

PRAYER CHANGES VIOLENT TOWNSHIPS IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Last year we published the remarkable story of evangelist Peter Sekhonyane who started a 24-7 prayer watch in the South African township Orange Farm. Around 1,25 million people live in this squatter camp, situated between Soweto and Sebokeng. Because Peter was frustrated about the lack of salvations he encountered, he decided to first saturate his township with non-stop prayer, before continuing his evangelistic work.

24-7 PRAYER BRINGS CRIME RATE DOWN

In the Summer of 2004, with the help of some sponsors, he put up a 300-seater tent to facilitate a 24-hour prayer watch in one of the 20 extensions and outer villages of Orange Farm. For three weeks he intensively trained Christians of all churches on prayer and the principles of 24-hour prayer. After three weeks, he decided to move the tent to the next extension, to repeat the process there. In October 2004 seven of these

24/7/365 PRAYER WATCHES WERE UP AND RUNNING AT AN AVERAGE OF 15 HOURS PER DAY.

Then they combined efforts to launch a week of real 24-hour prayer.

By Saturday Peter went to the police service station to ask how it went crime-wise during that week. According to their statistics something strange happened: in seven of the 20 extensions there was nearly no crime - exactly the seven in which 24-7 prayer was going on!

THE VISION MULTIPLIES

At the date of our publication in Joel News, in July 2005, four tents were available for training, and 20 prayer watches had been planted in the township. Then something special started to happen. People from townships from across the country started to ask for help. Peter and his team received people from Mpumalanga, KwaZulu Natal, the Cape Flats, Free State, Soweto and Zimbabwe to train and equip. These groups came for a week or two to experience for themselves what is happening and receive training. Afterwards they returned home to start similar 24/7/365 prayer watches in their own areas.

PEOPLE START COMING TO JESUS

Because as a result of all these prayers crime was declining in the townships, the police asked Peter and his team to come and help in one of the outer villages where crime and violence were rampant. Peter started a prayer watch there. After about two weeks, crime declined rapidly and got under control!

A second encouraging thing is that people start coming to the Lord as a result of these prayer watches. Prayer is taken to the people and some are being prayed for in their homes! The number of salvations seem to be going up compared to the previous evangelisation outreaches. The positive part is that significant numbers of new believers can now be discipled as they regularly come to pray at the prayer watch. Their chance to backslide is much smaller. It is also surprising to see that most of the new converts are young people.

NOW 1,460 PRAYER WATCHES PLANTED

Last week Joel News editor Marc van der Woude caught up with Peter Sekhonyane, who related the encouraging sequel to this story. Over the past two years the 24-7 prayer watches have 'exploded' to 1,460 prayer centers throughout the country, mainly in the townships.

"We expect a minimum of five area pastors to adopt the prayer tent (an army tent) into their township, so there is local ownership," Peter explains. "Then we give workshops to train the Christians in intercession, who then bring this 24-7 prayer vision into their churches. This is why we see such a fast multiplication take place."

TOWARDS TRANSFORMED COMMUNITIES

For most of the churches 24-7 prayer is a completely new dimension. "Realise that many churches and pastors in the townships are still into ancestor worship," Peter explains. "They were not used to pray, let alone 24-7. Now the intercessors are being trained to 'cut off' the occult ties of idolatry, which leads to incredible breakthrough in the communities. As a result of women getting involved in prayer, we also see them being released in leadership of the churches. People are being healed, even of AIDS. The unemployment is doing down. More young people are being educated and trained."

Peter and his team are steadily working towards their goal of five prayer training tents per province - one in the north, the east, the south, the west and the centre. "My mandate is to get the whole country praying,"

Peter says. "Now even the white churches are opening their doors to adopt 24-7 prayer, and ask for our help, which is something that rarely happened before. In fact, the churches that were most involved in Apartheid are now the suppliers of the tents we use."

Let's pray for Peter and his team. To fulfil the vision God gave them, they need another 27 tents, a truck to transport the tents, and a full-time praise and worship band.

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