

## OPERATION WORLD Not Just a Book or DVD, but a Global Gateway for Your Church

by Ellen Livingood

*Just over a year ago, the latest version of Operation World was released with great, and very deserved, fanfare. Years of painstaking research resulted in a body of knowledge about the state of Christianity and missions outreach that is now available in [print and DVD format](#).*

*In a conversation last fall with Mike O'Rear (sadly, the final contact prior to his home going), we talked about how the tremendous riches of this resource could be better utilized by local churches. This issue of Postings is dedicated to Mike's memory and the wonderful work he did at GMI.*

*Operation World* is perspective-changing information. As a prayer guide, it is also world changing. Thousands of copies are being purchased by churches and distributed to missions-team members or offered to the entire congregation. But despite many efforts across the evangelical world, only a tiny minority of Christians have yet been exposed to this powerful prayer fuel.

Time for a personal confession: I love *Operation World* and turn to it often as a resource, but I don't use it regularly for prayer. For me, the sheer volume is overwhelming. So maybe I shouldn't be the one writing this article? But I have a hunch that if I asked for a show of hands right now, there would be others who don't pray through the tome. (Kudos to those who do!)

So what do we do? Is there a way to engage the average Christian in our congregations with the powerful prayer information stowed in this book and DVD?

### Macro or Micro Intercessors?

Realizing the danger of straying into missions blasphemy, I'm going to say that it is just fine if Carlos Christian and Bev Believer in your church never own a copy of *Operation*

*World*. First off, I don't believe that success has to be defined as Carlos Christian praying for every country in the world. A cover-them-all approach is not necessarily more spiritually effective in global intercession than the Bev Believer who is well informed and praying fervently and consistently for one country, one people group, or one city that needs the light of the gospel.

So my goal is to help you engage your congregation in a more limited geographic context, at least to begin. Two characteristics of contemporary Western culture make that a logical place to start. First, we constantly feel overwhelmed by the deluge of "facts," and put up barriers to keep from being swamped. Second, Westerners, especially younger generations, increasingly expect information to be delivered in small bites (usually bytes).

How does this apply to using *Operation World* and discipling beginners learning to pray for the world? For them, prayer information is best bite-sized, customized, delivered by someone they respect, and offered with a rationale for why it is relevant. That's not as hard as it sounds, although it does take effort.



### OPERATION GLOBAL PRAYER

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Your missions team or prayer team can carefully select applicable slices of this resource, massage them for your audiences, deliver them in a context that communicates the urgency, and see

God generate a new wave of global praying in your church. Here are some ideas.

### Less Is More

Forget about featuring a country a day; forget about highlighting a country a week. Instead choose to focus on a country for at least a month, probably better for a quarter, six

months, or even a year. The goal is real engagement. This automatically reduces the “too overwhelming” factor, allows for repetition (essential in learning), and expands time for creative engagement with the information.

### Recruit a Teacher

Despite the fact that we live in a highly connected world, many Christians know little about other countries. Talk to a junior-high social studies teacher about how he/she introduces a class to a country or region. The same methods will work with teens and adults in your church. Use creativity and variety to expose your people to facts about a country’s spiritual realities, and you will help them build a foundation for praying knowledgeably. Why not ask a teacher (or a team of teachers and students) to put together several presentations to be used throughout the year (hint—recruit them in early summer when they have more free time, even though you may launch the focus months later).

### Discovering Our Spiritual Roots

Challenge your congregation to learn about the countries of their families’ origin. This is particularly fun if your church includes people of many different ethnic and national backgrounds. Ask people to submit the names of the countries from which they/their forebears emigrated. Print and distribute the corresponding *Operation World* pages. Encourage families to learn together about the spiritual condition of their nation of ethnic origin and pray for the people there. You may be praying for much of the world, just by getting people to pray for the nations to which they are linked by heritage.

At the beginning of subsequent worship services, or in adult classes or small groups, arrange for one person to share a fact they learned about the spiritual situation in their country of origin, then lead in prayer for that nation.

### Our Neighbors Are from Where?

Are there a number of immigrants from one country living or working in your neighborhood? Perhaps Pakistanis run the gas station or your children have Korean friends at school. Choose one country and distribute *Operation World* information about that nation to your entire congregation. Suggest they read the article, then think of some questions they could ask the next time they meet one of these immigrants. (You may want to suggest questions that would be appropriate.) Encourage your members to see these people from the nations as walking prayer reminders.

### Let’s Surprise our Missionary

Are missionaries soon visiting your church on home assignment? Challenge your congregation to do some “homework”

prior to their visit. A month before their arrival, distribute the pages about the country where they minister or make up your own simplified fact sheet, emphasizing information that particularly pertains to the ministry, location, or people group to whom your missionaries minister. Have some fun with your overseas workers by encouraging everyone in the congregation to approach your missionary guests and casually share one fact they have learned about their country. They will be impressed! Later, ask your missionary to describe how those facts can be turned into key prayer points.



### Behind the News

Deepen your congregation’s understanding of the spiritual climate in a country featuring prominently in the news. For example, you could take six weeks to introduce your church to Syria.

Recruit two people to stage a brief “TV report” each Sunday for several

weeks. The “cameraman” pretends to tape while the “reporter” presents information from *Operation World* (and perhaps other sources) about the religious background of Syria, current ministry efforts, and prayer requests. This could be presented during your worship service, or the reporting team could rove from class to class (with teachers’ approval secured in advance) or stage their drama in the church narthex before/after services. Ask your pastor to include prayer for this nation in his pastoral prayer. Make copies of the Syria section of *Operation World* and insert them in the bulletin or distribute in the foyer.\* Ask people to pray every time they hear Syria mentioned in the news.

### Our Sister’s Spiritual Needs

Many towns and cities have adopted a “sister city” in another country. If your community is one of them, challenge your church members to learn about the spiritual condition of the country in which your sister

city is located. Ask your pastor to pray for this city/nation in his pastoral prayer at least once a quarter (offer to send him a reminder email with a suggested prayer point each time). Visitors or exchange students from your sister city can be invited to come and give you a personal glimpse of their nation that can be a further stimulus for prayer.

### Eritrea? Cool!

Consider launching a 3-12 month focus on a continent or cluster of countries (such as sub-Saharan Africa or South-east Asia) or a group of countries dominated by a particular religion (such as lands where Buddhism is the predominant religion). Challenge each Sunday school class or small group to learn about the spiritual needs of a different country. For older teen and adult groups, you can provide *Operation World* materials. For younger classes, you may need to research more age-appropriate information (one possibility:

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Ask home-school families to develop the learning materials). Then arrange for each children's class to present "their" country to an adult class and spend time praying together.

### God Is Already Answering!

One reason it's hard to stimulate consistent prayer for large-scale global needs is because large-scale answers may be years away, and word of specific answers often doesn't filter down to the intercessors. *Operation World's* "Answers to Prayer" section is great, but people just beginning to pray for the world may benefit from more specific, immediate answers.

Intentionally highlight some prayer requests for your congregation for which you can report answers within the next month. For example, if you have missionaries in this country, ask them to review the *Operation World* requests and provide a related update. Or note the organizations listed in *Operation World* as working in that country; a visit to their website may reveal an exciting story about what God is doing in that nation right now. Ask for prayer, then several weeks later share the encouraging progress that results as God's people intercede.



them the *Operation World* DVD, and they will likely suggest creative uses of electronic communication. (3) Ask a retired missionary—no one is more passionate about generating prayer for the world!

### More Ideas and Resources

While most of the *Operation World* information is written in a country-by-country format, there are also sections in both the book and DVD presenting statistics in other ways. A collection of articles with more suggestions for leaders is available [online](#).

Do **you** have additional methods of making the tremendous prayer resources of *Operation World* more accessible to your congregation? [Write](#) and tell us; we'd love to share more ideas with our readers.

\* Please respect the *Operation World* End-User License Agreement, especially important when using electronic materials.



*Ellen Livingood launched and leads Catalyst Services to further church/agency collaboration. She would love to publicize more ways to help churches develop a host of global pray-ers.*

### Let's Join Nationals in Praying

An ever-expanding collection of short [prayer videos](#) is available for download in high resolution from OneWay Ministry, an *Operation World* collaborator. In each video, a national leads in prayer for his/her country. These videos are a great addition to a worship service, perhaps shown as a lead-in to your own prayer. They also model how to intercede for world needs. Check back on this site occasionally to find new releases for additional nations.

### For the Globally Inclined

As you use information from *Operation World* to initiate a new level of world awareness and concern, some members of your congregation will develop an appetite for a broader global perspective that could be fed by a daily delivery of focused requests. Point them to Jon Hirst's succinct Facebook page posts (Leaders Using Operation World) and [Twitter](#) feeds (@OWtips) that highlight individual facts for prayer.

### How Do We Find the Time?

Some of you are saying, "Great ideas, but who's got the time to do this?" Here are three possibilities. (1) Ask a senior citizen—this is a great way for those with reduced physical strength to serve. Give them a copy of the *Operation World* book (or DVD if they are computer savvy) and ask them to extract the info you need. (2) Recruit a teenager—Hand

### Interchange Postings

Catalyst's *Postings* e-newsletter is a monthly publication designed for mission agency personnel and local church leaders involved in collaborative global efforts. The practical articles highlight what churches and agencies are doing to mobilize believers, especially those of younger generations, to expand the Kingdom.

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