

## Definition of a Transformed Community

In Matthew chapter six Jesus declared to his disciples, “This is how you should pray:

*Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.”*

With these brief words we are reminded that God’s presence and purposes are to be the central focus of human society. They are to be realized and promoted not in some limited, religious manner, but as they are in heaven.

While many Christians assume transforming revival is about growing congregations, it is actually a matter of renaming or re-identifying our cities. To quote the prophet Isaiah, we are to “give [ourselves] no rest, and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem (or London, New York, or Singapore) and makes her the praise of the earth” (Isaiah 62:6-7). We are to “renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations” (Isaiah 61:4). If we do this, Ezekiel promises, “the name of the city from that time on will be: THE LORD IS THERE” (Ezekiel 48:35).

Transforming revival is a communal restoration of the God-man relationship. It is a corporate return to first love. It is a conscious re-enthroning of the King, not only over the realm of religious expression (meaning our church life), but over every dimension of life. There can be no secular-sacred or public-private dichotomy. He must be invited — and expected — to assume control of everything from the sanctuaries of our hearts to the structures of our society.

Simply put, for the term transformation to be properly applied to a community, change must be evident not only in the lives of its inhabitants, but also in the fabric of its institutions. In the end, it is dramatic social, political, and even ecological renewal that sets these cases apart from common experience.

In short, a transformed community is...

- A neighborhood, city or nation whose values and institutions have been overrun by the grace and presence of God
- A place where divine fire has not merely been summoned, it has fallen
- A society in which natural evolutionary change has been disrupted by invasive supernatural power
- A culture that has been impacted comprehensively and undeniably by the Kingdom of God
- A location where kingdom values are celebrated publicly and passed on to future generations

## Community transformation is indicated when:

- Political leaders publicly acknowledge their sin and dependence on God (II Kings 11:17-18; 23:2; Jonah 3:6-9)
- New laws, curricula, and business practices are put into effect (II Chronicles 19:4-10; Nehemiah 10:31)
- The natural environment is restored to its original life-nurturing state (Leviticus 26:4-5; II Chronicles 7:14; Ezekiel 34:27; 36:29-30)
- Economic conditions improve and lead to a discernible lessening of poverty (II Chronicles 17:3-5; Psalm 144:14; Isaiah 60:5; Amos 9:13)
- There is a marked change in social entertainment and vices as Kingdom values are integrated into the rhythm of daily life (Ezra 10:1-4; Nehemiah 8:10, 16; Ecclesiastes 10:17; Acts 19:17-20)

- Crime and corruption diminish throughout the community (II Kings 12:13-15; Nehemiah 5:6-12; Isaiah 60:17-18)
- Volunteerism increases as Christians recognize their responsibility to heal and undergird the community (Isaiah 58:10-12; 61:1-4)
- Restored hope and joy leads to a decline in divorce, bankruptcy, and suicide (Nehemiah 12:27-28, 43; Isaiah 54:11-14; 61:3,7; Jeremiah 30:17-19; 31:11-13; Hosea 2:15)
- The spiritual nature of the growing socio-political renewal becomes a hot topic in the secular media (II Chronicles 20:29; Nehemiah 6:16; Isaiah 55:5; Ezekiel 36:36; Acts 19:17)
- Overwhelmed by the goodness of God, grateful Christians take the embers of revival into surrounding communities and nations (II Chronicles 17:9; Isaiah 61:6; Acts 11:20-26)

This is a matter of faith, not triumphalism. There is, and will likely continue to be, gross spiritual darkness in the world. As believers, our goal is not to make a new heaven and a new earth, but rather to create salty spots on the earth that stimulate a thirst for God. Like many salty appetizers, these temporal transformations point the way to a larger, more satisfying meal to come.