



## Kingdom Over Culture, Pt. 3 – Hazen Stevens

October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024

### I. Introduction

- A. In this *Kingdom Over Culture* series, we are engaging in discussions on critical and often controversial topics such as gender identity, abortion, race, and the political climate. Our approach is rooted in a biblical worldview, emphasizing civility, humility, and a Christ-like attitude. We are focused on ensuring that our perspectives are shaped by the Kingdom of God, not by the world's opinions, and standing firm in our faith and commitment to Jesus. Throughout the series, we explore how our understanding of God forms the foundation of our identity and worldview, and how we can engage with love and truth amid a confused culture.
- B. As a nation, we are not simply at a crossroads—we are far down the wrong road, and we need to turn around. Prayer is our first, but not the final step. A praying people can avert crisis, stay the judgment, and a 'torn heart' can turn the heart of God toward us and bestow a blessing.

### II. A Historic Example of Prayer's Impact on Culture

- A. In 1857, **Jeremiah Lanphier**, a layman with a heart for ministry, began what would become the **Lunch Hour Prayer Revival**, also known as the **Fulton Street Revival**, in New York City. At a time of social, political, and economic turmoil in the U.S., Lanphier responded to the growing sense of anxiety and spiritual decline. He initiated a simple, businessman-led prayer meeting during the lunch hour, recognizing the busy schedules of professionals. On September 23, 1857, at Noon, the first prayer meeting was called on the third floor of the North Dutch Reformed Church. The meeting was announced in a flyer which said that its purpose was to "give merchants, mechanics, clerks, strangers and businessmen generally an opportunity to stop and call on God amid the perplexities incident to their respective avocations." For the first half hour, from 12 PM to 12:30 PM, Jeremiah Lanphier sat alone in prayer, wondering if he had heard God. Then one came and knelt down. Then another, and by 1 PM there were six that had come to pray. The next week there were 20 and the next week 40. Then those who came suggested they meet weekly. Three weeks later the stock market crashed and the panic of 1857 caused some to commit suicide, but others knew where to go to pray! The panic brought hundreds to pray! Soon men and women filled all three floors of the *Dutch Church* as well as the *John Street Methodist Church* next door! <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [https://prayer.tsc.nyc/wp-content/uploads/jeremiah-lanphier-prayer-revival\\_paul-jehle\\_09216.pdf](https://prayer.tsc.nyc/wp-content/uploads/jeremiah-lanphier-prayer-revival_paul-jehle_09216.pdf)



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- B. First, the leader would open up for no more than 10 minutes at exactly Noon. Second, one hymn, from three to five verses would be sung. Third, prayer and a Scripture reading would open the meeting. Fourth, the “five-minute rule” would apply – no one could testify or pray for longer so all could share. Fifth, no controversial issues could be brought up, and no one could promote their church or personal agenda. A bell would sound if a rule was violated! <sup>2</sup>
- C. This revival spread because of its simplicity and accessibility: a time of united, focused prayer during a busy workday. It wasn’t about preaching or emotional displays, but about seeking God’s face in humility. The prayer meetings were led primarily by laypeople, not clergy, and were held across denominational lines, emphasizing unity and a deep commitment to God.
- D. **Impact:**
  - 1. **Conversions:** It is estimated that around 1 million people were converted during the course of the revival. This was significant considering the total U.S. population at the time was around 30 million.
  - 2. **Social and Moral Reform:** The revival brought about social change, with increased moral reform efforts, including the temperance movement and missions to care for the poor.
  - 3. **Global Influence:** The revival also inspired prayer movements and spiritual revivals in other parts of the world, including Europe and South Africa.

### **III. The Biblical Response to a Cultural Crisis**

- A. “<sup>1</sup> Sound the trumpet in Jerusalem! Raise the alarm on my holy mountain! Let everyone tremble in fear because the day of the Lord is upon us. <sup>2</sup> It is a day of darkness and gloom, a day of thick clouds and deep blackness. Suddenly, like dawn spreading across the mountains, a great and mighty army appears. Nothing like it has been seen before or will ever be seen again... <sup>12</sup> That is why the Lord says, ‘Turn to me now, while there is time. Give me your hearts. Come with fasting, weeping, and mourning. <sup>13</sup> Don’t tear your clothing in your grief, but tear your hearts instead.’ Return to the Lord your God, for He is merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. He is eager to relent and not punish. <sup>14</sup> Who knows? Perhaps He will give you a reprieve, sending you a blessing instead of this curse. Perhaps you will be able to offer grain and wine to the Lord your God as before. <sup>15</sup> Blow the ram’s horn in Jerusalem!

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Announce a time of fasting; call the people together for a solemn meeting. <sup>16</sup> Gather all the people—the elders, the children, and even the babies. Call the bridegroom from his quarters and the bride from her private room. <sup>17</sup> Let the priests, who minister in the Lord's presence, stand and weep between the entry room to the Temple and the altar. Let them pray, Spare your people, Lord! Don't let your special possession become an object of mockery. Don't let them become a joke for unbelieving foreigners who say, 'Has the God of Israel left them?'" (Joel 2:1-2,12-17, NLT)

- B. The context of Joel 2 is a warning to the people of Judah about an impending day of judgment, known as the *Day of the Lord*. The prophet Joel describes a coming invasion of a powerful, destructive army—often symbolized as locusts—bringing devastation to the land as punishment for the people's sins. The chapter opens with a call to sound the alarm and warns of the darkness and destruction that will come upon the nation. In response to this looming judgment, God, through Joel, calls the people to repentance, urging them to turn back to Him with sincere hearts, fasting, and mourning. He emphasizes that God is merciful and compassionate, eager to forgive and restore if the people truly repent.
- C. The world is in chaos—fires in California, floods in the Carolinas, tornadoes and hurricanes in Florida, school shootings, political division, sexual confusion, war in Europe and the Middle East. **This is not what's coming; this is where we are now.**
- D. 4 Invitations from Joel 2: Urgency, Unction, Unity, and Repentance (U-turn)
  - 1. **Urgency:** The sound of the ram's horn in Joel is a wake-up call, signaling that *judgment is already in motion*. Yet, we can appeal to God's mercy and stay His hand of judgment through sincere repentance. Joel 2:12-17 is a powerful call to repentance and renewal in times of crisis. This story reminds us that our *first, but not final* response in moments of crisis must be *prayer*.
  - 2. **Unction in Prayer:** Prayer with fervency, brokenness, and passion must be the prescription for spiritual decline. But the kind of prayer matters! In our first front of engagement, we must be with God in passionate, transformative prayer. Have you wept for the spiritual condition of your 'political enemy'? That is how our hearts are changed, and how our prayers can change a nation. When the Lord says, "Rend your heart and not your garments," He is calling for more than outward grief or displays of mourning. He wants us to be broken over our spiritual condition, recognizing that we ourselves (including myself) may have contributed to the cultural decline. How much more challenging must circumstances get before we respond with hearts turned back to Him? As believers, we must turn to the King set upon His holy



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hill. Cynical responses to prayer are common, but we cannot be swayed by the world's disbelief or adopt their mindset. We cannot be passive, offering empty platitudes or prayers meant to comfort rather than intercede.

3. **Unity:** This moment requires more than just pastors' involvement—every person, in every season, needs to respond. Our culture is in crisis, and our first, but not final, response should be prayer—unified, penitent, and full of lament. Joel 2 shows us that type of prayer.
  4. **Repentance** (U-turn): If you've engaged in sinful behaviors—whether it's pornography, covetousness, anger, racism, selfishness, or complacency—you've contributed to the crisis. If you've loved yourself or your ways more than God and His ways, you are part of the problem. Even in our spiritual complacency, miserly giving, or apathetic prayers, we have lost the potency of our salt that is meant to preserve and transform cultural decay.
- E. God spoke to me about it this year—He said it is my "facedown 40," a time to fall before Him in humility and repentance for the spiritual condition of our nation. It's not a time to stride forward proudly, but to bow low in prayer, asking God to turn us back to Him. When we don't know how to pray, if we will just get on our faces before Him, the compassionate and merciful One will help us.
- F. Romans 8:26-27 (NLT): "<sup>26</sup> And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. <sup>27</sup> And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will."
- G. **Your next step:**
1. Join us in our prayer meeting tonight "For the Nation."
  2. Participate in virtual prayer in the coming weeks.
  3. Make time daily for prayer (using the *Prayer Guide up to the Election*).