

Prayer That Changes a Nation

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Clearly, our nation is in desperate need of prayer. We need the power of God to be poured out. We need another great awakening. The Church needs to be revived. We need godly leaders in our nation. None of that will happen without prayer.

Most of us feel inadequate regarding having any real on a nation the size of the United States. But we believe God can change the very heart of a people. He won't, however, unless we ask. So it does come down to you. Quit complaining and whining about leaders in Washington, D.C., or your state capitol. It's time to pray!

How do you pray in a way that changes a nation? Many want to pray but don't know how.

Jehoshaphat was an Old Testament leader who prayed and led his people back to God. His story is found in 2 Chronicles 17. Though the entire chapter is helpful, I want to focus on verses 3-6:

The Lord was with Jehoshaphat because he followed the ways of his father David before him. He did not consult the Baals but sought the God of his father and followed his commands rather than the practices of Israel. The Lord established the

kingdom under his control; and all Judah brought gifts to Jehoshaphat, so that he had great wealth and honor. His heart was devoted to the ways of the Lord; furthermore, he removed the high places and the Asherah poles from Judah.

The Key

It ultimately is Christ we are looking for, not just a better nation. We need a realignment of our hearts.

Jehoshaphat is a prime example of how beginning correctly impacts a nation. There were many ungodly options for finding direction and leading the nation. Jehoshaphat clearly chose to seek God and devoted himself to God's ways. As you read the rest of 2 Chronicles 17 and even the next few chapters, you see how God greatly blessed the whole nation because the leader was seeking Him.

Jehoshaphat's seeking of the Lord led him to place the Scriptures in a place of honor in the life of his nation. He literally led the way in making sure the people knew what was right and what was wrong. In 2 Chronicles 19:4, Jehoshaphat went out himself into the villages and led the people spiritually.

If you are reading this and saying, "Oh, I wish our leaders would do this," my question to you is, "Are you asking God to raise up political leaders who are also godly leaders?" Why not? James tells us we do not have because we do not ask (4:3). You can make a difference in the spiritual climate of our nation by praying for those who are in office and those who are seeking office. Pray that they would, like Jehoshaphat, first of all seek God!

But praying for leaders should not be a one-shot deal. We need to press in with persistence. Christians are literally commanded in 1 Timothy 2:1-4 to pray for our leaders. Instead of complaining, we need to be interceding.

I would also suggest that you personally begin to seek the Lord with greater passion and intensity. It is not just our leaders who need to draw near to CHRIST and experience His presence. Each one of us needs this. The promise of Scripture is that if you seek, you will find. We are told in the book of James that if we would draw near to Him, He would draw near to us. It is an absolute promise from the Lord!

Imagine living in a nation where a large number of people are crying out to God for His presence and are passionately seeking Him. You will find yourself in a community where love is leading the way. Those who are hurting are helped by their neighbors rather than an impersonal government agency. Justice for all becomes a way of life rather than a catch-phrase. Peace is sought by all. It really can happen! But we must do our part and become a people of prayer.

We also need to pray about our follow-up actions. Jehoshaphat twice goes about the nation teaching the people to follow the Lord. Rarely is prayer the last thing we do. Often, prayer launches us into divinely inspired activity that the Lord uses to help answer our own prayers.

Things you might do to help with the direction of our nation:

- Work for a candidate.
- Run for office.
- Volunteer at a crisis pregnancy center or a place that feeds the hungry.
- Above all, become an active part of your church's efforts to reach your community for Christ.

I believe, along with many others, that God is not done with the United States. There is hope for another great awakening that honors the Lord and releases his power for transformation in our culture. Depending upon your viewpoint, it may well be the last revival before the Lord returns to bring this age to a close. I don't know about you, but I want to be in on what

God is doing in our day. And without question, that means that we commit ourselves to become a people of prayer, prayer through which God works His purposes in our nation and around the world.

Prayer Point

Begin to passionately seek the Lord in greater ways in your own life and pray with that same passion for our political leaders to know the Lord.

Dave Butts is the president of Harvest Prayer Ministries and the Chairman of the Board of the National Day of Prayer Task Force. This article is excerpted from his book *With One Cry: A Renewed Challenge to Pray for America*.