

4.4.c. What we are looking for *

Here are some of the more common things we look for and often come across as we seek to understand the unseen dynamics of a community (specific information on How to Gather Information is contained in a later section)

Divine purposes and promises: Specific ways in which God desires or intends to use the community to glorify Himself and to bring blessing to the earth, as well as specific promises that have been spoken over the community (in some cases, communities may have specific passages of scripture in which promises for that community are revealed). Example: Isaiah 19:18-25 for Egypt.

Areas of blessing and God-given prosperity: Specific areas where God has clearly blessed and provided exceptional character, gifting, talent, or experience to the community. Often this will give us insight into the ways that God wants to work in the community or use it in the world. Example: Acts 17:11 for Berea.

History of the church: The way that God has worked to establish and build His church in the past may give significant insights into the spiritual dynamics of a community. Where the church has since died out and no longer exists, prayers of restoration and rebirth become powerful and effective. Where the church continues to exist but has yet to become the spiritual force that God wants it to be in the community, Strategic Prayer can unleash the potential. Example: Haggai 2:3,9 for the returned Exiles.

Patterns of leadership: Communities are shaped and directed by their leadership, but leaders are also shaped by their communities. Often patterns of leadership, whether godly or ungodly, will be repeated in a community's history over the span of years, decades, centuries, or even millennia. Exceptional leaders can also bring enduring blessing or judgment on their community. Understanding these patterns can give powerful insights into the community, and much fuel for effective, informed prayer. Example: 1 Kings 11:11-13 for the legacy of blessing that David's leadership left for Judah despite Solomon's disobedience.

Community covenants: Covenants (or mutual agreements) of allegiance or intent may be made by communities, and these covenants can have a significant impact on the unseen dynamics of that community. These covenants

may be overt (such as a public ceremony dedicating a city to a spirit or god), or subtle (such as a agreed upon intent to attain greatness at any cost). Often they are re- ratified through annual celebrations or festivals. Example: Isaiah 28:15 - Jerusalem's covenant with death (a common Near Eastern practice), Genesis 11:4 - Babel's covenant to make a name for themselves.

Other power bonds: Curses, blessings, and dedications are other dynamics that can affect communities in a manner similar to covenants. Spiritual power can be unleashed in ways that make a tangible difference for a community through overt or subtle use of power bonds. Example: Numbers 23:11-12, where God does not allow a curse to be unleashed against the community of His people.

Community sins and strongholds: Although any given community will likely have individuals that engage in any given sin, communities can engage in corporate sins that take on a greater life of their own through the participation or complicity of a significant portion of the population. Such sins can be repeated in cycles that create strongholds in the mind of the community against the Gospel (2 Cor. 10:4), or hardening of heart (Eph. 4:18-19). Understanding these strongholds allows them to be specifically addressed in prayer, reducing the overall level of resistance to the Gospel in the community. Example: Acts 7:51 for the Jews, Titus 1:12-13 for the Cretans.

Community level demonic activity: Just as sin in the life of an individual opens the door for demonic activity in their life, so community sins open the door for demonic activity on a community level. Powers of darkness actively interact with communities to nurture sinful behaviors, reinforce ungodly power bonds and covenants, and fight off any proclamation of Biblical truth or application of prayer. Clear discernment of these powers allows for authoritative prayer that restricts their ability to keep the community cut off from the Gospel. Example: Acts 19:11-17 in Ephesus, Daniel 10:20-21 for Greece, Persia, and Israel.