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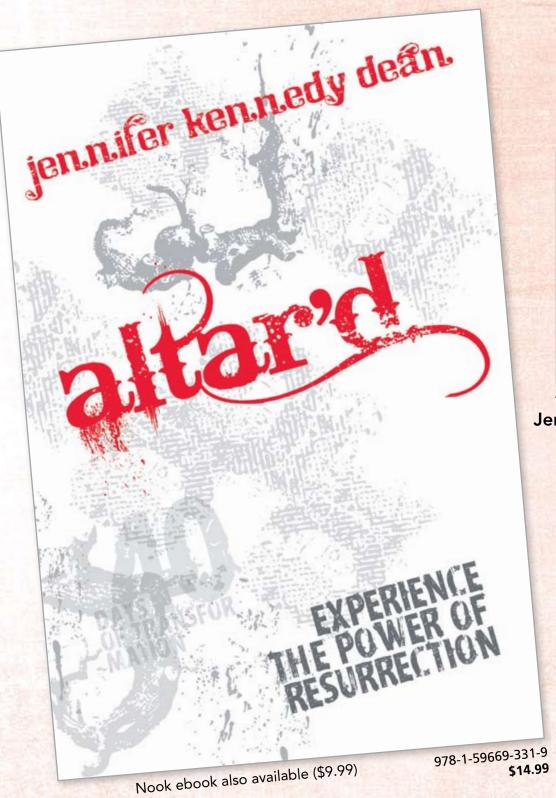
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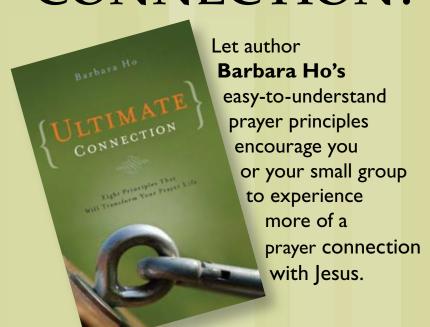
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Carol Madison

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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 for revival 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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The mission of **PRAYER**CONNECT is

- 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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Previously in Prayer Connect

The March/April 2012 issue, "Solid Foundation," is still available for purchase in single or bulk copies. You will learn about praying Scripture



from authors Dana Olson, Cheri Fuller, and John Maempa. In addition, we have packaged the theme articles of this issue into a booklet format that can be used to train your congregation to pray powerful biblical prayers. Order bulk quantities of both the magazine and booklet at discounted prices through *prayershop.org*.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE



As Natural as Breathing

ot long ago, I was in a church that clearly "gets it" where prayer is concerned. Mountain View Community Church in Fresno, CA, hosted our "Can Prayer Save America?" event this past February.

From the time the conference opened, it was evident that prayer is simply a part of this church's DNA.



When we lead such a conference, we ask that the host church provide worship. We did not coach the worship team at Mountain View to lead in a certain way, yet the worship experience was loaded with prayer. Multiple times the worship leader prayed in between songs. His song selections were clearly related to the theme—crying out for God to send revival and spiritual awakening.

Several times during a worship song, Mountain View people approached a microphone and prayed, reflecting the song's content. At one point during a particular song, the main prayer leader asked people from the audience to pray bold, transforming truths related to revival and awakening. It was a powerful moment.

But this church wasn't just putting prayer front and center because it was a prayer conference. Prayer permeates its ministry each Sunday and throughout the week. Pastor Fred Leonard models prayer and disciples his staff to engage in prayer. They all keep prayer/spiritual growth journals—and for accountability, they must regularly share from their journals during staff meetings. Their weekly two- to three-hour staff meetings are characterized by an hour to even half of their meeting time, given to praying together.

In Sunday school and small groups church leaders provide regular training regarding prayer. Every year they schedule at least two prayer initiatives—from a week to 40 days—during which the entire congregation is praying on the same theme. Mountain View wants every congregant to be discipled in prayer so that he or she knows how to pray with confidence. The leadership does not leave it to chance!

The most intriguing thing that sets them apart from every other church I know: Anyone who steps into leadership (such as elders, small group leaders, and those in teaching roles) must take a 12-week "prayer usher" class before they are qualified—and then they must receive ongoing prayer training.

A prayer usher (a term coined by Dr. Terry Teykl) is trained in taking individuals and their issues before God's throne of grace. They usher people—through praying for and with them—into God's presence. These trained ushers are the ones who pray with people at the altar, visit the sick, or encourage those in need of ministry support. The church also trains prayer ushers who are not directly involved in other leadership.

Finally, Mountain View demonstrates a regional prayer influence by encouraging Fresno churches to pray together. Now a significant number of churches participate in a yearly prayer calendar that includes ten joint prayer events. Pastors pray together, within geographic clusters, weekly or monthly around the city.

I share this, not to lift up Mountain View or pat the church on its back, but to offer pastors and prayer leaders a picture of what prayer "as natural as breathing" might look like. But it takes prayer, concerted planning, and effort to see prayer become as important as the Word—following the example of the early church: "We . . . will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4).

-Jonathan Graf











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David Butts, Founder, Harvest Prayer Ministries; Chairman, America's National Prayer Committee



"Our first step to helping the poor is on our knees before God in prayer."

Tom Lofton, Missionary, Founder of 12.12, Global Day of Prayer for the Poor & Suffering

NEWS&EVENTS

God's Movement through Prayer



Collegiate Day of Prayer Continues Long Tradition

housands of Christians agreed in prayer for God to pour out a spiritual awakening on America's college campuses on the third annual Collegiate Day of Prayer (CDOP) on February 23, 2012. There is a growing awareness that the hopes, dreams, and future of churches and the nation are being radically influenced by the spiritual atmosphere of colleges and universities. In response to this sobering fact, thousands of believers are praying faithfully for college and university students.



Fathers, mothers, grandparents, students, and church leaders from all 50 states and ten nations set aside February 23 to humble themselves in united intercession for the spiritual needs of this generation. They met in homes, churches, campus-wide prayer rallies, and 24-hour prayer vigils to cry out to God for a mighty collegiate awakening. In some cases, whole communities were united in prayer for the very first time around the needs of their local colleges.

History of Campus Prayer

Prayer on behalf of college students has a rich heritage on campuses in the U.S. The Second Great Awakening (1790-1845) produced some of the most powerful student revivals at universities. By 1815, prayer for colleges was a

regular feature on several New England campuses. By 1823 almost every major denomination and university in America had embraced the practice of a concerted day of prayer for colleges.

Henry C. Fish, in his Handbook of Revivals, describes the results of these prayer efforts. "In the years

1824-1825, revivals were experienced in five different Colleges; in 1826 in six

> Colleges; in 1831 in nineteen In one of the Colleges it is stated that a revival started on the very day of the concert of prayer. In 1835, not less than eighteen revivals were reported by different colleges."

> By the end of the 19th century, these repeated student awakenings had radically transformed the culture and moral climate of many of the

largest universities. For nearly a hundred years the Church in America observed a day of united prayer for God to awaken and revive our colleges.

Renewed Movement

This is the third year the U.S. has observed the Collegiate Day of Prayer since it was reestablished in 2010 (now the last Thursday of each February). This year, the number of participants almost doubled from 2011. There were 1,253 prayer groups in 776 different cities volunteering to pray for 2,540 different colleges.

The Collegiate Day of Prayer's leadership team is an interdenominational group of friends and ministry partners who are working together to call America's churches and colleges to unite and pray for a spiritual awakening.



Jeremy Story of Campus Renewal Ministries explains: "[CDOP] started as a dream among some friends who all lead college-focused ministries with national influence. It has been a grassroots effort spread via word of mouth. It was amazing to see this past year about half of the campuses in America adopted and prayed for specifically. As far as I know, there is no historical precedent in our country for that many campuses being prayed for in a unified effort throughout all the churches in our nation."

For more information or to adopt a campus, go to collegiatedayofprayer.org.



NEWS**&EVENTS**

National Day of Prayer Unites U.S. in Prayer in Tumultuous Times

hroughout the six decades since Congress established an annual U.S. National Day of Prayer (NDOP), untold millions of Americans have come together every year to express humble reliance upon Almighty God. On May 3, 2012, U.S. citizens will once again gather to lift their nation and leaders before the Lord.

In doing so, believers pay tribute to the example set by the nation's founding fathers and by presidents down through the years who have exhorted the American people to seek God's help and deliverance during trying times. As Abraham Lincoln presided over a war-torn land, he called on his fellow citizens to take part in a day of fasting and prayer, making this statement:

... it is the duty of nations as well as of men to own their dependence

upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon, and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history: that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord

Continued Urgent Concerns

John Bornschein, vice chairman of the NDOP Task Force, explains the importance of united prayer: "We continue to face unabated moral decline, economic turmoil, military conflicts, and the everincreasing assaults against our religious liberty. Given these urgent concerns, it's imperative that we remain on our knees in contrite supplication for the United States."



The National Day of Prayer Task Force has chosen *One Nation Under God* as the 2012 theme. The inspiration is found in Psalm 33:12, which offers this important reminder: "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord."

Dr. David Jeremiah, founder of Turning Point and senior pastor of Shadow Mountain Community Church, serves as this year's honorary chairman. Shirley Dobson continues to serve as national chairman, a role she has played since 1991.

To learn more and to find an event near you, visit *nationaldayofprayer.org*.

Prayer Summit Draws Broad Representation

he Christian Reformed Church called its first-ever denominational Prayer Summit for three days in April, with several hundred people participating—including denominational leaders, pastors, prayer leaders, intercessors, and representatives from every congregation. The call was to gather from across the nation to "humble themselves, and pray and seek His face . . ." (2 Chron. 7:14).

The Prayer Summit was hosted by the Korean Council at All Nations Church in Lakeview Terrace, CA. Each day began with "Dawn Prayer" at 6:00 a.m.—a Korean tradition of beginning the day in prayer. During the three days, several sessions included keynote speakers from both the United States and Korea. Each session

incorporated 45–60 minutes of praying. The two evening sessions were designated as "Concerts of Prayer" that were led "Korean style." In addition, ten workshops featured a wide variety of prayer-related subjects led by national prayer leaders. One required feature was that half of each workshop was to be spent in prayer.

Each general session was posted on the website immediately upon completion, and congregations were asked to encourage their members to gather on one of the evenings to "watch and pray." Churches listened to the session and joined in prayer at their own locations. A special prayer guide was also available.

Going Forward

Two new denominational prayer ini-

tiatives were introduced at the Prayer Summit. A Call for Intercessors seeks to mobilize those who will pray an hour a week for the churches and agencies, leaders and members, and mission and ministries of the denomination. A Call to Churches encourages congregations to set aside one day each year to pray for 24 hours for the denomination's ministries. The goal is to have at least one church covering each day of the year.

You can find out more about the prayer strategies of the Christian Reformed Church at *crcna.org/pray*.

DOUG KAMSTRA is the prayer and discipleship team leader for the Christian Reformed Church, and cochair of the Denominational Prayer Leaders Network.

sun

Gaza

AS THE WATERS COVER THE SEA

A Global Cry for the Glory of Christ

ne entire wall in the prayer room in my church is covered with a beautiful map of the world. As you enter the room, you are immediately drawn into the hope of Habakkuk 2:14: "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea." My pastor has chosen this as his life verse and has given himself to pray this promise as the underlying theme of his ministry. God has used my pastor's example to help change my own prayer life.

A couple of years ago, my church hosted a season of prayer, 24 hours a day for ten days, leading up to the Global Day of Prayer. I signed up for several prayer slots, determined to pray with the hope of Habakkuk 2:14. I longed for people throughout the earth to exalt the name of Jesus Christ and welcome His presence and glory.

So I began praying from one side of the map to the other. I stood at the wall, placing my hand (and sometimes just the tip of my finger) on every nation, one by one. I paced myself over the course of several days. I found myself placing my hand on countries with names I did not recognize. Perhaps I had studied their names in a world geography class along the way, but my lack of awareness humbled me. As the Lord was introducing me to the nations, it gave me even greater inspiration to "pray on." He was capturing my heart to pray with hope for people in places with names I couldn't even pronounce.

Truly a Global Prayer Movement

That was the year that the Global Day of Prayer

reported 220 nations of the earth were represented in this global prayer initiative. That meant that in every nation I touched while I prayed, at least one person was joining me in the same prayer!

I discovered a profound prayer principle: "God puts on our hearts the very prayers He intends to answer."

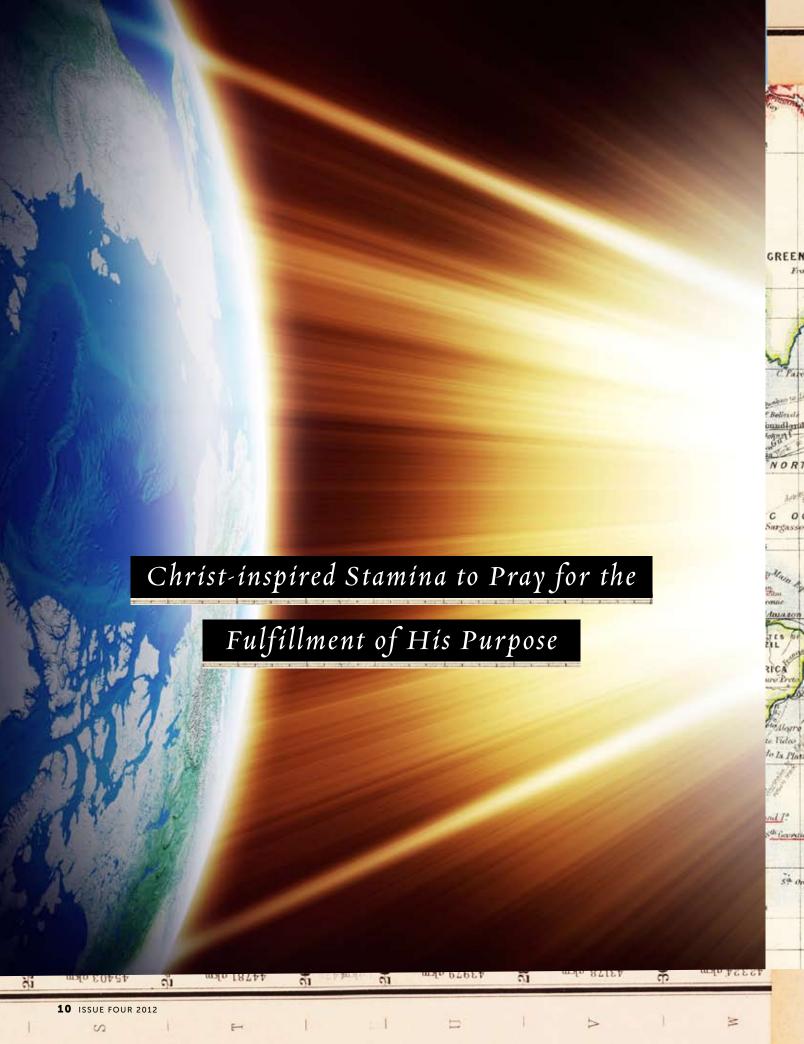
If we are praying with such global unity today, perhaps we are closing in on the day when truly all nations of the earth will be filled with the knowledge of His glory. Steve Hawthorne says it this way in his article: "Why else would there be a global prayer movement unless God is about to act in a global way?"

In this issue you will read of ways God is increasing the urgency of His people in this cry—especially in these last three decades, following the International Prayer Assembly in Seoul, Korea. Many prayer initiatives were launched from that significant gathering. And on May 14, 2012, another historic gathering will occur in Jakarta, Indonesia. Ben Jennings writes about these historic moments and invites the Lord to "do it again."

What is all this leading up to in God's Kingdom and in His timing? Dick Eastman addresses this by sharing his hope for a great spiritual awakening and global evangelistic harvest.

Be encouraged. God is inviting us to join Him in His plan by praying for the fulfillment of His promise to flood the earth with His glory. Let your prayer of faith be, "Come, Lord Jesus."

Carol Madison is editor of Prayer Connect.



WE MAY BE LIVING IN THE DAYS OF THE GREATEST

prayer movement of history. Despite some familiar patterns of prayerlessness in the church, more Christians are praying now, certainly, than at any time in history. More than 200 million believers pray every day for the advancement of world missions. At least 15 million groups around the world pray weekly for missions in their communities, probably many more. Prayer events and gatherings abound in many countries.

In the 1990s, millions assembled to "March for Jesus" in public worship. But those numbers were eclipsed by the even larger, and perhaps still-increasing, Global Day of Prayer gatherings that emerged after the turn of the millennium. Reportedly, on Pentecost Sunday 2011, believers in 220 nations took part in this global prayer meeting.

BY STEVE HAWTHORNE



EARE

NOT MERELY

PRAYING

MORE, WE

ARE PRAYING

DIFFERENTLY.

I've heard prayer leaders from several countries tell the same kind of story: Ten or 12 years ago, it was typical to see a few prayer meetings or seasons of prayer called every year. Some leaders would dutifully try to coordinate these initiatives on the same national or regional calendar.

But in recent years so many prayer events are taking place that it is nearly impossible to keep track of all the meetings, prayer watches, initiatives, fasts, and solemn assemblies in just one country or region. National and global prayer initiatives are now commonplace. Instead of leaders seeing these as competing events, many of them recognize that the explosion of prayer is evidence of a variegated global prayer movement far beyond anyone's control.

Prayer with Greater Substance

The rise of this global movement is remarkable in that we are not merely praying more, we are praying differently. We're praying with greater clarity and proximity for people far from God. Better publishing and instant Internet distribution of information easily alerts us to urgent needs and long-range trends. We are prayerwalking and networking to saturate entire cities with prayer.

Not only is our praying better informed and focused, we are much more organized on local-church and citywide levels. We are praying together as never before. Positive reports of huge stadiumsized, interchurch prayer gatherings confirm the hope and value of gathering in united prayer.

It's no longer an outlandish idea to enlist ordinary, busy believers to pray in unbroken prayer chains 24 hours a day. It's common practice. Not only do churches set aside rooms for intercessory prayer, but now entire buildings are dedicated as houses of prayer that draw praying people from many diverse churches.

What are we to make of this phenomenal flourishing of prayer? To celebrate growing numbers is fine, but far better than the great size of the prayer movement is the great substance of the prayers themselves.

Extraordinary Prayer Inspired by Christ Himself

I'm convinced that the risen Christ is now at work, deepening, uniting, and sustaining our prayer even more. He's instilling in us the joyous conviction that God is on the verge of fulfilling some of His greatest biblical promises to complete His global purpose for the earth.

Why else would there be a global prayer

movement unless God is about to act in a global way?

The upper room prayer movement, as seen in the Gospels and the Book of Acts, gives us the best example of the kind of extraordinary prayer we are engaged in today. A look at this movement shows ways in which Christ may now be inspiring, instructing, and leading the global prayer movement.

With the exception of one short prayer dealing with a leadership issue (Acts 1:12–26, replacing Judas among the apostles), we don't have any record of what the apostles prayed about during those ten days of constant prayer. But we can be fairly sure that what they had been *praying* was related to what they ended up *saying* on the street on Pentecost Day.

First, I think their words on the street show they were praying over **God's promises in the Bible.** The way they quoted Scripture on Pentecost morning (see Acts 2:16-21, 25-28, 30, and 34-35) indicates they had been dwelling on these very texts in the Prophets and Psalms, praying over them for days. The Scriptures they quoted focused on the culmination of God's unfolding purpose for all the generations and nations of the world. In fact, the one prayer we have from the upper room is prefaced this way: "Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled" (Acts 1:16, NASB).

Second, they were praying for God to do great things. The people of various nations who had gathered said the apostles were "speaking of the mighty deeds of God" (Acts 2:11, NASB). The apostles were utterly convinced that God was about to outdo Himself, to bring an astounding finish to all He had ever been pursuing in all the earth.

Beyond Pentecost: An Ongoing Movement

We misunderstand the upper room prayer gathering if we think that the only thing they were praying for was the outpouring of the Spirit. That was certainly part of what they expected, but they saw the giving of the Spirit as one marvelous part of a far greater fulfillment of all that God would ever do on a global scale.

In fact, we see them continue in organized ways. They gathered at the temple at particular hours. They gathered in homes with regularity and discipline (Luke 24:33; Acts 2:46). The upper room prayer movement was anything but a spasmodic series of crisis prayers. But when there was a crisis, they gathered again, praying, as they had before Pentecost, "with one accord" (Acts 4:24–31, NASB).

In their time of prayer, we see the "upper room way" demonstrated: They distinctly prayed from the Scriptures, worshiping God as He is described in Psalm 146:6 (compare Acts 4:24), and then basing their appeal on what Psalm 2:1–2 revealed about God's purpose among all peoples (compare Acts 4:25–28).

They basically asked God to keep on doing the great things He had purposed long before.

Passion that Sustained Their Prayer

The account describes their praying as being "with one mind," or as it is sometimes translated, "with one accord." The Greek word behind this expression is a fascinating word: homothumadon. It simply refers to sharing the same (homo) passion (thumadon has to do with zeal, desire, passion). The English word enthusiasm is built on the same word group as homothumadon.

The word *homothumadon* is common continued on page 15



The 24/7 Prayer Movement Ushers

in Radical Prayer

BY DANA HERNANDEZ

hroughout the history of the church, praying people and sacred spaces dedicated to prayer have been catalysts that changed everything. In Acts 2, the disciples gathered in a room, praying night and day—and the church was established. In the 1700s the Moravians launched a prayer meeting that lasted 100 years and changed missions around the world.

Inspired by these examples of radical prayer, the 24/7 global prayer movement began with a single student-led prayer vigil in England in 1999. It then spread by word of mouth into more than 100 nations, focused on setting aside space for corporate, continuous prayer.

Today God is calling the Church all over the world to radical prayer as never before. During 2011, more than 1,200 groups registered prayer rooms in 65 nations through the website 24-7prayer.us. According to information gathered by Carla Harding, the international prayer leader for 24-7 Prayer, this was the largest number of prayer rooms registered in one year since the start of the movement in 1999.

This milestone also marked the greatest spread of *global locations* for prayer rooms in a year. In some of the 65 nations that have registered prayer rooms, the church does not have freedom. These faithful believers risk their freedom and even their lives to go to their prayer slot in the (quite literal) secret place. God is surely pleased, and the hours of prayers are not in vain.

The prayer rooms continue to pop up in storefronts, university quads, primary schools, on top of bars and coffee shops, and, of course, in churches. The stories that flow out of these spaces include the lost coming to know Christ, physical healings, emotional reconciliation, the feeding of the poor, and hearts truly connecting with God.

Carriers of the Presence of God

In the United States, statewide movements of prayer continue. Believers across Arizona have prayed continually for four years, passing a torch of prayer that has never gone out. Each church takes a week to pray, then delegates travel to the next church to pass along the torch. The result?

- Many stories of the church returning to its first love
- 24/7/365 prayer in Arizona
- Increasing unity in the Body of Christ. Recently, the states of New York and Colorado have purposed to do the same thing. And entire denominations have been sending a "torch" of prayer around the world.

The 24/7 prayer room is just one of the ways the Holy Spirit is drawing people closer to God through communion with Him. In 2 Chronicles 16:9 we read, "The eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him." God looks for devotion, and these prayer rooms are tools to steward our devotion to Him. We are carriers of the presence of God as we seek to follow Isaiah 56:7 by establishing "houses of prayer for all peoples."

The testimonies never get old: college students who felt they were "bad at prayer" can now pray for two hours and crave more; elementary school kids in England have time in their school day to creatively connect with God; unity develops within communities flowing from heartfelt prayers.

We know the Kingdom is coming, and we know God is surely teaching us about His Kingdom as we pray.

DANA HERNANDEZ is the national prayer leader for 24-7 Prayer USA. To learn more and read stories from the prayer movement around the United States and the world, visit 24-7 prayer.us.

in Luke's description of prayer and occasions where people responded to God with one heart and mind and passion (Acts 1:14; 2:46; 4:24; 5:12; 15:25). The word is even used negatively about mob mentality (Acts 7:57; 18:12).

The New International Version presents a rather weak translation for homothumadon, only inserting the English word together. This translation fails to convey that they prayed with an extraordinary measure of common zeal, shared passion, and united mind. It means much more than merely being physically gathered together. It means far more than praying in agreement. It has everything to do with pursuing what God has promised because of an earnest, united desiring and a confident expectation that what God had promised He would certainly do—and soon.

This aligned desiring was not an emotional state or a personality trait. The risen Christ Himself formed this united desire within them. Luke says that during the days following His rising, Jesus emphasized one prevailing teaching: the Kingdom of God. Jesus unfolded the ancient story about God, ultimately bringing about global glory for the King of the Kingdom, "the Christ" Himself (Luke 24:46).

The followers Jesus was addressing on the road to Emmaus were losing heart with every step (Luke 24:25). He did not scold them or pep-talk them. Instead, He gave them a much greater framework in which to see the present moment. He did this by recounting a story much different than the one they thought they were in. The largest story they dared to imagine was that something happy and good would come upon their own people. Their big hope was that someone would come "to redeem Israel" (v. 21).

Jesus told them instead a truly great story, beginning with the books of Moses and somehow drawing from "all the prophets" (v. 27, also later in vv. 46–47). This was not a simplistic triumphal tale with a cheap, happy ending. It involved

drastic suffering for the Messiah and those who followed Him. But astoundingly, the story would culminate in the King of all the nations becoming known throughout all peoples as the One who enables transforming repentance to overcome sin (see vv. 46-47).

This proclamation, bringing Him renown throughout the world, is *part*

of what Jesus meant by saying that the Christ would "enter into His glory" (Luke 24:26, NASB). While the risen Jesus walked with the two men on the road to Emmaus, unfolding this epic story from the Scriptures about His global Kingdom, their "hearts were burning" with passion, confidence, and hope (Luke 24:32).

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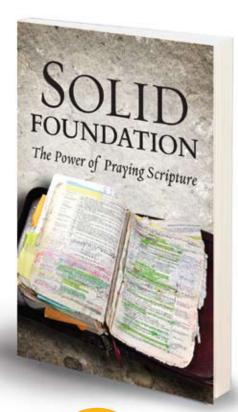
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HE GLOBAL PRAYER MOVEMENT IS SURGING AND CONVERGING.

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We can look for the risen Jesus to do for us what He did for His first followers. Jesus was patient with them, willing to repeat Himself until they finally got it: "This is what I told you while I was still with you" (Luke 24:44). Jesus "opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures" (v. 45).

Will He do less for us if we welcome Him to instruct us? We can expect Him to lift our vision beyond our own concerns and countries. He won't allow us to get stuck in cycles of "selfism," in which we seek for God to take us back to the good old days. In Acts 1:6, the apostles asked,

"Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" Jesus pushed them past their self-absorbed despair, instilling a bold confidence that God was going to exalt Jesus as King (Acts 2:24-36). That zealous certainty that God was doing great things for His Kingdom was like a fire ablaze in their hearts.

May God find our hearts flammable today so that the movements of prayer will increase with steady, jealous passion—the homothumadon factor—that we may pray "with one accord" as they did in the upper room.

We can expect the risen Christ to temper our souls with strength to pray as those who wait—to "wait for what the Father [has] promised" (Acts 1:4, NASB).

Since they kept praying daily with that same passion after Pentecost (Acts 2:46; 4:24), they must have expected God to do even more than He had at Pentecost.

In our day, many global prayer movements are finding that their prayers are not just surging, they're converging—as we pray for His Kingdom to come and His glory to be great. May our Lord impart the passionate stamina of the upper room, so that we may resolutely focus on what He will accomplish to fulfill all of His purposes in every people and place.

In this global purpose, He has given us much to do. But He is giving us even more to pray. EC



STEVE HAWTHORNE is the director of WayMakers in Austin, TX. He is the coauthor of Prayerwalking and the author of the Seek God for the City prayer guides.



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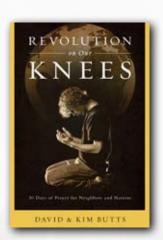
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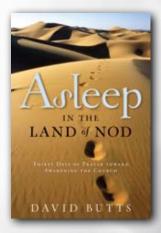
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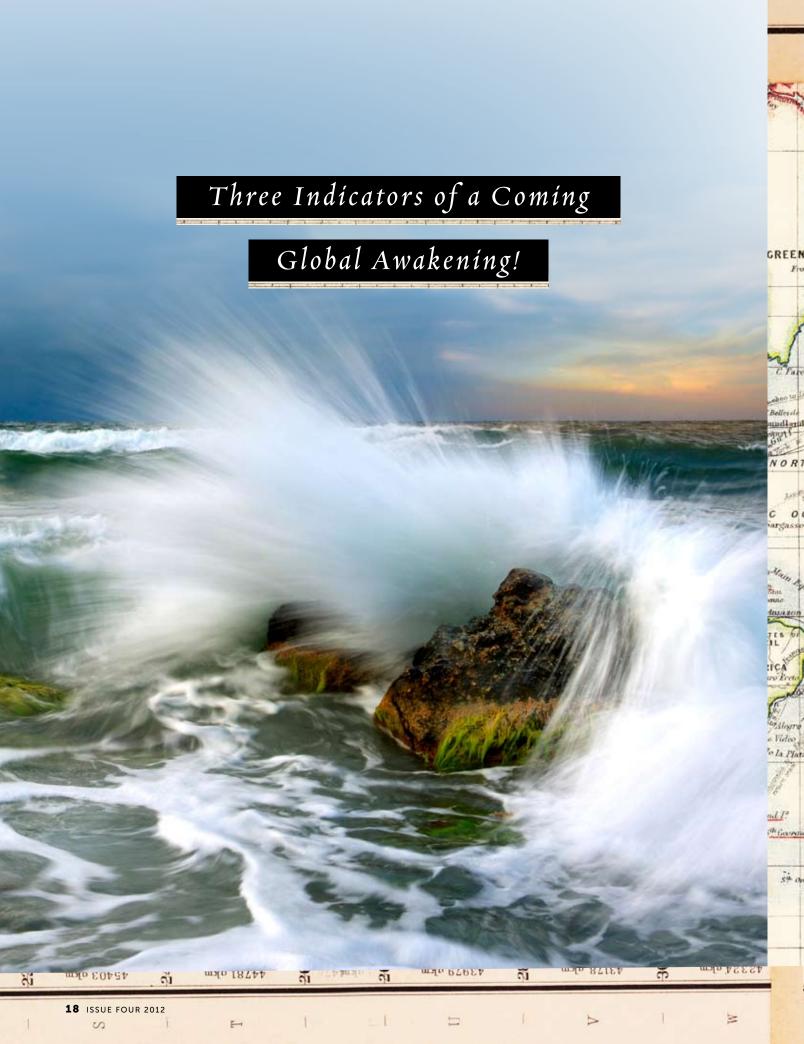
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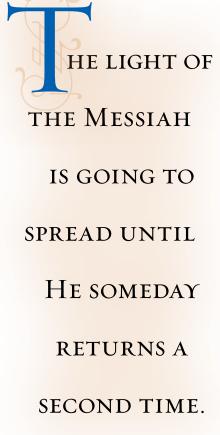


SEVERAL DECADES AGO, A SEMINARY PROFESSOR CHALLENGED me to cultivate the healthy habit of reading through my Bible, from Genesis through Revelation, annually. That habit has touched me every day since. But I've learned in this journey that no matter how many times you read through Scripture, you can still miss things.

One day, as I came again to one of the most inspiring chapters in Isaiah, I found something I had previously missed. Isaiah is a prophetic book recorded about 700 years before the birth of Christ. The Holy Spirit, speaking through Isaiah, not only describes the coming of the Messiah, but also tells us that the light of the Messiah is going to spread until He someday returns a second time. Chapter 60 begins with these words:

Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you and his glory

BY DICK EASTMAN





appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. . . . Then you will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy; the wealth on the seas will be brought to you, to you the riches of the nations will come (vv. 1-3, 5).

I had read this passage many times, usually on the same day each year. These opening words of the chapter blessed me again, but I felt as if God had something else to reveal to me that day. I saw something I had not noticed in previous readings. As I came to the final verse of the chapter, verse 22, I felt as though I were hearing directly from God in His throne room, as if He were shouting it into my spirit: "The least of you will become a thousand, the smallest a mighty nation. I am the LORD; in its time I will do this swiftly."

After a slight pause I heard the voice of the Lord add, "It's time!"

In the next few days, I saw three global indicators of a rapidly accelerating spiritual awakening. I firmly believe this is happening because of the prayer movements expanding exponentially throughout the world.

My desire is that seeing these indicators will plant seeds of excitement, anticipation, and hope within your spirit so you will say on any given day, "I can't afford not to pray."

These indicators include the following:

I . Accelerated Harvest Advances

At no point in history has the church seen a harvest that can begin to compare with what has been taking place in recent days. The disciples asked Jesus about the end of the age: "When will these things [plural] happen? And what will be the sign [singular] that they are about to take place?" (Luke 21:7, brackets mine).

Jesus then proceeded to list many things. He spoke of wars and rumors of wars, famines, and earthquakes, but He

Powerful Film Needs Prayer

he "JESUS" film is one of the most powerful evangelistic tools ever developed. Produced more than 30 years ago by Campus Crusade for Christ (now Cru) and based entirely on the Book of Luke, this timeless film has made an unprecedented impact around the world. It has been translated into more than 1,200 languages and shown in more than 230 countries.

It is estimated that every eight seconds, someone in the world makes a decision to follow Jesus Christ after viewing the film. To put that in perspective, that is 10,800 people per day, 324,000 per month, and more than 3.8 million per year. That's like the entire population of Pittsburgh, PA, coming to Christ every 28.25 days.

More than 200 million people have come to faith in Christ through the "JESUS" film, and more than one million churches have been planted through the film's influence. The film has yet to be translated into some 500 languages of more than 100,000 speakers. Many of those languages and people groups are in or near the 10/40 window. You can join the prayer team for this project by emailing pray4@jesusfilm.org.

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made it clear that "the end is not yet." He was saying that these things were going to happen, but they wouldn't spell the very end. Then, in a parallel passage in Matthew's Gospel, He gave what I believe is the real sign, the real indicator: "This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come" (Matt. 24:14).

Prayer and intercession play a significant part in bringing about the greatest harvest in the history of the Church, which I believe has already begun because of the prayer taking place.

Missiologists, who research what is happening in missions among various people groups, estimated in 1985 that about 75,000 people were coming to Jesus daily. If heaven rejoices when one repents (Luke 15:7), how exciting this is! By 1998 that number was thought to have climbed to as many as 178,000 a day. And in the year 2000 some suggested the total reached more than 200,000 a day.

Recent estimates are even more staggering. For example, some researchers suggested that in 2000 some 25,000 Chinese were coming to Christ daily. At a conference of mission strategists in 2006, one researcher suggested the number was closer to 50,000 a day. People we know on the field in China indicate that number could well have doubled by now. Although statistics may be hard to come by in regions like China, obviously there is a dramatic acceleration of the harvest—unlike anything at any time in history.

The ministry I lead, Every Home for Christ (EHC), like many global mission ministries, can cite equally amazing evidence of this acceleration indicator. In the year 2000 EHC followed up approximately 750,000 decisions for Christ and other positive responses to our home-to-home campaigns in about 100 nations. We were encouraged by those numbers but had little idea they would grow exponentially in the subsequent decade.

In 2011 our global force of 4,000 supported workers (with an added

30,000 monthly volunteers) followed up more than 13 million people with Bible courses for new believers.

Our church planting results have seen the same dramatic increases. In villages where there are no churches to follow up large numbers of people coming to Christ, our evangelism teams start Christ Groups (New Testament-type house churches). In the year 2000, some 1,500 Christ Groups were established. That's about four each day. Only 12 years later, that number reached 25,000—an average of 68 a day.

How can we explain this? The next indicator, in my opinion, holds the answer.

2 . Accelerated Strategic

Clearly an accelerated number of strategic prayer movements among multiple organizations across the globe are training and mobilizing people to pray. One prayer focus that has united many in this task is known as "Praying Through the Window." This ministry focuses on a geographical section of the world called the 10/40 Window, where an estimated 97 percent of the world's least evangelized people live. The "window" covers the rectangular area from 10 degrees to 40 degrees north of the equator and from North Africa all the way across China.

In October 1993, a month of strategic prayer was set aside for the 10/40 Window. Hundreds of ministries and churches participated. Reports documented that during that emphasis at least 21 million Christians were praying globally for this region of the world. Additionally, some 249 prayer teams traveled into the 62 countries of the region during that month to do on-site praying.

Two years after that first October focus, I spoke to one of EHC's overseas coordinators in the Middle East about the millions of people praying for the 10/40 Window, where he served. Prayer teams had visited his area during that month. I asked, "Did you notice any difference

continued on page 23

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Publisher *Prayer Connect*Author of *The Power*of *Personal Prayer* and *Praying*Like Paul.

President of Church Prayer Leaders Network





aging through the morning paper or scanning the news online, you would never know an unprecedented movement of God is underway in the earth. Secular media treats our world as "bad news as usual"—terrorist attacks, wars, threats of war, poverty, crime, natural disasters. Doom and gloom seem to be the order of the day.

Look behind the headlines, however, and you will see a harvest of souls unequaled in the history of mankind. And the lion's share is taking place in what is known as the 10/40 Window. Luis Bush coined this term at the Lausanne II Conference in Manila in 1989. Recognizing the world's desperate spiritual needs, Bush invited millions of believers around the globe to pray for a work of God in the 10/40 Window. By 1993, some 21 million people were praying faithfully for this region of the world.

The window extends from West Africa to East Asia, from 10 degrees south to 40 degrees north of the equator. Nearly four billion people live there, including 90 percent of the world's poorest of the poor. An estimated 1.6 billion of these people have never had the chance to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. However, the seat of every major non-Christian religion—Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Animism, Atheism, and Sikhism—is headquartered in the 10/40 Window.

Breakthroughs in the Window

Since Luis Bush's call to prayer, the Lord has been at work, bringing tremendous harvests in places commonly associated with spiritual darkness, oppression, and barrenness. Some major results of this focused prayer include the following:

- The Middle East and North Africa. Throughout this area, Muslims are accepting Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord in numbers dwarfing that of all past centuries combined. "Because of prayer for the 10/40 Window, 'The Passion of the Christ' movie took the Muslim world by storm," a Christian leader reported. "More Arab Muslims have been able to clearly hear and see the gospel in their own language than we would be able to reach in a lifetime of ministry in the Middle East."
- China. Untold thousands are putting their faith

in Christ each day. Some estimate the number of believers to be more than 100 million.

PHILIP

andang

- Mongolia. According to Operation World, there may have been only four Christians in Mongolia in 1989. Today, there are more than 40,000 believers in hundreds of churches and groups, meeting in most parts of the country.
- India. Key Christian leaders attribute prayer for the 10/40 window as one of the major catalysts to the conversion of hundreds of thousands of Indian Dalits (untouchables) and backward castes. In 2002, key leaders also attributed the planting of thousands of churches in India to the effectiveness of the prayer movement.
- Algeria. One Algerian Christian stated, "The Lord has opened before us a golden ministry door in Algeria. I remember taking a two-hour trip throughout the region and every single village we passed through had a Christian congregation. Algeria is truly experiencing a great [awakening]. Their time is now!"
- Governments. Christian political leaders are now heads of government in several 10/40 Window nations.
- Wide-open doors. There are 26 nations in the 10/40 Window now considered "gospel ready." This means they are open to Christians being involved in their nations in such ways as humanitarian aid, education, medical assistance, and political input. Some are open to the gospel being preached.

The Window International Network (WIN) is known for launching and facilitating the annual *Praying Through the Window* prayer initiatives that have mobilized millions of praying believers globally for the past 11 years. WIN cofounder and president Beverly Pegues makes this plea for ongoing prayer: "Prayer moves the hand of God. Once there is sustained, strategic, and informed prayer in the 10/40 Window, we will witness massive numbers of unreached people coming to Christ. Pray that it will happen in our generation."

These statistics are compiled by the Window International Network, a nonprofit organization founded in 1999 to continue the international outreach segment of the Christian Information Network. Their vision is to see sustained, strategic, and informed prayer transforming unreached people for Christ in the 10/40 Window (win1040.com).

from when you first went there until after the praying of those millions?"

The young missionary and his wife had served in a Muslim-dominated nation for a number of years. He said, "I can't speak for others, but I can certainly tell you our story. In the two years leading up to that month of prayer, my wife and I went with literature from home to home. We could not go in a systematic way, door-to-door, where we would be noticeable (since it was not a gospelfriendly country). But we would go to a home here and there throughout the town, and keep a record, and come back a few months later and go to other homes . . . In two years not one non-Christian family invited us in. They slammed the door, they spit at us, and they threatened us. Not even one person let us come in.

"But then came that month of prayer," he said, "and in the last two years since that month of prayer, we have been invited into the homes of—and led to Jesus Christ—more than 2,000 Muslims who lived in those same villages!"

3. Accelerated Signs and Wonders

Acts 2:43 says of the early Church: "Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles."

I carry in my Bible a three-fold statement by A. W. Tozer: "Anything God has ever done at any time He can do now. Anything God has ever done anywhere He can do here. Anything God has ever done for anybody He can do for you." We should not be surprised that God is moving supernaturally in these days as the result of all the prayer rising globally.

Myanmar, the former country of Burma, is a country that needs much prayer. A case study presented to me tells the story of a monk in one of the high mountain monasteries. He was sitting in front of the statue of Buddha, chanting with his eyes closed. Suddenly he heard an audible voice. He was positive that it was the Buddha speaking to

him. The voice said, "Go find Jesus."

He had never heard the name, *Jesus*, but because he thought the Buddha had said, "Go find Jesus," he jumped to his feet and headed for the door. The head of the monastery said, "Wait! Where are you going?"

The monk turned to him and said, "The Buddha told me to go find Jesus."

The head of the monastery replied, "Who's Jesus?"

"I don't know," the young monk said, "but the Buddha said to find Him."

The monk headed down the mountain, and, when he came to the first town, he saw a huge poster that said in the Burmese language, Come See JESUS. With excitement the monk thought, *He's here in town!*

It was the night an evangelistic team was showing the "JESUS" film in a local hall. The monk went to that meeting that same night and saw the story of Jesus for the first time. By the end of that first encounter, he gave his heart to Jesus! That monk, of course, quickly realized that it was not the Buddha that told him to go find Jesus. It was the Holy Spirit working. The last I heard, the monk had become an evangelist.

Praying at Jesus' Feet

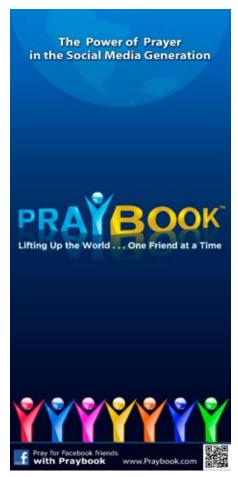
I am convinced that God is working as a result of people praying. He wants you to pray for His will to be done. God is bringing in an incredible harvest around the world, and I believe He wants to do the same in the U.S.

As we keep seeking God, the heavens are going to open and we are going to see great things happening. There is no challenge or problem too great. God never lacks a solution. The real school of prayer is at Jesus' feet. May we concentrate on what He wants us to do!



of Every Home for Christ, is a popular author and speaker. His books include *Beyond Imagination: A Simple Plan to Save the World*, and his newest

book, *The Purple Pig and Other Miracles*. You can learn more at *ehc.org*.





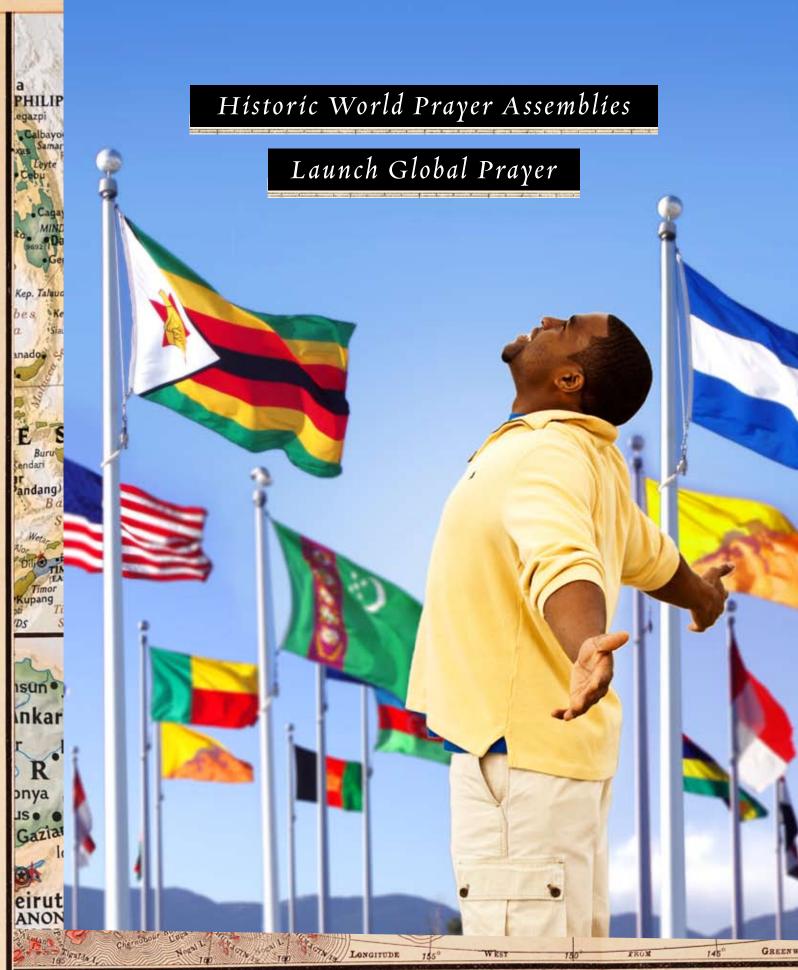
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NEARLY 30 YEARS AGO, AN UNPRECEDENTED PRAYER gathering in Seoul, Korea, marked the beginning of a new era in global prayer. In 1984, leaders from 71 nations came together for an International Prayer Assembly for World Evangelization (IPAWE).

Sponsored by the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization and the World Evangelical Fellowship, the Prayer Assembly is remembered for the global spiritual tide that burst forth and continues today beyond human expectations. David Butts, chairman of America's National Prayer Committee, recently commented, "Many people believe the IPAWE helped launch the modern prayer movement worldwide."

South Korea was selected for the Assembly in order to experience the passion for prayer that had gripped that country since the 1950 North Korean invasion. This proved to be a wise location. God used the passionate prayer of South Korean believers to inspire this new world movement of prayer.

BY BEN A. JENNINGS





SPIRITUAL

TIDE BURST

FORTH

FROM THIS

GATHERING.

In a demonstration of the commitment to launch a global prayer movement, a map of China was given to conferees, and every province of China was prayed for. In addition, 100,000 people participated in a closing prayer rally in Dook Seom Park.

Near the end of the Assembly, a select committee was convened to draft a worldwide call to prayer for the completion of the Great Commission of Jesus Christ. Chaired by the late Sherman Williams, the call was adopted by the Assembly. Vonette Bright (Campus Crusade for Christ) joined me in compiling material from that Assembly into a book, titled Un*leashing the Power of Prayer*, published by Moody Press in 1989 (now out of print).

A dedicated team of leaders navigated uncharted waters in the first Prayer Assembly. Many of them continue as prayer leaders today. Outstanding contributions were made by J. Edwin Orr, Harold Lindsell, Joy Dawson, Richard Lovelace,

Dick Eastman, Evelyn Christenson, and many other presenters including Korea's Dr. Joon Gon Kim, host chairman; China's Thomas Wang, program chairman; Vonette Bright, C. Peter Wagner, and Leighton Ford.

Launching International Activities

Many of the prayer initiatives around the world since the IPWEA in 1984, can be traced back to that explosive Assembly. Some of the startling developments in-

- Annual city days of prayer and national days of prayer, including the U.S. NDOP
- Numerous 30- and 40-day prayer initiatives
- · Large regional prayer chains, networks, and assemblies
- Proliferating intercessory prayer organizations
- Increasing numbers of schools and "houses" of prayer
- Prayer leadership training and on-site prayer teams
- Appointments of prayer coordinators and correspondents
- Prayer seminars, books, and curricula
- College, high school, and children's prayer movements
- On-site prayer teams for strategic events
- Prayer curricula for Christian colleges and seminaries.

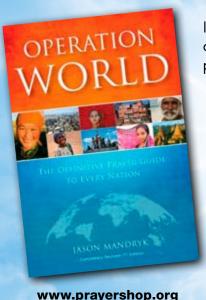
God has been using these years of prayer! Church planting, national evangelistic festivals, and even persecution are bringing in unprecedented harvests of souls. Global Media Outreach alone is recording more than a million decisions a month for Christ. The full scope of the 1984 Call to Prayer, however, still awaits fulfillment. Still lacking are such factors as these:

• Adoptive prayer coverage for all unreached people groups

continued on page 29

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THE HISTORY OF A MOVEMENT

An Interview with Vonette Bright, first chairperson of America's National Day of Prayer

BY JOHN BORNSCHEIN

hile many of us in the United States support and participate in the National Day of Prayer each year, few may realize how it began. And probably fewer realize how influential gatherings like the International

Prayer Assembly were to the start of this prayer movement. A chronicle of the growth of prayer in the U.S. can perhaps best be told by Vonette Bright, cofounder and first chairperson of the National Day of Prayer.

Bright was also the chairperson for the 1984 International Prayer Assembly for World Evangelization (IPAWE) in Seoul, Korea—and out of this Assembly came a series of prayer milestones that touched the world. During this season of explosive global prayer momentum, Bright was instrumental in securing official recognition of the National Day of Prayer in the U.S. in 1988.

Her unshakeable passion to preserve prayer in the United States and around the world through unabated vigor and commitment has led millions to unite in prayer every year. I recently had the privilege of interviewing this strategic prayer leader.

Q: What significant events led to your heart's relentless pursuit for prayer?

Bright: My enthusiasm for prayer and related events began shortly after graduating college and before marrying my husband, Bill Bright, cofounder of Campus Crusade for Christ International [now Cru]. At that time, during the early '60s, society was unraveling as the feminist movement spread through our nation. Women's liberation was everywhere in the media and in the public consciousness. Out of that distortion, as well as the removal of prayer from public schools, grew my concern for the moral and spiritual values of our families.

Q: What happened next on the road to the National Day of Prayer?

Bright: I received a phone call from a dear friend, Millie Dienert—affectionately [called] the first lady of prayer by Dr. Billy Graham—asking me to chair a women's luncheon at the American Congress on Evangelism in Minneapolis, MN, sponsored by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. After the meeting, I asked four godly women to join me in an effort to organize Christian women to action through strategic prayer in one heart and mind. But how?

The answer became clear while reading Acts 4, the biblical account of the disciples Peter and John being released from prison and asking God's mighty power to enable them in their efforts to proclaim the gospel. "The Great Commission Prayer Crusade" was formed.

Q: And, were you amazed at the effect of this humble beginning?

Bright: Yes! The movement launched in 1972 at a prayer rally in the Los Angeles Sports Arena. More than 7,000 people came simply through recruiting volunteers—mainly in churches, neighborhoods, and during prayer workshops. Pastors and Christian leaders from around the nation were thrilled. Prayer conferences flourished in cities—with more encouraging outcomes.

Q: Then, I understand there was another pivotal moment?

Bright: The same year a group that would eventually become America's National Prayer Committee [NPC] was formed to provide leadership to the growing prayer movement across the United States, a critical step toward the establishment of the National Day of Prayer. The executive group, including myself, began meeting at the newly purchased residence of the Christian Embassy in Washington, D.C. The NPC now serves as the governing board for the National Day of Prayer Task Force.

Q: Soon to follow was a prayer mobilization breakthrough on an international level?

Bright: I was asked to be the chairperson for the 1984 precedent-setting International Prayer Assembly for World Evangelization in Seoul, South Korea. Nearly 3,000 prayer and mission leaders gathered for the purpose of generating a vision for prayer for the completion of the Great Commission among churches throughout the Body of Christ. Since then, concerts of prayer have increased, prayerwalks have multiplied, prayer summits for pastors have occurred, and recognition has been given to prayer in local churches.

Q: And finally, through your personal efforts and influence in Washington, D.C. came recognition to the National Day of Prayer, too?

Bright: In 1988, the originally inspired words of President Dwight D. Eisenhower became reality: "Today I think prayer is just simply a necessity because by prayer I believe we mean an effort to get in touch with the Infinite."

Bill S. 1378 passed unanimously in the Senate, and a House Committee voted for the bill *one day prior to the 1988 National Day of Prayer*, followed by full support in the House of Representatives. A few days later President Ronald Reagan's action on Mother's Day fulfilled the request when he signed into law [the bill] establishing the first Thursday in May as the National Day of Prayer.

JOHN BORNSCHEIN is the vice-chairman for the National Day of Prayer Task Force (*nationaldayofprayer.org*).

Army of Online Intercessors

BY COLIN C. MILLAR

recently facilitated a prayer retreat with our Global Media Outreach (GMO) Team in Indianapolis. While there, I had the joy of staying with a family with three young boys (pictured at right). As we were enjoying breakfast together, the Holy Spirit prompted me to ask one of the boys: "Has God been putting any country especially on your heart this week?"

He thought and then enthusiastically said: "England!"

His parents were surprised. They expected him to answer China because they had been praying as a family for that nation. They didn't realize their son even knew that England existed as a country.

That night we prayed with the boys before they went to bed. Later we heard the boys still talking and were amazed at what we heard: "Who shall we pray for next, Japan?" they asked each other. And then we heard them say: "Dear Lord, please will you draw the people in Japan close to You so that they will be saved, amen."

They also prayed for their mom, dad, me, and for South Africa (my birth place) and for England (my parents' birth place). My heart melted and tears rolled down my cheeks as I listened to these precious brothers pray with such faith and simplicity.

The next morning, I received an email from a seeker living in England who told me he was from South Africa! God spoke to me in such a personal way through these children. He assured me, "This is what I will do when you get My children to pray."

Rising Tsunami of Prayer

Global Media Outreach is about advancing the Kingdom of God through the Internet. We search for hurting people all over the world through various Internet sites and introduce them to Jesus Christ. As the chief prayer officer for GMO, I am a part of an army of "Online Missionaries" who pray for seekers, help them begin a discipleship process, or encourage them with scriptural answers.



Serving as a "Internet Kingdom connecting point," GMO has websites that minister to thousands of people every day, 24/7. In 2011, GMO welcomed more than 156 million visitors to its websites and recorded more than 19 million decisions to follow Christ. Online missionaries are trained to respond to people requesting follow-up.

You can also watch real-time salvation decisions throughout the nations of the earth by going to *greatcommission2020.com*. On a map of the world, icons pop up almost continuously; the blue icons are visitors to our sites and the yellow ones are indicated decisions for Christ.

I see a swelling global tsunami of prayer rising in and for the nations of the world. In January I was with the leadership team of The World Prayer Assembly (*wpa2012.org*) in Jakarta. God has moved powerfully across Indonesia, establishing more than 1,100 prayer networks with five million intercessors, even though this is the largest Muslim nation in the world.

I personally invite you to engage your heart in intercession either by visiting our Prayer Wall (http://pryr.co/now) or by praying for those entering our greatcommission2020.com website. You can also become an online missionary at globalmedia-outreach.com. Click on "Get Involved" and mention Prayer Connect as your OM finding point.

COLIN C. MILLAR is the chief prayer officer for Global Media Outreach.

continued from page 26

- A centering of Kingdom praying in churches of the world
- Prayer leadership training for international prayer coordinators.

A New World Prayer Assembly

And now, in the providence of God, a number of international Christian organizations are calling Christian leaders to Jakarta, Indonesia, for a new World Prayer Assembly, May 14-18, 2012. Conferees will evaluate the gains of the prayer movement since 1984 but will also look toward launching even more prayer toward the fulfillment of Habakkuk 2:14: "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea."

God is up to something momentous! What greater momentum will He grant through national praying churches, like those of Indonesia, that are paying an enormous price today for their commitment to the Great Commission? In addition, this Prayer Assembly is anticipating the support of 20,000 children praying for the fulfillment of Christ's commands.

The global contribution of the IPAWE revealed vast possibilities in united prayer for world evangelization. Two contributions of the coming World Prayer Assembly may well be:

- 1. A wider prayer penetration into all human cultures
- 2. A stronger integration of prayer into all churches in the Body of Christ.

Both Assemblies, we believe, will have played a major role in "looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God" (2 Peter 3:12, NKJV). Now, may the global Body of Christ unite in the cry of the Apostle John, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20, NKJV).



BEN JENNINGS serves with Cru and its Great Commission Global Prayer Movement. He helped coordinate the 1984 International Prayer Assembly for World Evangelization.

Who Monitors Global Prayer?

his issue speaks to the growing prayer movement around the globe. But the question remains, who keeps tabs on what is happening? The answer: The International Prayer Council (IPC).

The mission and vision of the IPC states: "Compelled by God to seek Christ's glory worldwide for the blessing, healing, and transforming of the nations, the International Prayer Council exists as a coalition of prayer networkers and mobilizers working together to motivate, develop, and equip national movements and local churches to fill all nations with prayer for the fulfillment of the Great Commandment and the completion of the Great Commission."

While loosely in the works in the 1990s, the IPC was officially launched shortly after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Prayer leaders from around the world decided to form a new organization that would connect prayer networks and ministries worldwide to focus prayer on common global concerns.

Its website, *ipcprayer.org* states its mission:

- Celebrate the wonders of God together, learning from one another what the Lord is teaching the Body of Christ in the realm of prayer ministry.
- Build relationships between prayer leaders from every region in order to expand the global prayer network and motivate national prayer movements.
- Plan jointly a second World Prayer Assembly that will bring prayer leaders together (being held in Jakarta, Indonesia, May 14-18, 2012).
- Strengthen regional prayer connections through consultations and
- Develop a mechanism for continued relationships and sharing of strategic prayer information and resources globally and regionally.
- Support the Global Day of Prayer every year on Pentecost Sunday and help to connect nations by satellite, Internet, and other means to enable believers in every nation to pray together for the transformation of our world.
- Spawn new international networks, where none exist, focusing on particular global issues (e.g. HIV/AIDS pandemic, terrorism, the poor and the needy and natural disasters).

Though chaired by John Robb, an American, the IPC's leadership is extremely international, made up of major prayer ministry leaders from around the world. This year's World Prayer Assembly in Jakarta, Indonesia, is an example of international leadership, as it has been largely put together by Indonesian and Korean prayer leaders.

For those who have a heart for prayer and the world, the IPC has an excellent electronic monthly newsletter IPC Connections, loaded with news of God's movement around the world as a result of prayer, as well as prayer alerts and prayer initiatives. You can sign up at ipcprayer.org.

The IPC is also a co-sponsor of *Prayer Connect* magazine.

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AS THE WATERS COVER THE SEA

ABible Study By Sandra Higley

Note: This Bible study is formatted for small group open discussion. If you use this study by yourself, we suggest that you journal your answers to the discussion questions. Also, biblegateway.com is an excellent resource for looking up passages in translations you may not have at home.

2000

ne of the most fascinating phenomena to hit the Internet in the last decade has been the introduction of flash mobs. What first appears as a spontaneous action by several people in a public place is actually a carefully orchestrated moment meant to entertain the unsuspecting crowd. You may enjoy an Internet search of some of the most noteworthy ones, including *The Sound of Music* Flash Mob in Antwerp, Belgium, and the Frozen Flash Mob in Grand Central Station, New York.

These intriguing—although perhaps pointless—extravaganzas usually cause people to smile or scratch their heads. They may also leave people wishing they could be part of something like that, even if only as an observer who happens to be in the right place at the right time.

Why? What pushes scores of people to spend hours coordinating, practicing, and performing this type of a spectacle with millions more who tune in to watch it all unfold? Perhaps it stems from a yearning to be part of something bigger than ourselves—a big-picture event that moves people out of their small story into a collective and purposeful "belonging."

Discussion Questions

Read Ecclesiastes 3:11, Ephesians 2:10, and Luke 13:29.

Based on these verses, where do you think an unfulfilled longing to participate in something of epic proportions comes from?

PHIL

Gaz

Dick Eastman of Every Home for Christ sees global evidence of rapidly accelerating spiritual awakening. His organization alone experienced an increase from 750,000 responses to the gospel in the year 2000, to 13 million in 2011. His desire is that indicators like this will plant seeds of excitement, anticipation, and hope so that on any given day you will say, "I can't afford *not* to pray." What does this evidence of increased response to the gospel do to *your* spirit?

What did Jesus say will happen when global saturation of the gospel takes place (Matt. 24:14)?

Based on 2 Peter 3:12 (NKJV), do you think it is possible for you to personally play a major role in that event? What might that role look like?

Steve Hawthorne talks about praying with homothumadon (responding to God with one heart and mind and passion), as in Acts 4:24-31 (NASB), rather than praying a "spasmodic series of crisis prayers." Would you say that your prayer experiences with other believers are more homothumadon or crisis in nature? Explain.

Ben Jennings described an unprecedented prayer gathering in Seoul, Korea, in 1984 that marked the beginning of a new era in global prayer. On May 14–18, 2012, Christian leaders will gather in Jakarta, Indonesia, for a new World Prayer Assembly. How might this event launch even more prayer toward the fulfillment of Habakkuk 2:14?

Consider: If God is orchestrating and inviting you to join a global prayer "flash mob," how will you respond?

ACTION STEPS

Let your responses to this study initiate a quiet time with God. Steve Hawthorne named some things we can expect Jesus to do for us. Let's turn them into prayer points. Ask God to:

- Lift our vision beyond our own concerns and countries.
- Keep us from getting stuck in cycles of "self-ism."
- Push us past our self-absorbed despair.
- Instill in us a bold confidence that He is going to exalt Jesus as King!
- Set our hearts ablaze with the zealous certainty that He is doing great things and wants us to participate!

SANDRA HIGLEY has authored numerous prayer guides and articles on prayer. Her book, A Year of Prayer Events for Your Church, is available at prayershop.org.



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Prayer that Doesn't Ask for Anything

Most days my life is pure chaos. Running a small business in this topsy-turvy economy and caring for my aging parents has me, in essence, balancing two 24/7 jobs in one block of 24/7 hours. In the midst of chaos, I suppose it's natural that I have only enough emotional and physical energy to be concerned about the most basic essentials.

Conversation, what there is of it, is pragmatic—and brief. Get to the point, and get on with it. No niceties. No chit-chat. No time to just "be" with anyone else.

Even with God.

Stop-the-Chatter Experiment

Then, about a year ago, I had the great opportunity to step out of the chaos for ten whole days, basking in the February breezes of the garden isle, Kauaiescaping a Chicago blizzard by mere hours.

I quickly discovered that funny things happen when you slow down abruptly. First, you don't know what to do with yourself. Second, your heart finally can adjust its tuner to God's frequency. In hearing Him, I came face to face with the reminder of all I'd



CHATTER

been missing in relationship with Him in all those months that I'd allowed my chatter at Him to become a sort of daily briefing.

It was time for me to revisit a key life question:
Why do I pray? Why do I ask, day after day, for a personal audience with God? Is it so our conversation—
His and mine—can be all about what I want, what I need, or what I think ought to be going on in this big, old world? Is it, at the end of the day, all about me?

I can't imagine sustaining any personal relationship with a peer on that basis. Even a loving parent, sibling, or spouse eventually will tire of hearing every sentence begin and end with *I* or *me*. Even I tire of hearing myself yammering on about all my complaints.

What would happen, I wondered, if I took myself out of the equation for a while? Surely God had heard enough of my complaints to last a good, long time.

So, what would happen if I did a prayer experiment during which I didn't ask for anything at all? What if I allowed my conversation with God to be all about what He's doing, what He values, what He plans to accomplish in this big, old world?

In short, what would happen if my prayer life became all about Him?

Realizing Something's Missing

While I am truly grateful that God doesn't tire of me (even when I'm at my most self-centered worst), I suspect He does experience something akin to disappointment when, in my conversations with Him, I spend an inordinate amount of time all wrapped up in *me*. This was my first realization from this prayer-is-about-Him experiment.

My Bible reading that week (sitting on the lanai of my friend's condo, enjoying the brilliant sunrise over the Pacific) took me to the opening chapters of Revelation, to Christ's messages to the churches. It occurred to me—as I prayed and read and prayed some more—that I was hearing in these words what was on His heart for our relationship.

When I reached chapter 3, the words "I stand at the door and knock" (v. 20), took on new meaning. In all my rushing, all my fretting, all my daily duties, there my faithful Master stands, knocking. He's live and in person, waiting for our moments together.

But what do I do most days? Instead of opening the

door and inviting Him in, I shoot back a cryptic text message: *Need help. No time 2 talk. Do something about this mess, would U?*

Something was missing in my prayer life: *Him.* If only I'd let Him in. What a difference it would make to our conversation and to my circumstances. In holding a true, face-to-face conversation with my Lord, I'd be refreshed, redirected, reenergized. But in holding Him a door's width away, I was losing all those beautiful benefits and allowing chaos to continue reigning in my world.

Leaning into Him

Something else I observed in my upside-down (or was it right-side-up?) prayer times on Kauai was the absolute trust-worthiness of Christ. There I was, 4,300 miles away from home, while someone else (Mom) was administering Dad's meds, giving his shots, monitoring his daily test numbers, schlepping him off to doctor's appointments. I couldn't control anything from that distance. Of course I was available by phone or email, but I wasn't there with them.

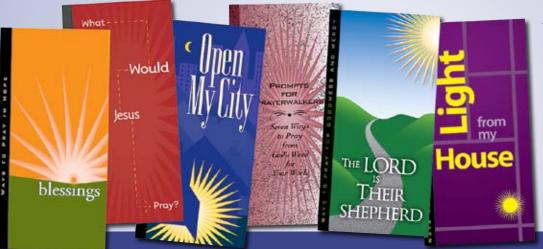
God was. He knew everything going on. Everything.

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How could I be sure? In His messages to the churches in Revelation 2, Christ pinpointed with divine accuracy all the sources of distress: "I know your afflictions" (v. 9). All the needs for correction: "Repent and do the things you did at first" (v. 5). All the needs for even a kernel of reassurance: "I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance" (v. 19).

I took this as a personal message from the Lord's heart to mine: He knows. All of it. He offers me the privilege of carrying my concerns to Him in prayer. But when I do, He isn't hearing about them for the first time.

This wasn't new information. But I desperately needed the reminder.

I found spiritual vitality in this reassurance. My daily desperation prayers, while heard, are never a surprise to my Lord. This prompted me, in my requestless experiment, to simply lean into Him—to express my dependence on Him by trusting His wisdom and creativity instead of trying to coerce Him into resolving things my way.

When I stemmed my flow of demands, I found He was already at work in the crises of greatest concern to me. My relationship with Him was finding new depth and breadth as I learned to entrust to Him all those people and needs so close to my heart.

Restoring My Love for Him

By far the biggest realization from my prayer time that week came when I wasn't even sitting with the Word open before me. I was on a deserted beach, standing ankle deep in sand. Camera in one hand. Fresh seashell in the other. Accompanied by the crescendo of sparkling waves, I raised my little voice in an old hymn. At that moment—when I was asking nothing but worshipping Him instead—into my heart dropped the piercing words I'd read earlier that morning: "Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first" (Rev. 2:4).

I suppose I wouldn't have been ready for this major course correction before learning the previous two lessons. And I certainly wouldn't have heard it if I hadn't slowed down to listen.

How have I abandoned my love for Christ? I wondered. I prayed hard as I dug into the passage later at the condo. Abandoned, the Greek word Christ used, means "sent away and replaced with something else." This chilled me to the core.

So I prayed again. I guess I broke my own rule, because this was a request albeit a different kind of request than I typically made. Oh, Lord, forgive me for replacing my love for You with duty, resentment, apathy, disappointment, selfishness. I've been so much about doing things for You, that I've pushed aside being with You. Thank You for this sharp correction. It's painful. But I'm grateful You cared enough to give it. Help me return to the love for You I had at first.

Forever Changed

Ten days go quickly, especially when you're in a place as close to paradise as this world can offer. You wouldn't expect me to say I stuck to the request-less prayer pattern indefinitely. But I can tell you this: My prayer life is forever changed. I have established a pattern of making fewer self-serving requests. I now make a priority of inviting Him all the way in, of trusting Him without demanding answers, and of nurturing relationship with Him daily.

As always, He does care what's on my heart. But in my refreshed love for Him, I now care a little bit more about what's on His heart. It's a start.



JULIE-ALLYSON IERON

is a conference speaker and author of 27 books, including Praying Like Jesus, which rereleased recently with a companion Bible study. She

also is the creator of a women's product for WordSearch Bible software, The Julie-Allyson Ieron Bible Reference Collection. Julie's website is joymediaservices.com.

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By Jennifer Kennedy Dean

Imost 40 years ago, when the Lord fully captured my heart and redefined prayer for me, He showed me that we don't have a prayer life—rather, we live a praying life.

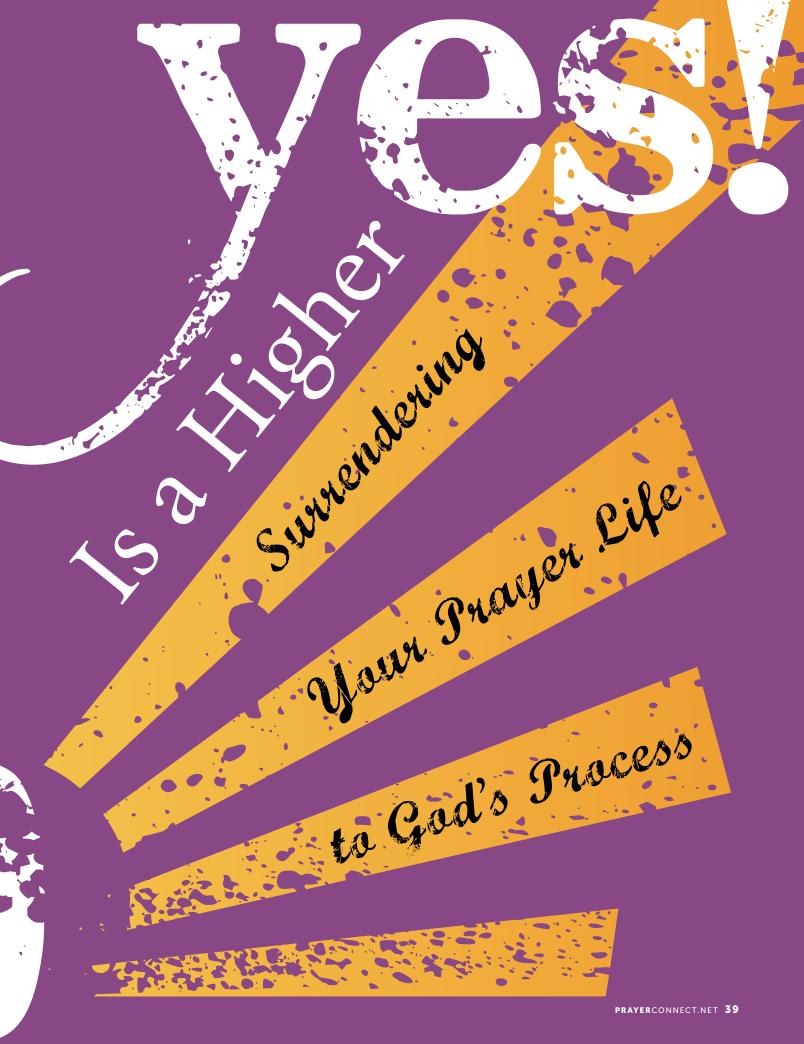
Prayer is more than sandwiching words between *Dear God* and *Amen*, hoping we say the words correctly and put them in the right order. Prayer is living in the flow of His power and provision.

A praying *life* makes our prayer all one piece, ongoing from one circumstance to the next. Instead of separating into "prayers"—first for this, then for that—we can consider all our interactions with God as one flowing river of prayer. An undercurrent of prayer carries every detail of our lives into the stream of His good and perfect plan. Sometimes words, sometimes sighs, sometimes groans, sometimes unnamed longing. It all rises before Him as if we had articulated it perfectly.

Redefining Answers and Desires

In the context of a praying life—through prayer and its answer—God gives us the desires of our hearts. He never, ever withholds from us those desires. Once we learn to see the current of prayer in operation, we will see the answers to our prayers differently. What we once saw as a *no*, we will redefine as a higher *yes*.





salm 37:4 says, "Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart." During the process of prayer, this truth takes on its richest, deepest meaning.

First, we find that when we delight ourselves in the Lord, He becomes the desire of our hearts. The word translated *delight* comes from a Hebrew root word that means "soft, moldable, or pliable." When we delight ourselves in the Lord, we become pliable and moldable in His hands. He fashions a heart like His. He is able to create desires that match His will. In fact, Paul writes, "It is God who works in you to will . . . his good purpose" (Phil. 2:13).

Second, we realize that we cannot know the desire of our hearts unless we know the heart of our desires. Usually, what we might call "the desire of our hearts" is really a secondary desire

orbiting around the true desire. Usually, what we think we desire is really the way we have imagined the true desire will be met. If I just had this. If that would stop. If this would start.

Sometimes, when we think we are asking for the desire of our hearts, we are really asking for the desire of the moment. Often, in order to give us the desire of our hearts, God will withhold the desire of the moment. He only says no as a prelude to a higher yes. When we give Him time—give Him access—He can peel back the desire of the moment and show us the desire of our hearts. And for that desire, there will always be a resounding yes from heaven.

God's True Desire

I remember when I began to learn this concept. I was leading a conference in New Mexico, and my body encountered unfamiliar allergens against which it rebelled. My voice got raspier and raspier as the conference went on. By the time I finished the conference, I had no voice at all.

The next morning, on a flight to Kentucky, where I was to lead another conference, I prayed, "Oh, God, give me back my voice."

The Lord asked me, "Why do you want your voice?"

I answered, "So I can lead this conference."

"Why do you want to lead the conference?"

"So that people can learn how to live in Your power."

"Why do you want people to live in My power?"

"So You can glorify Yourself."

"Then, Jennifer," He seemed to say, "ask Me for that."

And my prayer became, "Father, glorify Yourself."



he tension left me. My soul rested. I did not know how God would answer my prayer, but I knew that He

would answer my prayer. He helped me discover the desire of my heart and relinquish the desire of the moment.

Paul's Thorny Request

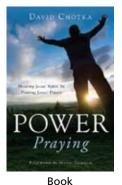
Paul, I think, had a similar experience. What was his request in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10? Verses 7 and 8 describe his pleading prayer to God: "To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me."

So, his specific request was, "Lord, remove the thorn in my flesh."

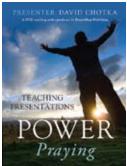
Is it possible that God and Paul had a conversation similar to the one of my own I just described? Might God have said, "Paul, why do you want the thorn in your flesh removed?" To which Paul may have answered, "So I can proclaim

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Christ to the world."

"Why do you want to proclaim Christ to the world?"

"So everyone can come to a saving knowledge of the Messiah."

"And why "

The conversation may have continued until Paul said, "So everyone can see that Your grace is sufficient." To which God would say, "That will require a thorn in your flesh."



id God say no to that specific request—the desire of the moment? He did. He said no so that He could

say the higher yes.

What was the heart of Paul's desire? In other words, why did he want the thorn in his flesh removed? What was Paul's true heart's desire? More than anything else Paul wanted to know Christ. (See Phil. 3:7–11.)

So although God said no to Paul's

specific request, He said yes to the desire of Paul's heart.

Paul stated his prayer in words that expressed the desire of the moment to be rid of the thorn in his flesh that seemed to hinder his work. But the wonderful Father heard the cry of Paul's heart: to know Him fully—both in the power of His resurrection and in the fellowship of His suffering-and to be conformed to His image.

In order to give Paul the desire of his heart, God had to withhold the desire of the moment.

All in Due Time

Give God time—give Him access—so that He can peel back the desire of the moment and show you the desire of your heart.

What looks like a no is really a yes in disguise. If you are crying out for bread,

He will not give you a stone (Matt. 7:9). He will not give you something that only resembles your true desire. He will not give you something just to pacify you. He will give you your true heart's desire in order to satisfy you. God never says no to that desire of your heart.

As you surrender yourself to the process of prayer, let Him have so much access to you that He is able to clear away all the secondary desires. Let Him crystallize for you and bring to the forefront the one overriding desire—to have more of Him.

"But as for me, the nearness of God is my good" (Ps. 73:28, NASB).



JENNIFER KENNEDY DEAN is executive director of The Praying Life Foundation (prayinglife.org) and the author of numerous books, studies, and magazine articles specializing

in prayer and spiritual formation. This article is based on her book Live a Praying Life.

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odern technology keeps getting better and better. Skype, GoToMeeting, and other technologies are opening new opportunities for training people without travel and at little or no expense. More and more ministries are seeing the po-

One ministry taking full advantage of this technology is Every Home for Christ (EHC) in Colorado Springs, CO. Its president, Dr. Dick Eastman (who wrote "Look What God Is Doing" in this issue), has for decades taught on the topic of prayer and revival. Tens of thousands of individuals and hundreds of churches have benefited from his Change the World School of Prayer. Designed to disciple everyone, from novice to seasoned intercessor, the Change the World School of Prayer covers a wide range of important aspects of prayer.

Prayer for the Nations

Now Every Home for Christ has made much of its teaching on prayer available via downloads at its website. In fact, EHC has a number of good prayer resources available at ehc.org.

There you can sign up for its Global Wall of Prayer, who intercessors commit to pray during a specific time slot (one hour or more) for world evangelization and the completion of the Great Commission. A visible wall shows you how many others are also praying during your time slot.

A free downloadable map features prayer points and information to keep you praying on target. The site also encourages prayer for a different nation each day, including up-to-date information about that nation. EHC nurtures these serious prayer commitments by emailing participants every three months to encourage them and to see if they are continuing with their commitments.

University of Prayer

But the aspect of greatest significance to prayer leaders is the downloadable video teachings of Dick Eastman. He regularly teaches in an ongoing ministry called the University of Prayer at EHC's headquarters. These teachings are offered as downloads (most of which are free) in MP3 and video formats. But that's not all. The site also includes a download of the corresponding PowerPoint presentation and a PDF of the note sheets.

> The beauty of this is that any church can have a dynamic, internationally acclaimed speaker with powerful insights on prayer, teach its people how to pray! Why not bring Dr. Eastman to a Saturday morning ayer seminar—for free! Have m come to your church for a sees of Sunday or Wednesday nights

(via video)—for free! Or you might host him as a regular guest Sunday school teacher or have him show up at your small group with his teachingsall at no cost. You get the idea.

It is always a powerful thing to have someone teach your group live because it provides more interaction. But modern technology has invented a way for any church—no matter its size or financial resources—to have a gifted teacher train





Every Home for Christ headquarters

its people in the area of prayer.

To access information on EHC's prayer wall, maps, school of prayer, and prayer watch, go to ehc.org and click on Prayer, then Overview. For downloadable teaching videos, at ehc.org, click on Videos, then Teaching.



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Here are some prayer pages on Facebook we encourage you to "Like." (Add www.facebook.com before the / on each address.)

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TIPS&TOOLS

Ideas to Stimulate Prayer



Unique Twist to Praying for the Lost

raying for lost people in your local community is an absolute necessity if you want to be a growing church. Many churches do this in a variety of ways. Here's a unique twist on effective evangelistic prayer.

Community Heights Alliance Church in Newton, IA, often sees adults come to faith in Christ. That's because the leadership is very intentional in helping their congregation pray fervently for lost people. They have developed a prayer card that tears in half.

One half of the card, filled out by people committing to pray for someone, says:

Reminders and Accountability

When people fill out a card, they put the second half in a basket on the altar of the church. The basket is surrounded by a few candles. During the week, the basket is taken to the prayer room, where people pray often, including three weekly prayer meetings. Those who come to pray pull out the cards and pray for the salvation of the person named. They also pray that the one who submitted the name will be able to share Christ with that person.

When those in the prayer room finish praying, they initial one of the lines. When all 12 lines are filled, someone from the church contacts the person who submitted the card, asking for updates. If desired, another card can be filled out to request continued prayer.

When someone being prayed for accepts Christ, a candle is lit on the altar by the basket, and the church celebrates during the worship service.

There are several reasons this is so successful at Community Heights.

> • Praying for lost people remains at the forefront of everyone's

- mind. Multiple visual cues remind people to continue praying over a long period of time their cards, the basket, and the candles are seen every Sunday.
- Praying for the believer to be the one who leads his or her friend or family member to Christ is a powerful twist. In addition to the spiritual power that can come from this, those who submit someone's name know their work is not done. Built-in accountability helps them look for opportunities to share Christ.

Today I commit to praying regularly for the salvation of: ___ I have asked others to join me in praying for this person as well, beginning: _____[date].

(Please inform the church office of updates and answers to our prayers for this person at: _____[phone number].) Those making the commitment keep this part of the card. The other half of the card, which they tear off and turn in, says: Please join me in praying for the salvation of: _____[name] My name: My phone or email: Date of request: The flip side of the half they turn in says: Dates this person was prayed for: Following that, there are 12 lines for people to initial when they have prayed.

What's Working in Your Church?

Tips and Tools articles are designed to stimulate prayer ideas for prayer leaders in the local church. These short articles (250 to 500 words) can include ideas to lead prayer in your church or helpful resources that have served to engage your church in greater prayer. We are interested in ideas for adults, students, or children. If it's working, we want to know about it!

Submit articles electronically to editor@prayerconnect.net or mail with an SASE to Prayer Connect submissions, 4300 West 98th Street, Bloomington, MN 55437.

For any church to be successful in praying for lost people, constant reminders are needed to keep praying and not give up. This idea allows for accountability and encouragement from others in the congregation.

TIPS&TOOLS

Easy, Colorful Blessing Prayer Cards

t's easy for all of us—and especially children—to get in a rut of just thanking God for friends and asking Him to "be with them." What else should we say? How can we learn to pray more specifically?

The Five Blessings Prayer is a helpful tool for expanding the way we pray for others. This method categorizes five main areas of a person's life:

- Body physical body, health, safety, and well-being
- Labor work or school needs
- **Emotional** peace, joy, happiness,
- Social friendships and family rela-
- **Spiritual** relationship and walk with Christ.

To help our kids deepen their prayer



lives, we created a 5-5-5 Challenge for our Keepers at Home group (a godly girlhood class for homeschooled children, ages 6-12). They pray these five blessings over five people for five weeks in a

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row. To help them remember the challenge, they decorated easy-to-make prayer cards.

Make Your Own

On 8 1/2" x 11" cardstock, we printed by hand the letters B-L-E-S-S and some simple icons on the front:

- for Body—the outline of a
- for Labor—a "busy" bee
- for Emotional—a heart
- for Social—three peas in a pod, smiling
- for Spiritual—a cross.

The kids used colored pencils, crayons, and markers to personalize the cards. On the back, we printed related Scriptures and prayer prompts for each area.

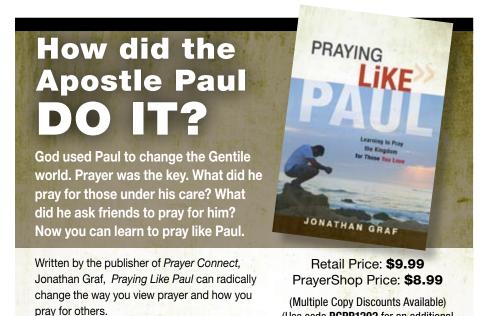
Folded in half, these cards make great tent cards. The kids can display them on their dressers, on a counter, or at their places at their kitchen table to remind them to pray. A quick look at the icons can prompt a prayer. With a little more time and a Bible, the kids can look up the related Scripture verses to guide their prayer time.

Our goal is to help the kids develop a habit of prayer for others that goes deeper than a basic thank-you or Godbless-the-missionaries prayer.

Learn More

You can learn more about using The Five Blessings method of praying for your neighbors and missionaries in The Praying Family: Creative Ways to Pray Together by Kim Butts. This book is a wonderful resource with many easy-toimplement ideas that will help you develop your family prayer life. (Available at prayershop.org.)

JENNIFER MAYHILL has been a coleader of the Kokomo, IN, chapter of Keepers at Home for three years.



LEARN TO:

Pray Scripture

Pray more than fix-it prayers

Pray the purposes of God

into those you love



From Storage Room to Prayer Room

esignating one particular space in your church as a prayer room is one way to raise the awareness of the value of prayer. Often space is at a premium, but even a storage area can be transformed into an inviting place for people to spend time in God's presence.

For years our church used a storage room as a prayer room, but boxes, wedding decorations, and miscellaneous bulky items often overtook the room. The space would be cleaned up and organized for special seasons of prayer, but then it quickly reverted to storage.

When our leadership decided to include in its mission statement the value of being a "house of prayer," they made a conscious decision to transform the storage closet into an inviting prayer closet. They designated funds to purchase furniture, a small stereo system, and a new paint job. It became a priority to create an inviting space to draw people in and demonstrate our commitment to prayer.

Careful Planning Matters

As part of the prayer team sharing the responsibility to convert the storage room, I immediately recognized my lack of ability to pick out a paint color or coordinate furnishings. So I enlisted the help of a friend whose home clearly indicates she has a gift for decorating. The greatest success of the storage area's transformation was my admission that this was not my gift!

We started with a large world map that I purchased online for about \$150.00. That might seem like a large expenditure for a map, but we wanted an entire wall to be the focal point of the room. We intend our commitment to "pray for the nations" to be instantly evident when someone walks into the prayer room. The beautiful muted earth tones of the map give the room a feeling of warmth.

We purchased all the room's other



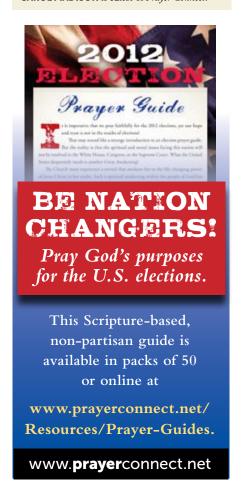
we hear is, "I love that map!"

CAROL MADISON is editor of *Prayer Connect*.

furnishings to coordinate with the map. All items in the room—including paint, furniture, pillows, and wall hangingshad to complement the map. We bought two large leather chairs and an oversized ottoman, which allows people to be comfortable while praying, whether they sit or kneel. We added a desk and chair in the corner so that people can journal or draw. A small table between the chairs provides a place to set a cup of coffee or tea.

Because this was a storage room, there is no direct heat coming in—an important issue during Minnesota winters! So we purchased an electric fireplace that generates enough heat to keep the room warm on winter nights. We also installed a doorbell near the church's front door so that people can alert others in the prayer room—to rotate in and out during our 24-hour prayer seasons.

One immediate challenge we faced was retraining the congregation that this room was no longer available for storage. After three years of diligent reminders, the prayer room remains an inviting place, used at various times during the week and for seasons of allnight prayer. People are drawn into the room now, and often the first comment





PRAYERLEADER

Encouragement for Prayer Mobilizers

Go Bold with Small Group Prayer By Andrew Wheeler

ne of God's stated intents for His Church is that it would be a house of prayer (Isa. 56:7; Matt. 21:13; Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46). As we read through the Book of Acts, we see that the early Church lived up to this expectation. Through prayer, the early believers sought God's wisdom, pled for His intervention, and commissioned His missionaries. God responded to their prayers, guiding their decisions, freeing prisoners, and saving the lost.

Today, we often see a different story. Four "pillars" sustained the early Church: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:42). In the church today, prayer is often the most neglected pillar.

As a prayer leader, how do you influence the culture of your church to grow in prayer? Service times are closely scheduled. In our busy world, extra prayer meetings struggle to maintain good attendance. Prayer classes attract sparse participation and don't produce lasting change.

How does prayer move beyond a chosen few dedicated individuals to taking root in the entire congregation?

Prayer, Small Groups, and the Church

If your church has a vibrant small group ministry, you have a potential grassroots prayer movement that can change your church's prayer culture. Working together with your small group ministry leaders to promote meaningful, missional prayer throughout your small groups, you can help your church achieve its full potential in prayer.

Most small groups incorporate an element of prayer into their time together. Often, however, that prayer doesn't look

beyond the group itself and is relegated to crisis responses rather than focusing on advancing the Kingdom. While personalcrisis prayer is vital in a small group, a steady diet of that is not sufficient to create a balanced, exciting vision for prayer.

You can start creating this vision by working with your small group ministry leaders. Paint a picture of small groups energized with a vision for the church. They already know that lives change in small groups. Help them see how prayer for the church can extend this life change to the congregation as a whole.

Getting Practical

Here are a few ideas to help your small groups incorporate prayer for the church.

- Church events. Create a monthly prayer calendar for your church's events. Your church's bulletin probably provides good information to include. Highlight the main events (both weekly and special ones) and suggest a few aspects of each to pray for.
- Missionaries. If your church sends out missionaries, subscribe to their newsletters and compile a regular prayer guide from their prayer letters.
- Church ministries and leaders. Contact church staff and key volunteers, asking for prayer requests regarding their ministries. Compile these into a regular prayer guide. Be sure to follow up with them, passing along answers to prayer. Seeing God answer can encourage small groups to keep praying!
- Invite a Leader. Encourage small groups to invite a staff member or key volunteer to visit their group for a time of prayer. Provide a guide for attendees and potential guests, so everyone knows what to expect. In my experience, nothing develops ongoing

prayer passion like a time of extended prayer surrounding a church leader.

Spread the Vision

Incorporating prayer for your church into your small groups will benefit your church in many ways. First, you'll grow the prayer lives of your congregation by encouraging prayer that looks beyond the typical personal-crisis prayers to incorporate strategic intercession for your church.

Second, praying for the church will help keep your small groups connected to the church. This connection tends to promote unity in the church and encourage support of your church's leaders and ministries. This can be a great antidote to a spirit of grumbling and discontent within the church.

Third, as God answers prayer, your church's effectiveness will be multiplied. The Book of Exodus records the story of Joshua leading Israel's army against the Amalekites. During this battle, as long as Moses held up his hands in prayer, the Israelite army prevailed. When Moses tired, Aaron and Hur held up his arms, and the army remained victorious (Ex. 17:8-13).

Our prayer team sees our role as that of Aaron and Hur. Church leaders today get weary from serving, just as Moses tired in his service to God. Your church's small groups can lift up their leaders' hands and strengthen them through prayer, inviting God to fight the battles. 🖭



ANDREW WHEELER, who has served as both small group leader and coach in the prayer ministry of Willow Creek Community Church, is currently codirector of the prayer

ministry at Willow Creek's regional campus in McHenry County, IL. He is the author of Together in Prayer (togetherinprayer.net), which is available through prayershop.org.

CLASSICS Time-tested Truths



Almost Incredible Promises | By An Unknown Christian

f we sing the hymn lyrics, "When we stand with Christ in glory, looking o'er life's finished story," the most amazing feature of that life, as it is ■ looked back upon, will be its *prayerlessness*. We shall be almost beside ourselves with astonishment that we spent so little time in real intercession.

In our Lord's last discourse to His loved ones, the Master held out His kingly golden scepter and said, as it were, "What is your request? It shall be granted unto you, even unto the whole of My Kingdom!"

Do we believe this? We must do so if we believe our Bibles. We should open our eyes in bewilderment, for these promises are almost incredible. But it is the Lord of heaven and earth who speaks:

"Verily, verily I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it" (John 14:12-14, кJV).

A Staggering Promise

Could any words be plainer or clearer than these? Could any promise be greater or grander? How staggered those disciples must have been! Surely they could scarcely believe their own ears. But that promise is made also to you and to me.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it to you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:23-24, кJV).

This is the greatest—the most won-

derful—promise ever made to man. Yet most people practically ignore it!

Today He sits on the throne of His Majesty on high, and He bids us to take of His treasures. He tells us that our strength and our fruitfulness depend upon our prayers. He reminds us that our very joy depends upon answered prayer (John 16:24).

Dare Not Hold Back

Let us not put it off till a more convenient season. The dear Savior wants me to pray. How dare we hold back? Let every one of us ask on our knees this question: If no one on earth prayed for the salvation of sinners more fervently or more frequently than I do, how many of them would be converted to God through prayer?

Why, the wonder is not that we pray so little, but that we can ever get up from our knees if we realize our own need; the needs of our home and our loved ones; the needs of our pastor and the church; the needs of our city—of our country.

So great is the importance of prayer that God has taken care to anticipate all the excuses or objections we may be likely to make. Men plead their weakness or infirmity—or they declare they do not know how to pray. God foresaw this inability ages ago. Did He not inspire Paul to say this?

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God (Rom. 8:26-27, KJV).

Yes. Every provision is made for us. But only the Holy Spirit can "stir us up" to "take hold of God." And if we will yield ourselves to the Spirit's promptings, we shall most assuredly follow the example of the apostles who gave themselves to prayer, and continued steadfastly in prayer (Acts 6:4, KJV).

Why Revival Is Delayed

Men are wondering why the revival delays its coming. There is only one thing that can delay it, and that is lack of prayer. It seems almost impertinence for any man to take up the cry when our Savior has put forth His "limitless" promises.

But these utterances go forth steeped in prayer that God the Holy Spirit will Himself convict Christian men and women of the sin of prayerlessness, and drive them to their knees, to call upon God day and night in burning, believing, prevailing intercession.

¹From "When This Passing World Is Done" a hymn by Robert Murray McCheyne (1813-1843).

AN UNKNOWN CHRISTIAN, who chose to remain anonymous, wrote a classic book on prayer in the 1930s. This article is excerpted and edited from A Kneeling Christian.

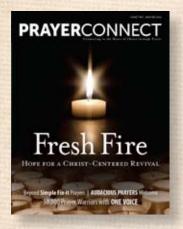
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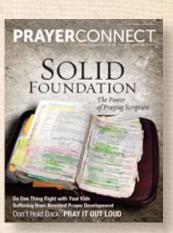
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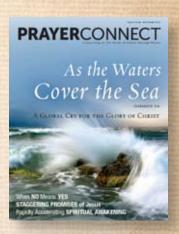
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