

IN THIS EDITION:

How God transformed a Kentucky drug town

Manchester, Kentucky and surrounding areas were once known as the 'pain killer capital of the nation', and drug dealing was considered part of the local economy. The area was a haven for violence and corruption. Large quantities of marijuana were grown, and prescription drugs OxyContin and Methamphetamine were trafficked. The drug problem had gotten so bad that the younger generation of Clay County was literally dying off, and a drug task force spokesperson remarked, "The drug problem in Eastern Kentucky is beyond anything I can imagine. It's epidemic."

But something extraordinary happened in this small town with a population of just 2,200 people, and it all started with a march.

On May 2, 2004, the pastors of Clay County, from every denomination, repented and asked God to forgive them for being more concerned about their buildings and programs than the people of Clay County. "Lord, as pastors, as churches, as Christians and citizens, we have too long hid our heads in the sand, and not stood up to the evil and the poison of drugs in this county, and this community," prayed pastor Wendell Carmack of Island Creek Baptist Church.

"ENOUGH! Drug dealers get saved, or get busted!"

After that, despite the unseasonably cold temperatures and a pouring rain, some 3,500 people representing 63 churches marched through town to send the drug dealers a message. Newspaper headlines were declaring 'ENOUGH!' and 'Drug Dealers Get Saved or Get Busted!'

"That moment, something broke in Clay County, that has changed us forever," pastor Doug Abner said. "God settled in our community, and a holy thing took place, it's hard to tell. There has been a new commitment by law enforcement to combat the drug problem. A drug task force called Unite is now partnering with churches, and is seeing great results. Arrests are up by about 300 percent in the last year and a half."

Not only are arrests way up, but so are the testimonies of former addicts, like 25-year old Melanda Adams. Adams, who is from a prominent Clay County family, had been in and out of jail and secular treatment centers for years, for using and making Methamphetamine. She was literally at death's door when one night, hiding in a closet, she cried out to God for help. Adams said, "When no one else would have fooled with me, when no one else cared whether I lived or died, when everyone gave up on me, He was a God who came down and stood with me in that closet and said, 'I've got you - you're mine,' and He ain't left me since that day."

Adams, whose father is the superintendent of Clay County schools, has helped lead her whole family into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. Asked how it felt to have his daughter back, Mr. Adams replied, "It's an indescribable feeling, it's hard to

answer that - it's a joy to get up every morning, you sleep longer at night. There's joy in your home again." Seeing the amazing transformation of his daughter, Mr. Adams recently gave the OK for the county schools to implement a Christian Bible study called 'First Priority' that students can do before and after class - something he had previously been opposed to, for fear of possible lawsuits. "Sometimes we err on the side of being almost atheistic. So what caused me to err on the side of being Christian? Well, I got saved!" Mr. Adams declared.

"The power of prayer has broken the spell of drugs"

Abner believes it is the power of the gospel and the power of prayer that have broken the spell of drugs off so many lives. Even Bobby Joe Curry - once one of the most feared drug dealers in all of eastern Kentucky - is now a regular churchgoer at Community Church. Abner said, "What we're trying to do with drug users and dealers is to say, 'Listen, you're doing wrong and you need to stop; we're here to help you, and we're your friend, not your enemy - but we're praying for you to get saved or be busted.'"

The change in Clay County so impressed state and federal leaders that they gave the city of Manchester \$1.5 million to build a drug rehabilitation center, where faith-based programs will be the norm. And that will also bring new jobs into the local economy.

Abner says that every area of the community has been touched by God since the march of commitment in May 2004. "There's just a difference, and you can feel the Spirit of the Lord when you walk through our town."

And the story continued. Following a broadcast on the 700 Club, featuring the story of Manchester, pastor Doug Abner of Community Church started getting telephone calls from all over the nation, and e-mails from New Zealand, France, Wales, England, and British Columbia. Nearly every request was the same: "Help us do in our town what you did in Manchester."

"The floor of our church was littered with people weeping"

Pastor Mike England of Tri-State Christian Center in Blue Ridge, Georgia, said: "We were blown away, because we knew we had a serious, serious methamphetamine problem. We have other drugs too, but meth is just overwhelming. We had no idea how to battle it - or deal with it. When we showed the Manchester video in our church, I didn't even preach because the floor of the church was just littered with people weeping and weeping." In August, some 3,000 residents of Fannin County, Georgia took to the streets for the first-ever march against meth.

In Longview, Texas - a similar story of desperation. In May, hundreds of residents donned red-T-shirts in what they called 'The Big March'. Churches were letting down the walls and seriously started to work together. The government agencies and the churches are now working together for the first time ever.

In Oceana, West Virginia, sometimes referred to as 'Oxy-ana' because of the drug problem associated with the pain killer Oxycontin, two marches were held after hearing about what God did in Manchester. Nobody could have imagined that so many towns, so many lives, would be inspired - even changed by a single story.

Source: Wendy Griffith, CBN News

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