientation and prayer. Then we walk to Pinecroft where two teams went door to door and another team prayed for each home. It was on this very first prayer walk that we met Chris and Camantha Baker. We were able to share the gospel with them, pray for them, and invite them to church. It was 100% a divine appointment. The next Sunday they showed up at church and within a month they surrendered their lives to Jesus and were baptized. They are now some of the greatest champions of our neighborhood outreach and our church welcome team.

From that first big victory, we have seen God do some amazing things that only he could do. Each month our Outreach Team identifies another neighborhood and we follow the same pattern. Our people pray for the neighborhood for 4 weeks. Various people prayer walk and prayer drive each week of the month, leading up to the organized door to door evangelism we do on the last Sunday. It's a spiritual process of prayerful preparation that has yielded incredible results.

My fears of rejection and slamming doors never came to pass. We've had hundreds of opportunities to share the gospel, point people to Jesus, and to pray for them. We've seen people weep on their front porch as we gathered to pray for them and their family. We've shared with self-proclaimed atheists who have told us that they wish more churches would do this (not at all the response I thought we'd get). We've had people tell us that they stopped going to church during Covid and this was a confirmation from God that they needed to return and recommit to their local church.

On multiple occasions we've had people from the neighborhood we're praying for to show up for a worship service before we ever got to the end of the month prayer walk. One Sunday, 3 families (an entire pew full of people) from South Creek Subdivision showed up on the Sunday morning that we were going to prayer walk their neighborhood that afternoon. They were so excited that we were going to their neighborhood that they joined us on our prayer walk and helped to introduce us to their neighbors for over 2 hours that afternoon. They literally met us that morning and were on mission with us that afternoon! It was through the power of prayer that God literally drew them to our church campus before we could even get there to invite them. Now we have 4 families from Southcreek who are active members in our church.

I could keep telling story after story from the monthly prayer walks we've done since Jan 2020. More and more people—from youth to Senior adults are joining us as we go out each month. People are excited to be engaged in their faith and telling people about Jesus. Instead of something they were once intimidated about, they know look forward to it each month.

These prayer walks have helped our people to be on mission with a gospel focus. They now see our community as a mission field (our Jerusalem) and themselves as missionaries! They see first hand the changing face of our community as something not to fear, but as a special assignment from God—the nations are coming to us. They now find it easier to engage in gospel conversations in their everyday lives. And most importantly they see the difference that prayer makes. We have had almost no one to turn down our offer to pray for them. If we hadn't covered these neighborhoods in prayer—I know we wouldn't have seen the fruit. We wouldn't have seen God move had it not been for prayer.

Marty has made available to us great resources—a Jesus dvd, a small bible study, John 3:16 cards, bags that we can leave on doors of people who are not home.

I'd be happy to come share with your church more specifics of how we train our people and our process. Even if you don't go door to door, I believe there is tremendous power in simply prayer walking these neighborhoods. What we witnessed in the Hedingham neighborhood in Raleigh is proof that this is spiritual warfare. If you don't take Jesus to your neighbors—who will? If you won't cover your neighborhoods in prayer—who will? If you don't have a gospel presence in these homes—who will? You want these people to come to God's house—are you willing to go to their house?