

Pray for Unity, So That . . .



Unity was the theme of our most recent National Day of Prayer. Based on Ephesians 4:3, “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace,” the theme was timely as tens of thousands of prayer gatherings prayed for racial, political, denominational, generational, and familial unity.

That theme was powerful and timely because of the divisiveness and disunity in all those areas today in the United States. We need a great move of God to bring us back to unity!

There is, however, an extremely important side benefit to our prayers for unity and a reason to keep unity at the forefront of your prayers. In fact, I suspect that the Apostle Paul did not see it as a side benefit at all, but the primary reason to pray for unity . . . and why he challenged the Ephesian believers to make every effort to live in unity.

What is the benefit?

In writing to the Roman church, Paul prayed “May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 15:5-6).

Paul was writing this to a fellowship that was in the heart of Rome, a city hostile to Christianity. Rather than pray for protection and safety, he prayed for unity. Why? So they would bring glory to God. So what Jesus prayed for in John 17 would be lived out in them.

Jesus prayed: "I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one. . . . May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me" (John 17:22-23). Earlier, Jesus had also said, "But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (John 12:32).

Paul knew that something happens in the heavenlies when believers are in unity—people are attracted to Jesus Christ!

The wonderful side benefit of our prayers for unity? Spiritual awakening. People are drawn to Jesus.

If you want to see people drawn to Jesus in your church, community or nation, pray for unity.

Why does this happen? Because when the Spirit of God moves in revival power on a congregation or community, region, believers get right with God, get right with each other, and get on mission again. And people come to Christ as a result.

Every revival in history bears this out. In every instance of revival (remember revival happens to the church) shortly after the revival starts, something else happens—a spiritual awakening. A spiritual awakening is where an unusual number of people come to saving faith in Jesus Christ. Unity in the Church attracts people to the gospel.

I have seen this heavenly principle in a local church, too—but in reverse. A number of years ago, I was close to a church that was in revival. People spontaneously would come to the altar during worship; salvations were so numerous that baptismal services were held very regularly. I watched this

for about 9 months, when one Sunday the senior pastor resigned as his marriage was breaking up. He was the only pastor the church had known in its 11 years of existence. The elders had never been through a pastoral change before and did not know what to do. An independent church, there was nowhere to go for help. Soon grumbling started happening in the congregation and people started leaving.

You know what stopped happening? People stopped coming to Christ. And it was not that the former pastor was a great evangelist and with him gone salvations stopped. People in the church, who were still there, had led people to Christ.

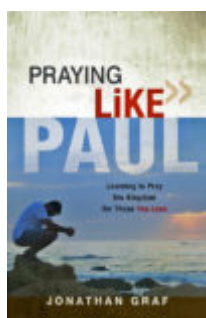
Why did it stop? The congregation was not in unity anymore!

Unity has a powerful spiritual dynamic.

If you want to see people come to saving faith in Jesus through the ministry of your church, pray for unity!

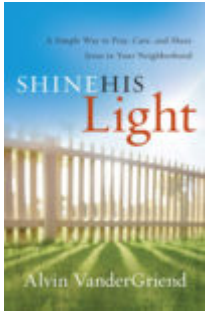
—Jonathan Graf is the vice president of publishing and resources for the National Day of Prayer Task Force and oversees the Church Prayer Leaders Network.

Jon recommends:



Praying Like Paul, which will teach you to pray the spiritual principles Paul prayed for his churches for believers and loved ones in your church.

Prayer Evangelism:



Shine His Light, a resource that will encourage and equip individuals and families to pray for their neighbors.



Be Jesus in Your Neighborhood, a 30-day devotional that will challenge and inspire users to pray for their neighbors, care for their neighbors with the love of Christ, and ultimately share Jesus with their neighbors.