

ISSUE FIFTY-EIGHT | OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2024

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A number of gifted speakers are 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, and mentoring the next generation in prayer. The Church Prayer Leaders Network also has many speakers associated with its ministries. You can find contact information at the respective emails or websites.

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

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Our nation has a unique destiny, and the Church plays a key role. Intercessors can shape a nation through God-given prayer assignments. This issue and other back issues are available at prayershop.org.

It Absolutely Works

When I wrote this column on a Sunday in August, the church where I am an elder in charge of prayer and outreach baptized three people in the service. That might not be a big number for a lot of churches, but for our smaller church—Christ Community Church in Brazil, IN—it was huge!

It was our second baptism Sunday in less than three months. The previous baptism Sunday was the first one we had observed in more than two years, also with three people baptized. Easter 2022 was the last one before this summer.

Since the beginning of this year, we have grown by more than 40 percent, with new people coming almost every Sunday. Most of those guests have now become a part of our fellowship. We have rejoiced over 11 salvations, transformed lives, and some healings and other miracles. Worship is dynamic, people participate with energy, and we regularly sense the presence of God among us.

What changed to bring about this new vitality and growth? It is absurdly simple. We sought God. We asked for it to happen! And it began to happen, believe it or not, during a season with no senior pastor—until his arrival in mid-January.

God blessed us first with a deeper hunger for Him, for Jesus, and then for the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives and church. Our midweek prayer meeting grew to more than a third of our adults coming, including all elders and spouses.

We changed the primary focus of our midweek prayer meeting, adding worship and eliminating much of the prayer for the “make my life better” kinds of needs. If someone does express a need for personal prayer, we have teams of people who will gather around them to pray *at the end* of our midweek gathering. And on Sunday mornings, we have prayer teams at the front who pray for those who come forward with a need. We also have an active text prayer chain that is needs-oriented.

But we guard our corporate prayer time. It now only focuses on God's Kingdom agenda: His Spirit and power poured out among us and other churches in the community, transformation of our city and region, and the salvation of the lost.

I've worked with churches in the area of prayer for the past 28 years, and I see this one change work over and over again. If a church can shift the focus of its main corporate prayer expression away from life's “little answerables” and begin focusing on God's purposes and power to grow His Kingdom through the Church, Kingdom things start to happen! To use a phrase coined by Daniel Henderson, we need to focus prayer “vertically rather than horizontally”—on Jesus rather than on those in the room.

While it is not wrong to pray for people's needs, Satan loves it if that's all a church does. His domain is not threatened by someone's sore back improving. But when a church focuses its prayers on growing Christ's Kingdom, the enemy is pushed back and Kingdom things start to happen.

Try it! God will move—guaranteed!

—JONATHAN GRAF is president of [Church Prayer Leaders Network](http://ChurchPrayerLeadersNetwork.org) and the publisher of [PrayerShop Publishing](http://PrayerShopPublishing.org).

Praying Revelation | By Dana Olson

It is easy to get caught up in the curiosity of Revelation's imagery. *When* and *how* will these judgments take place? *Who* are the 144,000? *What* is the meaning of the number 666?

You may have strong opinions or you may find yourself confused about millennial or tribulational positions. My point is *not* to take a stance, but rather to answer the question: in light of our reading of Revelation, how ought we to pray?

The answer, I think, is very clear.

In chapter 13, in between the descriptions of the two beasts and their war against the saints, the apostle John makes a very clear and unequivocal statement: "Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints" (v. 10, ESV).

Then, in chapter 14, the Lamb is on Mount Zion with the 144,000, and three angels appear, bringing the promise of global proclamation of the gospel as well as judgment by God's wrath against the wicked. Once again, a very clear and unequivocal statement is in verse 12: "Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus."

How do we pray in these tumultuous times? In the present circumstance of wars and rumors of wars, moral and political corruption, false teaching and corruption of the gospel and the Scriptures, what is the cry of the believer's heart?

Heavenly Father, by the power of Your Holy Spirit, by Your grace and strength, grant me the grace to endure. As a child of the King, help me trust You with my entire being. Let me walk in the obedience of faith, keeping in step with Your Word and in fellowship with Your saints.

If you make it your goal to be certain about every image and picture in Revelation, you will likely be frustrated. I recall the statement a well-known Christian leader made to me, speaking of the comment another famous preacher had spoken to him, saying, "I wish I understood the Book of Revelation as well as I used to!" The point: even from one period of life to another, perception about some of the imagery may change.

Straight to Prayer

There is much fuel for prayer in this remarkable book that closes the New Testament. Let a reading of Revelation lead you into earnest and fervent prayer.

1. *Praise the Lord* who is and who was and who is to come, the Alpha and Omega, the Almighty! Father, give me grace to hear and to keep what is written here (Rev. 1:8).

Father, I love the Church of Jesus Christ, wherever it may be found! Grant Your people endurance and faith; help us keep our first love for Jesus and Your gospel. Where we must repent, grant us conviction and the willingness to change. Keep Your Church free of false teaching. Deliver us from the wiles and deceptions of the evil one. Wake us up! Give us patient endurance! We throw open the door to Jesus and ask our Lord to come into His Church and revive us and awaken us and set our house in order.

2. *Holy, holy, holy are You Lord, Almighty God!* Only You are worthy of worship and praise. You are the Creator of all things. Only Jesus Christ, Your beloved Son, is worthy to open the scroll and its seals. We exalt you, Jesus—Lion of

Judah, the root of David, the Conquering King of kings—for You were slain and by Your blood You ransomed people for God from every people on earth (Rev. 5:5–10).

Father, grant courage and endurance to every martyr who will die for Jesus in these latter days. We know that the day of Your wrath has been set by You. Until that day, give the grace of perseverance to every believer and the hope of Christ's return! Whatever suffering is Your plan for me, enable me to hold firmly onto hope in Christ and the ultimate triumph of the Conqueror King Jesus.

3. *O God, what a blessing to see in advance the success of the gospel* in reaching every tribe and tongue and people and nation! Certainly, it is true: "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" (Rev. 7:10).

As a Christian believer in an evil day, give me the endurance I need to walk in the steps of Jesus, to endure to the end, to grasp firmly onto hope, to fulfill all You have called me to do. Let me remain steadfast and immovable, always abounding in Your Kingdom work, O God, knowing that this labor will never be in vain (1 Cor. 15:58).

Brothers and sisters, pray the promises and exhortations of the grand Book of Revelation. Look to the Lamb and look to the future in the new heavens and new earth.

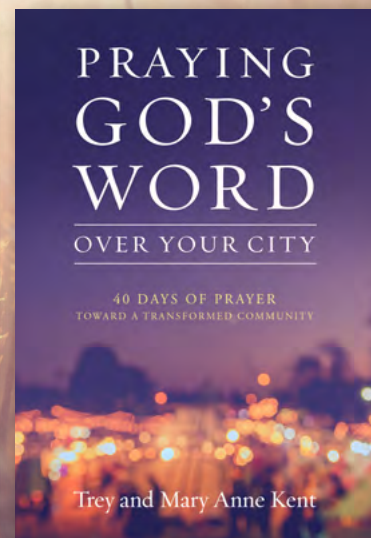
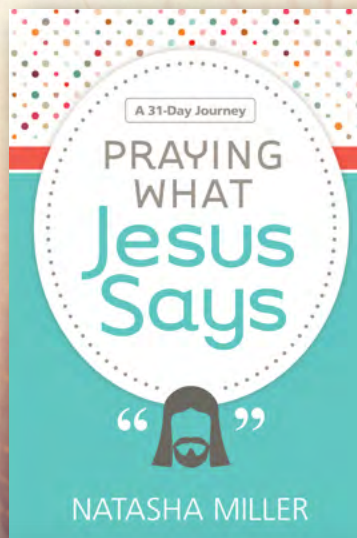
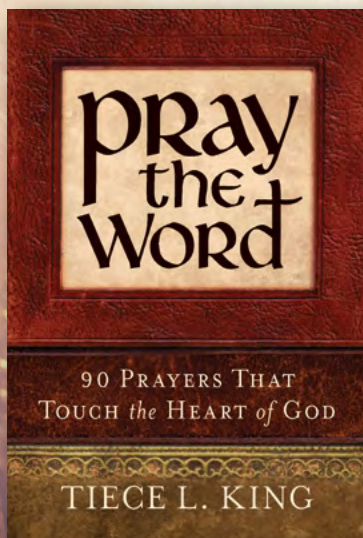
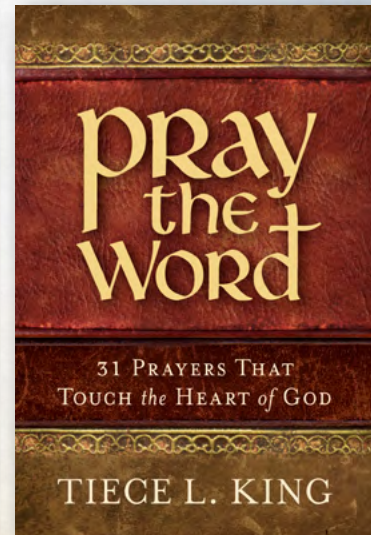
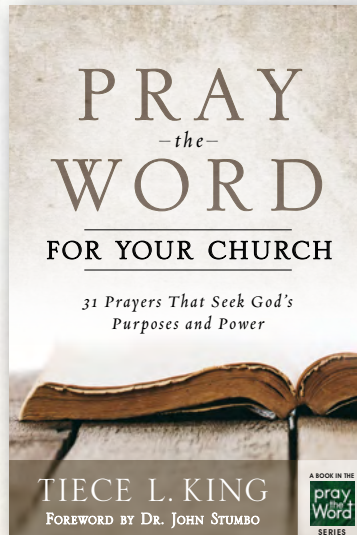
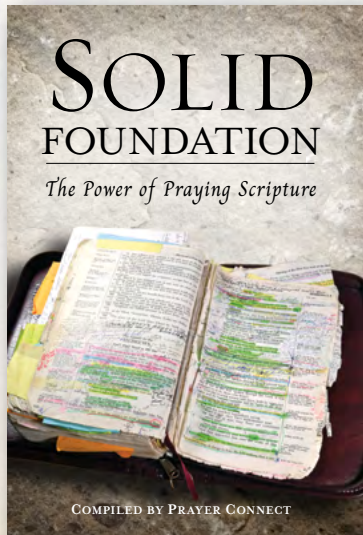
Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus! ☩



DANA OLSON, veteran pastor and prayer leader, is director of Prayer First Heartland, part of the Converge family of churches (convergeheartland.org).

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Praying For Election Integrity | By Gloria Robles

After 2020, many people became disheartened and disillusioned about voting. Many said if voting can be switched and elections can be stolen, why vote?

That question is precisely why we should pray about our elections. As Americans, we should care about the future of this nation and exercise our right to vote; the same applies to Christians. The only difference between the average American and the Christian American is our source of hope. The Lord is our anchor; we know He can do impossible things when we pray and act in faith.

Lessons from a Persistent Widow

We can learn much from God's answer to the prayers of a persistent woman intent on getting justice.

One day Jesus told his disciples a story to show that they should always pray and never give up. "There was a judge in a certain city," he said, "who neither feared God nor cared about people. A widow of that city came to him repeatedly, saying, 'Give me justice in this dispute with my enemy.' The judge ignored her for a while, but finally he said to himself, 'I don't fear God or care about people, but this woman is driving me crazy. I'm going to see that she gets justice, because she is wearing me out with her constant requests!'" (Luke 18:1-5, NLT).

Although we may feel discouraged about elections, we can fervently pray and do the following:

1. Don't Give Up. How does this story

apply to praying for elections? First, Jesus shared this story with His disciples to illustrate persistence in prayer. The truth is, some Christians lost their faith in the election process. Just because people violated our trust and corrupted the process does not mean we should just give up.

Pray for Christians to awaken from passivity to bold faith.

2. Show Up. This widow presented her case daily before the judge until she wore him out. After a while, the judge probably expected her arrival. The point was that she showed up. This is a major issue. Christians who do not vote shouldn't complain about an unfavorable outcome when we have a chance to vote for our faith and values.

Pray for Christians to realize they have a voice through their vote.

3. Make an Appeal. To appeal is to seek a higher court for a reversal of a lower court's decision. We saw an injustice in our last election cycle. We may not have agreed with what our earthly courts decided, but we can appeal to heaven. Shall not the Judge of the earth make it right?

Pray that righteousness will prevail in these elections.

4. Contend for Justice. This widow was constant. She would not settle for less than she deserved, which was justice. This kind of tenacity got the judge to render his verdict. God then says that if an earthly judge could render a just decision, how much more will God give justice to those

who cry aloud day and night? We must have persistent faith.

Pray that any and every injustice will be exposed.


Our Role in Election Integrity

Christians often get stuck in complaint mode. What if we took that complaint and acted on it, like volunteering at the polling place and being the presence of Christ there?

If you cannot volunteer, you can pray at polling places. You can pray onsite or walk or do drive-by prayers, as I call them. Prayer is not limited to where, and it's not about the quantity of prayer; it's about the quality of our hearts.

- Pray for believers with integrity who will be led to volunteer at polling places.
- Pray onsite at polling locations for God's will to be done in our elections.
- Pray that all matters of dishonesty and corrupt acts will be exposed.
- Pray for divine intervention in our elections and concerning the nation.

In every election cycle, there is a tangible sense of urgency, and the 2024 elections will be no different.

The 2020 elections showed us anything can happen. We cannot predict the outcome, but we can humble our hearts before the Lord and ask for divine intervention for our nation. May He once again grant us the truths of Luke 1:50: "His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation." 

INTERCESSORS FOR AMERICA (ifapray.org) has mobilized prayer for this nation for 50 years. Gloria Robles is an IFA contributing writer.

EVANGELISM EMPOWERED BY PRAYER

Preparing Hearts to Receive the Gospel

Shelise and I often greeted each other in the parking garage at my complex. And if I saw a car passing me on my early-morning walk—with the window down and an arm sticking out waving—I knew it was Shelise on her way to work. Shortly after the riots and racial tension in Minneapolis in 2020, she pulled up next to me in the parking lot, leaned out her car window, and said, “You have restored my faith in humanity.”

We became passing friends who realized it didn’t take much to be kind to each other.

One day I said to Shelise, “You know, we should have coffee sometime.” So, we arranged to meet each other at the puzzle table near the elevators. “Bring your own coffee, and let’s chat,” I added.

The first time we sat down and finally talked in depth with each other, Shelise shared about a particularly difficult situation in her life. I asked if she would mind if I prayed for her right then. She bowed her head while I asked Jesus to touch her and restore her. That prayer led to more conversation about Jesus. I also shared the gospel with her.

The next time we met, as we finished up our time, Shelise said, “Well, should we pray?”

“Great,” I responded. I paused for a moment, wondering if she would like to pray. After a slightly awkward silence, I prayed for Shelise and her family—and for her growing in faith in Jesus.

“Amen,” she said.

And that was it. I guess when she said “we,” she meant “you.”

As time went on, I watched Shelise grow in her assurance of her renewed trust in Jesus.

In This Issue

A blueprint for evangelism is modeled by the early Church in Acts. Pastor Kie Bowman describes their response to Jesus’ command to “go into all the world” by first devoting themselves to prayer. After a non-stop prayer meeting, God poured out the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, which then fueled their evangelistic efforts with power. He encourages a “stop, wait, go” strategy to reach the lost.

Dick Eastman is chief prayer officer of a ministry that has enormous evangelistic impact around the world. He writes about several encouraging examples of people who came to faith in Christ because of prayerful pleas for their salvation, often unknown to them. He even suggests that perhaps no soul is brought to Christ apart from a believer’s prayer!

There is power in praying God’s Word over your community, and Trey and Mary Anne Kent have developed a prayer guide of biblical prayers to reach the lost. They are witnesses of tremendous outreach success through 100 praying churches in their own community of Austin, TX. We have excerpted a few key prayers from their book that will help frame ways to pray for your own city.

Shelise eventually decided to move to a different community. I miss seeing her in the hallways with her exuberant greetings. But I also have the assurance that our first prayer together opened her heart to receive truth and hope in Christ.

Praying for the lost is undoubtedly the most powerful evangelistic strategy—and we are all called to engage with confidence and anticipation that God *will* answer. ☞

CAROL MADISON is editor of *Prayer Connect*.

She is also the author of [*Prayer That’s Caught and Taught*](#) and editor of [*Do It Again, Lord*](#).



J

esus said, “Wait.”

Admittedly, that advice is counterintuitive. After all, didn’t Jesus say we should go into all the world? Yes, Jesus said, “Go” (Matthew 28:19). But before we “go,” Jesus said we should “stop” (Luke 24:49).

The waiting period Jesus referred to is mentioned in the last chapter of Luke and similarly in the first chapter of Acts. The two passages are both written by Luke and clearly reflect the same idea.

“I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49).

On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:4–5).

It’s clear that Jesus wanted His followers to experience the empowering of the Holy Spirit prior to any evangelistic outreach. In many ways, the apostles, after the resurrection, were the most prepared, knowledgeable, and eager group of people who have ever existed to do mission work. They had firsthand

PRAYER FIRST, THEN EVANGELISM

The Stop, Wait, Go Strategy

BY KIE BOWMAN

THEY MUST HAVE BEEN EAGER TO TELL THEIR STORY,

but Jesus said they weren't ready.
They needed the power of the
Holy Spirit.

personal knowledge of everything Jesus had done and said during His earthly ministry.

In addition, they were eyewitnesses of the cross and the resurrection. They must have been eager to tell their story, but Jesus said they weren't ready. They needed the power of the Holy Spirit. So, He told them to wait in Jerusalem for the outpouring of the Spirit.

Sit Down and Hang Around

In these two separate passages, Luke uses two completely different words to describe the waiting process. In Luke's Gospel, the word "stay" is used nearly 50 times in the Greek New Testament. It means to sit down or be set in a place. The verb includes the idea of permanence as opposed to momentarily stopping or being set down briefly.

In Acts, however, Luke uses a different word, translated as "wait" (1:4). The word is found only once in the Greek New Testament. It literally means to circle around a place—almost like the idea of hovering. We might even paraphrase it, in a colloquial manner of speaking, as "to hang around."

The most important question related to these two words is this—how did the apostles interpret Jesus' instructions when He told them to stay or wait? How did they imagine "waiting"?

They prayed.

In Luke's Gospel, we're told they went to the temple "continually" to praise God (Luke 24:52–53). In Acts, we find them praying in the large upper room of a home (Acts 1:14). For

ten days, therefore, from the ascension of Jesus until Pentecost, we find the followers of Christ doing nothing but splitting their time between praising God publicly at the temple and praying privately together in the upper room.

In answer to their non-stop prayer meetings, God fulfilled the promise of Jesus and poured out the Holy Spirit onto the praying church.

The Acts Blueprint

Within minutes after the Spirit filled them, the disciples were out of the house, into the street, and preaching the first sermon of the Church! The result was phenomenal. That day 3,000 people gave their lives to Christ and were baptized (Acts 2:41).

Have you ever wondered how many people were saved between the resurrection and Pentecost? None are recorded. Think about that. The apostles spent about three years with Jesus and apparently did not reproduce themselves even one time in 50 days, with all the knowledge, information, and personal experience available to them.

But after the ten-day prayer meeting and the coming of the Spirit, 3,000 people were saved and baptized. Does that suggest anything to us? It should.

Immediately after the baptism of the 3,000, the church organized itself into a teaching, loving, praying community (Acts 2:42). When Luke summarized those idyllic early days, he said they were "praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47).

They prayed, and people were saved. It's a pattern Luke will emphasize throughout the Book of Acts.

Prayer Precedes Outreach

Later, when the church was threatened for preaching in Jesus' name, they met again for prayer—and the result of their prayer meeting was bold evangelism (Acts 4:31). When the church was handicapped by internal divisions, the apostles encouraged others to address

the divisions while they recommitted themselves to prayer and ministering the Word (Acts 6:4). As a result, the ministry of evangelism increased, and even Jewish priests came to Christ in record numbers (Acts 6:7).

When Peter went to Joppa, known today as Tel-Aviv, he prayed for a dead woman who came back to life. The result was an evangelistic flurry in the city, and “many people believed in the Lord” (Acts 9:40–42).

Then, years later, in the city of Antioch (now in modern-day Turkey), a group of five leaders gathered for a prayer meeting. While they were fasting and praying, the Holy Spirit called Barnabas and Saul (Paul) to evangelize the Gentiles (Acts 13:1–5). This became the biggest of all evangelistic enterprises because it took the gospel outside of a small, exclusive focus on Jews and out to the rest of the world.

What have we noticed in this overview of evangelism in Acts? For one thing, prayer preceded every evangelistic outreach mentioned. Fortunately for us, the Acts pattern of prayer and evangelistic success is not limited to the pages of the Bible. The pattern has proven true wherever people have prayed for more souls to turn to Christ.

For instance, in today’s financial district in lower Manhattan in New York City, near where the World Trade Center once stood, God worked a miracle more than 150 years ago.

The Old North Dutch Church on Fulton Street was more than 100 years old and dying. Its once-influential ministry had dwindled to a handful of the faithful. The area around the church had dramatically changed from residential to commercial. Other churches were relocating, but the leadership of the Old North Dutch Church decided to try something new to reach people. They hired a committed Christian business-

man to reinvigorate the outreach of the old church.

Jeremiah Lanphier started in July and tried several things, including going door to door to speak to business leaders, encouraging hotels to send their guests to the nearby church on Sundays, and numerous other efforts without success. He finally felt so discouraged he decided to host a noon prayer meeting

for the other businessmen in the area. He printed thousands of flyers advertising the noon event, which he handed out on the streets. On September 23, 1857, no one showed up until 12:30 p.m.

Eventually, six men dropped by that day to pray. It was an inauspicious beginning, but what happened over the next few weeks was miraculous. The noon prayer meeting eventually started meeting every day, and more people

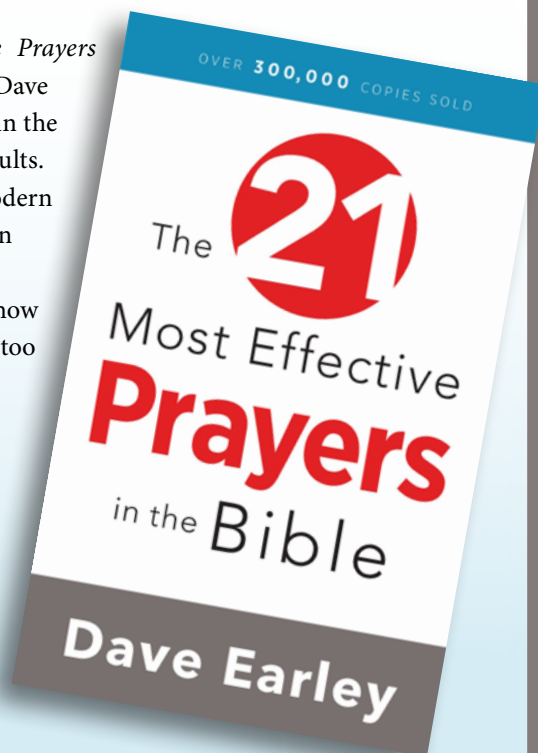
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started attending. A financial crisis in New York City drove even more anxious businesspeople to the daily prayer meetings. Within three months, the prayer meetings had spread all over the city and were reaching 50,000 people.

Soon, prayer meetings sprang up all over the nation. It was a genuine move of God. Miraculously, one million people were saved in 18 months when the U.S. population was only 30 million. The Prayer Revival of 1857–1858 may be the largest evangelistic harvest per capita in U.S. history.

How did it happen? The church recognized the need. They found the right leader, he led prayer meetings, and God saved hundreds of thousands of people.

The Blueprint Continues

The Acts blueprint has repeatedly shown itself to be God's desired path for

evangelistic harvest wherever it has been attempted. God's people pray, and more people get saved.

Here's a more recent example. One of the most amazing testimonies of the last 30 years in the body of Christ has been the miracle of the Brooklyn Tabernacle Tuesday night prayer meeting. But it started in an awkward, normal, unimpressive way. The key to the growth of the prayer meeting and of the church was what followed.

According to Pastor Jim Cymbala, the little group of prayer warriors started seeing people on their prayer lists getting saved. A wayward son here, a disinterested husband there, and eventually, the miracles of salvation became too numerous to ignore. God's people prayed, and lost people got saved. The church grew to an attendance of more than 10,000 with

conversion testimonies that have inspired the rest of the Church for decades.

The Acts blueprint worked in first-century Jerusalem, in nineteenth-century Manhattan, and in twentieth-century Brooklyn. It works wherever it's tried. Unfortunately, we often don't step out in faith to try it.

Will you pray for more people to be saved? Will you pray evangelistic prayers?

As F.B. Meyer once observed, "The greatest tragedy of life is not unanswered prayer but unoffered prayer." **PC**

Taken from *Evangelistic Prayer* (PrayerShop 2024) by Kie Bowman.



KIE BOWMAN is the national director of prayer for the Southern Baptist Convention, and senior pastor emeritus of Hyde Park Baptist Church in Austin, TX, where he helps lead a citywide prayer ministry. He is the co-author of *City of Prayer: Transform Your Community through Praying Churches*.

EVANGELISTIC PRAYER

Engaging the Power of God for the Lost



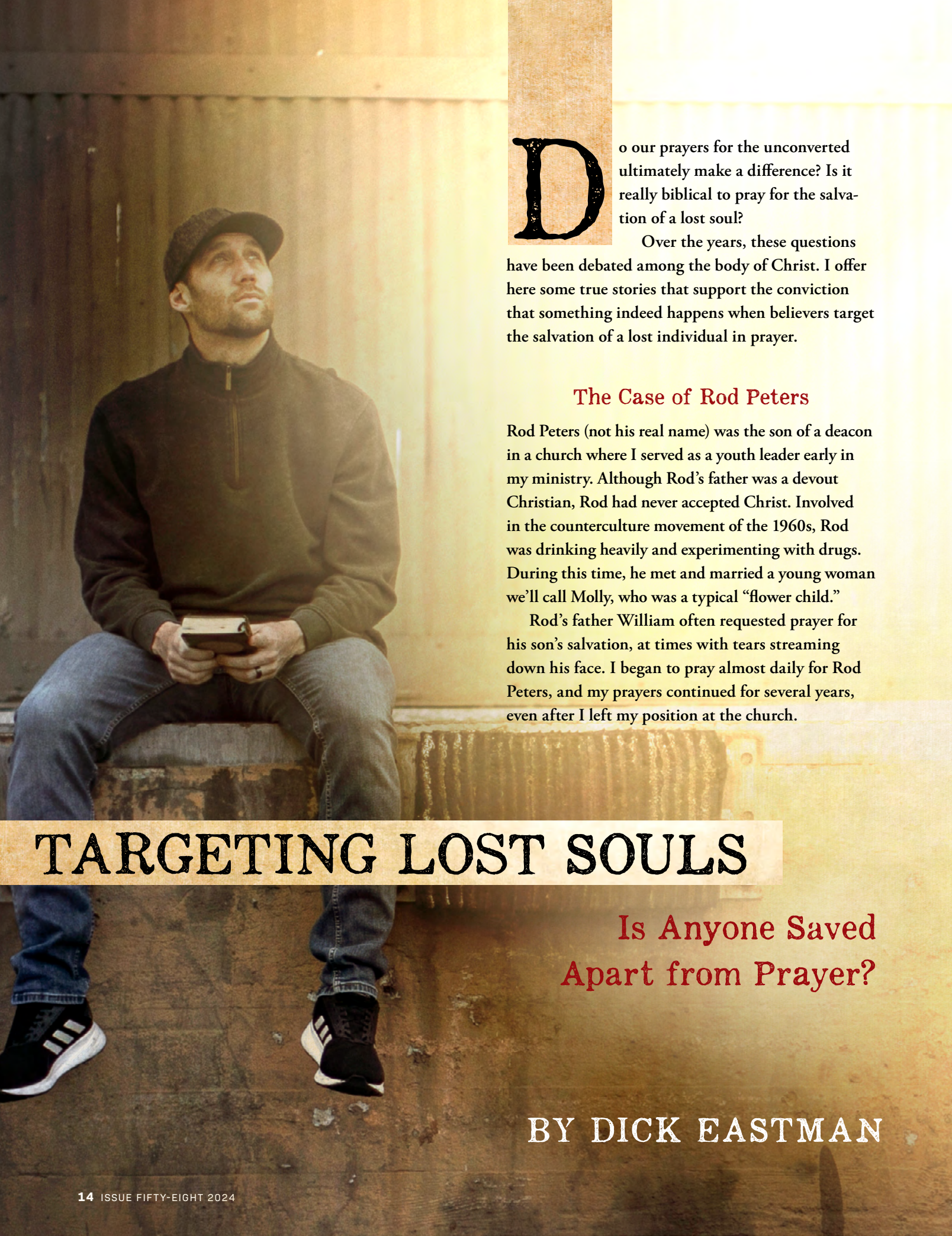
DR. J. KIE BOWMAN

"THEY PRAYED, AND PEOPLE WERE SAVED."

It's a pattern emphasized
throughout the Book of Acts.

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A man with a beard and a cap sits on a metal ledge, looking upwards with a contemplative expression. He is holding a small book in his hands. The background is a warm, textured wall.

D

o our prayers for the unconverted ultimately make a difference? Is it really biblical to pray for the salvation of a lost soul?

Over the years, these questions have been debated among the body of Christ. I offer here some true stories that support the conviction that something indeed happens when believers target the salvation of a lost individual in prayer.

The Case of Rod Peters

Rod Peters (not his real name) was the son of a deacon in a church where I served as a youth leader early in my ministry. Although Rod's father was a devout Christian, Rod had never accepted Christ. Involved in the counterculture movement of the 1960s, Rod was drinking heavily and experimenting with drugs. During this time, he met and married a young woman we'll call Molly, who was a typical "flower child."

Rod's father William often requested prayer for his son's salvation, at times with tears streaming down his face. I began to pray almost daily for Rod Peters, and my prayers continued for several years, even after I left my position at the church.

TARGETING LOST SOULS

Is Anyone Saved
Apart from Prayer?

BY DICK EASTMAN

“I DON’T BELIEVE A PERSON IS EVER SAVED

unless first someone has prayed for him or her.”

Realizing that Rod had been exposed to the Christian message all his life and had rejected it, it occurred to me one day in prayer that I should ask God to send a specific person to Rod—someone he respected and who could lead him to Christ. I remember every detail of that rainy evening in May of 1972 that suggested my prayers had been answered.

I was in Reno, NV, conducting a spiritual renewal conference in a small church. I was in my motel room preparing that night’s message when the phone rang. I was sure it was my wife, who was expecting our second child. To my surprise, it was Rod Peters.

“I wanted you to be one of the first to know I’ve just given my life to Jesus Christ,” he said joyfully. “I know you’ve prayed for me a lot because my dad told me, so I wanted to call and say thank you for your prayers.”

I could hardly believe my ears. I asked him how it happened. He explained that several months earlier he had noticed that his wife began to care for him in a radically different way. Rod asked her what had caused such a change. Molly explained that three months earlier she had been talking to her boss and learned he had become a born-again Christian. As a result of hearing his testimony, Molly was saved. And hearing Molly’s testimony, Rod gave his heart to the Lord also.

Did the Holy Spirit intercede through my prayers (Rom. 8:26)? I had prayed for God to send a trusted witness to Rod. In creating the answer to that prayer, God brought both Molly and her boss to Christ!

The Case of Clifford Potter

Jack McAlister, founder of Every Home for Christ, shared a remarkable testimony during a radio broadcast in 1961. McAlister told of an

instructor at Canada’s Prairie Bible Institute who remarked in one of his classes, “I don’t believe a person is ever saved unless first someone has prayed for him or her.”

Immediately, a student stood up and said, “I’m not sure that’s true. No one I know of ever prayed for me.” The student explained that his unbelieving parents hadn’t. And he felt assured no relatives or friends ever had.

In this student’s opinion, it was simply a matter of choice: he had walked into a small hometown church one night and heard the gospel preached for the first time. When the preacher gave the invitation, he responded.

Four years later, two classmates of this young man were doing visitation in the town where he had been converted, and they visited the home of an elderly Christian woman who was a devoted intercessor. When she discovered the two were from Prairie Bible Institute, she asked, “Do you know a young man named Clifford Potter?”

They responded that Clifford had been in their class and had gone on to be a missionary in Africa.

“A missionary to Africa?” the elderly saint asked. “Let me tell you a story,” she said. “Years ago, I was working as a cashier in a local restaurant when a tall young man came in for lunch. I heard a whisper in my heart I sensed was the voice of God. It was clear I was to pray for this person. I told the Lord I knew nothing about this young man. But I bowed my head and prayed for his salvation anyway.”

She had this same prompting that following day when the young man came into the restaurant. So, she prayed again for his salvation.

Not long afterward, she attended a gospel service at a small local church. That night, to this intercessor’s amazement, the young man she had prayed for responded to the preacher’s invitation and gave his life to Christ. She lingered after the service to learn the identity of the new convert and was told his name was Clifford Potter. Being somewhat shy, she decided not to tell him about her prayers.

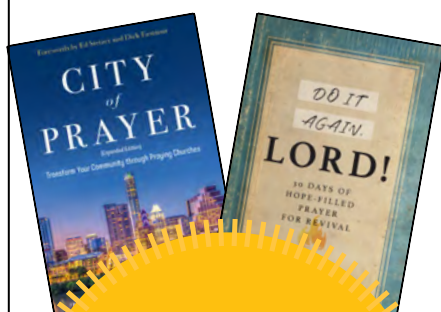
After hearing the woman’s story, the workers shared what Clifford had said in the classroom years before. Then the elderly saint knew that her prayers had made a difference.

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Six Focal Prayer Points to Help You Pray for the Lost

One pattern to help you pray for the lost is the six interrogatives: who, what, when, why, where, and how.

1. Whom can I trust? Intercede for the lost souls by praying that they would be confronted with questions regarding trust. Ask God to plant in their hearts a skepticism about the lies they hear, whether philosophical, social, or political.

2. What is my reason for being? Pray that the lost will begin to ask, “What is my purpose for living?” Ask God to plant in their hearts an urgency concerning this question.

3. When will I really be free? When praying for people who are not free, pray that God will use this lack to draw them to Himself. When interceding for the lost in free nations, pray that the person will ask, “When will I be free of this emptiness in my heart?”

4. Why do people reject God? When praying for the lost in closed countries whose leaders reject God, ask God to cause lost souls to question why their leaders so vehemently reject the existence of God. Asked often enough, this question leads people on a deep heart quest. They will not only wonder if there is a God; soon they will actively seek Him.

5. Where will I go when I die? Ask God to cause unbelievers to ask, “Where will I go when I die?” Pray that God will turn this question into a quest for an eternal answer and that He will plant a longing to resolve this issue.

6. How can I cope with my problems? Ask God to plant a sense of hopelessness in unbelievers’ hearts. Every person faces problems beyond his or her abilities. Our prayers can cause people to realize their need for deliverance and prepare their hearts for the day the gospel will be given to them.

—Adapted from *Love on Its Knees* (Chosen Books, Inc., a division of Baker Book House Company), by Dick Eastman.

The Case of R.A. Torrey

Consider the case of revivalist Reuben A. Torrey (1856–1928), who was best known as the founder of Biola University. Early in Torrey’s ministry in a church in Minneapolis, he learned the importance of intercessory prayer.

In those early days of ministry, the young pastor experienced a special burden for the husbands of two women in the congregation. Neither of the men was saved, and both the wives, who didn’t know each other, had asked Dr. Torrey to pray for their husbands. The preacher committed to pray for them daily until both professed Christ.

Torrey did not see the conversions of the men while he was in Minnesota, but it didn’t stop him from praying for them, even while pursuing his theological studies in Germany and when returning to America to begin his ministry as an evangelist.

More than two decades passed, and Torrey was invited back to Minneapolis to conduct a crusade. Several nights into the meeting, as Torrey concluded a dynamic message on salvation, he gave his customary invitation for sinners to stand and acknowledge their need for a Savior. To Torrey’s amazement, the two men for whom he had interceded over the years were seated side by side—and stood up together! They had never met,

nor did they know that Dr. Torrey had been praying for their salvation.

A Look at God's Word

Several New Testament passages are instructive as we consider whether we should pray for the lost. First, the words of the apostle in 1 John 5:14–15: “This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.”

Now compare these words with Peter's insights concerning God's will: “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

First Timothy 2:4 reminds us that God “wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.” If this is God's will, and if all prayers offered according to God's will are heard, why would we not pray for the salvation of a lost soul?

The prayers, in themselves, do not save a person. They may, however, prepare a lost person's heart to receive Christ. They may play a part in removing the darkness from his or her spiritual eyes in order to see Jesus clearly (2 Cor. 4:3–4). In any case, we know that the apostle Paul believed in praying for the lost. He told Roman believers: “Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved” (Rom. 10:1).

Perhaps Paul believed in such praying because of one of his own pre-conversion experiences. Stephen, as he was being stoned by an angry crowd led by Saul of

Tarsus (later the apostle Paul), prayed that God would not hold the crowd's sin against them (Acts 7:60).

Could it be that Stephen's prayer in those dying moments had some connection to the ultimate conversion of Saul, who became one of the greatest warriors for Christ in church history? I believe this will prove to be the case.

I also believe that some day, when we stand before God in a massive heavenly assembly of worshipping saints (Rev. 7:9), we will learn just how vital our prayers were to the conversion of the lost—that, ultimately, no soul was brought to Christ apart from a believer's prayer. **PC**



DICK EASTMAN is chief prayer officer of Every Home for Christ, where he served as international president for 34 years. He is also a member of America's National Prayer Committee.

FOREWORD BY LARRY GRIFFITH

50 Prayers
That Will
Transform Your
Company

PRAYING GOD'S WORD FOR YOUR BUSINESS

LOGAN BLOOM

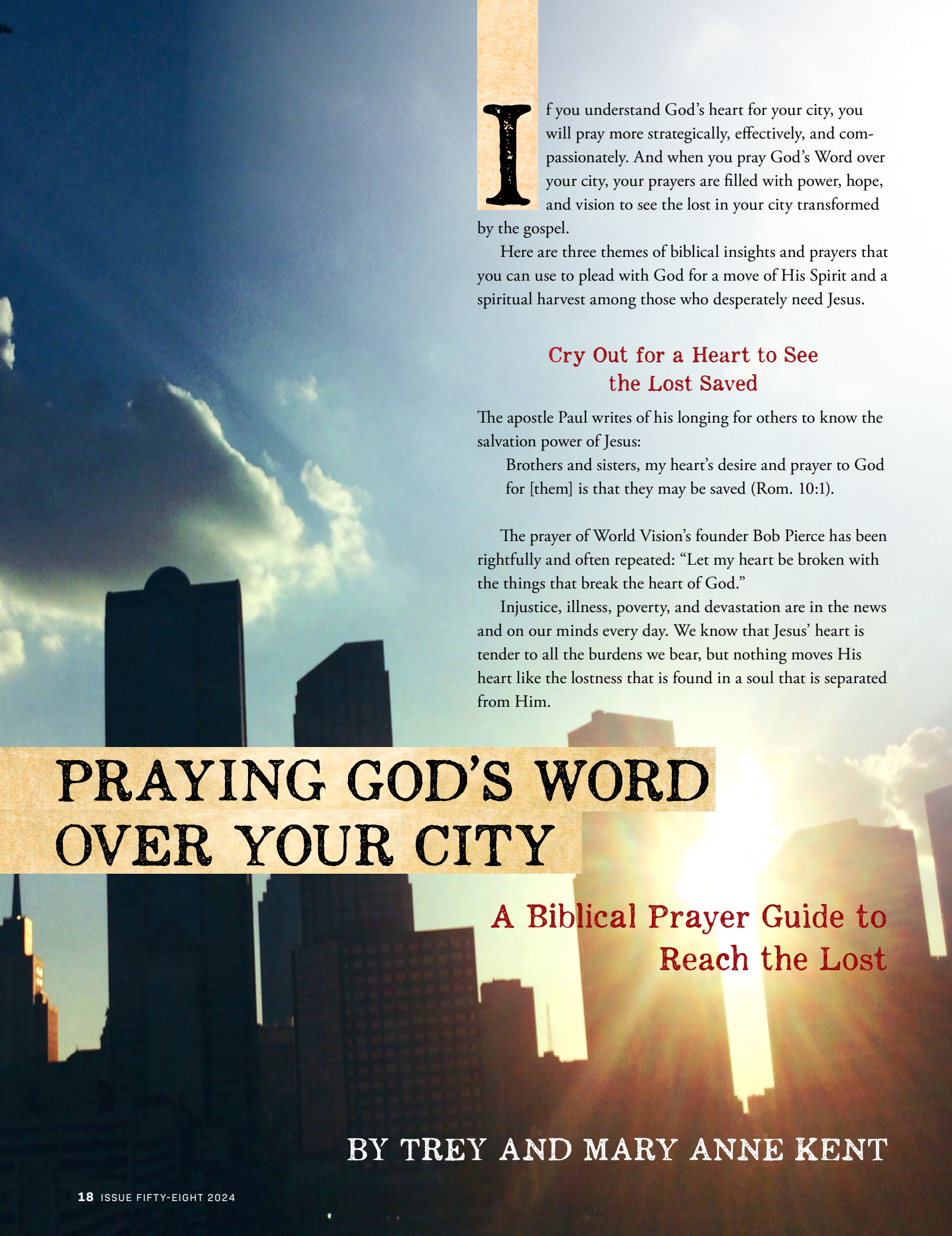
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If you understand God's heart for your city, you will pray more strategically, effectively, and compassionately. And when you pray God's Word over your city, your prayers are filled with power, hope, and vision to see the lost in your city transformed by the gospel.

Here are three themes of biblical insights and prayers that you can use to plead with God for a move of His Spirit and a spiritual harvest among those who desperately need Jesus.

Cry Out for a Heart to See the Lost Saved

The apostle Paul writes of his longing for others to know the salvation power of Jesus:

Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God for [them] is that they may be saved (Rom. 10:1).

The prayer of World Vision's founder Bob Pierce has been rightfully and often repeated: "Let my heart be broken with the things that break the heart of God."

Injustice, illness, poverty, and devastation are in the news and on our minds every day. We know that Jesus' heart is tender to all the burdens we bear, but nothing moves His heart like the lostness that is found in a soul that is separated from Him.

PRAYING GOD'S WORD OVER YOUR CITY

A Biblical Prayer Guide to Reach the Lost

BY TREY AND MARY ANNE KENT

LET'S ASK JESUS TO PUT HIS HEART OF COMPASSION WITHIN US and move our hearts to pray and work for the salvation of many.

Every problem that steals our sleep and wrestles peace from our minds is temporary. Someday, there will be no more sickness, violence, hatred, or lack. Everything will be made right in the eternal Kingdom of God. All will be well for those who are forever in the heart and arms of Jesus. But for those who have not given their lives to Jesus, all will be lost. To live and die without Christ is to face the only permanent loss known to man.

Do we understand that every face we see in the grocery store, every footstep we hear coming down the hall, and every life we encounter has a destiny that will either lead to eternity with Jesus or a never-ending separation from His life and love?

God's greatest desire is that all the world would know His Son and be found safe for eternity in Him. Let's ask Jesus to put His heart of compassion within us and move our hearts to pray and work for the salvation of many.

Gracious heavenly Father, thank You for sending Jesus to die on the cross for my sins and the sins of the world. I repent for my lack of compassion and urgency to see the lost saved. Forgive me for apathy and short-sightedness. Cleanse me of all selfishness and arrogance. I ask You, Father, to change my heart and make it break for what breaks Your heart. I ask You to give me a heart of compassion and a will to witness in every way possible. Holy Spirit, fill me with Your presence and anoint me with Your words so that I may witness passionately and continually for You. Give me a heart to pray and not give up until Your will is done in bringing many to righteousness.

Prayer Points

- Take a moment and ask the Holy Spirit to show you happenings, activities, and attitudes in your city that break His heart. Ask God to give you His compassion for people who are affected by the sin and lostness of your community.
- Ask Jesus to show you where you have been apathetic and negligent in praying for and witnessing to the lost in your community. Repent of specific areas and situations where you have chosen to ignore the call to share Him with others.
- Submit your heart and mind to the Holy Spirit and allow Him to give you a list of people for whom you will pray and with whom you will share.
- Take the list you have made and commit to pray for them daily and look for opportunities to share the love of God with them.

Seek God to Remove the Blinders

We can only explain the resistance of unbelievers to the hope of Christ by their spiritual blindness through the schemes of the enemy of their souls.

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ (2 Cor. 4:4–6).

The spiritual warfare for the souls of men, women, and children is raging before our very eyes. May we not be ignorant of the enemy's schemes to deceive and destroy the lives of those we seek to reach for Christ. Being aware of the spiritual forces that are waging war all around us is half the battle. The other half is diligently fighting the good fight through prayer and evangelism.

Let's seek God for His infinite power to see the lost freed to see the glory of Jesus.

Father, today I seek Your face, asking that You would awaken me to the spiritual war that rages all around me. Focus me on the greater power, influence, and victory that is already won through Jesus Christ my Lord. Free me not only to recognize the spiritual battles, but to be mobilized in prevailing prayer and victorious outreach toward those in the clutches of Satan's lies and deception.

Today, Father, I cry out for those I love and for those in my neighborhood and workplace to be freed from the blinders that our ancient foe has used to keep them trapped in a lost state of hell-bound ignorance. Use me and Your people to proclaim Jesus Christ today. Remove my self-centered focus as I lift up the death, burial, and

resurrection of Jesus Christ. Open the eyes of the lost to see the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Jesus, You asked that we would see Your glory. Today, I ask that You answer that prayer by removing blinders of deception that plague those with whom I interact with daily. Show Your glory today by freeing the lost from a spiritual blindness that can only be healed by You. Show them the joy, beauty, power, awe, and love that are in You and You alone!

Prayer Points

- Thank God that He is greater than all, including all the forces of the enemy.
- Ask God to remove the spiritual blinders for specific people in your world.
- Seek God for open doors to share

the gospel, which has the power to deliver.

- Intercede for believers to preach Christ, not ourselves.
- Trust God that He will reveal His glory to the lost today.

Cry Out for the Lost to Be Saved in Large Numbers

When the power of the Spirit is at work, people realize their sin and their need for a Savior.

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day (Acts 2:37–41).

Every Sunday in America, some 400,000 congregations gather while the good news of Jesus Christ is preached. What would happen if every pastor had a prayer team that prayed while the preacher preached? Charles Spurgeon said the power of his sermons were attributed to the several hundred deacons who prayed in the church basement while he preached the Word of God powerfully.

Let's cry out today for those who preach the gospel to many people in your church and community, whether they be pastors or rank-and-file believers.

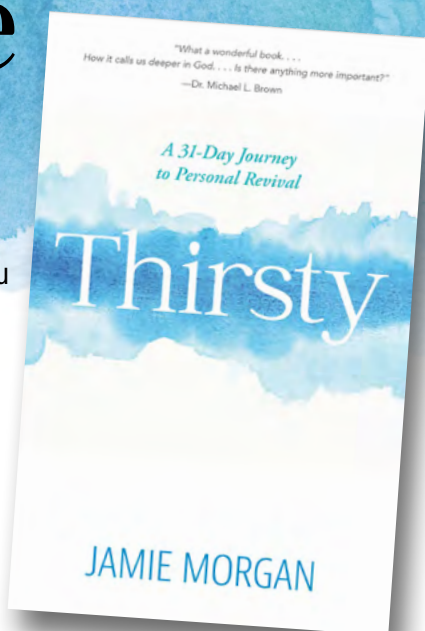
Father, I cry out today for the Word to go forth in power as I read about in the Book of Acts. May conviction come with such power that those who hear

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it ask, "What must I do to be saved?" I pray for my pastor and for area pastors to raise up a mighty praying people who pray while the preacher preaches. Let me be one of these prayer warriors. I ask for all believers to be empowered to share Jesus boldly and to see the lost repent, be saved, and baptized.

Holy Spirit, fill Your people to overflowing. May we be salt and light. Use me today to share Jesus clearly with one person. I pray now that he or she will be receptive to hear Your Word. I ask that this year our community will see a greater number of people saved and disciplined than we've seen in our history. Do a fresh, new, Holy Spirit-empowered work. Bring a great awakening to our community so that we can have a "before-and-after" perspective of Your mighty work. We are eager to see a powerful move of God.

Prayer Points

- Pray for churches and pastors (by name) to preach powerfully the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Ask God for specific believers to be mighty evangelists.
- Seek God for a great awakening in your community.

As evangelist and revivalist Leonard Ravenhill (1907–1994) stated, "If the Lord tarries and there is no revival of pure Christianity, then the next span of years will be the worst history has ever recorded."

Let's pray that our prayers for the lost will ignite the greatest revival our nation has ever known! 



TREY KENT is senior pastor of Northwest Fellowship in Austin, TX. He and his wife Mary Anne are founders of a movement of more than 100 praying churches in Austin. This prayer guide is adapted from [*Praying God's Word Over Your City*](#), available at prayershop.org.

Will God grant us one more nation-shaking, world-transforming move of His Spirit?

Will we experience one more Great Awakening that results in a massive spiritual harvest of souls?

Will the Church be revived to live in the fullness of Christ and the unmatched power of the Holy Spirit?

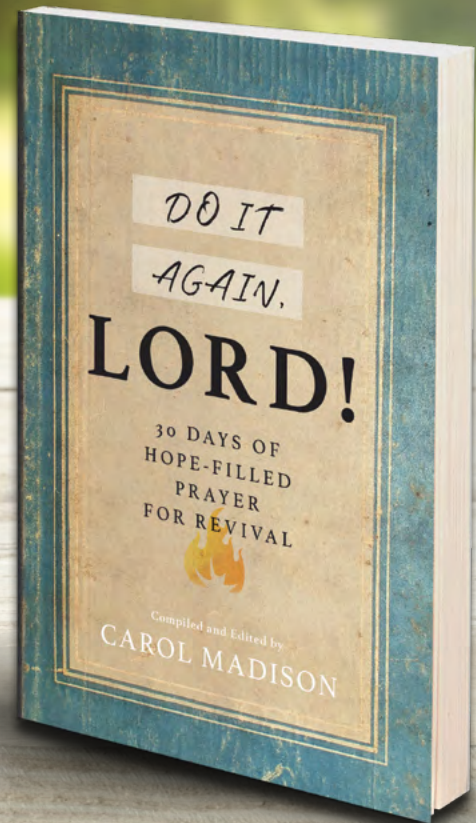
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- 5. Next Steps:** For more information, and to determine if this mission can help you in fulfilling your calling, contact Michael Jebb at mikejebb@sbcglobal.net, or 708.655.1044 to schedule a phone appointment, and he will be able to answer the various questions you have.

**STRATEGIC
PRAYER INITIATIVE**



***Note:** This Bible study is formatted for small group open discussion. If you use this study by yourself, we suggest you journal your answers to the discussion questions. Also, please use suggested translations where indicated. Biblegateway.com is an excellent source for translations you may not have on hand.*

BIBLE STUDY

Evangelism Empowered by Prayer

True confession: Ezekiel is not my favorite book of the Bible. Sure, it has some mind-blowing visuals and quotable passages. But overall, when I read Ezekiel, I'm usually more puzzled and confused than uplifted. So, when my pastor asked me to lead a group discussion on the book, I agreed out of deference to him more than enthusiasm for the opportunity.

My church encourages parishioners to read the Bible together. We follow a reading plan that enables us to read through the entire Bible in two years. Once a month, a group of fellow readers gathers to discuss our readings for that month. June was the month for Ezekiel, and our discussion was to take place on Father's Day.

I studied up, consulting commentaries and notes in different study Bibles. I watched hours of the Bible Project's excellent 29-session class on Ezekiel. I was ready to talk about weird prophetic acts, the disturbing imagery of chapter 16, the symbolism of the king of Tyre, the new temple, and more. I even had some thoughts about "Ezekiel Bread."

But our discussion on Father's Day didn't go to any of those places. Instead, it went toward the fatherly heart of God for the lost. It turns out, most of the group had adult children who are not walking with God. Some of our grown kids had just gradually slipped away so that faith has little meaning for them

anymore. Others of these much-loved sons and daughters are blatantly rejecting and rebelling against Christ. Like the Israelites in Ezekiel's time, all these young men and women had known the truth, had been trained by it—but they are now living far from God.

When this came to the surface, it became clear that we wouldn't need to spend as much time talking about the enigmas of Ezekiel as I'd anticipated. Instead, we turned to God. We exchanged first names of the individuals whose hearts we longed for God to soften. And we prayed words and promises from Ezekiel for them. We left that time encouraged, knowing that God has as much desire and power to turn our loved ones back to Him today as He did the dry bones of Ezekiel's time.

Discussion Questions

Print out a copy of this study. Then, on your own or taking turns in your group, read aloud the questions and the suggested Scriptures.

What hope for the lost do the following verses offer?

Ezekiel 33:11: _____

Ezekiel 18:32: _____

Ezekiel 20:44: _____

Sometimes people reject God because of how the church and other religious people have acted. Do any of the people you intercede for fit into this category? Read Ezekiel 34:1–16. Try to picture it in your imagination. How does God feel about those who have been wounded by religious people, and what

will He do about it? Can you picture Him doing this for the ones you are concerned about?

Some people seem to be so deep in sin that it's hard to imagine them ever being saved. But what does Ezekiel 33:14–16 say about that?

We know from Scripture and our own experience that no one has the power to change his or her own heart. What does God say about that in the following verses?

Ezekiel 11:19: _____


Ezekiel 36:25: _____

Ezekiel 36:27: _____

Action Steps

As you pray for the people you long for God to save, which of the Scriptures you read and discussed resonated with you? Personalize that passage and write it out so that you can return to it and pray it regularly. You might decide to pray it every day. Or you may choose to intercede for the salvation of the lost on a certain day of the week, every week. Just

find a regular time and jump in.

God commanded Ezekiel to perform a prophetic act that brought life to souls that were dead. Read about it in Ezekiel 37:1–14. What might God be inviting you to speak over the people you know who need to “hear the word of the LORD”? Go ahead and speak it. Say it loudly and boldly. Invite the breath of God to enter the dead souls of those you long to see saved. 

CYNTHIA HYLE BEZEK serves on her church prayer team and is director of curriculum for Community Bible Study (communitybiblestudy.org). She has authored several Bible studies on prayer, including *Knowing the God You Pray To* and *Prayer and the Word of God*, available from prayershop.org.




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THE POWER OF TWO OR MORE

Forming Revival Prayer Clusters

How many believers does it take to ignite a revival? Maybe fewer than you think. In fact, almost every revival recorded in history started with as few as two or three people praying together! From these humble beginnings, the seeds of revival multiplied into dozens and even hundreds of clusters of praying believers, until entire cities and nations were ablaze with the presence and power of God.

Don't get me wrong: massive prayer gatherings are vital and powerful! My husband Hal and I have participated in many of these. The most memorable was "The Call DC" in 2000 when more than 600,000 (mostly young people) gathered on the Washington, D.C., National Mall to pray for America.

Hal once participated in an all-night prayer meeting in Kampala, Uganda, where intercessors filled 18 sports


arenas throughout the city, calling out to God with one voice to send revival. In one coliseum alone, 20,000 people were praying. Hal described the sound of intercession as like the roar of a freight train.

But how did these massive prayer gatherings and other historic, large-scale revivals begin? They started with "two or more" believers united in prayer, such as:

- **First Great Awakening** (1727–1742), which was marked by multiple small clusters praying in cities, towns, and regions.
- **Haystack Prayer Meeting in the U.S.** (1806), which started with five Williams College students praying for revival—contributing significantly to the Second Great Awakening.
- **Businessmen's Revival** (1857–1863), which began with six men praying in a church in New York City and grew to 30, 60, then 300, then 2,500 people.

BY CHERYL SACKS





We are entering the beginning of a **GOD-BREATHED, WORLDWIDE GREAT AWAKENING LIKE NEVER SEEN BEFORE.**

News spread and prayer groups sprang up from city to city. Within a year, one million people were saved!

What's remarkable about these groups is how quickly they multiplied:

- In 1905, when American evangelist R.A. Torrey visited Australia, he witnessed 2,100 prayer cells with 20,000 people praying in homes. The meetings had an atmosphere of revival, and there was a remarkable harvest.
- The Hebrides Revival in Scotland (1949–1953), also known as the “Cottage Revival,” began with two sisters, Peggy and Christine Smith, ages 84 and 82, praying every night in their little cottage for revival to come to their island. At the time, churches were dead and practically empty. Not one young person attended church. It wasn't long before others on the island joined Peggy and Christine in prayer each night from their cottages. The revival lasted four years, and 90 percent of the island was saved—especially the teenagers and young adults under 40.

REVIVAL TODAY

This pattern holds true in modern-day revivals as well. In our book, *Fire on the Family Altar*, Hal and I tell the story of our friend Chris, who traveled to Uganda to document stories of how revival began there. He had seen large stadium events attended by multiple thousands who gathered to worship and pray for their nation. At one gathering, President Yoweri Museveni proclaimed Uganda to be a Christian nation.

When Chris interviewed Christians who had participated, they talked about how the revival had actually started in their homes. It became

clear that family units praying together were the real foundation of the revival. People shared stories of how marriages were healed, prodigals came home, and family members were delivered from addictions.

From their homes, the Ugandan Christians expanded their prayer clusters and invited the Holy Spirit into their schools, workplaces, and every sector of life—even to the Bank of Uganda, the president's office, and Parliament.

IT'S HAPPENING AGAIN!

We are entering the beginning of a God-breathed, worldwide Great Awakening like never seen before—marked by a growing societal awakening and a desperation for the healing of our nation and the brokenness of her people.

Already we are seeing believers responding to the call of God's Spirit to pray for lost friends, colleagues, and fellow students. They are gathering in homes, churches, schools, and workplaces, crying out for Him to send conviction, healing, and transformation.

This sense of calling is driven by the Holy Spirit, not by any human. No one is organizing this. There is no template or formula for how these clusters of believers are forming—though it's extraordinary how closely they resemble the practice of the early Church in the Book of Acts, who worshiped, prayed, and fellowshiped from “house to house”! Believers emerged to share the gospel with boldness and in demonstration of the Holy Spirit's power to heal, save, and deliver.

We see the same emphases developing in prayer clusters forming today:

Families Praying “House to House”

- Praying with family and friends for revival in their households and nation.
- Opening their homes for other believers to join in fellowship, teaching, sharing meals, and prayer (Acts 2:42).

Praying for the Holy Spirit's Power

- Praying to share the gospel with power, evidenced by healings, miracles, and deliverances.
- Praying by name for friends, family, and colleagues to know Christ and be set free.

Becoming Watchmen and Gatekeepers

- Serving as spiritual gatekeepers for families, schools, cities, and the nation.
- Occupying and transforming the spheres for which they are praying.

Clusters are forming in neighborhoods everywhere. Christians are intentionally getting to know their neighbors, reaching out to help elderly neighbors and single moms with home improvement projects, taking meals, and praying for those who are sick. Many who are being befriended, prayed for, and ministered to are accepting the Lord.

For example, our friends Guy and Teri Chadwick began sharing a weekly “Taco Tuesday” meal with four other couples. The couples challenged one another to pray for revival in their individual homes every night at 8:00 p.m. Then, on Sunday afternoons, they all meet together to pray for revival in their city of Manhattan Beach and for the nation, often prayer-walking the neighborhood. Guy and Teri always include in their prayers that “not one family member or friend will miss the revival—they will all be saved and fervently serve the Lord.”

One professor we know encourages her students to form clusters to pray for one another and for revival on the university campus. We heard of a city official who formed a cluster with her fitness trainer. They pray together every time she goes to the gym.

THE NEW WINE IS IN “THE CLUSTER”

You might notice that these prayer groups are unconventional. That’s why, rather than more familiar terms like “prayer groups” or “prayer cells,” I like the term “revival prayer clusters” when referring to the new thing the Lord is doing. The prophet Isaiah speaks of this when he declares,

Thus says the LORD: “As the new wine is found in the cluster. . .”
(Isa. 65:8, NKJV).

The emphasis here is on the *cluster*, not individual grapes. The grapes are not plucked individually but must remain together to produce the new wine. New wine speaks of the Holy Spirit’s anointing.

The Spirit of God is doing a new thing! No one needs to sit on the sidelines in this next great move of His Spirit. We can all actively **pray for** and **BE the Revival!** We can be part of producing the “new wine.” It’s as easy as calling a friend to start praying together or inviting your neighbor to coffee and seeing if there is a need you can meet or something for which you can pray.

Remember Jesus’ words: “. . . if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them” (Matt. 18:19–20).

What a powerful promise!

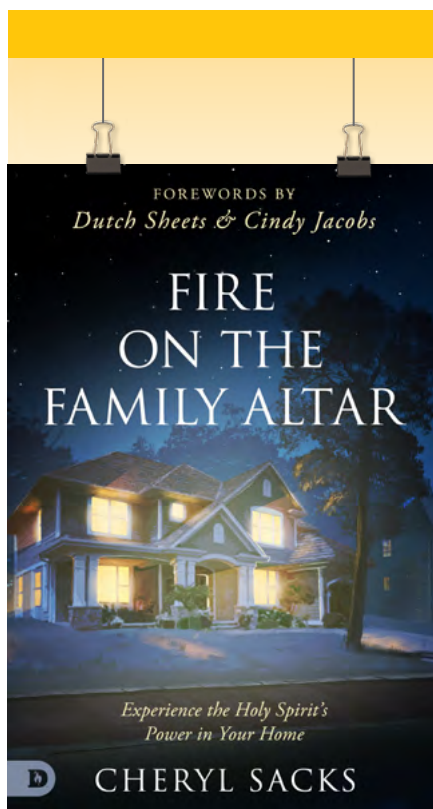
PRAY WITH ME

Let’s pray together that the light of Christ in us will shine brightly so that the world will see and give glory to God for the coming revival:

Lord, let not one of Your disciples be found sitting on the sidelines of this emerging revival. We declare we will obey Your command to “go” share the gospel (Mark 16:15–20) and make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:18–20). We pray that we, Your Ecclesia, will be activated like the Church in the Book of Acts—to share the gospel in power so that thousands will be added to the Church daily. PC



CHERYL SACKS is the author of six books, including *Fire on the Family Altar*, a guide to igniting revival in your home and nation. You can learn more about Cheryl and Hal Sacks’ ministry at bridgebuilders.net.



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A Day in the Life of a Prayerer

How do you define a prayerer? The answer is different for everyone. I like the idea of letting God hold us and guide us in love as we go about our normal daily routines. This helps to focus on the abundant blessings we are given each day.

We can begin each day with a “good morning” prayer, thanking God for the lovely day and asking for His guidance in knowing where we should focus our attention. I do a quick kneel by my bedside in thanksgiving, asking for guidance throughout the day. I ask Him to bless my family as well. I know I can’t protect all of them myself, but placing them in His hands helps me to start the day with my trust in Him. I also ask God to show me things that I otherwise might not notice—someone who needs help or the offering of a kind word.

A few times per day, I set a mental reminder (or you can even set a physical reminder on your phone) to take a minute and thank God again for the positive things that are happening. Blessings are everywhere, waiting to be noticed. Even small things like a deadline met or a

quick response to a question are reasons to give thanks.

God cares about all our issues and situations—no matter how seemingly uninteresting. He is right by our side and available for every decision. Personally, I’ll even drop for a quick kneel if the place is appropriate.

Some days just slump along with things not going as planned or as desired. On those days, I take it hour by hour. At the top of each hour, I ask God for guidance and direction: “Lord, thank You for helping me through this day. Please let me know what I should do in this next hour.”

I don’t have an instant flash of brilliance, but I have a little sliver of peace knowing God is in this with me.

Looking Back

At the end of the day, I remember all the wonderful blessings that have happened throughout the day. There are always many, even on a hard or “bad” day. People who love me, people I love, people I was able to help. I am thankful for food, health, shelter, and for God’s guidance through it all.



If sleep is hard in coming and my brain is on overdrive, I like to invite calm by counting my blessings. I see how high I can get before I drift to sleep. It’s a way of praising God quietly instead of focusing on my worries.

I can also hand my worries over to God. I picture each of my concerns on a card and, standing next to God, I hand Him each card. He holds it carefully and nods in agreement that He will be in charge of those worries. I no longer need to hold onto them.

Being in unceasing prayer throughout the day reminds us of the constant presence of God in our lives. He’s there with us. We can be there with Him in communication throughout the day as well.

JESSE NEVE is an author from Minnesota who writes for family publications.

Weaponizing Prayer: Revenge or Blessing?

I had been betrayed by two people, each around the same time in a similar way—and I struggled to know how to pray for them.

Each time I thought of praying for them (which I took to be a sign of the Holy Spirit prompting me), I intended to tell God how to deal with their sin against me. I sought to use prayer as a means of getting revenge, justified because they had

hurt me deeply. I was weaponizing prayer.

When I recognized my motivation and had enough spiritual insight to ask the Holy Spirit to help (and forgive) me, I was reminded of a prayer champion in Scripture who weaponized prayer, but with the exact opposite motivation.

Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in

prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured (Col. 4:12).

I was humbled by Paul’s description of this faithful servant of Jesus who was fervently committed to praying for the people God had placed in his life. Rather than pray against, Epaphras prayed for. He prayed forward, from whatever

problem the person had, toward a better spiritual future.

This was an important step in my journey to understand prayer as a weapon, not against the people who hurt or deceive me, but for the purposes and promises of God to invade their lives and circumstances. It's a radical shift of focus from relational warfare to spiritual warfare on behalf of the person who has brought me pain or problems.

In the Gospels, Jesus presents us with a challenging, unexpected teaching. But as always, His words are true wisdom and life-transforming—not only for the recipient of the prayer but also for the person praying. To weaponize prayer with a forward look has a double blessing.

"But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you" (Luke 6:27–28).

To bless is "to invoke divine care" (God's response); "to confer prosperity" (my request). To confer a blessing is to intercede from a gracious heart that wants what is truly good for the persons prayed for, even if they have treated us unfairly.

God will bless you, even if others treat you unfairly for being loyal to him (1 Peter 2:19, CEV).

Weaponizing for Blessing

Our prayers must be weaponized, but not for retaliation. Every response to a prayer is God being gracious. Almighty God wants to receive and respond to believers' prayers that echo and emulate the praying heart of our Lord Jesus. We are to mature beyond presenting God with a get-this-for-me demand or a get-them-back-for-me command.

Our prayers must become motivated by what motivates our Lord, modeled after the Father's gracious



generosity. Grace, generosity, and blessing should be in the DNA of every prayer, praise, or petition.

Prayers that release blessings require a sincere spirit of godliness; seeking to present our petition in what we believe would bless our gracious, generous God. A Holy Spirit-bred prayer that supersedes our personal pleas or pain. A prayer we could expect to hear Jesus praying as He intercedes in heaven for those lost or lonely, bruised, or broken.

A prayer beyond our self.

PHIL MIGLIORATTI is curator of The Reimagine Network (pray.network).

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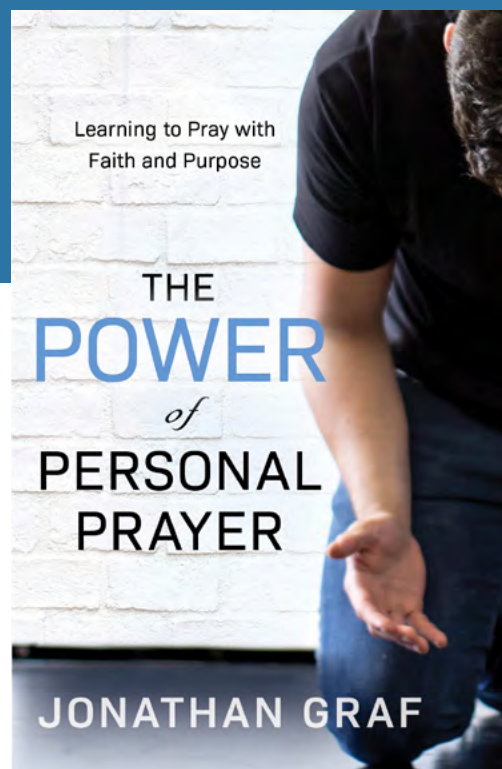
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How Do We Respond to a Broken Nation? | By Bill Elliff

It is a tragic thing to watch a nation digress. We live in the midst of such vile immorality today that the current generations cannot possibly remember anything different.

But I can. And so can millions of people over 60 years of age. Before you scoff, don't discount the reality. I remember a nation where:

- Every day in the public school, we began with prayer, asking for God's help and protection on our day. You may laugh at this, but your very laughter indicates you cannot envision the possibility or the blessing that comes when whole segments of society see prayer as an essential function.
- Television had no profanity (none), no sexual perversion, no nakedness, and what was promoted was wholesome. The daily fare was *Father Knows Best*, *Gunsmoke*, *Red Skelton*, and *I Love Lucy*.
- Political leaders disagreed, but they disagreed agreeably. There was a level of civility that is now a distant memory.
- Church activities and special events were reported, even on the front page of the newspaper.
- The Church had great respect from all levels of society and was making rapid advances.
- The things of God were not scoffed at or ridiculed.
- A child could ride his or her bike almost anywhere with safety.
- The basest kinds of immorality, normalized today, were unheard of.
- Abortion did not exist except in dark alleys.

I'm not saying these days were perfect or that our nation was living in revival. And I'm not praying for a return to "Americanism" or mere moralism. We need spiritual revival and a great awakening that will manifest itself in vastly different ways. But it was a very different moral culture in the 1950s, which has eroded dramatically over the last 50 years.

Response to Digression

Nehemiah watched a similar digression. His people had disobeyed God, and God had given them up to their enemies so they would come to desperation and return to Him. Nehemiah saw the low point come in a conversation with his brother, who had returned to Babylon from their hometown of Jerusalem.

In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa, Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that had survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem. They said to me, "Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire." When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven (Neh. 1:1–4).

You can formulate four responses to the moral and spiritual digression of a nation:

1. Gradual Assimilation. This will happen without knowing it is occurring. Like the frog in the kettle, you can

gradually adjust your morals so that godlessness is a part of your lifestyle and doesn't really disturb you anymore.

2. Hopeless Resignation. You can be so defeated and disturbed that you throw up your hands and offer no resistance—even though, if you are a believer, you are an ambassador of the King of kings and "the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

3. Frantic Humanism. You can rush around, vainly trying every human option to stem the tide of the enemy's assault. This can make a big noise but produce little substantive change in the end.

4. Spiritual Repentance and Fervent Prayer. Nehemiah chose this response. His appeal was to the God who is above the nations and rules over all. He fasted and prayed and immediately obeyed the Holy Spirit's promptings and directives of His Word. In the end, it led to one of the most significant nationwide revivals in the history of the world (see Nehemiah, chapters 8–9).

Only God

Nehemiah knew that only God could stem the tide and reverse the decay. Only God could mercifully forgive and return His glory to the land. Only God could move the hearts of government leaders. Only God could revive a sleeping Church and awaken a lost society. Only God . . . *Only God*.

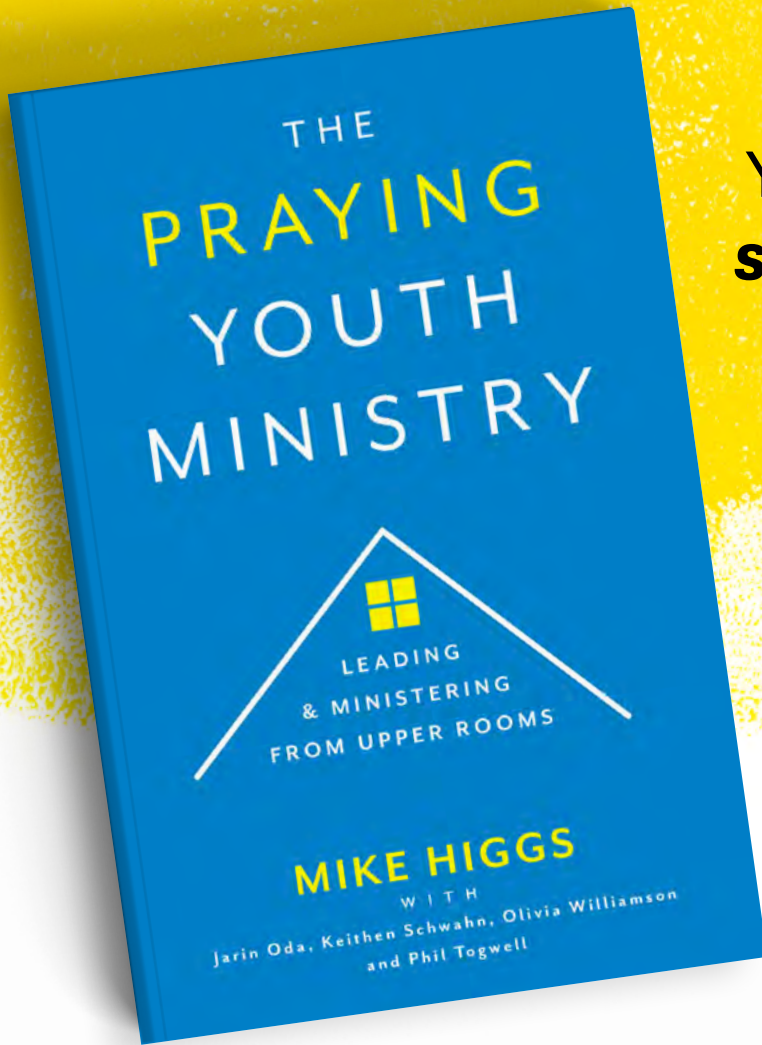
As you survey our land today, what will history record as your response? ☞



BILL ELLIFF is the pastor/church director for OneCry, a nationwide call for revival and spiritual awakening (onecry.com).

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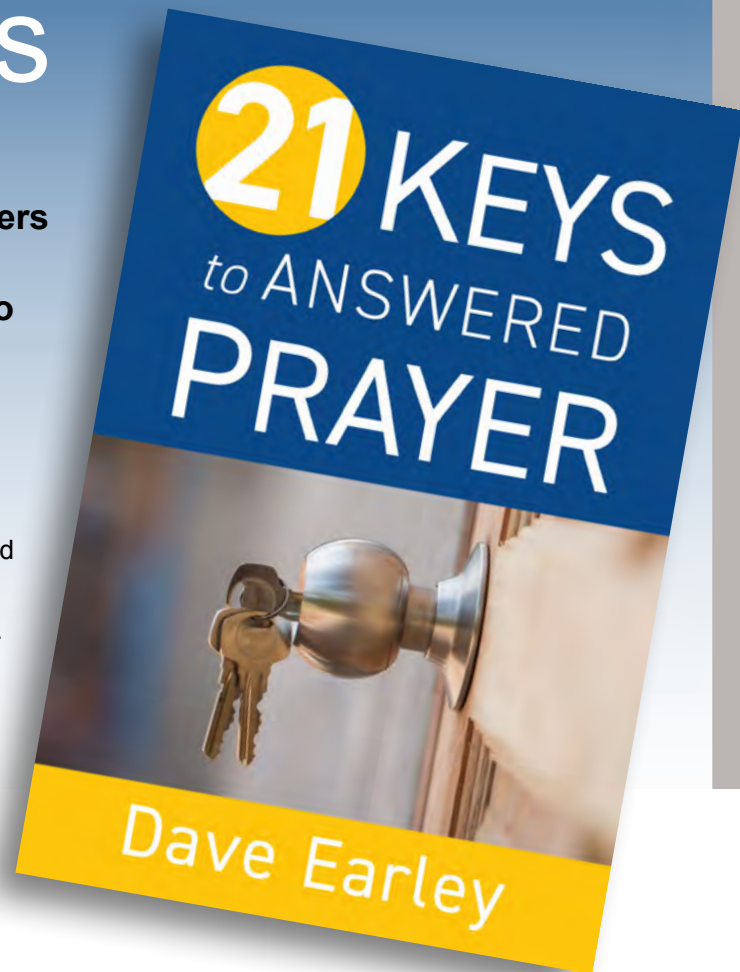


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