



Sunday, October 6<sup>th</sup>  
Part 4: “Let’s Pray...Together”

(SLIDE) This morning our focus is “Let’s Pray...Together”. Let me take you back in time for a moment. In his book, “When the Spirit’s Fire Swept Korea”, missionary Jonathan Goforth details the great work of revival God did in Korea in 1907.

That work came as a result of believers praying together in unity. Groups of Presbyterian and Methodist missionaries met together to seek God for revival. Up to that time the relationship between the two groups had been contentious with feelings of antagonism and competition.

But once they began to pray together, God convicted them of these obstacles to the spreading of the gospel and as God revived them, they all became unified in seeking God for revival.

And the results were that God not only revived them but He moved in the hearts and lives unbelievers as well. And that is something that always accompanies true revival – God uses His people to share the gospel with spiritually people resulting in huge advancements for the kingdom of God.

And that's what happened. God's people were revived and tens of thousands of unbelievers came to faith in Christ there in Korea. If there's anything the Bible and church history reveals about revival it's that prayer is the single and greatest activity we can take in partnering with God for revival.

In fact, church historians have noted that praying together for revival often brings about a spirit of unity among God's people.

Our memory verse this week reminds us that God has especially chosen the prayers of unified Christians who cry out to Him. Let's say this verse out loud together...

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*"Again, truly I tell you, if two of you on earth agree about any matter that you pray for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there among them."* Matthew 18:19-20

In our first message in this series I showed you these verses and I pointed out to you a promise that Jesus makes here...

Promise: God gives greater spiritual authority, when believers pray together in Jesus' name.

One praying Christian gets God's attention. Add another and another and another and the results can be world-changing. Now Jesus isn't saying that when 2 or 3 believers pray together that He gives us a blank check to pray any ridiculous thing that we might want.

God is not a Genie in a bottle and prayer is not an incantation to say so God comes out of the battle and grants our every wish.

Prayer is not the means we use to get God to do what we want. Rather, prayer is the means by which we surrender our wills to God so that HIS will is done on earth as it is in heaven.

When we pray in obedience to God and in accord with His expressed will in His Word, THEN God endorses our obedience and empowers our prayers for the completion of His will in our lives, and in the lives and circumstances of those around us.

And praying together with other believers multiplies the urgency of our prayers to God to do His work in our lives and in the lives of others. It's like when your kids gang up on you.

EXAMPLE: When our kids were small and we would be driving somewhere in our minivan usually one of them would say, "Hey, let's stop for ice cream." Most of the time, Lisa and I would simply ignore them or simply say, "Not this time."

But when all three of them started asking that we stop, and then they would start chanting, "Ice Cream, Ice Cream, Ice Cream". Well, their united voices got our attention. And if we thought it was appropriate in that situation to stop, then we would relent and head to the nearest ice cream shop.

In a similar way, our united voices being lifted up in prayer to God, asking Him for something that we know He already wants to do, gets His attention.

And while He will always move in accordance with His own will and timetable, I believe our united prayers lets Him know we are ready any time He is.

This morning we're going to see that much of the prayer modeled and commanded in the Bible – especially the New Testament – is collective prayer – praying together.

Now does this mean that you shouldn't pray personally by yourself even for yourself? Of course not. We've already learned in this series that prayer is a reflection of the personal relationship we enjoy with God as His sons and daughters. It's natural for us to spend time with God in prayer when we understand that He is our heavenly Father.

But far too often in the church today it's corporate prayer that is downplayed and ignored by many believers. As you've heard me say before, prayer is like an airplane.

(Slide) An airplane has 2 wings. Take one off, either one it doesn't matter, and what happens? The plane's gonna sink like a rock, right? And the same is true in our Christian lives.

Spiritually we need the lift and the power and the stability of both our personal prayer life to and with God, as well as prayer with other believers. Praying personally changes me. Praying corporately changes the world.

And that's what we see in the book of Acts. READ 1:14.

(SLIDE)



The day was September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 – 9/11 as it's become known. As the tragedy unfolded before our eyes, our church, like most other churches that day, held a prayer service that evening.

And the following Sunday we spent time in prayer for our nation. And we had a near record crowd that day.

One pastor, sharing a similar experience, later wrote these words,

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“Why does it take something like planes flying into buildings to cause us to recognize the importance of corporate prayer and give ourselves to it? If prayer is such a source of spiritual power – if it is such a valuable enterprise to utilize in the face of life's difficulties and problems – why don't we turn to it on a more regular basis? Why the struggle to get people to come together and pray? Is it not every bit as needed at times when our nation has not come under attack, and when there hasn't been the massive loss of life?”

Good questions. Let's look again at the early believers in Acts. Just how committed were they to being united in prayer? What did they pray when they came together in united prayer and what were the results?

Here in chapter 1 verse 14, we're not told what they prayed and we're not given insights into any outward results. But I believe it would not be a far stretch to conjecture that what they were praying probably had something to do with the last words they had just heard Jesus utter to them.

READ vs. 7-8.

They knew the Spirit was coming, they knew they had a God-given mission to pursue. So again, in verse 14, they came together and were continually united in prayer.

Their unity in corporate prayer shows up again in later in chapter one.

READ Acts 1:24 - 26

WHAT DID THEY PRAY? They prayed for wisdom in knowing who Judas's replacement was supposed to be.

WHAT WERE THE RESULTS? God answered and chose Matthias to take Judas's place.

READ Acts 4:24, 29-31

WHAT DID THEY PRAY? They asked God for boldness when Peter and John were threatened about publicly witnessing to others about Christ.

WHAT WERE THE RESULTS? God answered and gave boldness to the church so they could be faithful witnesses.

READ Acts 6:6

WHAT DID THEY PRAY? They prayed over the 7 men chosen to assist the elders in making sure the widows in the church were taken care of.

WHAT WERE THE RESULTS? READ vs. 7. The church's witness flourished, and more and more people became disciples of Jesus – especially Jewish priests! That's huge!

Just like it's very difficult for Jewish people to accept Jesus as the Messiah today and give their lives to follow Him, it was just as true then. This was nothing short of a miraculous!

READ 12:5

WHAT DID THEY PRAY? Peter was arrested and put in prison and they prayed for his release.

WHAT WERE THE RESULTS? READ vs. 6-10. God answered their prayers and again something miraculous happened, that to God Peter got to use His Get Out of Jail Free Card! It's that awesome?! 😊

READ Acts 13:1-2a

WHAT DID THEY PRAY? We don't know for sure but it seems to have included worship and maybe even the reaching of the nations because that's the way God answered.

WHAT WERE THE RESULTS? Vs. 2b-3. The Holy Spirit directed that Paul and Barnabas should be sent out as the first missionaries and they immediately sent them out.

READ 16:25.

WHAT DID THEY PRAY? We don't know for sure but a good guess would be that they were praying for their release – because again, that was the result of their prayers. Let's look...

READ vs. 26-34. A whole family put their trust Christ as Savior and God freed Paul and Silas from prison.

Notice from this particular example that it was 2 two people – Paul and Silas that were praying together. When even just 2 people agree in prayer the results can be, again, miraculous. I'll come back to that concept in a minute.

What we see from these examples of corporate prayer is that God's people continued their commitment to unified prayer that had begun back in chapter 1.

Their prayers were varied in nature, but they always had something to do with God's mission being completed, the church being able to do what God wanted it to do or God's glory being shown in some way.

AND whenever God's people came together in prayer, God gave amazing answers that in most cases even amazed those who had doing the praying. The bottom line is that God answers prayer when his people come together in unified prayer.

Now these are just the examples of God's people praying in the book of Acts. Corporate prayer is also addressed in the books of Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and 1 Timothy. Turn to 1 Timothy chapter 2.

Paul told Timothy in his first letter that the first priority for a pastor is to lead his church to pray. READ 2:1-4.



Now from the example of the believers in Acts and from the priority of prayer Paul told Timothy to place in the local church I come to two conclusions:

(Slide) 1.) Pastors have a God-given responsibility to lead their church to be united in prayer. For a pastor to NOT make corporate prayer a priority is to fail to follow God's will for his life and ministry.

So let me ask you, what's the first priority a pastor is to set in the local church? Prayer! If prayer isn't the highest priority in the church is a pastor doing his job? No!

It is therefore important for a church family to pray for their pastor asking God to give their pastor wisdom and understanding in how to make prayer the priority God wants it to be. I hope you'll put me on your prayer list so that God will give me the wisdom and understanding I need. Amen?!

Here's the second conclusion...

(Slide) 2. God's people have a God-given responsibility to follow the spiritual leadership of their church and be united in prayer. For a local church to NOT make corporate prayer a priority is to fail to follow God's will for His people.

So, what's the first priority people in their local church should be committed to? Prayer! If prayer isn't their highest priority are the people in the church doing their job? No!

It is therefore important that a pastor prays for his people asking God to help them see the high priority that prayer should be and to give themselves to becoming a people of prayer. And that is my prayer for all of you.

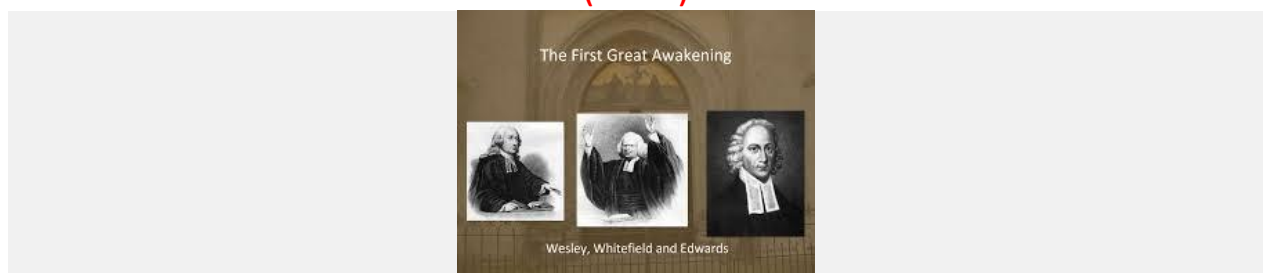
One church leader wrote these words,

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“It may be no coincidence that the culture we live in has become increasingly indifferent and even hostile to Christianity at the same time that united prayer has gone out of the church. As recently as fifty years ago, prayer meetings were a vital part of many churches. As American culture became increasingly entertainment oriented, the mid-week prayer meeting was replaced by the Wednesday night service. The active work of prayer was replaced with passive listening as the focal point shifted from God’s power to answer prayer, to what was happening at the front of the church. Eventually the prayer meeting moved out of the sanctuary and into a corner of the church library. At the same time, the church’s impact upon the culture around us began to decline.” ~ James Banks

Historically in our nation, God has used corporate prayer to bring about revival among God’s people and spiritual awakening among lost people. Three very prominent times God did this and we refer to them as the First, the Second and the Third Great Awakenings.

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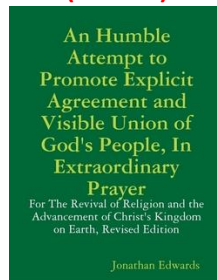
The first occurred way back in the 1730’s & 40’s. God used men like John Wesley the founder of the Methodist Church movement, George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards and their preaching and leadership.

But before these men came on the scene, it was God's people, gathered together in unified prayer that prepared the way for the Holy Spirit to move and to bring revival.

The Second Great Awakening began about 1800 again Jonathan Edwards was a principle figure even though he had already been dead for over 40 years.

He wrote a pamphlet...

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What was the pamphlet about? Corporate prayer! God used this pamphlet to stir His people to pray together in prayer meetings all over America and England and as a result God's people were revived and thousands came to faith in Christ.

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Then came the Third Great Awakening in the late 1850's. A man named Jeremiah Lamphier, a layman in his local church, started a noon-hour prayer meeting in New York City for businessmen over their lunch hour. A pastor didn't this, a faithful church-going man started this.

The first day only 6 people showed up. The next week 20 showed up, then the next week 40 showed up. Then the unthinkable happened: The Panic of 1857 hit. It was the world's first international economic crisis.

Within six months thousands of people had lost their jobs and at the same time the noon prayer meetings had moved from a weekly event to a daily event and were drawing over 10,000 people a day.

God used corporate prayer to sweep a revival across America that resulted in the greatest number of people coming to faith in Christ our nation has ever seen!

They estimated that out of a population of 30 million people in America at the time, 1 million Americans became followers of Christ. God brought revival to His people and out of this awakening hundreds and hundreds of people were mobilized as missionaries to the unreached around the globe.

This bronze sculpture of Jeremiah Lamphier entitled, "Invitation to Pray" sits near the place where his church once was in New York City as a memorial to the man God used to spark this great revival – simply by asking people to pray together.

Looking at our nation's history Church historians believe that all three Great Awakenings were the result of God's people coming together in corporate prayer and that corporate prayer is the foundation for revival and spiritual awakening.

One historian has said,

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“It is a deeply interesting and encouraging fact, that from the period when the disciples at Jerusalem, in obedience to the commands of their Lord, “continued in one accord in prayer”, to the present time, every revival with which the church has been blessed has been preceded by the spirit of special and earnest prayer for the influence of the Holy Spirit, and the conversion of sinners; and individual conversions are continually occurring, which may be distinctly traced to the influence of intercessor prayer.”

~ Robert Young

So what does this mean for us, for our body of believers here at FCC? If we desire God to revive our hearts and to use us to further His mission in discipling all peoples beginning with our own community and region, what are the keys to a culture of prayer at Fellowship?

(Slide) 1. A dynamic culture of prayer at Fellowship must center around united prayer as the very fabric of our existence as a church and as a catalyst to revival.

We must pray together – in every setting and situation from our morning worship services, to our adult Growth Groups, to ministry meetings to functions of all types and in all seasons...

From the youngest among us in our Fellowship Jr. Ministry to our Elementary Children, our Jr. High Youth Ministry, our Sr. High Youth, our Foster Care Ministry, Nursing Homes Ministry

Yes, in every ministry and facet of our church, we must pray together – with each other and for each other, for the lost around us and around the world,

For our president and for all those in authority, for our pastors and leaders, and most of all for revival in hearts and lives so that through us God's mission of discipling all peoples for the sake of His expands in our generation.

Will you help me build a dynamic culture of prayer here at Fellowship centered around corporate prayer a central part of who we are as a local church, is so, say, "Amen". I appreciate your support and I need it.

Let me show you one way that we can build this culture of corporate prayer together...

### 3 Day Prayer Summit VIDEO

(Slide) 3 Day PRAYER SUMMIT at Wesley Woods by Indianola

Registration starts this morning at the Summit Table in the lobby or online. It's going to be another sweet time of fellowship together with the Lord. A little taste of heaven. I hope you'll join us.

### (Slide) Daily Prayer

Another application of praying together here at Fellowship is our daily prayer gatherings. For most of you these are impossible to come to due to your work schedules, but I want you to know that when we gather here every day in prayer at 10:00, we pray for you.

And the invitation is always open for you to join us any day as we seek God's face in prayer for each other, for our church family, for our missionaries and MIFs, for pressing needs that only God can meet.

But praying together doesn't just mean with others in our own local church. God wants us to lock arms in prayer with fellow believers right here in our own community and seek Him together to transform our community by His power. That's why we have our annual Norwalk/Cumming Prayer Walk.

(Slide) Norwalk / Cumming Prayer Walk – Next Sunday at 4:00 p.m.

(Slide) 2. A dynamic culture of united prayer at Fellowship begins and is most practiced in the setting of 2 or 3 believers together seeking God – prayer partners.

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### THIS WEEK'S MEMORY VERSE

We saw in our memory verse the power of the unity of 2 or 3 people praying together. These verses make 2 things abundantly clear:

- 1.) You must be in agreement before you ask God in prayer
- 2.) You must ask together in prayer

God answers prayer when we pray in agreement, together with another person. Why? God wants our hearts to be going the same direction when we pray. God is honored in unity and He is pleased to hear and answer our harmonious prayer.

So what is a prayer partner? (NOTES) A prayer partner is any believer who joins you in praying in agreement with you anytime, anywhere.

Let me give you some examples:

- First from the Bible...We saw earlier in Acts 16 Paul and Silas were in a heap of trouble. They were arrested, flogged, and put in the maximum security prison. They had every reason to worry, complain, and doubt.

Instead they partnered together in prayer and praise to God and God heard and answered their prayer and miraculously delivered them.

- Last Sunday at the end of the service as I dismissed everyone, I watched a lady walk over to another lady in another part of the gym and talk briefly with her, then together they bowed their heads and began to pray. That's 2 people coming together as prayer partners, agreeing in Jesus name.
- Every Sunday our pastors and elders are down front available to partner with you in prayer and in agreement take your requests to God. That's not an embarrassing thing, it's a strategic thing to do as we join you in prayer.
- On Friday I received word that Pastor Eddie, director of Mexico Caravan Ministries – one of the missions ministries our church supports, had suffered a stroke on Thursday.

I grabbed the closest staff member I could find in the office and together in agreeing prayer we took Eddie to the throne of grace and asked God to heal him.

I'm happy to report that he went home from the hospital Friday night with no residual effects of the stroke. He's weak and tired, but he's ok. In a few moments I'm going to ask you all to pray for him this morning.



A prayer partner can be your spouse, someone in your Growth Group, your accountability partner, a Christian friend at work or school, or someone in your church family that on the spur of a moment you are drawn together in prayer with.

Every Sunday morning we have the opportunity, not only to worship God together, but to pray together with others, in groups of 2 or 3, agreeing together and praying together in the name of Jesus.

Partnering in prayer with fellow believers should be something so necessary to our Christian lives and to our church that is just second nature as we live out our faith together. It's something we should be engaged in at all times.

Why should you partner with 1 or 2 others to pray together? Look on your notes...Because from the Scriptures we learn that prayer partners...

- 1.) Can help deliver people from trouble – Acts 12:1-17
- 2.) Can move God to heal someone – James 5:16
- 3.) Can help others live peacefully – 1 Timothy 2:1
- 4.) Can help protect others from temptation – Luke 22:31-32
- 5.) Can pray for the ministry of others – Romans 15:30; Colossians 4:3
- 6.) Can help others understand and grow – Ephesians 1:17; 3:16-17

Who can you partner with in agreeing prayer and seek God together today? This week?

Fellowship: Let's make our church a church with a dynamic culture of prayer by praying together. We're going to put this into practice right now. I want you move into groups of 2-4 people and pray together.

If someone around you is by themselves, invite them to join you. No one has to pray out loud if they don't want to. But if you are comfortable, I encourage you to lift up your voices in agreeing prayer to God.

Jesus promised big things if we would go to Him with others in agreeing prayer in the name of Jesus. I want to ask you to pray for revival in your hearts and lives. Pray for revival here in our church. Pray for Pastor Eddie and his recovery. Pray for any needs you might have.

**(GROUPS OF 2-4) Time of PRAYER FOR REVIVAL & PASTOR EDDIE / Elders & Pastor DOWN FRONT NOW**

INVITATION SONG: "THIS WE KNOW"