

Come As You Are

Focus on Him

Matt 6:9

Prayer series and initiatives- desire to be a praying church. Are we? Some great initiatives but does it permeate all we do.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones - "Prayer is beyond any question the highest activity of the human soul. Man is at his greatest and highest when, upon his knees, he comes face to face with God" (slide)

It comes down to faith and confidence that I have an audience with the Creator of all things, and that for Him nothing is impossible. Remember a few weeks ago we spoke about who we are in Christ? Royal priests and what that means

Hebrews 10 vs 19-22 (slide)

¹⁹ Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

Do you believe this? How seriously do you take your position? This is prayer. A dynamic interaction with God in the holy of holies.

Does prayer make a difference? (slide)

If I believe the verse above is true, then prayer has to make a difference.

Research

Physical and mental health

Decrease in unhealthy behavior

Relationships/marriage

For me the most intriguing aspect is the significant part it plays in moving people, communities and nations to become true followers of Jesus and what happens to societies when this happens. We call this revival. It's difficult to find a revival that has happened in history that didn't have prayer at the core. Go and read the doc on our website. I want to mention just one of those revivals in a moment but there is a common factor in revivals.

1. Prayer precedes revival (slide)

I have not read of a revival that has happened without prayer playing a significant role. Why do we want to pray for revival? What happens?

Fact is that every revival has had an enormous social impact. People who were touched by the revival started addressing every form of human need in their communities; feeding schemes were started for the needy, housing was provided for the homeless and unmarried mothers; rehabilitation centers for alcoholics and prostitutes, orphanages and psychiatric institutions were established, and societies for the protection of animals were founded. The rights of workers were negotiated and slave trade was counteracted by legislation. In many cases Christians initiated legislation to have child labor declared illegal, to protect juvenile delinquents and also various others forms of legislation for the restriction of different forms of violence and exploitation of people who were powerless to fight for themselves.

This is what happens when Jesus followers are alive in the spirit and living out their faith.

New York revival 1857-62- layman's prayer revival

Conditions of the day

Historian, James Edwin Orr summarized the state of America as follows:

- Gain, gambling and greed were rampant. There was spectacular wealth, but also misery and utter poverty at the other end of the scale, and the gap between rich and poor was growing. This was accompanied by a rapid increase in violent crime.
- There was an alarming increase of occult activity because the disappointment of many people with the church made them turn to other options.

- Immorality, a playboy type of philosophy of free love, was advocated and accepted by many.
- Economical and political corruption increased – bribery and illegal business practices flourished, and national laws still endorsed slavery.
- Atheism, agnosticism, apathy, indifference to God and the mocking of God were the order of the day.

The decline was fivefold: social, moral, political, spiritual and economic. Sound familiar

Charles Finney and others were around and seeing fruit. A desire for revival grew

Prayer meetings began where they prayed for revival

when Jeremiah Lanphier called for a noonday prayer meeting from 12:00-13:00 on Wednesday 23 September 1857, the ground had been prepared. In a certain sense it was just another prayer meeting of business people and other New Yorkers with a passion for change in the social, spiritual and economic situation in New York and America. However, this specific prayer opportunity was the spark that kindled the 1857 revival.

First meeting 6 then 20 then 40 then 100...soon 5000 daily. Soon 100's of prayer meetings were started. The revival fire was on. Newspapers started reporting--- progress of revival

Prayer format

The prayer meetings were usually held for exactly one hour: 12:00-13:00. Many factories would blow their whistle at 11:55 to remind people of the day's prayer meetings, and the whistle was blown again at 13:05 as a signal for people that it was time to start work again.

“We take our seats in the middle room, ten minutes before 12 o'clock. A few ladies are seated in the corner, and some businessmen are also already present. Five minutes to twelve, the room begins to fill up rapidly. Two minutes to twelve, the leader walks in, and takes his seat at the table. At 12 noon

- Leader commences the meeting by reading two or three verses of a hymn. A hymn book has been placed on each person's seat; all sing with heart and voice. -
-Leader offers a prayer – short, purposeful, to the point.

-He reads a brief portion from Scripture. Ten minutes have now passed.

In the meantime, prayer requests in sealed envelopes have been going up to the table. A deep, solemn silence settles upon our meeting. It is holy ground. The leader stands with the requests on slips of paper in his hand. He announces: 'This meeting is now open for prayer. Brethren from a distance are specially invited to take part. All will observe the rules.'

All is now breathless attention. A tender solicitude spreads over all those upturned faces. The leader reads a request: 'A son in North Carolina desires the fervent prayers of the righteous of this congregation for the speedy conversion of his mother in Connecticut ...'

In an instant a father rises: 'I wish to ask for prayer for two sons and a daughter.' He sits down and bursts into tears, laying his head down on the railing of the seat before him, sobbing like a broken-hearted child.

A few brief remarks follow. The leader continues reading the requests in his hand: 'A praying sister who attends our meetings requests prayer for two unconverted brothers in Detroit; that they be converted and become true disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.'

Another request follows: 'Prayer is requested for a young theologian who is going astray ...'

Two very fervent earnest prayers follow in quick succession. And others who rise to pray at the same time sit down again when they find themselves preceded by the voices already engaged in prayer. Then arises from all hearts a beautiful hymn:

*There is a fountain filled with blood Drawn from Immanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood Lose all their guilty stains.*

Then someone prays earnestly for all who have already been prayed for; for all sinner's present; for the perishing thousands in the city and for revival all over the land and world.

It is now a quarter to one o'clock. Time has fled on silver wings.

Then arises a sailor who daily intercedes for other sailors. He was converted on board a man-of-war (warship) and knows how hard it is for a converted sailor to stand up, firm against the storm of jeers and reproaches and taunts of a ship's crew. 'I am here,' he says, 'to represent one who has requested me to ask your prayers for a converted sailor this day gone to sea. I parted from him a little time ago and his great fear is that he may dishonor the cause of the Redeemer. Will you pray for this sailor?' People start praying immediately that God will keep and guide him."

Then follow the closing hymn and benediction. They part for the following twenty-four hours.

So, the answers started coming

In New Hampshire there was a place called Hell Corner. These people had practically no contact with the outside world. They were known for their profanity, foul language and gambling. One day when they were again swearing, drinking and carrying on in a wicked and ungodly way, a woman who didn't know the Lord either, tried to stop them but they ridiculed and mocked her. Someone sarcastically suggested that they start a prayer meeting in *her* house.

A backslidden Christian tried to 'lead' in prayer and mocked God, but he broke down while praying and repented. After this the meetings continued under the leadership of a man from a neighboring town, and four or five hundred men were convicted of sin and accepted Christ. Many in Hell Corner became dedicated praying people. The Spirit of God simply took over and people were saved without any preaching or outside influence.

1 million out of 30 saved. America is different.

No famous names- just a prayer meeting led by laymen with access to the holy of holies

So, what is the state of our nation? Spiritually, morally, socially, divisively. How deeply do you desire revival?

2 Chron 7 vs 14 (slide)

14 if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

Lord, speak to us in these next 4 weeks. Move us to prayer. Show us what we are not doing. Teach us from your Word

It's called the Lord's Prayer, but it is really the Disciples Prayer.

Matthew 6 vs 9-13 (slide)

⁹“This, then, is how you should pray:

**““Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,**

**¹⁰ your kingdom come,
your will be done,**

on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us today our daily bread.

**¹² And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.**

**¹³ And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.**

2. Pattern vs ritual (slide)

As we have just prayed for some this was just the same old ritual. Until I can in sincerity and truth say, “Our Father which are in heaven,” and in my life seek to honor His holy name, the saying of this prayer has no meaning and is in fact hypocritical.

This prayer was taught more as a pattern than a ritual, and as beautiful as it is, it is not limiting me but rather guiding me as I engage in a relationship with my Father that will involve so much more.

There does not seem to be any valid reason that He meant it to be repeated frequently, or as part of a service of prayer or worship, as it is commonly used today. No mention is made of its use in the early Christian assemblies of the book

of Acts, nor is it even referred to in the Epistles....Now that the Holy Spirit has come to guide us in our supplications, it would seem needlessly formal to be bound to use the exact words we have here when we come to God either in public or in private devotions.

3. Prayer as a lifestyle (slide)

Life in the Spirit

“When you pray”. The present imperative is a command calling for us to make prayer the habit of our lives. Prayer is not to be a "past time" but a lifestyle. Why is prayer so hard? Prayer is a spiritual activity. It is a supernatural conversation with God. It is not something that our flesh agrees with or desires and so that will always be the battle to begin with. So, what is the solution? The Spirit. But the Spirit indwelling us gives us both the spiritual desire and the power to pray because we "want to" not because we "have to".

If you are struggling to pray- no desire. Deny the flesh and surrender to the Spirit. “Fill me”. It may start as a discipline and a practice but once you enter in and get past the flesh you discover the joy.

4. Prayer is Personal and relational

Our FATHER

Personal and corporate (Our Father...us...our)

Jesus transferred the Fatherhood of God from a theological doctrine into an intense, practical experience, and he taught his disciples to pray with the same intimacy. He gives them a share in His sonship and empowers them, as His disciples, to speak with their heavenly Father in just such a familiar, trusting way as a child would with his father. This was revolutionary.

Addressing God as Abba (Dearest Father) is not only an indication of spiritual health but is a mark of the authenticity of our faith.

Galatians 4 vs 6 **(SLIDE)**

“Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, ‘Abba, Father!’”

The impulse to call on God in this way is a sign of being God's child.

Romans 8:15, 16 (slide)

“you received the spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father!’ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.”

Do you have that testimony? Come today.

Our father

When you address God what is your image of Him?

How do I talk to my father?

I love him, I respect him, I look up to him, I trust him. He is wise, he has my back and my best interests. I feel safe and secure. For those who haven't had a father like this it's hard to relate. Maybe you are that father now. What's it like to have your child want to come to you and get your input in their lives? To show they trust and value what you think. God is relational.

Familiar, safe, intimate. Nourisher, protector.... this is my image of Him. Its huge in how it affects the way we pray and our desire to pray

It's a family prayer...assumes a relationship. My father means I know Him.

5. Prayer is Worship and reverence (slide)

Who is in heaven

Hallowed be your name

What we are doing when we pray this phrase is, we are acknowledging God as holy, as unlike any other. We are choosing to hold His Name in reverence and thus to honor, glorify, and exalt Him for His name speaks of His person and character.

In Hebrew the name does not mean simply the name by which a person is called (not simply a title). In Hebrew the name speaks to the nature, the character, the personality of the person in so far as it is known or revealed to us. (Do you know what your name means? Eg Andrew- one who is always right!!!)

Psalm 9 vs 10 (SLIDE)

"Those who know your name put their trust in you"

It means that those who know what God is like, those who know the nature and the character of God will put their trust in him.

Hallowed be your name (speaks to His Character)

Let God's name be treated differently from all other names; let God's name be given a position which is absolutely unique.

He takes this very seriously.

Exodus 20 vs 2-4,7

²“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. ³“You shall have no other gods before me. ⁴“You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.

⁷“You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

My experience with blasphemy and the attempts of the enemy. His sole purpose is to blaspheme the name. So, every time you hallow His name you are destroying the purposes of the enemy.

So, today and this week may His name be hallowed among us. May we speak of His name and the beauty of His character. We set aside what we want Him to do. Let us get lost in His beauty.

Response

1.Psalm 145 (slide)

A psalm of praise. Of David.

¹ I will exalt you, my God the King;

I will praise your name for ever and ever.

² Every day I will praise you

and extol your name for ever and ever.

³ Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise;

his greatness no one can fathom.

⁴ One generation commends your works to another;

they tell of your mighty acts.

⁵ They speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty—

and I will meditate on your wonderful works.

⁶They tell of the power of your awesome works—
and I will proclaim your great deeds.

⁷They celebrate your abundant goodness
and joyfully sing of your righteousness.

⁸The LORD is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and rich in love.

⁹The LORD is good to all;
he has compassion on all he has made.

¹⁰All your works praise you, LORD;
your faithful people extol you.

¹¹They tell of the glory of your kingdom
and speak of your might,

¹²so that all people may know of your mighty acts
and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.

¹³Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and your dominion endures through all generations.

The LORD is trustworthy in all he promises
and faithful in all he does.

¹⁴The LORD upholds all who fall
and lifts up all who are bowed down.

¹⁵The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food at the proper time.

¹⁶You open your hand
and satisfy the desires of every living thing.

¹⁷The LORD is righteous in all his ways
and faithful in all he does.

¹⁸The LORD is near to all who call on him,
to all who call on him in truth.

¹⁹He fulfills the desires of those who fear him;
he hears their cry and saves them.

²⁰The LORD watches over all who love him,
but all the wicked he will destroy.

²¹My mouth will speak in praise of the LORD.
Let every creature praise his holy name
for ever and ever.

2.Names and attributes (slide of card side by side)

take 15 seconds and ask God to show them one name that is meaningful to them. After 15 seconds instruct ones to ask God to give them an image of what that would look like. Let them sit with the image for 15 to 30 seconds. Then have everyone pray out loud to the God that is all things. Praying the specific name or all of name.

3.Revelation song