

# PRAYERCONNECT

Connecting to the Heart of Christ through Prayer

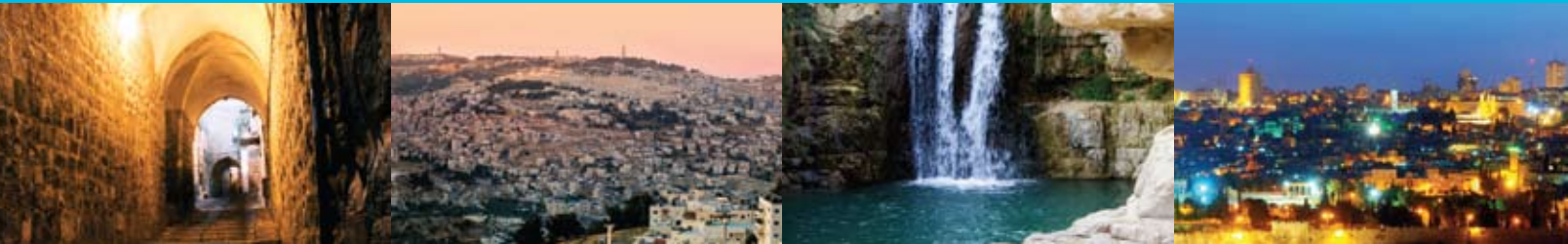
## The Place Was Shaken

IGNITING THE  
POWER OF  
CORPORATE  
PRAYER

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A Pastor's **GREATEST FAILURE**  
**ALL THINGS REVIVAL**



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**Dr. Thomas E. Trask**  
Chairman, Convoy of Hope's Global Prayer Initiative



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**“Coming together in Jerusalem to cry out to the Lord on behalf of those who are suffering is both Godly and timely.”**

**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



# PRAYERCONNECT

July/August 2012 | Vol. 2, No.4



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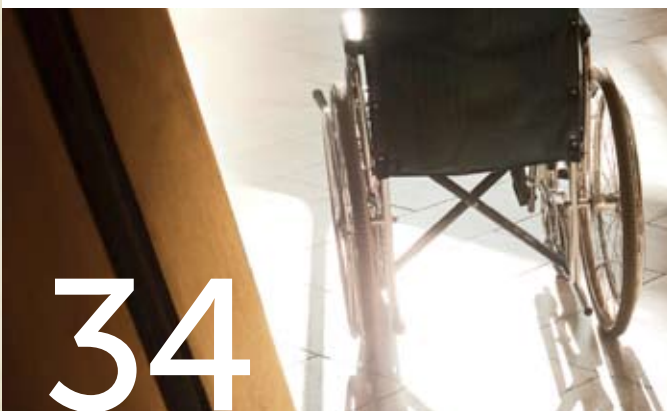
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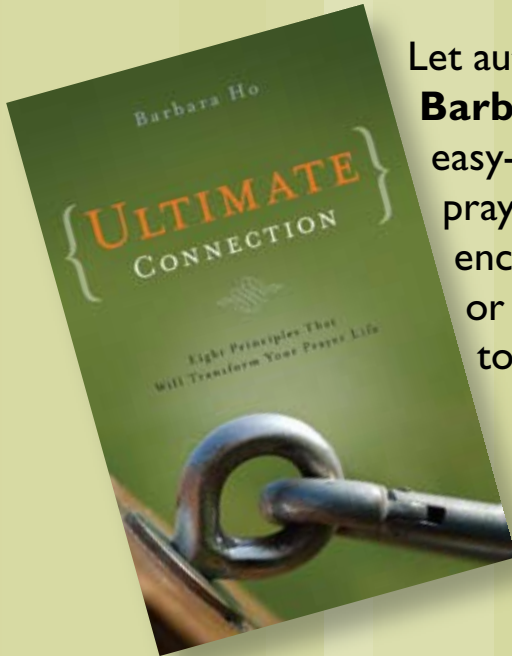
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**Barbara Ho's**  
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— Susan Lana Hafner, OneTouchAwakening, Inc.

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## Article Submissions

We are looking for general articles, ideas, and news stories on what God is doing as a result of prayer. As a start-up magazine, we are primarily looking for newly written pieces that have not appeared in other publications. Writer's guidelines are available by emailing Carol Madison at [editor@prayerconnect.net](mailto:editor@prayerconnect.net). For news stories, we recommend emailing first to see if we have an interest in reporting on the event or item you wish to write about. Send your submissions to:

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## Subscriptions

*Prayer Connect* is a bi-monthly publication, available in Church Prayer Leaders Network (CPLN) Membership (\$30 per year), Print (\$24.99 per year) or Digital (\$19.99 per year) formats. Both CPLN and Print subscriptions include access to the Digital version. To subscribe, go to [prayerconnect.net](http://prayerconnect.net). We also have multiple copy discounts available for individuals or churches who want to purchase copies for a prayer team or small groups:

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## Need a Speaker for Your Prayer Conference or Event?

There are a number of gifted speakers associated with *Prayer Connect*. Jonathan Graf regularly ministers in churches of varying sizes. Carol Madison is also available to minister in the area of prayer 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 **PRAYERCONNECT** is

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

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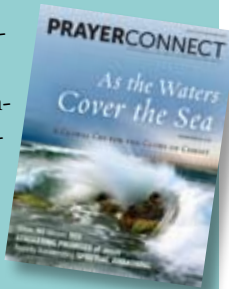
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Joanne Telle

## Previously in Prayer Connect

Thousands of believers gathered at the World Prayer Assembly in Jakarta, Indonesia, in May 2012. Their prayers were unified pleas that God might again unleash a powerful worldwide prayer movement. The May/June 2012 issue, "As the Waters Cover the Sea," is about the global cry for the glory of Christ to be known throughout the earth. Articles by Steve Hawthorne and Dick Eastman will stir your heart to believe that God is about to act in a global way. Order at [prayershop.org](http://prayershop.org).



## Prayer That's Front and Center

One of the biggest indicators of a praying church is how much prayer is front and center in its worship service. In praying churches, you do not have to be in the building very long before you know prayer is important to them.



I was recently at Trinity Evangelical Missionary Church in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, whose pastor Nick Cardases (an interim pastor who has been there for five years) continues to challenge the congregation to be a house of prayer. While he would say the church still has a long way to go, my observation is that it is becoming a praying church.

On the Sunday I was there, I arrived at 8:30 a.m. and participated in a pre-service prayer meeting that lasted 80 minutes. Although not heavily attended (with just eight participants), it was a powerful time as we worshipped with a prayer list that focused us on Christ. In between songs, Pastor Nick led us in various prayer topics, all related to what was going to happen in the morning worship service.

The 10:00 a.m. service, which was a 90-minute event, started with 30 minutes of musical worship and had more than 40 minutes of prayer (plus a message on prayer that I gave). And if we count the musical worship that included songs that really were prayers or declarations of who Christ is, we spent a good 60 minutes in prayer. It made me think that an early Church gathering might have looked the same.

Trinity Church's worship leader prayed between songs, as well as led the congregants to pray for each other in groups while we were singing one song. The pastor was moved by the fact that the worship team (backing up the leader) was made up of kids (9 to 16 years of age). He had the kids' parents come up and lay hands on their children as he prayed, asking God to release a passion and delight for worship in each of them.

Next, a baby dedication was all about prayer as parents and the assistant pastor all prayed over a new baby. (See Tips and Tools in this issue for a description of their prayers.)

Finally, two "words" were presented, one by a young congregant and one by me. I had sensed early into the service that God was going to use this church—and particularly its many young couples—in a unique way to see people come to Christ. Rather than speak that over them, I prayed for its release. To close out the service, people were invited to come forward to be prayed for by teams.

### What Does This Do?

After the service I asked Pastor Nick if this was typical or something special. I was excited when he said that it was typical for their worship services. I told him he was well on his way to being a house of prayer.

While there still are not a lot of people who come out to the church's corporate prayer times outside the morning worship service, I suspect that will change. Every week people see prayer front and center—and as a result, they will keep growing in 1) their understanding of its importance, and 2) their sense of expectation from prayer. As that deepens in their lives, more people will value praying with believers at other times.

That can happen in your church, too, if you work to make prayer more front and center in the worship service.

—Jonathan Graf





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our nation

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## ONECRY Launches Series of Prayer Broadcasts

During the month of May, Moody Radio Network in Chicago hosted a weekly OneCry prayer summit, with ministry and prayer leaders speaking about the principles of revival, as well as praying for a national spiritual awakening. The broadcast was hosted by Wayne Shepherd and Bob Bakke, and featured such leaders as Erwin Lutzer, Nancy Leigh



DeMoss, Byron Paulus, Francis Chan, Rick Warren, Mark Batterson, Crawford Loritts, and Stuart Briscoe.

The initial broadcast was on the evening of the National Day of Prayer (NDOP) and was featured on nearly 500 radio stations across the nation. The listening audience included people in 94 nations who joined through Internet streaming. In addition, several hundred participated in the prayer summit through live chatting and social media.

The NDOP broadcast also included a live link with the UNITE prayer gathering at the Mariucci hockey arena on the University of MN campus where 1,500 people (mostly students) were gathered



to pray for spiritual awakening on their campuses. Nick Hall joined prayers with Warren and Chan for God to do a work in the student generation.

OneCry is a growing movement of believers who are urgently crying out to God to revive the church and transform the culture. You can learn more or commit to pray by going to [onecry.com](http://onecry.com).

## A Call to 40 Days of Pre-election Prayer

“If we do not pray, we will soon not recognize our nation,” says Dave Butts, chairman of America’s National Prayer Committee. “We need to ask for the intervention of God.”

While attending the World Prayer Assembly in Jakarta, Indonesia, in May, Butts sensed a strong challenge from God that he is to devote much of his time before the November elections to the message that the United States desperately needs a season of 40 days of continuous prayer. As he prayed and worshipped with 9,000 other prayer leaders, the conviction grew stronger for Butts—something he was not expecting as he attended the world prayer gathering.

The burden he felt was in turn confirmed by other believers from various countries (China, India, Egypt, Malaysia),

who approached him with the same message: *The world is praying about the elections in November; when are believers in the United States going to get serious and join in fervent prayer for their nation?*

### Launch of 40 Days in September

As a result, Butts is urging 40 days of continuous prayer from September 28 to the national elections on November 6. This is a call for Christians to pray day and night, perhaps joining with other churches in their community or with other prayer movements that already exist.

“Everyone needs to do *something*,” Butts says, acknowledging that there are many 40-day prayer guides and initiatives already in existence—and that God is not leading him to create something new. For Butts, the point is for all believers to

### Prayer Calendar

**Cry Out America**  
**Tuesday, September 11**  
[awakeningamerica.us](http://awakeningamerica.us)

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**See You at the Pole**  
**Wednesday, September 26**  
[syatp.com](http://syatp.com)

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**40 Days of Prayer for Elections**  
**September 28–November 6**  
[40daysofprayer.net](http://40daysofprayer.net)

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**America for Jesus**  
**September 28-29**  
[afj2012.org](http://afj2012.org)

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**Day of Prayer for the Peace of Jerusalem**  
**Sunday, October 7**  
[daytopray.org](http://daytopray.org)

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BE A  
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CATALYST**

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NETWORK  
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get involved in some way—however God might lead their church or ministry.

“We need to pray like we’ve never prayed before,” he says. He believes it will be an unprecedented prayer movement in the United States that will continue far beyond the elections.

There are three areas of prayer that Butts believes are critical to the 40 days: 1) for the elections, 2) that a standard of

righteousness will be raised up over the nation, and 3) for revival of the Church. He also emphasizes that this call to prayer is not intended to be a political statement.

An informational website has been established that will track organized 40-day prayer efforts around the nation. To connect with or report on 40-day initiatives in your area, go to [40daysofprayer.net](http://40daysofprayer.net).

## A Taste of Revelation 7 in Jakarta

More than 9,000 prayer leaders, pastors, and ministry leaders from more than 80 nations gathered in Jakarta, Indonesia, May 14–18, to participate in the World Prayer Assembly. Many participants believe it was a picture of Revelation 7:9–12, with those from every tribe and nation worshipping around the throne of God.

Themed “A New Wave Is Coming,” the event was hosted by the churches of Indonesia and Korea. The Assembly featured vibrant worship, informational keynote speakers, practical workshops, and lots of prayer. Frequently throughout each general session, the crowd huddled in groups to pray over what they just heard. Topics such as the underground Church in North Korea, the Church in China, human trafficking, political corruption, and a fresh outpouring on the younger generation (children and young adults) brought intense moments of intercession.

Worship was led by teams from Indonesia, Singapore, South Africa, and Sweden. Participants often sang in their own languages, with the lyrics of a song regularly displayed in Indonesian or Chinese (there were more than 600 participants from mainland China).

Besides Indonesia and Korea bringing the largest contingents, other nations

with significant national groups were China, Singapore, and Vietnam. Other nations that had smaller, but noticeable numbers, were the United States, Great Britain, South Africa, India, and Malaysia.

The main gathering was held at the Sentul International Convention Center, south of Jakarta. Actually a church building, the arena held 11,000 with plenty of space for breakout sessions. Pastored by Niko Njotorahardjo, Healing Ministries is a movement of more than 800 local groups (numbering more than 200,000 members) who focus on prayer. Each of their facilities has a 24-hour prayer room that focuses on intercession for Indonesia and the nations. The Sentul church is working to bring transformation to its community by building homes, launching businesses to provide jobs, and ministering to the poor.



PHOTO BY BILL MCCOY





### Packed Stadium

The culmination of the event came Thursday night when participants joined more than 100,000 Indonesians at the largest soccer stadium in Jakarta for a four-hour prayer rally. The event was streamed into more than 300 stadiums around Indonesia with an estimated one million participants. It reached even beyond Indonesia through live broadcast on God TV.

One of the moving moments of this event was the ceremony of Lighting the Unity Torch. Representatives from different regions of the world passed a lit torch until it came to two Indonesian church leaders—a Protestant and a



PHOTO BY BILL MCCOY

Catholic—who lit a large torch. The Indonesian Church is largely believed to

be the most unified Church in the world, with every stream—from Pentecostal, Evangelical, Mainline, and Catholic—praying together for the salvation of souls and transformation of Indonesia (a must, given the fact that Indonesia is the largest Muslim nation in the world.)

The World Prayer Assembly was the second one in history, with the first held in South Korea in 1984. Many church leaders look at the first event as the catalyst for the modern prayer movement. Prayer leaders are watching closely to see what God births out of this recent event.

Main sessions can be viewed at [worldprayerassembly.org](http://worldprayerassembly.org).

## Jerusalem Pilgrimage Highlights Pray for Hope

Convoy of Hope is planning a highly visible, worldwide prayer event called Pray for Hope ([prayforhope.com](http://prayforhope.com)), with the goal of enlisting a million people to intercede on behalf of the planet's poor and suffering.

A ten-day prayer pilgrimage in Israel during December will culminate with a 12-hour gathering on 12.12.12 (December 12, 2012) in Jerusalem. The tour, in cooperation with the Center for Holy Lands Studies, will focus on alleviating conditions causing poverty.

"The poor were near to the heart of Jesus," says Thomas E. Trask, chairman of Convoy's Global Prayer Initiative. "When people pray, the Lord is able to turn the circumstances of the poor and suffering. When we pray, the Lord will bring those in poverty and distress out of hardship and heartache, and into joy and abundant life."

Compassion has been a hallmark of Convoy of Hope since its founding in 1994. "When Jesus was moved to compassion, His first step was always prayer," says Assemblies of God world missionary Tom Lofton, founder of 12.12 Global Day of Prayer for the Poor and Suffering.

"That ought to be our response as well."

Trask, who retired in 2007 after 14 years as general superintendent of the Assemblies of God, is volunteering to head up the campaign.

The past two years, Pray for Hope has been held on Dec. 12 in Kansas City, MO, in conjunction with International House of Prayer (IHOP). Scores of intercessors, especially young people, have been praying at IHOP around the clock since 1999. In addition, Pray for Hope has sponsored summits in Phoenix, AZ; Detroit, MI; Brooklyn, NY; Laredo, TX, and Springfield, MO.

### Jerusalem Connection

The 2012 experience will feature live-stream coverage from Jerusalem. Numerous partners supporting the event include the Global Day of Prayer, National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, National Day of Prayer Task Force, America's National Prayer Committee, [ourprayer.org](http://ourprayer.org) of Guideposts, and IHOP.

Jerusalem is a significant location in Christian history. "We recognize that the greatest act of compassion was Jesus laying down His life in Jerusalem,"



says Harold Sallee, director of Convoy's Global Prayer Initiative.

The prayer journey will involve participants boarding buses daily to visit sites as well as to pray. Marc Turnage, director of the Assemblies of God Center for Holy Lands Studies ([holylandsstudies.ag.org](http://holylandsstudies.ag.org)), says throughout the trip people will be praying at specific locales that have stories relevant to the 12 points of prayer that Convoy of Hope has outlined in connection with the poor and suffering.

Trask says the ultimate goal of 12.12.12 is to awaken the Church to pray to be God's hand extended to those in need. "The Church has yet to discover the power of prayer," Trask says.

**JOHN W. KENNEDY** is news editor of the *Pentecostal Evangel*.



## Light the Fire: 24-7-520

### Ten Years of Day and Night Prayer

**D**ay and night prayer has been rapidly spreading across the globe as God's people are waking up to fresh passion for seeking His plans and purposes for His Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. One fellowship of believers, the Independent Christian Churches/Churches of Christ, has embraced 24-7 prayer as a collective journey towards asking God to give Jesus His inheritance of the nations: "Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession" (Ps. 2:8).

These churches (about 6,000 in the U.S. and another 8,000 internationally) are part of a ten-year prayer gathering



that began at midnight on January 1, 2011, and will continue through December 31, 2020. Churches, Bible colleges, and mission organizations that are part of this fellowship are passing a "torch of

prayer" from one to the next, each taking one week (168 hours) of day and night prayer. Because these churches are all independent with no physical "headquarters," the movement of prayer is literally an organic, grassroots prayer meeting. Not every week is filled yet, but the hope is that by the end of 2012, there will be multiple groups signing up each week for the remaining eight years.

#### Unique Prayer Expressions

Participants have their own Holy Spirit-directed expressions of prayer through the week. Guidelines and training are provided online, as well as people available by email and phone to coach the groups. The goal is to honor God rather than to adhere to a legalistic set of guidelines, so each group's week of prayer looks different from all the others.

A group begins on a Friday evening, receiving a virtual torch of prayer from

the previous group either by phone, Skype, or in person if possible. The group passing the torch shares from their week, and then prays over the group that is about to begin the next week of prayer.

Each group is encouraged to set aside a dedicated prayer room for the week. Setting up creative prayer stations allows people of all ages to meet with God. Many have never had this kind of experience in prayer before, and even the most hesitant about praying for an hour find that time goes quickly when they are stretched to connect with God in unique ways. Prayer stations can include laying hands on maps of the world, journaling prayers, attaching Scriptures to pictures of missionaries as they pray for them using the Word of God, etc.

For training materials or examples of how churches are organizing their prayer rooms, go to [restorationrevolution.com/almighty](http://restorationrevolution.com/almighty). Contact [lightthefire@harvest-prayer.com](mailto:lightthefire@harvest-prayer.com) for more information.

## Prayer Preparation for the Olympics

**P**rayer leaders and intercessors have been preparing for the 2012 Summer Olympics in London by participating in seven years of prayer and praise around the coasts of Scotland, England, and Wales. One young man completed a prayer walk of the entire coast of Great Britain, and other intercessors have walked and prayed along their parts of the coast and rivers. The Lydia prayer movement has raised up a "spiritual coastguard," and many prayer centers have been started along the coast—all in preparation for the Olympics.

Many of the prayers have centered on the nations coming to the UK for the Games, with the desire that all will experience an encounter with God and

a blessing upon their nations. Already the prayer movement has received great favor from the Olympic organizers. This includes being asked to provide more than 1,000 Game pastors to welcome people as they arrive at ports, airports, and stations. The police force has invited the Church to help with many of the policing challenges, and the Salvation Army was awarded the contract to provide water to all athletes in all events.

More than Gold (a charity set up to coordinate the Christian response to the Games) has been equipping more than 3,000 churches throughout the country to provide service, mission, and hospitality. All main Christian denominations



and more than 80 organizations are working together. Many churches, prayer groups, and Houses of Prayer will provide a continuous canopy of prayer and praise during both the Olympics and the Paralympic Games.

You can connect with this prayer movement by going to [morethangold.org.uk](http://morethangold.org.uk). Prayer resources are available on the website.

**BRIAN MILLS** and **JANE HOLLOWAY** are part of the Prayer Forum of British Isles and Ireland.

# The Place Was Shaken

## IGNITING THE POWER OF CORPORATE PRAYER



I was in downtown Minneapolis in a meeting with several ministry leaders the day tragedy struck our nation. Together, on 9/11, we watched the news of the Twin Towers falling. In shock, we prayed and asked God how we should respond. We sensed we were to call churches together for corporate prayer.

A few of us walked across the street to the Metrodome, knelt on the sidewalk in front of the stadium, and asked God to give us that professional sports facility for a prayer gathering. Moments later we had permission to use the facility, free of charge, to invite the Church from all over the Twin Cities area to join us.

A flurry of emails went out to various ministries, which forwarded them through their networks. Five nights later, we were amazed when 24,000 people showed up to worship and pray in corporate unity. We were desperate for God to show His mercy upon our nation, and we prayed in agreement throughout the evening.

I made an assumption that night. We had already scheduled a citywide prayer gathering for a few months later at the Metrodome, and we had been promoting it prior to 9/11. So I assumed that after this powerful corporate prayer experience, people would return and bring more friends with them.

But as we got closer to the follow-up prayer gathering, I sensed a shift. It was clear that the urgency had left people's hearts. Other church events and personal calendars began to take precedence over coming together again to pray for revival and spiritual awakening in our city.

I tried not to look at all the empty seats that night as we prayed with a much smaller crowd. But I admit I was discouraged. I still wonder what evidences of God's favor

we might see today had we continued to increase our corporate cries on behalf of our nation.

### Shaking with Power

When the disciples were threatened and intimidated over speaking the truths of Jesus, they responded by gathering for prayer. Together they raised their voices to God, asking for boldness and miraculous signs of His hand upon them (Acts 4:29–30). I suspect all the disciples were present and accounted for in this moment of distress. One can't imagine anything better to do at that time!

God, in turn, answered their prayers by filling them with the Holy Spirit and enabling them to speak God's Word boldly. And, to add an exclamation point to His response, God caused the building to shake (v. 31). They asked for a sign—and God made sure there was no doubt that He was empowering them to keep sharing the gospel.

We may understand that corporate prayer—praying together with one heart—is important, but it can be such a struggle to make it a priority. In this issue you will read the confession of a senior pastor who returned to his previous church to repent to the elders for not leading them in more corporate prayer. Other prayer leaders will tell of times when corporate prayer has worked powerfully—and times when hindrances have overtaken the joy of praying together.

There is a direct correlation between praying corporately and experiencing the building-shaking power of the Spirit. The disciples proved by their lives and ministry that they had no doubt God was in the room that day! May God shake our churches again with His power and presence in answer to our prayers.

—Carol Madison, editor, *Prayer Connect*





By Dennis  
Fuqua



# United and IGNITED

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## THE EXTRAORDINARY IMPORTANCE OF CORPORATE PRAYER



Those who believe in the power of prayer would never question the importance of individual prayer. We know we need to grow in our personal prayer lives. But some dimensions of prayer can only take place when we step beyond individual prayer practices and into the realm of corporate prayer.

The term *corporate* prayer does not simply refer to praying with other people. In fact, it is possible to pray individual prayers in a group setting. Rather, I am referring to prayers that are *influenced* by the prayers of others—and, in turn, influence the prayers of others. I am referring to prayers that flow more from listening than from lists.

These are prayers of *agreement* or *harmonious* prayers. We could call them *symphonic* prayers. In fact, the word Jesus used in Matthew 18:19 most often translated *agree* is the word from which we get our English word *symphony*: “Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.”

**Location:** Jerusalem

**Date:** c. AD 32

**People:** Jerusalem believers with Peter and John

**Scripture:** Acts 4:23–31

**Setting:** Peter and John report being threatened by the religious leaders to no longer speak or minister in Jesus' name.

**Activity:** Fervent, united, corporate prayer

**Result:** Place where they prayed was shaken, they were filled with the Holy Spirit, and they were bold in their witness.

**Location:** Antioch

**Date:** c. AD 46

**People:** Leaders of the church at Antioch

**Scripture:** Acts 13:1–3

**Setting:** Leaders set aside time to spend with the Lord with no known agenda.

**Activity:** Passionate, corporate worship and prayer

**Result:** The Holy Spirit spoke. They obeyed. The missionary advance of the Church to "the ends of the earth" began. It has never stopped.

**Location:** Herrnhut, Germany

**Date:** August 13, 1727

**People:** The Moravians, a struggling Christian community of believers led by Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf

**Setting:** A rift within the movement threatened its very existence

**Activity:** A call to passionate, corporate prayer

**Result:** Fresh empowerment from the Holy Spirit and deep reconciliation within the community in turn birthed a prayer meeting that lasted more than 100 years and produced some of the most effective missionary activity since the Book of Acts.

**Location:** Many cities across the U.S. and other nations

**Date:** Present day

**People:** Pastors and other spiritual leaders

**Setting:** Varies from city to city, church to church

**Activity:** A fresh level of corporate prayer that is dynamic and attractive

**Result:** God encounters. United hearts. Vision ignited. Passion, perspective, relationship, and mission renewed. More cooperation, less competition. Jesus is both pleased and proclaimed.

**Location:** Your church, your city

**Date:** 2012 and beyond

**People:** You and your friends

**Setting:** Will vary from city to city, church to church

**Activity:** Fresh, corporate, united prayer flowing from fresh vision

**Result:** God hears and shows up! You can tell us more about what happened later.

When you think of corporate prayer, think of a group of people playing (or praying) a symphony from the same score, under the same Conductor, but playing their own unique instrument. They contribute just the right notes at just the right time. It is not simply that I am praying what is on my heart. It is that, together, we are praying what is on God's heart. The result is not only that Jesus hears more prayer, but that He hears one prayer from many voices.

## Prayer that Attracts Christ

There are at least three important factors in dynamic corporate prayer: First, the pray-ers are all sensitive to the Holy Spirit and do not bring their own prayer agendas with them. Second, worship is more than a tag at the beginning or the end of the time of prayer. It is a key part of the entire prayer experience. Third, Scripture sets and guides the themes of prayer. There may be a major topic of prayer, but our prayers are shaped more by God's thoughts in Scripture than by our own thoughts.

This is the kind of prayer that, according to Matthew 18:20, attracts the presence of Jesus in a unique way ("there am I with them"). Jesus is always with us, but He says He will be there in a special way when we pray corporate prayers.

This is the kind of prayer that seemed to be taking place in Acts 4 and 13, as described in the sidebar at left. This is the kind of prayer that is happening more and more in the church today. This is the kind of prayer that, as it increases, will produce deeper fulfillment in the pray-er and greater impact in our world. It unites and it ignites.

## Corporate Prayer Unites Us

Prayer has a unique capacity to unite the pray-ers. When my wife and I were engaged, after a short but good time of



# CORPORATE PRAYER ALLOWS US TO HEAR EACH OTHER'S HEARTS.

prayer, I remember thinking, *Wow, I know her much better after this time of prayer than if we would have spent much more time just talking to one another.*

This has proven true over and over again in our relationship.

When we speak to God in a safe environment and allow others to listen in on the conversation, we speak in a deeper way than when we simply speak to one another. Corporate prayer allows us to hear each other's hearts.

I have seen this work in groups of pastors who either did not know or did not like each other. As pastors have gathered from different denominational

or racial backgrounds and spent time hearing one another pour their hearts out in worship and intercession, they have concluded that they really do have much more that unites them than divides them. After a time of corporate prayer they have seen one another as true brothers and have even become great friends.

But the uniting does not stop on the horizontal plane. There is a deeper connection with God that can only happen in corporate prayer.

We get to know God more as we hear others who pray from a different personality, background, or theological

perspective. In Ephesians, Paul says that one reason he is praying for the Ephesian saints is, "so that they would know Him better" (1:17). This is a key reason to pray.

In Colossians 2:2-3, Paul, in a series of thoughts, demonstrates how this can happen: "My purpose [goal] is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, *so that* they may have the full riches of complete understanding, *in order that* they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ" (emphasis added).

Paul's thinking begins with believers being encouraged in heart and *united in love*. Prayer produces that kind of unity.



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# Praying Together Increases FAITH

BY JONATHAN GRAF

**I**n Matthew 17 and Mark 9 is the story of the father who brought his demon-possessed son to the disciples. They tried to cast it out, but could not. The boy was taken to Jesus, who spoke a word and the demon left. Later the disciples came to Jesus, baffled at what happened. Why? They knew how to cast out demons. Jesus had already sent them two by two into villages to cast out demons and heal the sick. So they asked Jesus why they couldn't do it this time.

Jesus said two things: "because you have so little faith" (Matt. 17:20), and "this kind can come out only by prayer" (Mark 9:29).

I wonder if the disciples attacked this demon issue cavalierly or routinely. They knew the words to say, the steps to take. But nothing worked because they were not "prayed up enough." Their faith was not there as a result. There is a clear connection between prayer and faith.

I believe faith is the most significant thing lost in a church that does not have corporate prayer. The main reason most churches are stagnant and do not see God at work in miraculous ways in their midst is that people don't know how to pray in faith anymore. Faith grows as we pray together. Here's how it works:

Imagine I am going through a tough time. In the midst of it, I try to pray with trust and faith, but it is difficult because I only see the issue. If I go and pray with others, however, what happens? As I listen to others pray with more faith than I have, my faith grows.

Here's how it works in a corporate situation: Let's say our church is planning to build. I'm an elder who is skeptical of the plans because they are beyond what we can afford. But I begin to pray with others, asking God for direction. God can now put a heart of trust in me, bringing me to unity with others and giving me the faith to believe Him for the miraculous—His vision and plan for my church. When I only pray by myself, this is less likely to happen.

Churches that do not pray together still minister in whatever ways they can, given their resources, abilities, and sacrifices. But churches that pray together begin to see the miraculous power of God at work in their midst. It goes beyond what they can and should do—into what God wants to do through them.

**JONATHAN GRAF** is publisher of *Prayer Connect*.

This unity will lead them to the full riches of understanding. This, in turn, will allow them to know the mystery of God, which is Jesus Christ Himself!

On many occasions I have had my understanding of Jesus Christ enlarged and even corrected as I have heard the prayers of people who know Christ differently (and in many cases better) than I have known Him. If we never pray with people from other portions of the Body of Christ, our view of Jesus can be limited to what we already know.

## Corporate Prayer Ignites Us

But deeper relationship is not the only value of corporate prayer. God uses corporate prayer to stir us and bring us more in line with His purposes. He uses corporate prayer to bring about personal renewal, fresh vision, greater passion, increased faith, and clear direction in His saints.

At a prayer retreat for the leadership of one congregation, the pastor sensed God had something He wanted to say to them as a group. So he invited the 40 to 50 people to take an hour or so by themselves and simply ask God if there was anything He wanted to say to this team. When they returned, there were about a dozen people who shared their thoughts. All but one brought up the topic of unity. God now had their attention.

Because this group asked together, they heard together. It was a great confirmation to all of them that God had given them some very specific direction. They were ready to listen.

As the Lord leads us in times of Spirit-directed corporate prayer and worship, He will often direct us to a theme. Then, as we read and pray from Scriptures and sing songs on that theme, He is able to bring conviction to one person, hope to another, and direction to another.

Once I was leading a prayer retreat with more than 150 men from one congregation who were together from



Thursday evening through Sunday. We did not have workshops or special speakers. We simply prayed. At the last session I asked people to share in a word or short phrase what they had experienced in those days together. Words like *rest, refreshment, direction, unity, and heart surgery* were mentioned. Then one man said, "The best marriage seminar I have ever been to!"

I remember thinking, *Marriage seminar? I know we didn't talk about marriage and I am not sure we even prayed very much about it.*

But we had worshipped enough to establish an environment for God (the best marriage counselor ever!) to tap this brother on the shoulder and speak to him about how He wanted him to treat his wife.

Recently, as I wrapped up a one-day time of prayer with pastors, I asked a similar question. One man said, "I came here wanting some clear direction from the Lord and He gave it to me as *you*—" he pointed to another man in the group "prayed." Even though the pray-er was not even praying for the man who was speaking, God used him to communicate exactly what was needed.

## On Behalf of a City

There have been many cities in our country that have been hit hard with unusual weather-related catastrophes in recent years. I know that pastors have had ongoing, meaningful, corporate prayer times in several of these cities. Without exception, when the catastrophe hit, they teamed together to serve their cities in very effective ways.

One factor in their effectiveness is the trusting, noncompetitive relationships they have developed over the years through prayer.

A second factor is the love and vision they have developed for their cities. As they were together interceding for their communities, God put fresh vision and desire in them to love the people around them through service. When the need

was there, they rose up as one church to meet it head on.

For example, in February of 2010, after several prayer summits for Rhode Island pastors, many of them wanted to take concrete steps to have a greater impact in their state. About 70 pastors were presented with the idea of forming the Love RI partnership. Pastors were given six weeks to decide, and by the end of March, 30 congregations decided they wanted to be involved.

Initially, the plan was to start with a pulpit exchange in June with a city outreach in the fall. However, before the initial April meeting could happen, the heavens were opened and much of the state was hit with a "100-year" flood!

At the first Love RI meeting, instead of talking about it, they began to do it. An official partnership with Samaritan's Purse was formed on the spot. Within one week's time 385 volunteers from 15 congregations were at work at various sites. Often the volunteers didn't even know each other, but quickly got acquainted through partnering in the work. There was often an opening to pray for people in their homes. Since then, other less spontaneous (and less drastic) activities have continued to mark the result of corporate prayer in Rhode Island.

In biblical times, throughout history, and even today, as people have prayed together—in congregations and cities—the consistent results have been a greater depth of relationship and a greater sense of mission among those who practice corporate prayer. Inevitably, they have offered greater impact in the name of Christ when they have been united in prayer and ignited by the Spirit. ☞



**DENNIS FUQUA** has been the director of International Renewal Ministries ([prayer-summits.net](http://prayer-summits.net)) since 2000. He is the author of *Living Prayer: The Lord's Prayer Alive in You*.

This article is adapted from his new book *United and Ignited: Encountering God through Dynamic Corporate Prayer*. Both are available through [livingprayer.net](http://livingprayer.net).

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By James  
Banks



# A Foretaste of HEAVEN

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## WAITING ON THE LORD TOGETHER



Imagine the church's first gathering in Jerusalem after Jesus' ascension. He had instructed them to wait for the Holy Spirit, and now they were coming together—waiting.

Peter was excited. He knew exactly what to do in the meantime. He ordered a demographic study of those Jerusalem neighborhoods targeted for growth and received a report from the city's planning office about the location of new construction permits. Nathaniel commissioned a survey of residents, zeroing in on their personal preferences. Bartholomew was thrilled with the new logo and eye-catching graphics he purchased (at a nonprofit discount) for the church's upcoming communication blitz. Everything was falling into place nicely for the fledgling church to thrive and change the world.

Or was it?

Something isn't quite right with this picture. Not that there's anything wrong with the methods mentioned, as far as they go. It's just that it didn't happen that way.



Jesus *had* told His followers to gather in Jerusalem, but they did only one thing while they were waiting: “They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers” (Acts 1:14).

Why did the leadership of the early Church place such a high priority on meeting together to pray? Was it only because the Holy Spirit hadn’t yet been

given and once the Spirit came their time would be filled with other more necessary things?

Not according to Luke. He says that after the Spirit was given, “They *devoted* themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:42, emphasis added). Luke isn’t referring to individual, private prayer. He makes

it clear that “all the believers were together” (v. 44).

Praying together was not only one of the first “acts of the apostles” while they waited for the Spirit; it was something they “devoted themselves to” *after* the Spirit had come to empower them for the work they were to do. But why did united prayer matter *so much* that they would *devote* themselves to it?

## My Greatest Failure as Your Senior Pastor

BY DALE SCHLAFER

I sent a letter to the elders of South Fellowship (Littleton, CO) in the fall of 1994, following my departure from the church to take a full-time position with Promise Keepers. In it, I asked the elders if they would invite me to a meeting in the near future so that I could address my greatest failure as their senior pastor.

For 22 years I had served the church in that role. In the time leading up to my final days as pastor, I spent a lot of time on airplanes between Promise Keepers conferences. It gave me opportunity to evaluate my time as the spiritual shepherd of that church.

There was much I had done well. There were things I wished I had done differently. And there were things I had *not* done well. But as I reviewed the totality of my 22 years, one glaring failure stood out above the rest. One area desperately needed to be addressed—and if possible, corrected.

So I wrote the letter asking the elders if they would allow me to come back to address my greatest failure, and they were intrigued enough to extend the invitation.

### Missing in My Leadership

My greatest failure was my commitment to lead the church in corporate prayer. Let me hasten to add I am convinced few churches in America at that time spent more hours in training and teaching on the need and practice of individual prayer than we did. Developing an individual intimacy with our heavenly Father was one of our priorities. We spent considerable time practicing this aspect of prayer.

And I don’t mean to say that we never prayed together. But it was always in the context of small groups or retreats,

never the entire body of our fellowship and certainly not during Sunday morning worship.

In the time between when I left the church as senior pastor and my visit with the elders, I had become convinced of the need

for corporate prayer. As a revivalist I saw over and over again that revival most often came in answer to the gathered people of God calling out for Him to come. I shared that with the elders and told them that they had a unique opportunity to change the DNA of the church. Because they were searching for a new senior pastor to replace me, and as yet no one was on the horizon, they could actually change the way prayer was viewed, taught, and practiced.

I challenged them to pray corporately within the morning service. I pleaded with them to call special corporate prayer meetings of the congregation. I suggested that they join with other churches in their part of the city for area-wide corporate prayer. I was not asking the elders to change the strong direction the church had for individual prayer, but rather to *add* this dimension of corporate prayer.

The result of my time with the elders was that they prayed together about the direction they should move in, and then they began a very deliberate, structured shift toward corporate prayer.

I believe the reason behind this failure of mine was that I had no training in corporate prayer and no mentors to tell me how important corporate prayer is to the life of a church. Praise God that this is beginning to change today as God’s people are creating a culture of both individual and corporate prayer.

**DALE SCHLAFER** is president of the World Center for Revival and Awakening. He also works with the prayer movement in West Central Florida.



## The Promise and the Presence

Jesus told the disciples, “By myself I can do nothing” (John 5:30). In the same verse He made it clear that His purpose in everything He did was to please the Father who had sent Him. He also said, “Apart from me *you* can do nothing (John 15:5, italics added). So the disciples were to be dependent on Him in the same way He was dependent on the Father. Then, after His resurrection, He commissioned them, saying, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (John 20:21).

The earliest Christians understood that they had to be dependent on Jesus every moment if they were going to accomplish the work He had given them. The church would not survive if they didn't. They also understood (from their experience at Pentecost) that God had blessed them deeply when they waited together before Him. Praying together kept them connected to Jesus' presence and power unlike anything else.

Jesus assured them (and us), “If two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them” (Matt. 18:19–20).

The first Christians remembered that promise from Jesus when they came together to seek His purposes above their own (the meaning of praying in Jesus' name). He would make His presence known in a unique, vital way.

Jesus not only promised to be *with* them because He had ascended to the Father's “right hand” (Matt. 26:64), He also assured them their prayers would be answered. As they joined together before the throne of grace, our heavenly Father poured out His power in world-shaking ways.

## Martha, Mary, and the One Thing Needed

One of the deepest needs of the American

Church today is to rediscover a passion for praying together, seeking the blessings that God so deeply desires to give us in response. Recent research by the Barna Group indicates that “only one out of every five self-identified Christians (21%) believes that spiritual maturity

requires a vital connection to a community of faith.”<sup>1</sup>

Such individualism would have been unthinkable to the first followers of Jesus. Being actively involved *together* was inseparable from what they believed it meant to be a Christian.

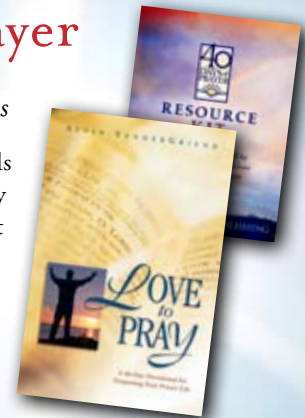
“I know of no better prayer idea than an all-church prayer initiative to get the most people involved in prayer.” —JONATHAN GRAF

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In contrast, our understanding of what it means to pray today is heavily weighted toward the personal and private. Churches may be brimming with excellent activities, but it is rare for prayer gatherings to draw similar numbers. We're doing good things but missing something better. Our lives as Christians today are marked more by the busy

*individualism* of Martha, running from one activity to another, than the *devotion* of Mary who is actually *more* engaged with Jesus by sitting—with others—at His feet. That quiet moment at His feet is the “one thing” Jesus indicates “is needed” (Luke 10:42).

Praying together is spiritual teamwork—the whole, more than the sum

of the parts. If, individually, the prayer of a righteous person is “powerful and effective” (James 5:16), the prayers of God's children, humbly gathered *together* before the throne of grace, have a worth and beauty so precious to God that it surely evokes a special response.

Jonathan Edwards, the brilliant colonial-era pastor and theologian who encouraged fervent united prayer, wrote that God intends united prayer to be “one of the most beautiful and happy things on earth, which indeed makes earth most like heaven.”<sup>2</sup>

When we humbly seek to love Him and love one another before His grace-filled throne, it's a foretaste of heaven.

As a father, I love spending time, one on one, with my children. But when they are all home and we're gathered together for a moment as a family, I treasure those times uniquely. The New Testament often uses the concept of family to describe our relationship with God and with each other (Gal. 6:10, Eph. 3:15, 1 Peter 4:17).

Our unity matters so much to Jesus that He prayed for it passionately the night before His crucifixion (John 17:22–23). Because our heavenly Father loves each of His sons and daughters uniquely and deeply desires our unity, our “family times” in prayer together have a precious place in His heart. Each of us has something to contribute, not on the basis of our merits or the words we use, but simply because we are *His* and we are loved.

### Giving God the Glory He Deserves

God wants us to treasure our times together in prayer because they bring glory to Him in ways few other things can. It is when we come to the end of our own ability to make things happen that we find ourselves in the place of waiting expectantly for what only God can do.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, a gifted preacher, credited united prayer for the explosive growth of his 19th century

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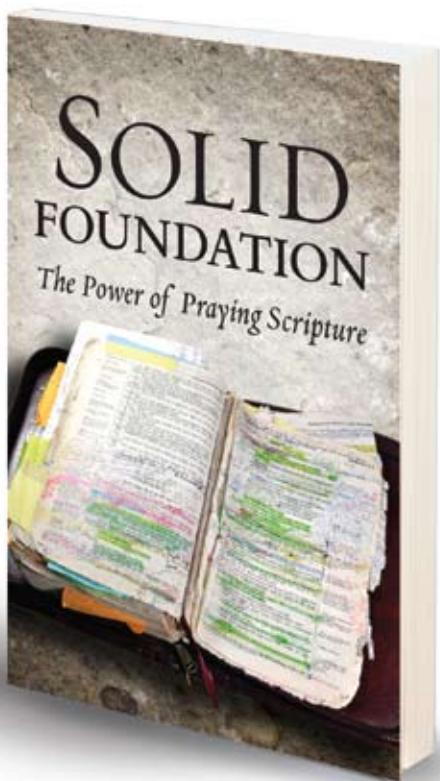
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London church. He encouraged his members never to give up in their efforts to pray together: “May our prayer meetings be sustained in fervor, and increased in number! Praying is, after all, the chief matter. Praying is the end of preaching. Preaching has its right use, and must never be neglected, but real heart devotion is worth more than anything else. Prayer is the power which brings God’s blessing down upon all our work.”<sup>3</sup>

When Christians lean heavily on God in prayers together and then definitive answers come, He alone gets the credit—and we’re encouraged and inspired to pray all the more. God proclaims in His Word, “I will not give my glory to another” (Isa. 42:8). When progress in the church depends solely on Him and not the giftedness of the pastor, the cleverness of the people, or the excellence of programs, God is pleased. Good things follow.

As a church planter in a challenging city (Durham, NC), I was reminded of this recently in a poignant way. One afternoon I attended a denominational conference at a larger church a few hours down the highway from our own. The church has grown to more than 1,500 members in just ten years. (That pastor also has a heart for united prayer.)

As I looked around the impressive facility, I found myself wishing *our* church had such a wonderful building. Our people had been faithfully praying together for several months for His provision for our building efforts, but God had not answered.

I wondered what mistakes I had made. I left the meeting feeling ineffective and discouraged. And on my way home in the car I tearfully prayed Esau’s plea: “Bless me too, my father!” (Gen. 27:38).

When I pulled into the driveway at home, I checked the mailbox. In it was a letter from a friend I had not seen since I graduated from seminary more than 20 years earlier. The letter enclosed a check for \$5,000 toward our church’s first

building, and a factory-sealed card with a verse inside it. I tore open the tab on the card to read: “As soon as you began to pray, an answer was given” (Dan. 10:12). I didn’t deserve the answer, but God kindly gave it. This was the first of many encouraging answers soon to follow.

What blessings await as we come before our heavenly Father in humble, united prayer? In what ways does He long to pour out His power afresh? What answers are ready to be released, just for the asking? How will our Father’s work progress in ways we could never accomplish in our own strength—if we humble ourselves and pray?

Only God knows. But may it never be said of us that we “do not have” because we “do not ask” (James 4:2). This much we *do* know: He alone is our greatest blessing. And if we seek His face *together*, we’ll see His hand move as well. **PC**

<sup>1</sup>*Self-Described Christians Dominate America but Wrestle with Four Aspects of Spiritual Depth*, Barna Group, September 13, 2011, [www.barna.org/faith-spirituality/524-self-described-christians-dominate-america-but-wrestle-with-four-aspects-of-spiritual-depth](http://www.barna.org/faith-spirituality/524-self-described-christians-dominate-america-but-wrestle-with-four-aspects-of-spiritual-depth).

<sup>2</sup>Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 2, *An Humble Attempt To Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of God’s People In Extraordinary Prayer For The Revival of Religion and the Advancement of Christ’s Kingdom On Earth*, (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 295.

<sup>3</sup>Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *Spurgeon’s Expository Encyclopedia*, Vol. 5. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984) 30–31.



**JAMES BANKS** is a pastor, speaker, and author on the topic of prayer ([jamesbanks.org](http://jamesbanks.org)). His books *Prayers for Prodigals* and *The Lost Art of Praying Together* are both available from [prayershop.org](http://prayershop.org).

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A close-up photograph of wooden chair spindles, showing the grain and texture of the wood. The spindles are arranged in a row, with some in the foreground and others receding into the background. The lighting is warm, highlighting the natural color of the wood. A white paper tag with four black fasteners is pinned to the bottom left corner of the image.

By Jonathan  
Graf



# Hopping on ONE STILT

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## HINDRANCES TO CORPORATE PRAYER



A few years ago, I was leading a prayer weekend in a megachurch. It was the third time I had been to that church over a three-year period, so I had built solid trust relationships with the pastoral staff. The church's prayer coordinator and I had talked months prior about holding a five-minute corporate prayer time within the morning worship service (6,000 attendees in two services).

We both sensed the congregation was ready for such an event. She was excited, but when we approached the senior pastor about the idea, he was very reluctant to allow it. He believed too many people would be uncomfortable with the thought of praying in groups with others. Even after explaining how I would facilitate the time so that no one would feel awkward, he said no.

Though corporate prayer was clearly practiced in the early Church (Acts 1–13), very few Western churches these days practice it. Why?

Why do we allow our comfort to override a clear practice of the New Testament Church (Acts 2:42)?

# DON'T GIVE UP CALLING YOUR PEOPLE AND CHURCH TO PRAYER.

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God has given us two stilts in the Christian life to allow us to rise above the world and walk the Christian life in vibrancy and power. But most churches today—and our people—only hop on one stilt. What are the stilts? *The Word* and *prayer*.

In Acts, the two were given equal emphasis. Today in most evangelical churches the Word is taught, but prayer is more assumed than taught and practiced. We need to change that if we want to see spiritual power return to our churches.

Few pastors will argue against the need for praying together in a corporate way. No one can argue from Scripture that it is not important or that the early Church did not pray together. But few pastors and churches today make an effort to develop this style of prayer. Why?

I think it stems from the extreme difficulty in overcoming all the hindrances. To make praying together a natural part of the spiritual dynamic of a congregation takes work. But if a church wants to be New Testament-like, spiritually healthy, and truly Kingdom-minded, it must pray corporately.

Based on what I have observed throughout my years in prayer ministry, beyond the obvious—that the enemy does not want to see churches pray and therefore opposes it—here are some hindrances to corporate prayer in a local church, and some potential cures.

## Hindrance #1: No Personal Prayer Life

By far the biggest hindrance to corporate prayer is individuals within a church who have weak or no personal prayer lives. The believer who doesn't pray when alone is not going to get excited about being asked to pray with others. Most churches fail to recognize that many of their people do not have healthy prayer

habits. In fact, statistics indicate that in most churches more than 80 percent of a congregation admits to poor prayer lives.

**Cure:** Don't give up on corporate prayer because nonpraying believers won't come to a prayer meeting or will be uncomfortable if asked to pray together in a worship service. Instead, raise the level of prayer discipleship in your church. Teach people to pray and give them experiences and opportunities to practice. With all the excellent resources on prayer available today, believers have no excuse for not praying. Look for strategic ways to teach prayer—through small groups, men's ministry, Sunday school classes, and the pulpit.

## Hindrance #2: Poor Past Prayer Experiences

People may not like to pray together because they have experienced poor, dull, corporate prayer in the past. Their picture of corporate prayer or the typical "prayer meeting" is negatively skewed. Many people's image of "praying together" is six seasoned saints in a room each praying for 15 minutes, all fully covering the church's prayer list of everyone's ailments. That is not corporate prayer. That is simply personal prayer practiced in a group.

**Cure:** Cast a different vision of corporate prayer for your people. Offer them a more dynamic model, where a leader directs the prayers on one theme, not a hodgepodge of prayers based on everyone's individual agendas. Don't let your times of prayer be about *them*, but rather about *Him*.

## Hindrance #3: No Expectation

One of the most significant reasons people do not pray with others is that they have

no expectation that anything will happen when they pray. While most will never say that they don't believe "prayer works," they often pray with a sense of "wish or hope" more than faith. We know God is big enough and we hope He will do something, but we do not really believe He will.

**Cure:** This will only change from the top down. Leaders need to model expectancy. If the elders and pastor don't believe anything will happen, nothing will! In order for the people to glimpse a vision of a God who moves when we pray, the church leaders need to demonstrate that vision from the pulpit. Publicizing testimonies of answered prayer within the church will improve expectation.

## Hindrance #4: Fear of Complaints and Discomfort

Many church leaders are like my pastor friend who did not allow a corporate prayer time in his morning worship service. They restrict corporate prayer within a service to one leader praying from the platform. That way, those who do not like to pray out loud won't feel uncomfortable. These leaders also fear complaints from congregation members if they encourage group prayer experiences.

**Cure:** Corporate prayer times can be made easy and nonthreatening. Keep them within two to five minutes. Always direct the prayer by giving people topics to pray about. Put prayer points and a prayer on the screen. Let people know that they may pray multiple times within the group, but challenge them not to pray longer than 30 seconds at any one time. Tell people that if they are uncomfortable praying out loud, no one will force them to do so. They can simply pray in their hearts.

If there are unbelievers present, they



# Variety Is KEY

are not generally the ones bothered by this practice. Non-believers know Christians are supposed to pray and that prayer happens in churches. Typically, when they witness it, they are not turned off—even if requested to be a part of it.

A few years ago, I was speaking in a large church in California, and their prayer leader wanted a time of prayer in the worship service. The senior pastor, though reluctant because of the comfort level of his people, allowed it. The prayer time became so dynamic and powerful that people came to him for weeks afterward, asking to do it again. They now pray corporately on a regular basis!

## Hindrance #5: Staying in Control

Church services today are typically well planned out (even to the minute with event-planning software), full of “stuff,” and often with no margin available at the end due to another service or planned event. Even if prayer is incorporated into the plan, it must adhere to the schedule: “2.5 minutes and no more.”

I was recently in a church where, before I got up to preach, the pastor told me I had to be done at a certain time or he would come up to get me. He said it with a smile, but he got his point across. I understand that there is usually no need to speak beyond a certain amount of time, but what’s wrong with this picture—so typical in the Western church? What if God actually moved in a service?

If prayer is to be effective, it does not fit into this time-constraint mold. Prayer is giving up control. What happens if one of the pray-ers, suddenly empowered by the Spirit, becomes impassioned and goes over the time limit?

Most leaders understand it is difficult to control prayer’s length, so it becomes easier to leave out any opportunity for corporate prayer in a worship setting.

**Cure:** If your church has no margin, then conduct a prayer time in which people organize into groups and pray briefly about one topic at a time. The time can

If you want to improve corporate prayer in your church, whether it is at a weekly prayer meeting or prayer within the worship service, one effective key is variety. Prayer becomes stale when we always do it together the same way. Often a method or format starts out dynamically, but it can become boring and lose its effectiveness when we do it the same way week after week, month after month. So look for creative ways to involve people in praying together.

I have deep respect for a former pastor of mine, Doug Dry (then of North Springs Alliance Church in Colorado Springs, CO), for the variety he brings to prayer in the worship service. Pastor Dry never did prayer the same way two weeks in a row. Besides the anti-rut factor, every method or format we use gives our people new insight into prayer.

## Shake It Up!

Here are some ideas to incorporate prayer effectively into a worship service:

- **Pray the thoughts of a song.** During the singing, an effective worship leader can guide people into short snippets of prayer that reflect on the words of the song. You might also have some people come to a microphone while the music is playing, and pray prayers that reflect the song’s content.
- **Pray the sermon application.** Leave a few minutes at the end of the message to organize people into groups of three or four. Provide a prayer point that reflects what you want them to take away from the message, and then have them pray it for each other.
- **Offer pastor-guided prayer.** The pastor leads in prayer, but invites people to pray after him or her, line for line. Another variation: the pastor prays but leaves moments within the prayer for people to pray silently for something the pastor mentions. (*Lord, we pray for the salvation of our neighbors. . . .* Pause and let people pray for a specific neighbor.)
- **Pray in groups regarding a topic.** Something may happen in your community—or you may witness a tragedy in the world scene—and you want to mobilize special prayer. Have people get into groups of 4 to 6 and pray short prayers regarding the situation. The person leading can close in prayer as the signal to stop. This works best when you start with a topic that will engage most people. But once your church gets used to praying corporately, you can have them pray for any topic this way—revival, the nation, your upcoming women’s retreat. Never let this time go for more than a few minutes, five maximum.
- **Pray for each other.** Have those with needs stand; have others gather around them and pray. This works best if you give instructions to those with the needs by explaining that they do not have to mention the need. But if they do, they should keep it short and general. Having background worship music while people are praying for each other can also be effective.

There are lots of creative things you can do to keep corporate prayer from becoming stale. Shake it up regularly and watch people get more engaged and interested in prayer.

—Jonathan Graf

easily be controlled from the platform. The leader simply prays a short closing prayer to wrap it up. Or if the prayer time is during the musical worship portion of the service, the worship team starts singing again to bring prayer to a close.

### Hindrance #6: Church Is for Me

Another major hindrance to corporate prayer is the individualistic attitude of many congregants. Many believers look at their church with a consumer mentality. If their needs aren't met, they look for a place that will meet those needs. This mentality highly affects corporate prayer. It is hard to get people to want to pray for anything but their own needs.

We unknowingly perpetuate this problem when most visible prayer is about people's needs, rather than outreach and the move of the Spirit among us.

**Cure:** Administer a healthy dose of outreach praying. For several months, focus entirely on praying for the lost, for your community, the nation, the world. Focus any prayer from the pulpit on those things. In a prayer meeting, don't take requests. Instead, focus your time with prayer guides, a topic, or other tools.

### A Clear Call

Effective corporate prayer, especially dynamic prayer within corporate worship services, can happen in any church—but it takes effort, prodding, and equipping.

The Book of Acts provides proof of the powerful role that praying together had on the early Church. However, within 20 to 30 years church leaders already had to challenge believers to pray. By the time the epistles were written, Paul and James needed to remind those under their care to pray. Paul asked people to

join his missionary endeavors by praying. He also challenged people to pray continually, pray when they had anxiety, and pray for those in authority.

James had to write a lengthy passage, in chapter 5 of his epistle, encouraging people to pray more often. I suspect Paul and James made these challenges because they saw the people slacking off where prayer was concerned.

Don't give up calling your people and church to prayer. Show them how by offering easy and manageable ways to do it. It is biblically right to do so—and so spiritually powerful! **PC**



**JONATHAN GRAF** is a popular speaker and author on prayer—especially on corporate prayer. He is the publisher of *Prayer Connect* and the president of the Church Prayer Leaders Network. He is available to do prayer weekends in churches or speak to pastor groups.

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# Igniting the Power of CORPORATE PRAYER

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## BIBLE STUDY *By Sandra Higley*

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



he first leg of my journey into prayer began at a home group prayer meeting for Every Home for Christ in 1993. I was not a pray-er, so the fact that I even went was a “God-thing.” It was an invitation into His presence through the unified prayer of believers who were focused on one goal, and it forever opened my eyes to the power and benefits of corporate prayer.

These women came from various denominational backgrounds with different understandings of minor theological points. But the richness and depth of their one-mindedness about the spread of the gospel to every home in the world honored Him so much that His manifest presence was tangible. I was hooked.

In the years that followed, God developed my personal prayer life into a rich, vibrant relationship with Him. But the desire and need for corporate intercession continued and instigated times of unified prayer with a variety of groups, including my extended family—times so beautiful and healing that specific memories of them still take my breath away.

## Discussion Questions

From the beginning, God created us for relationship. He walked with Adam and Eve together in the garden. Do you think togetherness is a priority for Him? Why or why not?

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Using the following passages, what ways do you notice His desire to see us unified? (John 17:22-24; Rom. 15:5-6; Eph. 4:1-3, 12-14; Col. 3:14)

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Scripture paints several pictures of the type of relationship God desires with us. One picture is of a family unit. "As a father, I love spending time, one on one, with my children. But when they are all home and we're gathered together for a moment as a family, I treasure those times uniquely." With these words, James Banks paints a beautiful picture of our Father's desire for "family get-togethers." How is the concept of family used to describe our relationship with God and each other in Galatians 6:10, Ephesians 1:15, and 1 Peter 4:17?

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Over the past years, a great emphasis has been placed on developing a personal prayer life, often to the exclusion of corporate prayer times. Describe how Jesus felt about Martha's "busy individualism" compared to Mary's sitting with others at His feet (Luke 10:42).

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1 Corinthians 12:12-27 gives another picture of the relationship God wants us to have with one another as members of one body. How could the dynamics of corporate prayer be enhanced or hindered based on this passage?

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Dennis Fuqua explains that true corporate prayer is *symphonic*. The word used in Matthew 18:19 translated as *agree* is the word from which we get our English word *symphony*. He asks us to think of it as a group of people playing their own unique instruments, but from the same score, under the same Conductor. This type of prayer attracts what (Matt. 18:20)? Explain the importance of that kind of prayer.

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Is it possible to pray in a group setting without praying corporately? Jon Graf describes a common misconception: ". . . six seasoned saints in a room each praying for 15 minutes, all fully covering the church's prayer list of everyone's ailments . . . is not corporate prayer. That is simply personal prayer practiced in a group." Looking back over your experiences of praying with others, do you think it was true corporate prayer or personal prayer practiced in a group? Describe your typical experience.

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## Action Steps

Jon Graf also shares hindrances to and cures for corporate prayer in a local church. Get alone with God and ask Him to show you if any of these hindrances affect you personally:

- No personal prayer life (80% of church attendees admit to poor prayer lives)
- Poor prayer experiences (history of dull or boring group prayer)
- No expectation that anything will happen when you pray (praying with a sense of "wish or hope" rather than faith)
- Fear of discomfort (don't want to pray out loud or interact with others you don't know personally)
- A "church is for me" mindset or consumer mentality (not wanting to pray beyond your own needs).

As the Lord helps you identify any of these hindrances, spend some time talking with Him about ways to engage in more corporate prayer. ☞

**SANDRA HIGLEY** is the author of *A Year of Prayer Events for Your Church*, a book designed to enhance corporate prayer experiences (available at [prayershop.org](http://prayershop.org)). She is a regular contributor to *Prayer Connect*.



An American flag is shown in the upper left corner, with its stars and stripes partially visible against a dark blue background.

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# PARTNERING WITH A

By Sherrie Porterfield

# *Miracle-*

## In God's Timing, in God's Way

Ema McKinley has real zeal for living. She was known for participating in downhill skiing, martial arts, and even skydiving—while holding down three jobs. But that was before April 1993, when a work accident changed Ema's life.

As an employee of a large retail store in Rochester, MN, Ema and other co-workers were scurrying around to get ready for a visit from a corporate headquarters representative. Alone in a storage loft, Ema was stacking boxes 33 feet up, when she fainted from the heat.

She fell and hit her head, losing consciousness. As she fell, her foot caught in some shelving, and she hung upside-down for two-and-a-half hours before someone discovered her.

This trauma to her body caused severe, long-lasting injuries. Immediately, Ema lost 60 percent of her hearing. She became wheelchair bound, her spine so twisted she could not even sit upright. Doctors at the Mayo Clinic said her spine would never straighten. And, they predicted, "She will never get out of that wheelchair."

*Good  
working*



# SOMETIMES GOD ALLOWS US TO GET TO OUR WORST POINT BEFORE HE GIVES US

# *His best.*

## **A Heart to Help and Pray**

Emma has always had a heart for the disabled, even before she experienced her own traumatic disability. One of her jobs prior to her accident was with the Rochester Park and Rec department in their adaptive recreation program. She says, "The only thing of value when our life on this earth ends is how we helped other people." She believes that her life is about showing the love of Christ and modeling the life of Jesus, who said, "The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him" (John 8:29).

She has also been a strong pray-er on behalf of others and her church. Emma has not been able to attend her home church (Autumn Ridge in Rochester) in recent years because of her heightened sensitivi-

ties and pain, but she is still faithful in prayer. This is one way God allows her to remain a part of the church.

She specifically prayed during the church's building project. "I used to come in a van and pray in the parking lot for Autumn Ridge as it was being built," she says. She prayed daily for the safety of the workers. She prayed, too, that it would be a place where members of the community would come to know Christ. "I prayed that each nail pounded represented a new soul for God."

Emma regularly prays for the staff as well as for members of the congregation. She prays over each event and person

mentioned in the church's weekly publications. Emma listens online to worship services at the church website. She also lays hands on the name of each staff member listed there, praying for them individually, and as a group, for God's direction. When the mail brings greeting cards from the congregation, she prays for those who sent them as she opens the envelopes one by one. "Every event, every card that comes to me, I pray over it. It is my honor and privilege to pray. It always has been."

## **Years of Pain and Exhaustion**

Yet the challenges have been great. Not only was Emma wheelchair bound, but she

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was unable to even lie in bed at night because of her twisted spine. Restorative sleep was rare. Ema would be awake in her wheelchair for 60 to 70 hours at a time, then fall exhausted into sleep for three to four hours, only to repeat the cycle again. But in the midst of her struggles, Ema says, “God [has been] my partner through it all. The bigger the problem, the more my faith grew.”

In response to her injury she also developed reflex sympathetic dystrophy (RSD) with symptoms including intense burning pain, skin sensitivity, and swelling. For Ema, the pain was excruciating. Among the sea of drugs she took, Ema was prescribed a daily dose of 2000 mg of morphine in an attempt to manage the pain. Doctors said levels that high should have affected her mind and other organs years ago. Although there have been some side effects, thankfully her mind and organs have been spared.

Ema’s only food intake has been liquids and protein drinks, due to problems with her digestive tract. Headaches have been constant. At one point she experienced a leg infection so severe that doctors wanted to amputate her leg. Ema refused. She knew God was in control, not the doctors. She committed the situation to Him, at peace that God would either take her to heaven or heal her leg. Gradually He healed her leg.

Several times Ema came close to death, but each time God brought her through. All of Ema’s doctors and caregivers know that she loves God and has a deep faith. Remarkably, Ema has not experienced anger or bitterness. She praises God in spite of it all. “At the end of the day,” she says, “my goal is that I put a smile on God’s face.”

Many times, throughout Ema’s suffering, people prayed for her complete



Author Sherrie Porterfield (right) remembers Ema as “the crooked lady in the wheelchair” in years past. Upon arriving at Ema’s home for an interview, Sherrie was delighted to see Ema open the door and greet her—“all 5’ 9” of her, standing straight and tall!”

healing. The board of elders from her church laid hands on Ema and prayed for her. People from churches in different states prayed for her healing. Ema continued to thank God for that healing, though she hadn’t yet received it.

Ema recalls a specific time when God came to her and said, “Ema, it’s going to be OK.” In faith, Ema knew that her healing would come, whether it was here on earth, or when ushered into heaven. According to Ema, “If God said it, it was going to happen. Whether people prayed for weeks, months, [or] years, I knew that healing would be in God’s own timing.” So she persevered in faith and was not disappointed as she waited in her wheelchair.

### **Her Christmas Miracle**

On Christmas Eve 2011, around 1:00 a.m., Ema was alone in her festively decorated townhouse working at her computer. And she was anticipating with joy the next day when her two sons and their families would arrive to

celebrate the birthday of the Savior.

Rolling herself across the room, Ema tried to maneuver her wheelchair to reach something. But her chair tipped over. Instantly, with the impact from the fall, searing pain overtook her highly sensitive body. It was almost more than she could bear. There she lay, alone and helpless. She cried out for help but knew it was unlikely anyone would hear her. Her neighbors who shared a wall with her were out of town for the holidays.

For more than eight hours Ema lay crumpled on the floor, screaming in excruciating pain and crying out to God. Though she had been through many difficult experiences in the previous 19 years, this time she thought she was going to die. “I felt that this was the way God was going to take me home,” she said. Yet she continued to trust Him.

After hours of lying on her left side (which is the most affected by RSD), Ema couldn’t see her left foot. But suddenly something amazing began to overtake her.



"I felt God entering my body," she says. "I felt God straightening out my foot."

Her head was resting on her arm and she had a good view of her hand, which had been clenched for years. "I felt my hand open up. I could see the raw flesh being changed to healed flesh. I thought, *God is in my house!*" Then He began working on her neck and spine. Though her spine had been crooked for 19 years, suddenly Ema flipped over and lay flat on her back on the floor.

Ema watched in wonderment as a bright, white robe appeared. It was Jesus. "He knelt down on one knee and asked for my hand," she says. "I reached out to Him. Then He took both hands and pulled me up. I knew at that point that God wanted me to walk."

Shaking and crying uncontrollably, Ema stood up straight and began to slowly walk, stumbling with the use of muscles that had not functioned for

nearly two decades. "I walked into my bedroom and lay straight down on my bed for the first time in 19 years!" She lay there stunned at what had just happened.

"God did some last testing during those eight hours on the floor," she says. "He saw that I was still deeply committed to Him, so He knew He could trust me with this big miracle. Sometimes God allows us to get to our worst point before He gives us His best."

### Her Christmas Surprise

Eager to share her excitement at this incredible evidence of God's healing hand, Ema walked her wheelchair out to the door where her family would enter to celebrate Christmas. She wanted them to see the empty chair when they came in—a certain surprise!

When her family opened the door later that morning, sure enough, they saw the empty wheelchair and did not

know what to think. Then Ema came walking down the hall toward them.

"It was surreal," says her son Jason. "With just the Christmas lights on, I didn't know if I was seeing a ghost, or dreaming, or what!"

Needless to say, the family was shocked and thrilled at the sight of their mom and grandma standing up straight and walking. Ema has shocked and delighted all her friends and family as she has met them face to face following her Christmas miracle.

Doctors are amazed. When Ema first saw her physician, Dr. Bell, she surprised him by pushing back the curtains.

"Tell me Ema has a twin!" Dr. Bell exclaimed. "This was not Mayo Clinic," he says of the restored Ema. "This was an act of God."

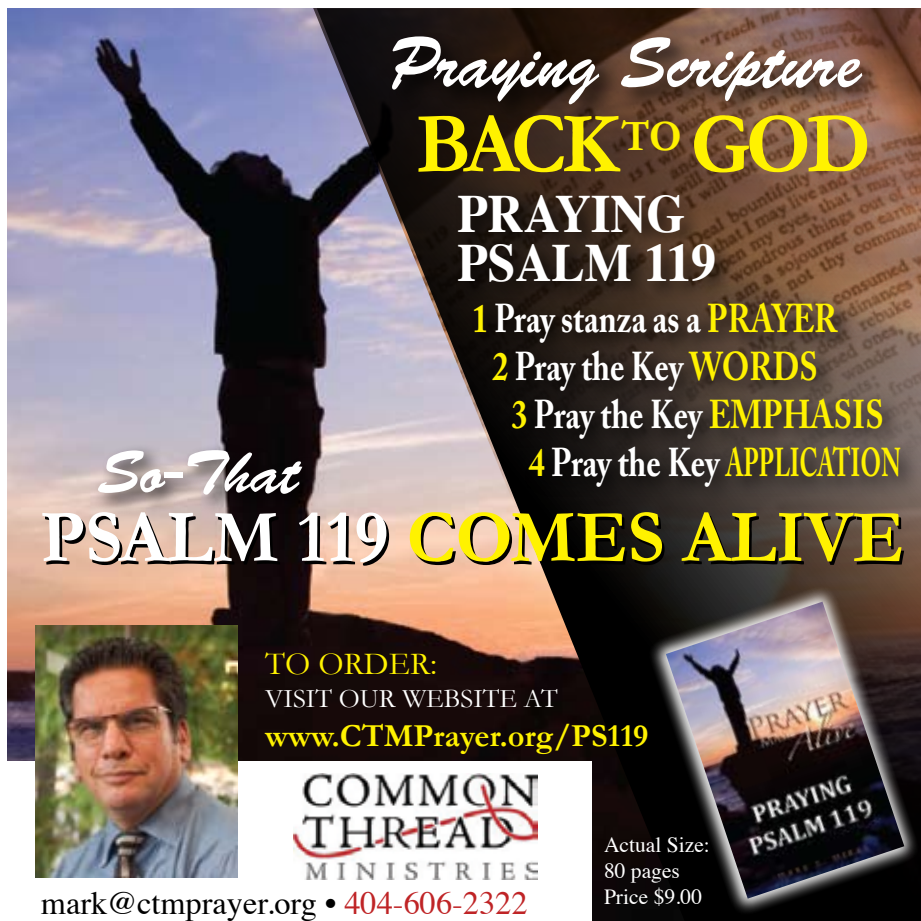
Doctors recommended that Ema receive physical therapy to regain strength and greater ability to make use of her restored body. She has lost weight now that she can be more active, and her strength in long-dormant muscles continues to increase.

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**SHERRIE PORTERFIELD** is a member of Autumn Ridge Church, Rochester, MN, and worked full time on staff in communications. She is now a freelance editor and graphic designer for the church's monthly *ARC Magazine*, where a version of this article was first published.



# Pray Without CEASING

You might relate to my initial reaction to the Apostle Paul's exhortation to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17). At 26, I was a baby Christian, but a "Bible-hungry adult." My first reading of this verse created an immediate mental picture of quitting my college coaching job and entering the nearest monastery—or simply excusing Paul for forgetting that I'm not in a full-time ministry like he was. I certainly had more things to do besides pray all day!

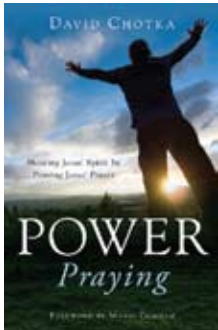
*By Dennis Conner*

**Practical Ways to Fulfill a Biblical Command**



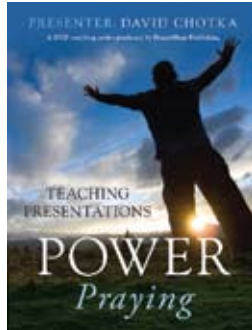
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This "pray without ceasing" statement bothered me for many years. No matter how hard I tried, I felt wedged between a desire to be fully obedient to this prayer principle in God's Word and the pragmatic principle of living out everyday responsibilities as a husband, father, university employee (and later as a ministry staffer). I wanted to be known as a true disciple of Jesus Christ, but I was not sure how to live up to Paul's admonishment.

A few years ago—I am a slow learner—the Holy Spirit began to show me how I could easily fulfill this prayer command in a practical way. I've always been motivated by the "practicality" of Scripture, ways to apply the Word to everyday living. And I'm excited that the Spirit is expanding my "pray without ceasing" vocabulary and frequency year by year!

## HITTING THE TARGET

In 2007, I was exercise-walking in my Richardson, TX, neighborhood and decided I needed to be redeeming the time better (spiritually speaking). I began to pray a simple blessing over every house I passed while walking my daily three-mile course. After several days—because I didn't know what the residents needed most—I began to seek the Lord about more specific prayers I could pray that would "hit the bull's-eye" as I targeted each home in prayer.

I wanted to pray an evangelistic or discipleship-type prayer for each resident or house, but I did not know the people who lived in these homes or which prayer fit. Suddenly the Holy Spirit, who promises to lead us when we don't know exactly what to pray (Rom. 8:26–27), prompted me to pray a "SAFE" prayer. He assured me, "Dennis, if you pray in this way, I promise you will *not* miss the spiritual target God has for the people who live in any home. You will hit the bull's-eye every time!"

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## POWERFUL WALK-BY SAFE PRAYERS

The acronym *SAFE* stands for: **S**piritual Awakening/**F**resh Encounter. Since I did not know if the people in these homes were lost, without any relationship to Jesus Christ—or perhaps Christians who had unintentionally drifted away from the Lord through daily-living distractions or even committed believers—this one simple prayer-declaration covered any situation.

I now verbalize this prayer as: “SAFE prayer, Lord, in Jesus’ name!” With that brief but powerful declarative statement, I know that the Holy Spirit will apply it exactly as the people need it. He may bring someone or some circumstance into the life of the lost person to lead him or her to personally repent and receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord (**S**piritual Awakening). Or He may convict the “lukewarm” Christian to repent and renew the “first love” fellowship with Jesus Christ (**F**resh Encounter). Or He may help committed believers to deepen their faith through a fresh encounter with Him.

Beyond that initial walk-by *SAFE* praying experience, I now likewise pray the *SAFE* prayer for so many people I encounter during my day:

- Other drivers on the road (especially reckless ones)
- A group of athletes practicing on a nearby sports field
- Individuals crossing the street at an intersection or walking along a sidewalk
- First responders as they pass me on the road
- Construction workers (buildings, homes, roadways)
- People sitting in airport restaurants or standing in line to board a plane
- Mall shoppers and retail-store employees.

The prospective recipients for such prayer blessings are unlimited! I promise, if you ask the Lord to help you become

a “pray-without-ceasing” Christian, He will answer you. That is exactly what He wants, and it is in His nature to equip us to do exactly what He asks of us.

## DRIVE-BY PRAYING

The Holy Spirit continues to give me other prayer declarations to verbalize as I am driving by such places as:

- **Churches:** “House of Prayer, in Jesus Name, may God’s glory fall on you and His Presence fill the temple!” I believe Jesus expects all Christian churches to be a house of prayer as He emphatically declared about the temple in three of the four Gospels (Matt. 21:13, Mark 11:17, Luke 19:46).
- **Schools:** “Education with Revelation!” (Rom. 12:2). I pray that through the Holy Spirit’s leadership, the students will somehow be introduced to Jesus Christ as they are being educated academically. May their minds be renewed with the truths of Christ.
- **Hospitals:** “Revealing while Healing!” (John 11:40–45). I pray for patients (as well as doctors, staff, and administrators) to encounter the Lord while also experiencing or facilitating His physical healing.
- **Retail Stores:** “Prosperity with Integrity!” (Ps. 78:72). I pray for a financial blessing upon the businesses, in relation to the integrity of their business practices.
- **Government Offices:** “Servant Leadership!” (Matt. 20:26–28). I pray that the office holders and their staff will govern and lead their constituents with the same humble heart that Jesus modeled for His disciples.
- **Health/Fitness Centers:** “Fitness with a Witness!” (1 Tim. 4:8). I pray that during their fitness workouts, the Lord will give Christians an opportunity to share their faith in Jesus Christ with an employee or with others exercising alongside them.

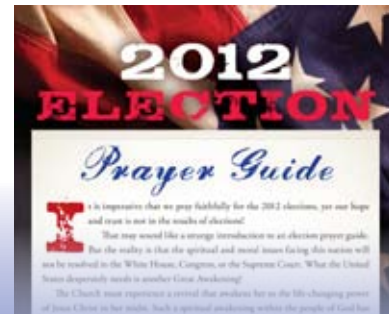
Perhaps the Holy Spirit has prompted you to “pray without ceasing” in other ways. But for me, these brief but biblically based prayers have resolved my earlier dilemma of thinking the Apostle Paul’s command unattainable.

The pragmatic application of 1 Thessalonians 5:17 has never been easier, thanks to the ministry of the Holy Spirit’s prayer promptings. If we listen closely, He will expand our prayer vocabulary and frequency.

Whatever He prompts us to pray at various times throughout the day may be prompts to “prime the pump” for prayers that do not cease! ☑



**DENNIS CONNER** and his wife Betty Jo are “prayer coaches” for pastors and churches through their ministry Called to Serve (*babop.org*). They are members of the National Prayer Committee and representatives for the Church Prayer Leaders Network.



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## All Things Revival

Church historian David Smithers describes revival this way: “Genuine revival is *not* a church growth strategy, evangelistic crusade or a series of miracle meetings, but rather the manifest glory of God that radically redefines and transforms the Church from a man-centered institution to a corporate celebration of the supremacy of Jesus Christ.”

If you have been looking for a place with comprehensive information about revival, explore Awake and Go Global Prayer Network ([awakeandgo.com](http://awakeandgo.com)), an Internet site that calls a new generation to engage in persistent, enduring, and strategic prayer “for God’s glory to revive the Church and awaken every tongue, tribe and nation!” The website is comprehensive, well organized, and easy to navigate, which makes it a powerful tool.

Populated with a multitude of articles, biographies, and “Kingdom Quotes,” Awake and Go encourages Christians to use these free resources to encourage their own local churches and Bible study or prayer groups.

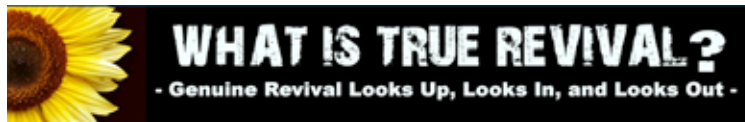
Smithers, its founder, has brought together a blend of the historical and the contemporary to give visitors a broad representation of the history and scope of revival. He also provides tools for individual study, church prayer meetings, newsletters, and more. Smithers asserts that revival causes the church to look up, in, and out:

- Up to the throne of God
- In to our own desperate need
- Out to the needs of the nations.

Articles by such authors as A.T. Pier-son, E.M. Bounds, A.W. Tozer, and James

Edwin Orr are organized in each of the categories (Up, In, Out), giving students of revival a depth of focus that is extraordinarily rich with powerful insight. Many articles also look back to the history of worldwide and national revivals.

Biographies are organized by specific revivals or moves of God, which allows the searcher to find the “players” involved in each. For example, listings under the



1<sup>st</sup> Great Awakening (1730s–1740s) include David Brainerd, Gilbert Tennent, and John Wesley. Simply click on a name to access the biographical information.

### Establishing Corporate Prayer

One extremely useful tool on the main menu is the category “Prayer Meetings.” Here you will find a collection of articles and messages for establishing and maintaining corporate prayer gatherings. The powerful teachings in these articles focus on the purposes of God that lead toward spiritual awakening. Be sure to read the article by Smithers titled, “The Prayer that Killed the Prayer Meeting.”

The Kingdom Quotes section offers hundreds of powerful quotes on prayer, revival, missions, and the spiritual life. Quotes range from historic authors to more contemporary writers such as Richard Owen Roberts, Keith Green, and John Piper. A powerful tool for missions teams, prayer teams, and pastors, these quotes are useful for newsletters, bulletin inserts, sermon illustrations, and much more.

The values and vision of Awake and Go include the following characteristics:

- “Genuine revival is a supernatural celebration of the supremacy of Jesus Christ. . . . Anything less will only leave our churches disillusioned and distracted by temporary and superficial religious experiences.”
- “Genuine revival mobilizes the Church to World evangelism for the glory and pleasure of God. . . . Scriptures and Church history clearly confirm that the remaining task of World evangelism will never be fulfilled in our generation apart from a fresh and mighty move of God.”
- “Genuine revival is always preceded by faith, humility, and united prayer. . . . God delights to use the faith-filled prayers of frail and needy people to birth great things into the earth.”

As you dig into this website, you will find a treasure trove of resources to teach, encourage, and inspire multiple generations as we all seek an authentic expression of Christ in our midst. Take your time to carefully mine the depths of all this site has to offer. **PC**



### What's Not to Like?

Here are some prayer pages on Facebook we encourage you to “Like.” (Add [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) before the / on each address.)

**Prayer Connect** /[prayerconnect](https://www.facebook.com/prayerconnect)

**Harvest Prayer Ministries**

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**OneCry** /[theOneCry](https://www.facebook.com/theOneCry)

**Intercessors for America** /[IFAPray](https://www.facebook.com/IFAPray)



## House of Prayer Message Still Stirs Audiences

Pastor Jim Cymbala of the Brooklyn Tabernacle in Brooklyn, NY, preached a sermon at a praise gathering in Indianapolis in 1994 that is considered one of the most powerful messages delivered on prayer in the last few decades. He declared that Jesus did not call His house to be one of preaching or worship—but a house of prayer. He challenged believers to get serious about prayer if there is to be hope for a fresh move of God in our churches and nation. And he shared a redeeming story of his daughter returning home as an

immediate answer to the cries of his congregation.

You can order this popular DVD from *brooklyntabernacle.org* or view it at *youtube.com* (search House of Prayer Jim Cymbala). This is a great resource to share with your prayer team and pastors.

Cymbala leads a Tuesday night prayer gathering at the Brooklyn Tabernacle that often draws more than 2,000 people to what he considers the most important gathering of the week.



Many churches have taken teams of people to Brooklyn just to visit this prayer meeting and be inspired toward greater corporate prayer.

He is also part of the leadership team of the 6:4 Fellowship, which hosts one-day gatherings for pastors and leaders—with a call to return to the centrality of the Word and prayer. You can find a regional conference at *64fellowship.com*.

## Prayer for Names Yields Unexpected Abundance

Seven years of prayer and planning and an unfinished auditorium floor covered with names resulted in an outpouring of God's blessing on opening Sunday for one church location in York, PA. Leaders and worshipers had prayed and prepared for 500 to attend opening day—and instead 1,995 adults and kids showed up.

Lives Changed By Christ (LCBC) is one church with multiple locations throughout central Pennsylvania. The York campus is LCBC's fourth location, which was launched with two services (9 and 11 a.m.) in March 2012. The overwhelming response can be credited to the intentional prayer efforts prior to the launch.



About 150 people came to the unfinished York space one Sunday afternoon in February 2012 and wrote hundreds of names on the floor—parents, neighbors, relatives, and friends. Every name represented prayers by those who were planning to invite them to services.

“There was even an ultrasound picture of a baby yet to be born,” Zeswitz says. “It was touching and sacred.” Although those names are now covered with carpet, prayers continue to permeate the meeting space.

Prayer events prior to other campus launches

were similar. For instance, participants in Harrisburg wrote on the walls the names of people they were planning on inviting. In Manheim, before the auditorium

### Writing Names and Praying Them In

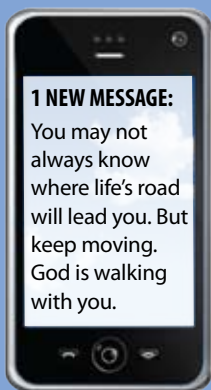
“One of our core leadership principles is to pray about everything,” says John

Zeswitz, executive director of ministries. “It’s more than a mantra—it is a part of how we engage every initiative and decision.”

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was built, names were written on wooden stakes. Putting a stake in the ground represented a commitment to invite that person who was far from God. In Lancaster City, LCBC leases the auditorium on Sundays and does not own it, so instead the people wrote names on a large banner.

### Responding to the Thirsty

Senior Pastor David Ashcraft said, in an email to the LCBC family, that the York launch “pretty much proved that we may have ideas but God may have other plans!” With three times the number of people anticipated showing up that first Sunday, many had to be turned away because York’s auditorium and parking lots were packed.

Those showing up in overwhelming numbers included people who hadn’t been in a church in 17 years. One person had not attended church since the Vietnam



War. Others with broken lives agreed to come with friends who invited them.

Here’s how one email to the church described the people of York: “York isn’t just thirsty, we are dehydrated and starved.” A third service at 1 p.m. has been added to help quench that thirst.

**DEB STRUBEL** ([debedits.com](http://debedits.com)) is a freelance writer and editor, living in Lancaster, PA.

## Parents, Prayer, and Baby Dedications

Trinity Evangelical Missionary Church of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada has a unique prayer twist on its baby dedications. The congregation believes it is important for the pastor to pray a blessing over the child. But because the parents are the ones who are actually dedicating their child to the Lord, they are encouraged to participate in a significant way.

Instead of the pastor speaking and leading the entire dedication, Trinity Church has the parents do it—through prayer. As is typical in many churches, the pastor invites the parents to bring the baby forward, with close relatives joining them at the front. But then the parents take the lead by praying over their baby. They are free to pray as they feel led—and often the mother prays a prayer that is somewhat prophetic. She asks the Lord



to mold and shape her child, sharing all the “character quality” dreams she has for the baby as he or she grows up. Then the father takes the child and prayerfully offers him or her to God. Finally the pastor prays a blessing over

the child. The dedication ends with a short charge to relatives and the congregation to help in raising the child.

In addition to this being a touching, powerful time in a service, some important prayer principles are modeled for the people. As the congregation listens to the prayers and hears character qualities being prayed about, it is a reminder that prayer can go beyond “fixing situations” by praying toward the future spiritual development of a child. It also provides a deeper link to the parents by reminding people to pray for them, as well as offering thoughts on ways to continue praying for the child.





## Making Room for Spirit-led Prayer

Paul tells us that we don't know what we should pray for, but that the Holy Spirit Himself intercedes for us (Rom. 8:26). And yet, how many times do we find ourselves praying for others strictly on the basis of what they think they need prayer for, rather than seeking the guidance of the Spirit?

When we take prayer requests in small groups, we tend to focus our prayers on exactly the items listed. Indeed, Paul once prayed this way, asking God to remove his "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor. 12:7). But God's response indicated that God had greater purposes in mind than Paul's request for relief.

Standing with friends in prayer during a time of need is one of the best ways to support them and to deepen relationships. But such prayer shouldn't be limited to repeating before God the specific issues and desires raised. The group member in crisis is often consumed with the details; she needs the group to step outside those details and seek God's Kingdom and will on her behalf.

One way to do this is to change the way we share prayer requests in our groups. Rather than having a group member share details surrounding a prayer request, have him simply mention the area for which he needs prayer. Allow a couple of minutes of silence, as group members ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to them His prayers for the person. Then, have the group pray as the Spirit has led. Over time, this will help the group pray more Kingdom-centered prayers as they invite God's work in the lives of each group member.

### Keep Prayers Brief and Focused

Long prayers tend to cause group members to disengage, discouraging widespread participation. Brief, focused prayers encourage and value the contributions of all group members. Group members stay engaged and attentive, listening

for the guidance of the Holy Spirit as they participate. By contrast, longer prayers covering multiple topics tend to relegate other members to the role of spectator rather than active participant.

For example, consider a group praying for one of its members in the hospital. If the first person to pray covers the doctors, the recovery, the family, financial issues, and spiritual needs, he doesn't leave much for others to pray. Such a prayer will tend to be long (causing others' minds to wander) and will discourage other members from praying because there's nothing left to pray for. However, if the first one to pray sticks to one idea (for example, the surgery), he leaves ideas for other group members to contribute. A brief, focused prayer like this encourages others to join in prayer.

Similarly, suppose a group member is struggling in her marriage. If someone opens the prayer time by praying for her husband, her children, her spiritual growth and perseverance, and God's guidance, there isn't much room left for others to join in. But if the opening prayer focuses, for example, on the husband, then the entire group is encouraged to pray for the husband before moving on. Such prayer is both more complete and more engaging for the entire group.

By training your group to pray briefly and stay focused, you will increase your group's effectiveness in prayer, promoting unity, encouraging widespread participation, and inviting the Holy Spirit's leading.

**ANDREW WHEELER** is co-director of the prayer ministry at Willow Creek's regional campus in McHenry County, IL.

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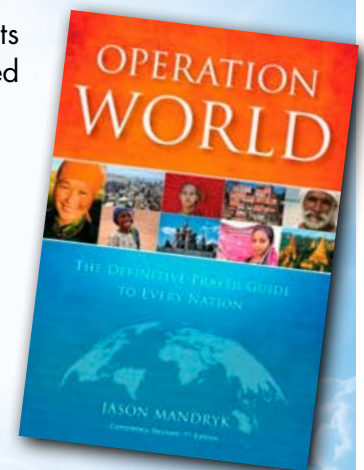
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## Inviting God to Stay in the Room | By Elaine Helms

“Does anyone have a prayer request?” This is the way many prayer times in our churches begin. That question generates lots of detail about health, wealth, and other temporal issues of life. It’s as though we are asking God to leave the room so we can talk about what we’re going to talk to Him about when we pray.

When we finally get around to praying, we usually rush because we used up our time by sharing details of our requests. I believe this pattern is one reason prayer gatherings dwindle.

### Perhaps a Better Way?

While it is biblical to bear one another’s burdens (Gal. 6:2), there may be a better way to approach leading a prayer time.

Asking for prayer requests first, keeps us focused on ourselves and how big our problems are. For example, if I hold an opened book in front of my face, it will seem like the biggest thing in the room. But when I put the book on the table, I see it in proper perspective to everything else.

Much the same way, if we focus on our circumstance, it seems like the biggest and most urgent thing in the world. But when we instead begin a prayer time with praise, focusing on how great and mighty God is, we see life issues in proper perspective. Nothing is too difficult for God (Jer. 32:17). Adoration restores our awareness that we are approaching our holy, holy, holy God. He is exalted—high and lifted up—and we, like Isaiah, respond, “Woe is me” (Isa. 6:4–5).

As soon as Isaiah confessed his unworthiness to be in God’s presence, God forgave the prophet’s sin and gave him work to do. We see the perspective of a right relationship with God in 1 John 1:9

also: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” That right relationship prepares us for our assignment from the Lord.

From this vantage point, we are more concerned with God’s glory and His will being done. What is the Holy Spirit prompting us to pray? With a glance back to those huge problems and dire circumstances we brought to the prayer meeting, we see that they look like deflated balloons. We’ve put them in perspective. Our God is bigger than anything we encounter. He can handle our circumstances. He is in control.

God repeatedly tells us to give our requests to Him and trade our anxieties for His peace (1 Peter 5:7, Phil. 4:6–7, Matt. 6:25–33). He loves us and cares for us. When Jesus taught His disciples—and us—to pray, His prayer began with praise of God, then casting our cares on Him by trusting Him for provision, then asking for forgiveness of our sins and protection from evil. With the anxieties of life taken off our shoulders, we can get back to the business of prayer, seeking God’s glory and His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

### Putting It into Practice

Set the tone for worshipful prayer first by reading aloud a Scripture passage of praise, such as Psalm 96 or Ephesians 1,

as individuals read along in their own Bibles. Then invite everyone to pray back to God what you have just read. This fresh dimension helps others learn to praise God for who He is.

Encourage the group to share other Scripture verses or short passages if the Holy Spirit prompts them. By doing this you are leading the group to use Scripture, to rely on the Holy Spirit, and to ground their prayers in the character of Jesus.

Often praise will lead to a time of confession, so you might read a Scripture such as Ephesians 4:25–32 to help people deal with issues that need attention. To close the confession time, read or have someone else read Psalm 32:1–5, which naturally leads to thanksgiving for cleansing and renewal.

Then the group is ready to cast their cares on our loving Father, who is more than able to handle anything that concerns us. Encourage the group to ask God how He can be glorified through the specific trials and tribulations that are facing His people.

Connecting with our Living God encourages people’s hearts and prepares them to face whatever challenges come their way.

Jesus said in Matthew 18:20, “For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.” This is the reality we need to acknowledge when we meet with Him to pray.

He is already in the room! **PC**



**ELAINE HELMS** is director of Church Prayer Ministries ([churchprayerministries.org](http://churchprayerministries.org)), the national prayer coordinator emeritus for the Southern Baptist Convention, and the author of *Prayer 101: What Every Intercessor Needs to Know* (available at [prayershop.org](http://prayershop.org)).



## Prevailing Prayer | By Charles Finney

**T**he effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much (James 5:16, KJV).

Prevailing prayer, or effectual prayer, is that prayer which attains the blessing that it seeks. It is that prayer which effectually moves God. I cannot detail in full all the things that go to make up prevailing prayer. But I will mention some things that are essential to it; some things which a person must do to prevail in prayer.

### He must pray for a definite object.

He need not expect to offer such prayer if he prays at random, without any distinct or definite object. Many people go away into their rooms alone “to pray,” simply because they must say their prayers. They fall down on their knees and pray for just what comes into their minds—for everything that floats in the imagination. They can hardly tell a word of what they have been praying for. This is not effectual prayer.

**Prayer, to be effectual, must be in accordance with the revealed will of God.** There are three ways in which God’s will is revealed to men for their guidance in prayer.

- By express promises or predictions in the Bible, that He will give or do certain things.
- By His Providence. It would be impossible to reveal everything in the Bible. But God often makes it clear to those who have spiritual discernment that it is His will to grant such and such blessings.
- By His Spirit. When God’s people are at a loss what to pray for, agreeable to His will, His Spirit often instructs them. Where there is no particular revelation, and Providence leaves it

dark, and we know not what to pray for as we ought, we are expressly told that “the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Rom. 8:26, KJV).

### Effectual prayer for an object implies a desire for that object commensurate with its importance.

If a person truly desires any blessing, his desires will bear some proportion to the greatness of the blessing. If you find yourself exercised with benevolent desires, there is a strong presumption that the Spirit of God is exciting these very desires, and stirring you up to pray for that object.

Prevailing prayer is offered when Christians have been wrought up to such a pitch of importunity and such a holy boldness [that] afterwards when they look back upon it, they were frightened and amazed at themselves, to think they should have dared to exercise such importunity with God. Yet these prayers have prevailed, and obtained the blessing.

### It must be persevering prayer.

Prayer is not effectual unless it is offered up with an agony of desire. The Apostle Paul speaks of it as a travail of the soul. Jesus Christ, when He was praying in the garden, was in such agony that “his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Luke 22:44, KJV). I have known persons to pray till they were all wet with perspiration, in the coldest weather in winter. I have known persons to pray for hours, till their strength was all exhausted with the agony of their minds.

Such prayers prevailed with God.

**If you intend prayer to be effectual, you must offer it in the name of Christ.** You cannot come to God in your own name. You cannot plead your own merits. But when you pray in the name of Christ, you can receive just as much as God’s well beloved Son would if He were to pray Himself for the same things.

**You cannot prevail in prayer without renouncing all your sins.** You must not only recall them to mind, and repent of them, but you must in the purpose of your heart renounce them all forever.

**You must pray in faith.** You need not look for an answer to prayer, if you pray without any expectation of obtaining it. If the will of God is indicated by His Providence, you ought to depend on it, so far as to expect the blessing if you pray for it. And if you are led by His Spirit to pray for certain things, you have as much reason to expect those things to be done as if God had revealed it in His Word.

A great deal of prayer is lost, and many people never prevail in prayer, because, when they have desires for particular blessings, they do not follow them up. They may have desires, benevolent and pure, which are excited by the Spirit of God; and when they have them, they should persevere in prayer, for if they turn off their attention, they will quench the Spirit.

Will you offer prevailing prayer that the Spirit of God may come down? **PC**

**CHARLES G. FINNEY** (1792-1875), an evangelist often referred to as “The Father of Modern Revivalism,” played a key role in the Second Great Awakening. He was involved with the abolitionist movement and frequently denounced slavery from the pulpit. He also allowed women to pray in public.



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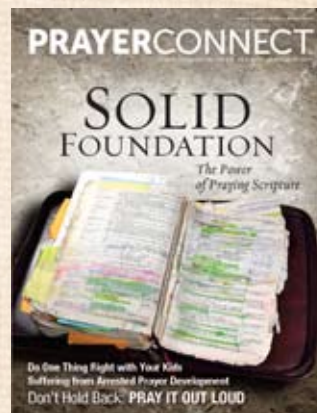
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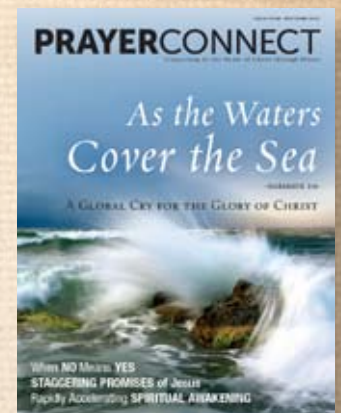
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