

Prayer Is More Than Talk



A little while ago, I spent a day at an interesting church. Rising out of the corn fields of central Iowa is the town of Newton. Hard hit by the recession, Newton's main employer having gone out of business. On the edge of Newton stands a dynamic praying church of 800, Community Heights Alliance Church.

After preaching in the morning services and teaching in Sunday school, we were holding a concert of prayer that evening. The pastor was a little anxious about who would show up. It was the kick-off to their fourth annual week of prayer. We were using a large side room called the Gathering Place. As the people kept coming, more chairs had to be set up. Eventually close to 200 people filled that room for what became a dynamic beginning to the week.

The highlight was watching 20 or so kids lined up down the center aisle, with all the adults laying hands on them or lifting their hands toward them as we prayed over them. And they weren't safe, tame "Lord, bless them," prayers. They were prayers that were praying down the Kingdom of God on them!

I was struck by several things that day. First, the hunger of the people to connect with God was palpable. They were excited by what God was going to do as a result of prayer. I was also struck by something lead pastor Cory said to me. He had been at the church only four years, so this was not primarily a result of his ministry. "I have never been in a church before where we have seen so many adults come to Christ," he told me. It was exciting as they watch lives and families be

transformed.

They recognize that it is the result of prayer. They regularly and consistently pray for specific people to come to Christ; and they pray that the person who gave the name for prayer would become the one to lead the individual to Christ. It's working!

The last thing that struck me was something I had never seen in a pastor before—at least not on a busy Sunday. I watched Cory talk with people (individuals and couples) before or after one of the gatherings—a typical thing for a pastor to do. But four times I watched Cory put his hands on the person or couple, bow his head and pray for them. My host, an intern named Mark who was over the prayer ministry, told me that Cory challenges his staff every week to not just talk with people, but pray for them on the spot. That is absolutely what you expect to see in a church that views prayer as important—people doing it without it being “prayer time.”

God is up to something at Community Heights; and it is coming out of prayer. What might He do in your church if your people caught a vision and passion for prayer?

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