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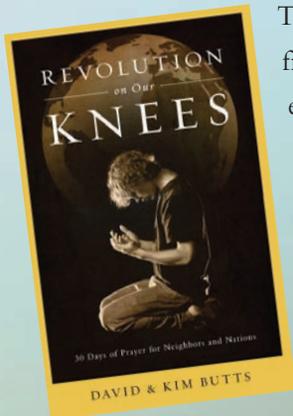
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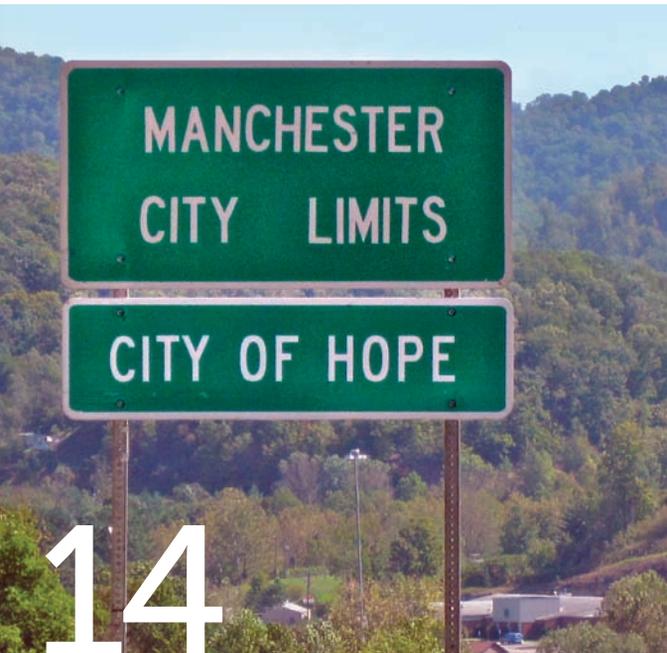


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PRAYERCONNECT

Premiere Issue • Vol. 1, No. 1



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Need a Speaker for Your Prayer Weekend, Prayer Conference, or Event?

There are a number of gifted speakers associated with *Prayer Connect*. Jonathan Graf regularly ministers in churches of varying sizes. Carol Madison is also available to minister in the area of prayer and community transformation. Our parent organizations, Harvest Prayer Ministries and the Church Prayer Leaders Network, have many speakers associated with their ministries. You can find their contact information at the respective emails or websites.

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Feel the Need to Connect?



P *Prayer Connect*. Seems like an odd, bulky name for a magazine on prayer. I have to agree; it doesn't just roll off the tongue. But I am getting used to it now that I have said it a thousand times or so. It's also a popular name for anyone and everyone to use for their ministry prayer newsletters or church prayer pages. So why pick it as a name for a new magazine? Because it clearly says what we intend the magazine to be.

First, prayer is a connection with God. Our tagline "Connecting with the Heart of Christ through Prayer" speaks of that wonderful relationship that every believer can have—through prayer—in which we experience the living Christ. Unfortunately, many believers struggle with prayer and making this connection. This magazine will help believers at any depth of their relationship to go deeper into prayer.

We also intend that *Prayer Connect* will connect readers to consider praying for the things that are on God's heart. We will regularly feature articles and ideas on praying for the lost, revival, and the completion of the Great Commission. We want people to move beyond using prayer as a "fix-it tool," to becoming active Kingdom participants whose prayers are in sync with and release the purposes of God for the world.

Second, we want to encourage readers to connect with other praying people. *Prayer Connect* will feature many helps and articles on praying together and developing dynamic corporate prayer in churches. But we also want to connect you with other like-hearted individuals. Our website prayerconnect.net will provide opportunities for you to interact via a social network, chats, and comment forums on blogs and articles.

We will also host multiple conferences across the country (currently seven regional conferences are planned for 2012). These events will be jointly sponsored by *Prayer Connect*, the Church Prayer Leaders Network, and the National Day of Prayer Task Force.

Finally, we want to connect you with the best resources on prayer. We hope our magazine and website will lead you to books, prayer guides, experts on various aspects of prayer, websites, and prayer ministries that can encourage and challenge you. Join the connection!

How Do I Subscribe?

Our launch plan is different than most magazines. The first issue and possibly the second issue will be sold as stand-alone products. We plan to roll out a subscription-based magazine early in 2012—probably with the January/February issue. To help us gauge interest, will you please go to prayerconnect.net and fill out a simple form that indicates your desire to subscribe when *Prayer Connect* becomes available as a bi-monthly magazine? This is a non-binding form—you are not committing any money at this time. We will email and mail you a notice when we are ready to take subscriptions. You can choose to purchase a subscription at that point. Thank you for helping us in this way.

We hope you will enjoy *Prayer Connect*. And we encourage you to connect with us and others at prayerconnect.net.

Jonathan Graf

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International Prayer Council

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The mission of **PRAYERCONNECT** is

1. To encourage and equip believers toward a deeper walk with Jesus Christ through prayer—our experiential connection to God.
2. To resource prayer leaders and pastors with tools to help them motivate, disciple, and mobilize believers in churches to be a part of an army that seeks to pray the purposes of God for churches, communities, and the nations.
3. To be a unifying force between prayer ministries, community transformation groups, and churches.

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About this Issue:



You might be intrigued by the theme of this issue, "Can Prayer Save America?" Many of you are thinking, *Only God can save America—not prayer.* We agree!

But we also know that God works on behalf of the prayers of His people who seek Him with humble and repentant hearts. The truth is, only God can save America *as we pray.* He invites us to ask Him. We are in partnership with Him for the sake of our nation. So please read this issue with a heart to pray and believe that God can still save America.



Prayer Leaders to Gather at World Prayer Assembly

Thousands of leaders from as many as 220 nations are



expected to gather in Jakarta, Indonesia, next year under the banner of "Let the New Wave of His Glory Fill the Earth!" The World Prayer Assembly (May 14-18, 2012) is a call to ministry leaders from all walks of life to join in a global prayer movement based on the vision of the whole earth being filled with the knowledge of God's glory (Hab. 2:14).

The Assembly will be hosted by the nations of Indonesia and South Korea, where vibrant movements of prayer have grown exponentially in the last several years. The first similar event took place in Seoul, Korea, in 1984, and launched an international prayer movement and

unprecedented efforts to share the gospel of Jesus throughout the world. In recent years,

hundreds of thousands of Christians have also gathered in prayer throughout Indonesia. These two nations are eager to host the world in a new wave of global prayer and evangelization.

Now leaders are invited back to another united worldwide prayer movement. It is anticipated that 5,000 to 7,000 ministry leaders will seek God together in significant times of prayer, listening, and response to the Lord. The criteria for attending the Assembly include:

- Ministry/mission leaders from both church and marketplace
- Prayer network leaders

- Leaders serving in all walks of life (arts, media, marketplace, church, development of poor, education, family, government)
- Youth, student, and child leaders
- Anyone who has a heart for prayer and is making an impact in his/her community or sphere of influence.

A special emphasis will be on raising up the younger generation to become cutting-edge leaders in the global prayer and mission movement. Young leaders, students, and children will make up one-third of the participants (especially those under age 30).

Registration and other information can be found at worldprayerassembly.com.

Thousands of Minnesota Students Unite for Prayer

The UNITE prayer gathering on the National Day of Prayer (May 5) at the University of Minnesota was in part the answer to years of prayers for spiritual awakening, especially on college and university campuses.

The gathering was a unique partnership between Global Day of Prayer MN, Pulse, and Praise FM radio, all ministries in the Twin Cities with hearts for revival and spiritual awakening. In addition, the UNITE event was undergirded in prayer by the 10,000 Moms In Touch International (MITI) groups throughout the U.S.

Although the prayer and worship time was student-led, the students invited all generations to participate. More than 2,500 students and adults worshiped and prayed together, crying out for revival on

campuses and in the churches.

Bob Bakke (Global Day of Prayer MN) opened the evening by declaring, "We're here to partner with God in the unfolding of His purposes by asking Him to send His Holy Spirit upon the earth and upon these campuses and to change them for the glory of Christ."

Generations Blessing Each Other

Dr. Bakke joined Nick Hall (Pulse) and Fern Nichols (MITI) to lead in prayer as a demonstration of the unity among the generations. As Nichols prayed for the students, the crowd was reminded of the prayers of thousands of moms across the nation. "I love you," said Nichols. "Thousands of moms love you. We are counting on you, this next generation, for Jesus' sake and for the Kingdom of God!"

To the roar of the students' approval



in appreciation for the older generations, Hall declared, "God's Word says one generation will commend God's works to another. Tonight is not about asking the adults to pass some baton to us. It isn't about saying we don't need you anymore. This is about us, as young people, standing and saying, 'Older generations, we need your help, your prayers, encouragement, wisdom, and guidance in our lives.' *We link our hearts together and pray for a multigenerational partnership in the gospel!*"



Pulse (pulsemovement.com) has a vision of seeing revival and evangelistic outreaches on campuses throughout the region and nation. The ministry recently hosted an outreach on the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh campus, with 4,500 students attending a free concert and hearing an evangelistic message by Hall. More than 800 students made commitments to Christ. And already the students who were a part of the UNITE gathering in Minneapolis are planning strategic initiatives to reach their campuses this fall.

Response to UNITE

Students came from area colleges and universities (both secular and Christian) to the University of Minnesota hockey

arena to invite God to do a work on their campuses. Beyond the large crowd unified in prayer, there were other results that demonstrated God was at work:

- More than 300 students indicated commitments to Christ.
- Some 1,400 students filled out response cards desiring further involvement in the campus prayer movement.
- The event was entirely paid for in advance; an offering was taken to bless the U of M campus ministries.
- More than 1,500 people from around the nation viewed through the live web stream. There were hundreds of posts in the Internet chat-room. (You can view the event

by going to livestream.com/CCC_up-permidwest and clicking on NDOP Part 1.)

Acknowledging that God has moved through young people in the history of revivals in this nation, the prayer of the evening was, “Lord, would You do it again?” Dr. Bakke encouraged the crowd to pray with faith. “If we are focused on purity in the glory of Christ—in agreement—God says He will change both heaven and earth. This is amazing power. It’s a gift to us, and it is the strength that we exercise right now.”

CAROL MADISON is part of the leadership team with Global Day of Prayer MN and editor of *Prayer Connect*.

A Mercy Drop of Revival

A move of God began at The Summit Church in Little Rock, AR, on Sunday morning, April 3, 2011. Since that morning and for the next month, more than 200 gathered nightly for two to four hours of prayer that included repentance, confession, people coming to Christ, spontaneous baptisms, and passionate intercession. The revival prayer meetings have continued on Monday nights, with more groups starting throughout the city.

“This is a mercy drop of revival,” comments Pastor Bill Elliff, “but in over 42 years of ministry, I have never been involved in or observed a moment quite like this . . . I am humbly amazed and grateful.”

Ready for the Match of Revival

Prior to April 3, Elliff had sensed for a long time that God was about to move. In an audio interview with Life Action Ministries’ Byron Paulus, Elliff stated that it felt like there was “gasoline on the floor of the church waiting for a match.” In March (while preaching a

series on the Holy Spirit) Elliff put a microphone on the floor of the sanctuary, just waiting for a time when his congregation might need to use it. However, as he began the series, God told him to throw out his plan and just preach whatever the Lord gave him each week.

He was preaching on quenching the Holy Spirit on that first Sunday in April. Midway through the second service, as Elliff was preaching, he sensed God told him to “stop preaching.” He commented to the congregation that he did not know why, but God told him to stop. A man stood up and responded, “We need to begin to pray.” Before Elliff could say much more, the altar started filling up. Soon people came to the microphone and began confessing sins, testifying to what God was doing in their hearts.

One man said he had been quenching the Spirit in his own life by not being baptized. The Lord had been prompting him to do that for years. He took off his shoes and asked to be baptized right then. Four more baptisms followed. Each night for the next week (except Saturday), numbers built from 200 to 350 as people came to pray and meet God. More confessions, baptisms, and salvations occurred as people obeyed what the Spirit was saying to them.

The following Sunday the two



Prayer Calendar

30 Days Muslim Prayer Focus **Aug. 1-30;** 30-days.net

Cry Out America **Sept. 11;** awakeningamerica.us

See You at the Pole **Sept. 28;** syatp.com

Day of Prayer for the Peace of Jerusalem **Oct. 2;** daytopray.com

International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church
Nov. 13; idop.org

For more information on these prayer events, go to the event website.



morning services merged and lasted for five hours as the prayer revival continued. Now more than two months later (at the writing of this story) hundreds of people from churches around the area are still gathering as the prayer revival goes on.

Renewed Prayers for the City

In a report to fellow pastors about this move of God, Elliff wrote of the gatherings: “There is a deep sense and constant awareness that the Spirit of God is the *only* leader. We are to listen to Him and do exactly as He directs. God has given us a deep faith during these meetings. The more we are led to pray, the more we realize it is God; therefore He has an agenda, a purpose, and we are merely cooperating with Him.”

“The Lord has awakened us,” continued Elliff, “it seems, to pray primarily for

our city. There have been deep prayers for individuals, but also prayer . . . for the pastors and spiritual leaders and churches in our city. Many nights we have gathered around and prayed over pastors who have been attending.”

Powerful reports have come out of these prayer meetings—reports of transformation, release from sin, meeting of needs, etc. One significant outcome was reconciliation between two churches—Summit Church and the Baptist church it had come out of in a division 12 years prior. The reconciliation was not planned, but the Spirit moved members who had been involved in the division to suddenly confess sin and ask for forgiveness.

God’s Willingness to Answer

In a new and fresh way, people are eagerly anticipating the revival prayer

meetings. After a season of repentance and confession, the Lord also directed them to the verse following 2 Chronicles 7:14: “Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place” (vs. 15). As Pastor Elliff describes, “It’s now as though the people really believe that God is willing to answer their prayers like they never imagined.”

You can read or hear more about this outpouring of God’s Spirit online. Go to summitchurch.org and click on “Do Not Quench the Spirit.” Among the things you will find is Bill Elliff’s blog about what God is doing. To hear a 45-minute interview of Elliff, conducted by Byron Paulus of Life Action Ministries, go to lifeaction.org and click on Media and then click on Infuse Podcast (“Revival Stirrings in Arkansas,” April 14). The interview includes stories of God’s movement, as well as teaching and cautions for leaders who may help shepherd revival.

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The Day of Prayer for the Peace of Jerusalem

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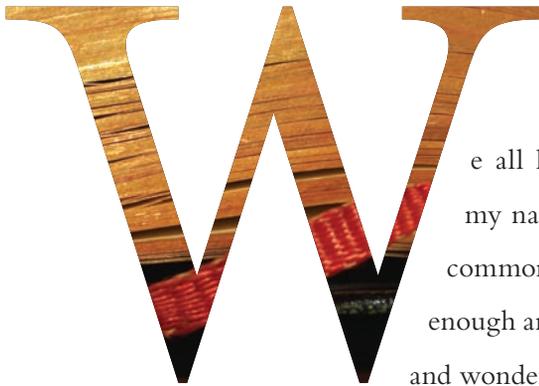
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SHOW ME

A Historical Look at How Prayer
Turned the Tide in U.S. History

By David Kubal



we all know the verse: “If my people who are called by my name. . . .” Go ahead and finish it. The words are so common they have become a cliché. We have said the verse enough and heard it enough, yet we often look at our country and wonder if our prayers are having any visible effect.

Thankfully, history assures us that this verse is true, and that the powerful Word of God is never simply a cliché. When a nation comes together to pray, fast, and seek the will of God, *things do happen*.

Here are three pivotal moments in our country’s history that demonstrate God’s desire to act when we contend in prayer for our nation.

Birth of a Nation

It started with a bailout. Hungry for new sources of income, the British Crown negotiated a payment of 400,000 pounds of tea each year from the British East India Company, a company that had developed a monopoly on the tea trade in British territory. When the agreement nearly drove the tea company into bankruptcy, Parliament passed a new tax contained in the Tea Act of May 10, 1773, meant to subsidize the company with what many called a “legal bribe.”

The

PROOF

American colonists were infuriated by the new measure and protested when a blockade was set in place to enforce the monopoly in Boston's harbor. Samuel Adams, one of the fathers of the American Revolution, was influential in sparking a grassroots movement that

resulted in revolt on December 16, 1773—what is now known as the Boston Tea Party.

The impact of these events was felt up and down the East Coast. Just a few months after the Boston Tea Party, Virginia legislators felt such a commonality

with their fellow colonists to the north that they passed the following resolution that called for a day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer:

“This House, being deeply impressed with apprehension of the

America's PENTECOST

BY ROBERT BAKKE

Hopeless? Is our nation's current situation beyond fixing? Hardly. We've been here before. Among the first and greatest national experiences of the United States was a massive spiritual awakening in the face of overwhelming problems. Consider these dire challenges that faced our nation preceding perhaps the greatest movement of God in our nation's history.

Economic Disaster and Plagues

The tragic after-effects of eight years of the War of Independence with England were profound. The 1790s were years of grave national doubts. We faced the enormous pressures of two superpowers on our borders (France and England) and the constant threat of war.

We teetered on the edge of national bankruptcy, exacerbated by a banking crisis and a real estate speculation bubble that burst. Without the English navy, the U.S. had terrible trouble with pirates interrupting our trade. Twenty percent of our annual national budget went to pay off Muslim pirates in North Africa, and the French and English were taking our ships in the North Atlantic.

Plagues were killing thousands of our citizens. The Capitol was moved from Philadelphia to Trenton, NJ, each spring to escape the banks of the Delaware River, thought to be the source of illness there. The nation also teetered on the verge of famine because of diseases in crops.

Political Unrest and Empty Churches

The editorial pages and cartoons were among the most vicious in American history. Political rancor was fed by newspapers essentially owned by the political parties—rancor highlighted by a duel between two prominent political figures, Aaron Burr and Alexander Hamilton. The famous duel left Hamilton dead.

The nastiest presidential election in U.S. history between

John Adams and Thomas Jefferson was thought by many to be a political struggle for the soul and future of America. Many Christians were convinced that Jefferson was the antichrist.

An anti-Christian French Enlightenment was sweeping through the intelligentsia (affecting publishing, schools, and government). Worries about the “Reign of Terror” caused fear of French terror cells. There was political unrest and riots in our cities. Federal troops were called on to quell anarchy.

Universalism was sweeping away established churches, and most churches were empty. Pastors wrote that these were the worst times they ever could have imagined. Others wrote of a “coarse sensuality” and intense partisanship in the land. Irreligion was rampant on college campuses. In fact, on certain campuses, Bibles were publicly burned. At major schools only a handful of students confessed being Christian.

A Spiritual Explosion

What happened? The pastors began a movement of prayer. It was small at first, but it grew. After years of seeking God, in 1801 a spiritual explosion took place that swept our nation like a wildfire. Vanderbilt University historian Paul Conkin calls it “America's Pentecost.” Mark Noll, a historian specializing in the history of Christianity in the U.S., insists it was our nation's most important religious moment *that changed the course of history*.

Hundreds of denominations were born and thousands of churches were founded. Modern missions exploded on the scene, as well as tract and Bible societies. Abolition was launched. Hospitals, schools, and colleges were founded. The awakening infiltrated every area of life and it spun out for nearly 50 years. The impact on our nation and around the world was astounding.

In the midst of similar problems today, we pray with hope and confidence. *We have seen the glory of Christ before.*

— Dr. Robert Bakke is the senior teaching pastor of Hillside Church, Bloomington, MN.

great dangers to be derived to British America from the hostile invasion of the city of Boston in our Sister Colony of Massachusetts Bay, whose commerce and harbor are, on the first day of June next, to be stopped by an armed force, deem it highly necessary that the said first day of June be set apart, by members of this House, as a Day of Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer, devoutly to implore the Divine interposition, for averting the heavy calamity which threatens destruction to our civil rights and the evils of civil war, to give us one heart and mind . . . [Pray and fast] that the minds of His Majesty and his Parliament may be inspired from above with Wisdom, Moderation, Justice, to remove from the loyal People of America all cause of danger, from a continued pursuit of Measures, pregnant with their ruin. . . .”

Less than three weeks later, Virginia called the colonies to form the Continental Congress, the organizing body behind the Revolutionary War. *A day of fasting and prayer acted as a fulcrum for the emergence of a nation.*

Breakthrough for a Nation

After the Revolutionary War, leaders of the colonies met in Philadelphia at Independence Hall to construct the unifying document that would give birth to our nation. George Washington, James Madison, and Noah Webster had met before the assembly and were convinced that the Articles of Confederation currently in use were not adequate. Representatives presented numerous ideas, and yet no one could reach an agreement. The whole process was on the verge of rupturing.

On June 28, 1787, Benjamin Franklin (the oldest delegate present) asked permission to address the assembly. At 81 years old, he had not lost his gratitude for the One who directed them during the early days of the Revolution:

“. . . this small progress we have made after three or four weeks. . . [this] is proof of the imperfection of the Human Understanding. . . how has it happened that . . . we have not once thought of applying to the Father of lights to illuminate our understanding? In the beginning of the contest with Britain, when we were in sensible of danger, we had daily prayers in the room for Divine protection. Our prayers, Sir, were heard, and they were graciously answered. . . . I therefore beg leave to move—that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven and its blessing on our deliberation be held in this assembly every morning. . . .”

These comments were put into a formal motion that passed. Very shortly after this, a breakthrough was achieved, resulting in the writing of our American Constitution—the longest standing constitution in the history of the world. *Every day since Benjamin Franklin’s call for illumination from God, Congress has opened with prayer.*

Freedom for a Nation

The Battle of Chattanooga in November of 1863 was a critical point in the Civil War. Up to this point, the southern states seemed impenetrable. Considered the “Gateway to the South,” a victory in Chattanooga meant that Atlanta would be next, and then the defeat of the Confederacy could quickly follow.

Historians debate much over turning points in the Civil War, but it is obvious that there was a significant occurrence just one month earlier on October 3, 1863. In the third year of the bloodiest war in our nation’s history, with brother fighting against brother and hundreds of thousands dead, President Abraham Lincoln declared a “National Day of Thanksgiving and Praise.”

The initial reaction had to be surprise. How could people be thankful at a time like this? The words of the

proclamation reveal Lincoln’s heart for eventual healing and restoration:

“. . . I recommend . . . that while offering up the ascriptions justly to Him for such singular deliverance and blessings, they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience . . . and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation and restore it as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes. . . .”

One month later Chattanooga fell. About half a year later Atlanta fell, followed by the surrender of the Confederacy, thus ending this horrific war. *A National Day of Thanksgiving and Praise to the Almighty Hand of our Lord was timely in ending bloodshed and securing freedom for the entire nation.*

The Urgency of Today

Certainly our nation is at a place of crisis again. The political rancor is reaching heightened extremes, with political parties disagreeing—at times bitterly—over solutions to our economic and social woes. Abortion continues to be one of the greatest blights of all time on our country. The entertainment industry seems to know no boundaries, with children and families directly affected by regular exposure to indecency and violence. We seem ineffective at stopping the flow of drugs into our culture.

We are fighting wars on many different battle fronts, and the rhetoric of hatred with nation against nation grows each day. We were deeply wounded in September of 2001, and now we wait in apprehension for the next terrorist attack that might harm multitudes of Americans at any time. We are a nation on edge.

Certainly the stresses and woes of our nation today are comparable to critical times in our nation in the past. Yet at times it seems the Church is unaware of

the urgency of the day. We can seem paralyzed in prayer, unsure that God's Word still applies to our hopeless situations.

Might God Hear Our Cries Again?

Could it happen again? Could we cry out to Almighty God that He would

accomplish His divine purposes in and through our nation?

Part of the answer to these questions is your understanding of His purposes. God always wants to accomplish good things for a nation. His heart is always looking for reasons to bring mercy. He says in Jeremiah 18:7-10:

“If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned. And if at another time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be built up and planted, and if it does evil in my sight and does not obey me, then I will reconsider the good I had intended to do for it.”

It is only in the final days that we would be praying against God's will for the healing of our nation. According to Revelation 19:15, it is then that God's wrath against nations will be fully realized and poured out:

“Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. ‘He will rule them with an iron scepter.’ He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.”

But until then, can America be saved by prayer? The problems we are facing are too large for human understanding. If we are to be saved, only God can do it. We have seen Him save our country in the past, and we have no reason—either historical or biblical—to doubt that He would do it again.

“ . . . if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and will heal their land” (2 Chron. 7:14). **PC**



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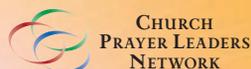
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The Story of Manchester, Kentucky

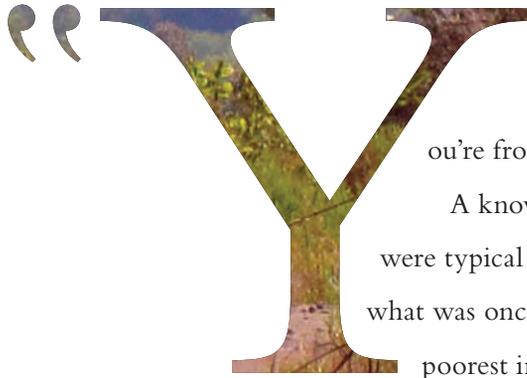
MANCHESTER
CITY LIMITS

CITY OF HOPE

From Hopelessness to

EASTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY
MANCHESTER REGIONAL CAMPUS
NEXT RIGHT

By Arlyn Lawrence



ou're from *Clay County*? Oh . . .”

A knowing comment and a condescending lift of the eyebrows were typical responses when someone admitted to being a resident of what was once the second poorest county in Kentucky and the fourth poorest in the nation.

In 1964, CBS News gave the small city of Manchester—Clay County’s county seat—the title of “Depressed City, USA.” Forty years later, in 2004, nothing had changed; if anything, the situation was worse.

The community was divided—not just physically by geography, but relationally by years of violent clan feuding. The churches were divided, marked by spiritual pride and parochial bickering that left them stripped of any real spiritual power or meaningful role in the public arena.

Families were divided—destroyed by divorce, rampant drug and alcohol abuse, abandonment, suicide, and widespread crime. More people were incarcerated in

CITY

trans·form
a: to change in composition
b: to change the outward form
c: to change in character

of HOPE

the local prison than resided in the town. Even law enforcement was divided and impotent, riddled with corruption and devoid of cooperation between its various agencies.

From all visible signs, the scenario for Manchester, KY, was increasingly hopeless.

A Desperate Place

Out of sheer desperation, Christians began to pray together. One hundred to 150 of them started gathering on Saturday mornings—fed up with the loss of far too many bright young lives due to drug overdoses. They were also fed up with the corruption and the crime—fed up with drug dealers whose houses got more commercial traffic than the local Wendy’s while law officials turned a blind eye. One participant put it simply, “People just got tired of burying their kids.”

So they gathered, from all walks of life, praying across denominational lines—Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Charismatics, and Catholics. Even those who were not professing Christians showed up to pray, so great was their desperation. One pastor reported, “People who had never done that before were on their knees crying out to God—and all of a sudden you’re hugging a Presbyterian or a Methodist.” Instead of focusing on their differences, they were focusing on their commonalities: *Jesus and their community’s problems.*

Repenting and Exposing Darkness

What did those desperate, united prayers look like? For one, participants repented (as churches and individuals) for their passivity, disunity, and spiritual separatism that had robbed the Church of its rightful role and responsibility in the community. “We weren’t [just] trying to take back what the devil had stolen,” says Pastor Doug Abner of Community Church in Manchester. “We were taking back what was right-



Thousands of people gathered to march and pray through Manchester.

fully ours that we had given up because the Church wasn’t doing what it was supposed to have done.”

One Methodist minister said at the beginning of the prayer meetings, “We need to pray for God to expose the darkness.” So they did. And God responded. Little did the praying band of believers know that God was already moving powerfully behind the scenes to break open the crime and corruption that had poisoned the community for so long. Unbeknownst to anyone, the FBI had quietly moved into town and was working intensely behind the scenes.

It is notable that those Saturday morning prayer gatherings were not the first foray into seeking spiritual solutions to the community’s practical difficulties. On September 7, 2002, a historic prayer initiative took place at the Cumberland Gap, just 40 miles southeast of Manchester. That gathering brought several thousand intercessors from more than 40 states and included representatives from Scotland, Ireland, and Wales—the ancestors of the original settlers who traversed the Gap in the earliest years of America’s history.

The intercessors believed fervently that God would pour out His Spirit through the Gap just as hundreds of thousands of pioneers had poured through it centuries earlier. That day, ten cities in the Kentucky region banded together to form a prayer corridor to

prepare for revival in the region, and prayed words of healing over the land.

Taking a Stand and Welcoming Jesus

Two years later, those prayers came to powerful fruition on May 2 as 63 churches and more than 3,500 people came together on a cold, rainy day to march in the streets against drugs in Manchester.

“ENOUGH!” roared the newspaper headlines the next day, for that was the battle cry, both practically and spiritually. But John Becknell, president of CCMP-TV in Manchester, says they knew the march that day wasn’t just taking a stand against drugs. It was about welcoming Jesus as Lord of Clay County and consciously re-enthroning Him as the ruler over the land and people. Alongside the anti-drug banners, marchers lifted high signs reading, “Lord of Lords,” and “Jesus is Lord in Clay County.”

Many people in Manchester will tell of their conviction that this climactic prayer event broke the vice-like grip of drug addiction and other issues that had tormented the daily life of the entire region. Within roughly two months, the FBI closed in and made its move.

Subsequently, over the next several years, more than 3,000 people were arrested, including drug dealers. Seventy county officials were indicted. The

mayor, city supervisor, council members, commissioners, assistant police chief, fire chief, county clerks, and even a circuit judge presiding over three counties, were exposed and jailed for racketeering, distributing drugs, and voter fraud. Corrupt members of the police and sheriff departments were exposed, prosecuted, and sent to prison. New, stable, and accountable government was instated, which has had far-reaching effects.

True Transformation

In fact, residents of Manchester will be the first to tell you there has been a distinct “before” and “after” in the community—before the prayer started, before the march, and after. And that before and after effect can best be described as *transformation*:

- Crime and corruption have diminished dramatically throughout the community.
- Economic conditions have improved, leading to a discernible lessening of poverty.
- New laws, school curricula, and business practices have been put into effect.
- Political leaders have publicly acknowledged their previous sin and their renewed dependence on God.
- Restored hope and joy have led to a marked decline in divorce, bankruptcy, and suicide.
- Secular media and government have confirmed growing social and political renewal.
- Volunteerism has increased as Christians have recognized their responsibility to care for their community.
- Large numbers of local drug dealers and addicts have surrendered their lives to Jesus Christ and been dramatically delivered from drug addiction.
- In 2007, the city council voted to change the name of the city to Manchester: City of Hope.

Why Don't We See More Community TRANSFORMATIONS in America?

Community transformation is an extraordinary season in which the Kingdom and presence of God pervade virtually every institution of the community's life. In recent years, prayer-related transforming revivals have been documented in Guatemala, Brazil, Fiji, Uganda, and many other nations around the world.

The uniqueness of the story of Manchester, KY, is that it is *currently* the only documented example of transforming revival that meets these criteria in America. Why? It's hard to say.

But here are some possibilities, according to George Otis, Jr., of the Sentinel Group:

- Western Christians tend to lack the childlike, cause-and-effect faith that people groups such as the Fijians and Africans consistently demonstrate.
- The sophistication of Western Christians often contributes to the “hedging of bets,” so to speak, and the mindset that we cannot say anything about God or expect anything of God with certainty.
- Westerners don't seem to be as willing to put themselves “on the clock” as other cultures that have experienced documented community transformation. Fijians, by contrast, will call a 21-day corporate repentance and fast and fully expect that when the fast is broken, God will show up in some way. The reality is, He generally does—and usually within 48 hours. It's always different and always unpredictable, but always distinctly God.

So what are the implications for us in America? What are some ways we can reach out to God on behalf of our communities and expect to see His hand in our midst?

Consecrate and Humble Yourselves

The Bible teaches that when God wants to reveal Himself to His people on a corporate level, He first asks them to examine and humble themselves on an individual level. “Consecrate yourselves,” Joshua told the Israelites, “for tomorrow the LORD will do amazing things among you” (Josh. 3:5). *Consecrate* means “to purify”—to make a person free from guilt or moral blemish. We purify ourselves through humility, confession of sin, and repentance.

In this account, God wanted to do something wonderful for the community as a whole. But first, He asked them to purify themselves *individually*. This meant careful self-examination, humility, honest confession, and earnest repentance of any revealed sin. Then the people were ready to come together corporately to experience God's presence.

As many of the people in the Manchester story will testify, it is as we humble ourselves before the Lord and repent individually that we have the platform to come together to repent and pray corporately. When we do, we cultivate a spiritual appetite and atmosphere in which the Lord can do *amazing* things among us!

—Arlyn Lawrence

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- The city has become a regional influence, receiving desperate calls from 49 different states and five foreign nations, all soliciting guidance in their own battles against drugs.

George Otis, Jr., of the Sentinel Group, has documented the transformation of Manchester, KY, in his most recent documentary, *An Appalachian Dawn*. After thousands of hours of research, interviewing, filming, editing, and the resulting video production of the dramatic and moving story, Otis says that much of the story still remains untold. “It was the hardest story for us to tell,” he recounts, “because where do I start? What is the best angle? There are so many possibilities. I can’t even begin to overstate what God has done here.”

After having observed and/or documented transforming revivals in more than 700 communities around the world, Otis agrees that Manchester, KY, is a classic example—and all the more exciting because it is in America. It’s an example of what happens, he says, when people take seriously what God promises in 2 Chronicles 7:14: “. . . if my people who are called by my name will *humble* themselves and *pray* and *seek my face* and *turn from their wicked ways*, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land” (NLT, emphasis added).

That’s exactly what happened in Manchester: *Confession. Repentance. Humbling. Action.*

“People in this story who, from a theological perspective are oil and water, are joined at the hip in what God is doing,” says Otis. “That’s a hallmark of genuine revival.”

Returning to Repentance, Prayer, and Unity

What’s going on in Manchester these days? Now, seven years after the original prayer meetings and the march, they’re getting *back* to repentance, reports Otis. As with all movements of God, there

can be a tendency to rest on one’s laurels (or one’s blessings) and take for granted what God has done. The key, Otis says, is to *stay* in humility, *stay* in dependence on the Lord, and *stay* in prayer.

With this principle in mind, both church and civic leaders in Manchester are taking seriously the responsibility to stay in prayer and unity. Because of it, God’s presence and work are still being keenly felt and observed in the public arena in Manchester.

How do we know if God is responding to prayers for transformation, as was evidenced in Manchester? What should any of us who are praying for transformation in our own communities be looking for? “Really,” reflects Otis, “we don’t always see right away everything that God is doing in response to our prayers. Sometimes He’s moving behind the scenes in response to our prayers in ways we can’t even see—yet. When He does manifest His presence, you’ll always know it, not just by the nature of His response, but by its magnitude and force.”

Attracting God’s Attention

But while God’s response to our prayers may vary from community to community, what remain constant are the things He says attract His attention and His presence. These are the very things the Manchester churches set into motion, whether they realized it or not at the time. They realized the problems were spiritual, not just physical. They united in desperation and repentance. They began to pray for a solution. *And* they started taking action.

The resulting transformation is beyond the scope of most people’s ability to describe. Perhaps John Becknell’s simple assessment says it best. He just tells people, “God tabernacled here.” **PC**



ARLYN LAWRENCE is the co-author of *Prayer-Saturated Kids*, and was a contributing editor to *Pray!* magazine.

**“I mean we had no hope.
It was at the end...
there’s not gonna be a next generation
of Manchester.”**

Rev. Doug Abner



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Praying
GOD'S

Using the Scriptures to Pray for a Nation

By Dave and Kim Butts

D

o you long to see God work in a healing and restoring way in our nation? As the chairman of America's National Prayer Committee, I (Dave) intersect with prayer leaders across our nation. Our hearts are growing increasingly urgent about the need to pray for God's mercy and grace in our country.

As my wife Kim and I prayed over and discussed this article together, we had questions. How do we pray for America? What can we ask of God, given the history of our nation, the ways we are currently grieving God, and the many ways God has blessed us both today and in the past? Suddenly I felt led to pray.

This is the simple prayer that the Lord put on my heart. If it resonates with your heart, I invite you to join me in praying for America in this way:

Lord,

How would You have me pray for my nation? I watch with horror as we increasingly turn from Your ways. Your precious Word speaks so strongly to our situation: "The wicked freely strut about when what is vile is honored among men" (Ps. 12:8).

The Psalmist David again asks the right question for our day, "When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Ps. 11:3).

PURPOSES

for America

MINISTRIES WITH FOCUS on Prayer for America

Presidential Prayer Team

The Presidential Prayer Team was established in 2001 to pray for the president, national leaders, and Armed Forces. The website includes prayer for weekly featured leaders, 24/7 prayer watch with updated news items, a prayer wall to submit written prayers, and weekly teaching on prayer. (Phone: 866.433.PRAY; presidentialprayerteam.com)

Intercessors for America

IFA's goal is to inform and mobilize Christian intercessors across the nation to pray for local and national concerns. The website includes a 24-hour prayer wall, daily updated national prayer concerns, prayer resources, and information about local prayer groups. (Phone: 540.317.2070; getamericapraying.com)

Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation

The Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation (CPCF), a non-profit, non-partisan organization, works alongside elected officials who are calling America back to prayer and trust in God. Its mission is to preserve our Judeo-Christian heritage and protect the religious liberty of all Americans. (Phone: 757.546.2190; cpcfoundation.com)

National Day of Prayer

This annual observance (on the first Thursday of May) was created in 1952 by a joint resolution of Congress and signed into law by President Harry Truman. Its mission is to mobilize prayer in America and to encourage personal repentance and righteousness in the culture. Cities and states across the nation host prayer observances on this day, with an emphasis on prayer for America and its leadership in government, military, media, business, education, church, and family. The website lists local gatherings and provides prayer resources. (nationaldayofprayer.org)

Capitol Hill Prayer Alert

As a network of praying believers, this ministry focuses on the need for repentant, heart-felt prayer for another Great Awakening in America. This group combines access to Christian political authorities with the study of biblical theology to inform intercessors of pertinent prayer needs on Capitol Hill. Their prayer alerts encourage intercessors to pray in agreement with a biblical focus. (prayeralert.org)

Prayer Force One

Described as "America's Flagship for Prayer," Prayer Force One is a national Christian ministry that seeks to unite America's praying majority. They host two prayer meetings: 1) a virtual online prayer meeting with panoramic view of the White House, and 2) prayer the Sunday before a presidential election. The ministry also owns a converted Greyhound bus that they drive around the country to promote prayer for revival in the nation. (prayerforceone.com)

continued from page 21

It is because I love the United States of America that I pray with passion for her. Lord, You have greatly blessed our nation. From our beginning, there have been those in leadership who have honored You and sought to lead us in righteousness. You have made us a beacon for freedom around the world for those who are oppressed and downtrodden. The material blessings from Your hand have welled up in national generosity to help those who are hurting, both within and outside our borders.

We recognize our imperfect human nature and structures. While fighting for freedom, we had periods of slavery within our own nation. Even with slavery behind us, freedom was not always available to all in the same measure. The list of our sins, Lord, is long. Without Your mercy, who could stand?

Throughout our nation's history You have blessed us with times of spiritual awakening and revival. Your Spirit moved in our midst to restore godly worship. You empowered Your people to be witnesses to Your truths and to take stands for righteousness and justice.

Oh God, do it again! Come upon Your people again in reviving power. Before our nation can be changed, our hearts must be changed. Turn us from selfishness and sin to Your loving ways.

Your Word tells us, Lord, that judgment begins in the house of the Lord (1 Peter 4:17). May Your mercy and grace also begin there. Pour out a spirit of repentance upon the Church in America. Forgive us for making our faith more about us and our comfort and preferences than about Your purposes on planet earth. Fill our pulpits with godly preachers who will proclaim Your Word fearlessly.

A Daily Prayer Pattern for Strategic Areas of Our Nation

How can we pray effectively for the United States every day? Rather than simply praying, “God bless America” and hoping for the best, we can begin to pray God’s purposes and plans more strategically over the key influencers in our country.

Many Christians are using the idea of seven centers of power as a guideline for their prayers. Here are some simple prayer points you can use to pray over these vital areas in our nation. Look up the Scriptures and use them to expand your prayers.

Daily Prayer Points for the Seven Centers of Power and Influence in the United States:

1. Government: *righteousness, laws based on God’s moral law, justice.* “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people” (Prov. 14:34). See also: Ps. 34:15; Ps. 89:14.

2. Media: *love for truth, fairness, godly standards.* “Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32). See also: Ps. 51:6; Zech. 8:16.

3. Business: *integrity, wisdom, generosity.* “Do not use dishonest standards when measuring length, weight or quantity” (Lev. 19:35). See also: Prov. 3:9-10.

4. Education: *biblical standards, love for children, gifted teachers.* “When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law” (Matt. 7:28-29). See also: Deut. 4:9; Prov. 10:14.

5. Arts and Entertainment: *creativity, godliness, sensitivity to the Spirit.* “See, the Lord has chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts” (Ex.35:30). See also: Is. 51:11, Eccl. 3:4.

6. Family: *commitment to relationships, holiness, bringing up children in God’s ways.* “He [an overseer] must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect” (1 Tim. 3:4). See also: Deut. 11:19; Eph. 5:22-33.

7. Church: *revival, holiness, love for truth, passion for Jesus, evangelistic fervor, compassionate ministry.* “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord” (Acts 3:19). See also: Joel 2:12-14; Ps. 85:4-7.

—Dave and Kim Butts

We will respond to Your Word as those who are called by Your name, humbling ourselves before You and in prayer, seeking Your face and turning from our wicked ways. Father, will You then hear from heaven and forgive our sin and heal our land (2 Chron. 7:14)?

We ask this in the powerful name of Jesus! Amen.

Praying Scripture for Our Nation

Praying for any nation requires that we lay down our desires and take up God’s desires for that nation. In addition to praying those things that God puts on our hearts, we also need to learn to pray Scripture over a nation. Here is a powerful Scripture to pray on behalf of our nation:

Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people he chose for his inheritance. From heaven the LORD looks down and sees all mankind; from his dwelling place he watches all who live on earth—he who forms the hearts of all, who considers everything they do.

No king is saved by the size of his army; no warrior escapes by his great strength. A horse is a vain hope for deliverance; despite all its great strength, it cannot save.

But the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love, to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine.

We wait in hope for the LORD; he is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy

name. May your unfailing love rest upon us, O LORD, even as we put our hope in you (Ps. 33:12-22).

May the Lord renew our hope to pray for our nation according to His Word and the leading of the Holy Spirit. **PC**



DAVE AND KIM BUTTS are the founders of Harvest Prayer Ministries. Dave is also the chairman of America’s National Prayer Committee, which seeks to provide collective servant leadership to the national prayer movement. Both Dave and Kim are gifted “prayer guide” developers. Among their works are *Asleep in the Land of Nod*, a 30-day revival prayer guide by Dave, and the new work from both authors, *Revolution on Our Knees: 30 Days of Prayer for Neighbors and Nations*. Both are available at prayershop.org.

CONTENT



WHEN YOU NEED A



DING IN

BY CAROL MADISON



Prayer

ARE YOU WILLING TO CONTEND FOR IT?

I sensed the Lord posing this question when I discovered I lost my chance at buying a new townhome. I had persistently prayed for God's favor regarding this home, but now the Lord was inviting me to a new level of intercession—that of *contending*.

This was an unusual home-buying situation. I was interested in this particular townhome for one reason: obedience to God. I didn't necessarily want to move, as I was content with my current home. But several months earlier God directed me to this townhome for a unique prayer assignment, so I was willing to move.

Situated on a hill, this townhome has the best view over a community in Minnesota. The deck extends out with an unobstructed view over the downtown and other key places in the city. The third-story windows give an even higher perspective. God was inviting me to a special place of intercession on behalf of the people of this community.

However, when I first felt led to the home, it was not for sale. Yet I felt strongly I was to live in *this specific townhome*. Other homes in the complex came up for sale, but I chose not to look at them. The Lord placed the prayer assignment and *this home* deep within my heart. So for months I drove by the townhome, praying and asking the Lord to make a way for me to buy it.

One day as I pulled up in front of the home to pray, I discovered that it was on the market! I called my real estate agent, only to learn with quick dismay that another offer on the home had been accepted and the sale was pending only a final inspection. Suddenly the home I was praying and waiting for was gone.

I was devastated and expressed my

HIGHER LEVEL OF INTERCESSION

By contending, we are assuring God that we will not accept the current circumstances without a heart-felt fight!

disappointment to the Lord. That's when I heard Him say, "Are you willing to contend for it?" I answered, "Yes," not knowing what that meant. But for the next few days, I was quickly mentored by the Lord in true contending in prayer for His Kingdom purposes.

CONTENDING FOR STRATEGIC TERRITORY

I had *persisted* in prayer for many months, asking God to give me the townhome. I was reminded of the "persistent widow" story of Luke 18, in which the widow pursues the judge over and over again, *continuing past the normal or expected time*.¹ Jesus praises this kind of repetition in prayer by telling the disciples to "always pray and not give up" (vs. 1).

In the same way, I asked the Lord over and over again for the townhome—and then I waited. But now that I had clearly lost the townhome to someone else, I felt the Lord inviting me to a whole new level of prayer.

The idea of *contending* was new to me. Somehow it seems different; more strategic, desperate, and urgent. Jude uses the term "contend" (vs. 3) when he urges believers to "contend for the faith." This contending admonition refers to *an intense effort in a wrestling match*.² Watching a wrestling match gives a very vivid picture of contending, as there is an ongoing struggle to maintain control or victory over an opponent. Neither participant is willing to give up until one is clearly pinned or defeated.

Another definition of contend conveys the idea of "striving against a rivalry or contending with an enemy for

the control of a port."³ That summed up how I felt in my prayers—that I was wrestling with spiritual powers in a battle over strategic land and a desperate community.

For whatever God's reasoning, this townhome and its location were important. (Just across the road from the townhome is the international headquarters for a cult organization; I knew this was part of my prayer assignment.) Long ago God determined this was the place that I should live and pray on behalf of the city.

A QUICK CONTENDING LESSON

With greater understanding that I was involved in a spiritual battle, I began to fast and pray continuously. When I was in my car, I prayed. I turned off my television at home and prayed. I prayed as I fell asleep, and immediately when I woke up. I was consumed moment by moment in desperate prayer. Through daily email updates, I invited family and friends to contend in prayer with me.

My fervent prayer wasn't because I wanted a new home. This was about God's Kingdom purposes and His glory! I was suddenly passionate for God to demonstrate Himself in a way that no one could deny. I prayed every way the Lord put on my heart, including spiritual warfare prayers, agonizing prayers with tears, and prayers modeled after biblical giants of the faith.

I pleaded with God to show Himself powerful. Using Elijah's prayer when he confronted the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18, I implored God to answer in such a way that people would know He was at work in this. "Answer me, O LORD, answer me, so these people will

know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again" (vs. 37).

STOP CONTENDING

At the three-day mark of fasting and praying, these words suddenly flashed through my mind: "It's over. Stop contending and start worshipping Me with praise and thanksgiving." I was skeptical that I was hearing the Lord. Again, the same words whispered through my spirit. I asked the Lord to confirm in His Word that He was speaking to me.

I opened my Bible "randomly" and it fell open to Exodus 33:17, where God said to Moses: "I will indeed do what you have asked, for you have found favor with me, and you are my friend" (NLT). A peace rushed through my soul, and I knew that God had done it. The victory had come.

Less than an hour later, my agent called to say that we actually had a "long shot" at getting the townhome because of a minor problem with the home inspection. The garbage disposal was too loud, but the sellers were refusing to deal with the current buyer over that little issue.

Eventually, to the surprise of everyone, the buyer defaulted over that insignificant problem—and the townhome was mine. And just to add to God's favor, the sellers replaced the garbage disposal for me, without my even asking!

YES, GOD WAS IN IT!

At the closing, I asked God for an opportunity to tell my story to the unsuspecting sellers. I cautiously shared that I had prayed for months about their townhome. I told them I believed God was

calling me to pray over the city from that vantage point.

Their response confirmed that I had heard the Lord correctly. The wife exclaimed in astonishment: “We had no intention of moving, but one day I woke up and told my husband, ‘We *have* to move!’ We had just finished redecorating the home, but I felt an urgency to move. In fact, we put the house on the market that day, and then bought the first house we looked at!”

Everyone, including our agents, sat stunned for a moment. Then the sellers’ agent spoke for all of us when she said, “I had no idea I was a part of something so big.”

FOR THE GLORY OF CHRIST

God taught me a lesson in contending prayer. There are times to pray steadily and faithfully with persistence, but there are other times when God stirs within us a passion to contend as though Jesus’ name and glory are at stake.

More and more challenges are facing believers, churches, and even our nation. We are increasingly aware that intense spiritual battles are confronting us. Greater urgency and determination rise up in us as we pray: “Not *my* child; not *my* family; I *will not* give in to Satan’s scorn and destruction intended for my church!” *By contending, we are assuring God that we will not accept the current circumstances without a heart-felt fight!*

If your heart is broken over a seemingly hopeless situation, ask the Lord if you are to “contend” over it. If God responds by stirring within you a passion to contend in prayer for a specific circumstance (a devastated marriage, a friend with a hardened heart, a child in rebellion), know that there is no “text-book contending.” This cry of your soul, this desperate longing for spiritual victory, must be done with a humble

heart that is willing to be guided by the Holy Spirit.

A GOOD RISK!

When it comes to contending in prayer and desperately wanting Christ’s glory demonstrated to all, the risk is worth the investment of your heart and soul! A wrestler does not approach the mat with the thought of simply forfeiting because he thinks he is overmatched and might lose. He brings all his training, strength, and heart to the match with the hope that he can overcome his opponent.

In the same way, by contending we are calling upon God to release His power and resources to overcome any opposition. The outcome rests with the Lord, but His invitation always stands: “*And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night?*” (Luke 18:7).

For the past five years I have prayed—with the best view over the city. For as long as God keeps me here, I will faithfully pray for revival and spiritual awakening of my community. Often I pray by myself, other times people join me in my living room or they prayer walk with me.

If God calls you to contend in prayer for certain situations, you can trust that He has a greater purpose. You can also trust Him to teach you how to be faithful to that call. He just needs to know that *you are willing to contend for it!* **PC**

1. Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary.
2. NIV Bible Commentary, Vol. 2: New Testament, Kenneth Barker and John R. Kolenberger III, consulting editors. Zondervan, 1994, pg. 1120.
3. Dictionary.com Unabridged



CAROL MADISON is the editor of *Prayer Connect*. She has been involved in the prayer movement in the Minneapolis, MN, area for many years, most recently with the Global Day of Prayer MN and Prayer First.

Can Prayer Save America?

Yes! As we pray . . . God will heal.

As we come into an important election year, as we continue to see turmoil and uncertainty in our economy, as we see the moral compass of America continue to erode, it is time to pray as never before.

We believe God wants to transform our nation again, as we cry out to Him.

Let *Prayer Connect* encourage your people to pray. Host a Prayer for America Weekend in 2012.

GO TO **PRAYERCONNECT.NET** FOR MORE INFORMATION. CLICK ON PRAYER FOR AMERICA WEEKEND.

Combining the Power of Prayer and Social Media

“Lifting up the world one friend at a time” is the tag line of a new Facebook application called “Praybook.” With more than 550 million people worldwide using the social media of Facebook, an application that encourages friends to pray for friends has the potential of generating an explosive prayer movement.

Tim Lehmann, the founder of Praybook, explains his reason for creating the application. “I had more than 500 friends on Facebook and I was ignoring every one of them. I began to wonder what God might do if I prayed for them consistently. Social media has provided an amazing opportunity. Never before have we been able to reach so many, so quickly. Praybook can direct that power of social media into a spiritual format to multiply the power of prayer.”

Special Features of Praybook

Praybook organizes and motivates us-



ers to be consistent in their prayers for others. Automatic daily prayer lists, generated from the user’s Facebook friend list, help the user pray through all of his or her friends faithfully. Users can then notify friends of their prayers with a message on their Facebook walls. Lehmann sees this ongoing prayer as a catalyst for further relationship building and even evangelism.

Praybook users can also input their own specific prayer requests to the friends in their network. In the same way, they can see and pray for requests posted by their friends. For urgent prayer requests, a special alert is displayed for the user’s entire Praybook network, calling many together to pray for that need.

A 30-day challenge is issued when the user engages Praybook, which helps

build a discipline of consistency. Tallies of friends who have been prayed for provide encouragement through quantitative feedback for the user to see the impact he or she is having on the lives of friends. Users are also encouraged to pray with greater faith through a daily devotional thought that speaks to the power of prayer.

Great Potential

Praybook users have the potential to blanket millions of people simply by *friends praying for friends*, including Christian and non-Christians friends. Lehmann foresees Praybook notifications as a catalyst for spiritual conversations encouraging evangelistic outreach. “The power of God through a family of faithful praying friends has the power to change the world,” he says.

Praybook is a free application. To learn more, visit their Facebook fan page facebook.com/PraybookApp or visit the website at praybook.com.

How to Get the Most People Praying

Churches are often looking for ways to encourage prayer among their people. A great way to get the most people praying is to design a prayer initiative—praying on a theme for a set period of time. Prayer initiatives disciple people to move beyond fix-it prayers for their own needs, and instead pray Kingdom-focused prayers that seek the power, blessing, and purposes of God.

Many denominations or organizations encourage a week of prayer or develop materials for a 30- or 40-day prayer emphasis. A church can develop its own initiative, but there are lots of good ones available, complete with Scripture-based

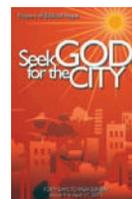
prayer guides, sermon helps, and even promotional materials.

For best results, the initiative needs advance planning behind it, leadership support, and plenty of promotion. Initiatives work best when a pastor’s preaching series goes along with the emphasis.

Here are three initiatives that *Prayer Connect* recommends. Each has a different level of support for a church.

Seek God for the City.

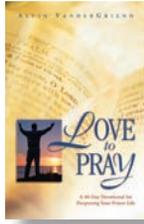
This prayer initiative is put on every year during the Lenten season. It lasts 40 days, ending on Palm Sunday. While *Seek God*



for the City does not provide extra materials for churches, its strength is the solid Scripture-based prayers its guide provides. Each day your people will focus on praying Kingdom prayers for your church, neighborhoods, community, nation, and world. In the process—besides the spiritual ramifications in the heavenly realms—your people will learn to pray Scriptures that fulfill God’s purposes! There is also a downloadable children’s prayer guide. For more information, go to waymakers.org.

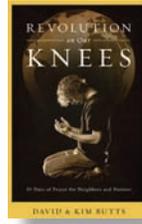
40 Days of Prayer using Love to Pray. This is by far the most complete prayer initiative on the market. It has

a resource kit with sermon outlines, promo pieces, DVD of teaching presentations for Sunday school classes or small groups, and a children's version of the guide.



It mainly uses the 40-day devotional *Love to Pray* by Alvin VanderGriend, a 100,000-plus selling product that covers great basic theology of prayer and encourages praying beyond fix-it needs. Go to 40daysofprayer.net for information.

Revolution on Our Knees: 30 Days of Prayer for Neighbors and Nations. This new



prayer guide encourages believers to pray daily for God's purposes to be released around them. Its content focuses on the moving of God's Spirit in a church, prayer for lost friends and neighbors, and the completion of the Great Commission. Go to prayershop.org for more information.

Modern Technology Meets Prayer Evangelism

Many churches today are using the catch phrase "Prayer-Care-Share" (which comes from the Lighthouse movement of the late '90s and early part of this century). The idea is to encourage members to first pray for their neighbors' salvation, next look for ways to care for them, and finally gain an opportunity to share Jesus Christ with them.

Now the Mapping Center for Evangelism and Church Growth has released a technology tool that can help churches make it easier for their people to reach their neighbors through Prayer-Care-Share. Called the "5 Mission Tool Kit," this resource offers important up-to-date data that can make your church and praying members more effective. For a \$99 one-time purchase you get the following:

- 1 Drive-Time Map** that shows your church homes with overlays defining how far you can drive from the church building in 10, 20 or 30 minutes.
- 2 Church Home Cluster Analysis** that divides your mission field into ZIP+2 areas with a strategic analysis, showing where your congregants live and where they are clustered in neighborhoods.

3 A Member Survey on Neighborhood Outreach that recruits your congregants to participate in prayer-care-share.

4 A 20-30 Closest Neighbors List that is provided to each member. This gives each participant in prayer-care-share his or her neighbors' names in street-walking order so he or she can pray for them by name. It also gives them information helpful in meeting their neighbors.

5 A 10 Closest Member Report that shows each member which other church members live close to them. This can be valuable in increasing fellowship, and in joining Christian neighbors together to pray for their other neighbors.

Most believers recognize the importance of praying for lost people around them, and neighbors are potentially the most responsive due to relationships. When a church can provide information to help its members pray more effectively, prayer will be sustained over the long haul and a church is more likely to see people come to Christ as a result.

Go to MappingCenter.org/5MissionTools for more information on how this resource might help the prayer and evangelism efforts of your congregation.

prayerconnect.net

ALL YOUR PRAYER CONNECTION NEEDS IN ONE PLACE.

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 Connect with **resources**
 Connect with **praying people**

The Power of Prayer in the Social Media Generation

PRAYBOOK™
 Lifting Up the World . . . One Friend at a Time

Pray for Facebook friends with **Praybook** www.Praybook.com

The Voice of Experience | By Jonathan Graf

Payer Connect asked seven national-level prayer leaders—individuals who regularly mentor and equip local prayer leaders—to answer this question:

What is one thing you would like to say to local church prayer leaders to help them be more successful in their ministries?

Several leaders encourage prayer leaders not to give up or worry about small numbers. “Don’t get discouraged over low numbers,” said Doug Small, liaison to the overseer for prayer for the Church of God (Cleveland, TN). “Go after a core of people.”

Tom Swank, pastor and prayer leader in the Missionary Church, agrees. “Never give up! The stakes are incredibly high. There are too many lost people for us to abandon our prayer stations or cease to recruit others to join in praying the Lord of the harvest to send workers. . . . When it seems you are the only one praying, *never give up*. . . . When others don’t understand your persistence in prayer, *don’t give up*.”

Check Your Own Heart

Phil Miglioratti and Alvin VanderGriend both emphasize that prayer is essential to the prayer leader's ministry. “Pray much and pray often for yourself,” says VanderGriend, chairman of the Denominational Prayer Leaders Network. “[Ask] for the spiritual riches that God has for you in Christ—all the things He is eager to give to those who ask in accordance with his will (1 Jn. 5:14–15).”

Miglioratti of the National Pastors Prayer Network emphasizes the vital importance of the Holy Spirit. “[There

is] no better partner than the Holy Spirit to ensure a strong and successful ministry of prayer,” he says. “The Spirit knows how to lead us, individually and corporately, in the *what, why, and how* of praying. So, next time you are praying or preparing or planning, or anything, invite the Spirit of the Lord to fill you (assume control, Eph. 5:18), to grant you the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16), and to enable you to pray [as though seated] in the heavenly realms (Eph. 2:6).”

Expanding on the thought of praying for yourself as a prayer leader, Dennis Conner of Called to Serve, adds the idea of praying regularly “for the ‘spirit of prayer’ to fall upon the pastor, staff, and church leaders.” This regular prayer pattern can change the spiritual dynamics of a church as God brings a vision for prayer to its leadership.

Recruit, Train, and Assist

Several other prayer leaders offer ideas to help recruit. “Ask God to call out a prayer team, with representation from the various areas of the church, to help draw members to participate in prayer opportunities,” says Elaine Helms, the former national prayer director of the Southern Baptist Convention, now with Church Prayer Ministries. “When a member offers an idea for an avenue of prayer, ask how you may assist in getting that started. As you meet with the staff member regularly to encourage and equip him or her to lead that area of the ministry, you grow your prayer team naturally while mentoring a new leader.”

Conner and David Chotka, a national prayer leader and pastor with the Christian and Missionary Alliance of Canada, both talked about the importance of teaching and training others.

“Add a 4- or 6- to 8-week prayer training course that provides people the opportunity to do exactly what Jesus’ first-century disciples wanted to do: learn to pray,” comments Conner. “This practical step has made a huge difference in the churches that have done this. Their people become much more confident of how to pray more effectively. This course should be offered on a continual basis, so all the people have a chance to go through it.”

Chotka, too, believes in the power of training, but he adds that you should start by using Jesus’ plan—training those who can then train others. Jesus got alone with God; then He chose 12 to mentor, three of whom were especially close to Him. Encourage those you train to train others.

Prayer, Perseverance, and People

The bottom line: You simply cannot lead a prayer ministry if you are not convinced of the importance and power of prayer. Let your own prayer life demonstrate that you believe God’s promise to hear the prayers of those who seek Him with humble hearts.

Then determine that you will not give up, regardless of the response to your invitations to pray. Persevere with the belief that one day God will demonstrate His answers to your heart cries.

And finally, always be thinking about bringing others along with you in this exciting prayer journey. Look for those you can mentor in prayer. Trust that the Lord will awaken His people to greater prayer if you are faithful as a leader. **PC**

JONATHAN GRAF is the director of the Church Prayer Leaders Network and the publisher of *Prayer Connect*.



The Benefits of Time in Prayer | By E.M. (Edward) Bounds

Our devotions are not measured by the clock, but time is of their essence. Short devotions deplete spiritual vigor, arrest spiritual progress, sap spiritual foundations, blight the root and bloom of spiritual life. They are the prolific source of backsliding, the sure indication of a superficial piety; they deceive, blight, rot the seed, and impoverish the soil.

It is true that Bible prayers in word and print are short, but the praying men of the Bible were with God through many a sweet and holy wrestling hour. They won by few words but long waiting. The prayers Moses records may be short, but Moses prayed to God with fastings and mighty cryings forty days and nights.

The statement of Elijah's praying may be condensed to a few brief paragraphs, but doubtless Elijah, who when "praying he prayed," spent many hours of fiery struggle and lofty intercourse with God before he could, with assured boldness, say to Ahab, "There shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word."

The man Christ Jesus prayed many an all-night ere His work was done. His all-night and long-sustained devotions gave to His work its finish and perfection, and to His character the fullness and glory of its divinity.

True Praying Costs Something

Praying, true praying, costs an outlay of serious attention and of time, which flesh and blood do not relish. Few persons are made of such strong fiber that they will make a costly outlay when surface work will pass as well in the market. Hurried devotions make weak faith, feeble convictions, questionable piety. To be little *with* God is to be little *for* God.

It takes good time for the full flow of God into the spirit. *It takes time in the secret places to get the full revelation of God.* More time and early hours for prayer would act like magic to revive and invigorate many a decayed spiritual life. A holy life would not be so rare or so difficult a thing if our devotions were not so short and hurried.

Our ability to stay with God in our closet measures our ability to stay with God out of the closet. Hasty closet visits are deceptive, defaulting. We are not only deluded by them, but we are losers by them in many ways and in many rich legacies. Tarrying in the closet instructs and wins. The greatest victories are often the results of great waiting—waiting till words and plans are exhausted. Silent and patient waiting gains the crown.

To pray is the greatest thing we can do. To do it well there must be calmness, time, and deliberation; otherwise it is degraded into the littlest and meanest of things. We cannot do too much of real praying.

We must learn anew the worth of prayer, enter anew the school of prayer. There is nothing which takes more time to learn. And if we would learn the wondrous art, we must not give a fragment here and there. We must demand and hold with iron grasp the best hours of the day for God and prayer, or there will be no praying worth the name.

Who Truly Prays?

Few men there are who pray. In these days of hurry and bustle, of electricity and steam, men will not take time to pray. Preachers there are who "say prayers" as a part of their program, on regular or state occasions; but who "stirs himself up to take hold upon God"? Who prays as Jacob prayed—till he is crowned as a prevailing, princely intercessor? Who prays as Elijah prayed—till all the locked-up forces of nature were unsealed and a famine-stricken land bloomed as the garden of God?

Who [prays] as Jesus Christ prayed as out upon the mountain He "continued all night in prayer to God"? The apostles "gave themselves to prayer"—the most difficult thing to get men or even the preachers to do. Laymen there are who will give their money—some of them in rich abundance—but they will not "give themselves" to prayer, without which their money is but a curse.

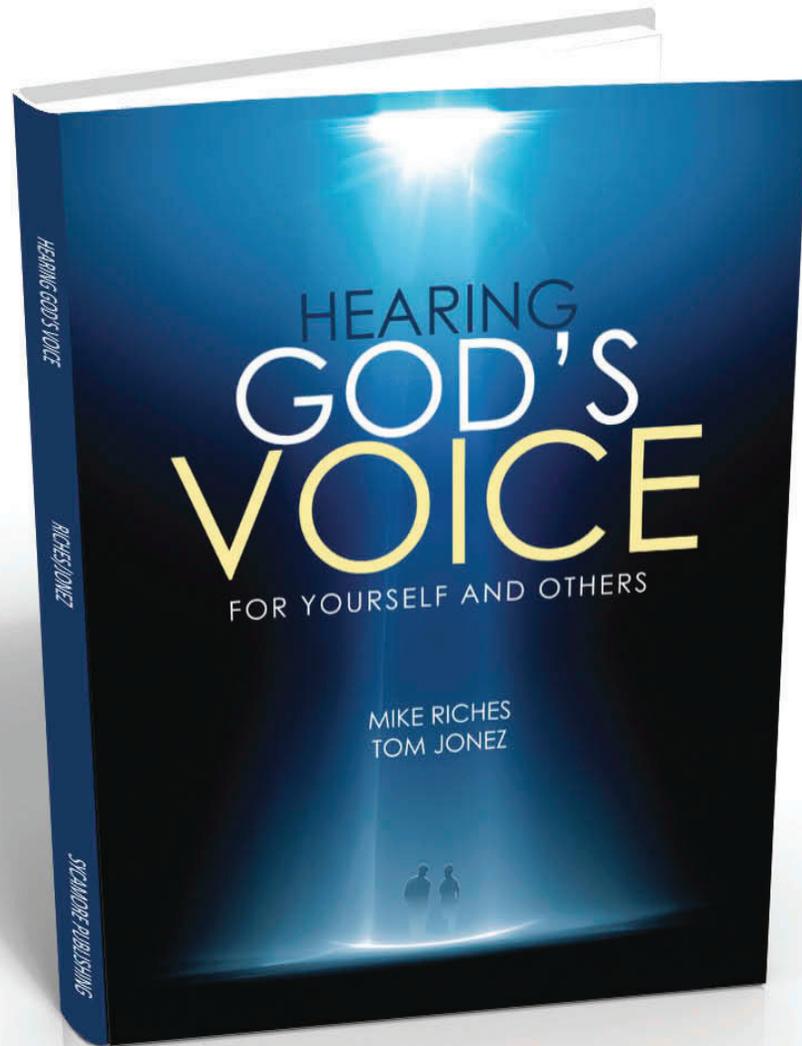
Prayer Is a Lost Art

There are plenty of preachers who will preach and deliver great and eloquent addresses on the need of revival and the spread of the Kingdom of God, but not many there are who will do that without which all preaching and organizing are worse than vain—pray.

It is out of date, almost a lost art, and the greatest benefactor this age could have is the man who will bring the preachers and the Church back to prayer. **PC**

E.M. BOUNDS (1835–1913) was a pastor and a Civil War chaplain known for his strong pietistic convictions. He was also known for his writings and his travels as an itinerant revivalist. This article is taken from his work *Power through Prayer*, which is available through prayershop.org.

Now more than ever...



...we need to hear the voice of our God.

Sometimes, if we receive a providential answer to our prayers, we do have the sense that Someone, somewhere, is listening to us. But is it possible that we can also listen to that Someone? Is it possible that He has a voice, and that we can train our ears to hear and respond to Him?

According to the Scriptures, that is precisely the case. In fact, hearing from God is perfectly normal – at least it ought to be for every one of His children. It's the way God designed it all along!

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