

The Forest Prayer Meeting

One of the hallmarks of the growing Brazilian prayer movement is its no-nonsense approach to corporate intercession. People don't pray just to say they have... they pray until God visits them. They pray until change is manifest in the life of their churches and their cities. They pray through to victory.

Many pastors and lay intercessors have consecrated specific mountains as prayer retreats — places set aside to meet with God. There is nothing new in this of course. Believers around the world have been doing this for centuries. Even so, we found the scope and the intensity of the Brazilian effort to be a cut above the norm. Very pure, and very impressive.

One pastor we encountered on a prayer mountain outside Belo Horizonte has been there for 80 days! Crying out to God for the life and well-being of his city.

In other parts of the country, pastors pray so fervently throughout the night that the foliage around them begins to glow with the presence of God. The very leaves, still on the branches, testify to his nearness.

After interviewing numerous pastors from every part of Brazil, it became apparent to us that these prayer mountains (and their urban counterparts called Prayer Towers) were playing a major role in the nation's transformational upsurge.

Thus, when an opportunity presented itself to film one of these all-night prayer retreats, we took it. This particular venue was located in the Sierra do Mar mountains to the west of Teresópolis. We were led to the site around 7:00 pm by a godly Methodist pastor who is highly respected by the local ministerial association. Now in his 60s, he has been coming to pray at this special site for many years. We made our way into the forest along a narrow path trodden out by the feet of countless intercessors. The night, crisp and illumined by a full moon, could not have been more inviting. Our company included several Brazilian pastors, James and Andrea Alvarez, and a group of 14 international believers (including delegates from the Torchlight Summit).

Our anticipation grew as we trekked deeper into the forest — and it was heightened by sober instructions delivered at key waypoints. At the first such marker, a large anthill in the middle of the path, we were told that all conversation should cease. The next phase of the journey would be taken in silence as we prepared our hearts for God's presence. At a second waypoint arrived at several minutes later, we were told to remove our shoes. The ground we were now approaching was holy. The prayer site itself was a small clearing under a canopy of leafy trees. Nothing was heard aside from the gurgling of a nearby stream and the beating of our hearts. It was a holy and expectant hush.

Then, suddenly, the Brazilians cut loose. Prayers echoed through the forest, and the presence of God drew near — as thick and palpable as I have ever experienced it. The sensation was overwhelming. In such a setting, time loses its meaning. Eternity takes over, and lesser priorities are rearranged. Those who experienced that evening together will never be the same. Not everything was captured on film — it was just too overwhelming — but the footage we did shoot, including an interview with the Methodist pastor, is compelling.

The Sentinel Group – Brazil 2008 Ministry