

Role of Prayer in Preparation for Spiritual Awakening

by Bill McLeod

Bill McLeod's sermon highlights the essential role of prayer in preparing for spiritual awakening and revival in the church.

Duration: 58:28

Scripture: Isaiah 56:1-2, Isaiah 56:4

Topics: "Spiritual Awakening"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of plain and simple preaching of the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit. He highlights the need for genuine blessings from God and prays for an enlargement of his coasts, which is interpreted as a desire for spiritual growth rather than material gain. The preacher discusses the role of prayer in preparing for spiritual awakening and shares an example of a church in Scotland that experienced a powerful conversion of 500 sinners after an all-night prayer meeting. The sermon also mentions the use of evangelistic teams, singers, and preachers, but suggests that true transformation comes from a genuine encounter with God rather than external factors.

Transcript

Good morning. I'd like to read from Isaiah 56, verse 1. Isaiah 56, verse 1. Thus saith the Lord, Keep your judgment and do justice, for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed. Blessed is the man that does this, and the son of man that lays hold on it, that keeps the sabbath from polluting it, and keeps his hand from doing any evil.

Neither let the son of a stranger, now he's talking here about the Gentiles, neither let the son of a stranger that has joined himself to the Lord, now that's New Testament language, speak, saying, The Lord has utterly separated me from his people. Neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree. For thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant.

Even unto them will I give in my house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and daughters. I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. Also the sons of the strangers that join themselves to the Lord, it's mentioned twice now, to serve him and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants.

Everyone that keeps the sabbath from polluting it and takes hold of my covenant, even them will I bring to my holy mountain and make them joyful in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon my altar, for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all people. The Lord God who gathers the outcasts of Israel says, Yet I will gather others to him beside those that are gathered unto him.

Verse 7, God said, I will make them joyful in my house of prayer. My house shall be called a house of prayer for all people. The Lord Jesus quoted the latter statement in Matthew 21.

So the Old Testament says it, the New Testament says it, and nobody has caught on to it yet. My house shall be called a house of prayer for Jew and Gentile. In the average evangelical church service, I suppose it would be in an hour five minutes of prayer.

I was in a church one time and they had 45 minutes of music Sunday morning which meant they were trying to press me into a 25 minute mold which I cannot operate or live comfortably with. And I spoke to the pastor and he said, Oh heavens no, we cannot change this, we've done it this way for 25 years. Please notice, he never said his house would be a house of singing or of preaching or of good works or even of fellowship.

But he did say it would be a house of prayer. And somehow we've missed this almost entirely it seems. Have you ever noticed, and please hear me to the end of this particular thought, have you ever noticed how small a place music has in the New Testament scriptures? One reference in four Gospels, it simply says when they sung a hymn, they went out.

In the book of Acts, no references at all except Paul and Silas in jail at midnight, they prayed and sang praises unto God. But you couldn't exactly call that a church service. The book of Revelation, a singing and harp playing in heaven, but nothing said about singing and harp playing on earth.

It seems strange to me, we do have of course Colossians 3.16 and I would not dare to overlook that. We're told to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. So it's right to sing, and I'm not downgrading that, but I'm just saying that apart from Colossians 3.16, there's almost nothing in the New Testament regarding music.

That may be why Spurgeon, in his great church, never allowed a choir or a quartet or a trio or a duet or even a soloist, except on one occasion he allowed Sankey to sing. They never even had a musical instrument in his auditorium. He would not allow that, but he did allow Sankey to bring his little portable custom whistles, the Scotch people called it, a tiny portable organ, and Sankey was allowed to sing.

It wasn't really that Spurgeon was dogmatically opposed to this, but this is what he said, I wanted to demonstrate to the world that all we need to attract the crowds and get them saved is the plain, simple preaching of the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit without any other adornment. That's what he said. He did describe some songs as being what he called mermaid poetry, fair enough where they broke the surface but totally fishy in the lower parts.

And he spoke of some other songs as being wax-nosed hymnology made to fit the face of any creed. You know, creedless songs, all kinds of them. Colossians 3.16, after all, does give us some guidelines.

Songs, hymns, hymns of praise, it really means. Songs from the Spirit, odes, it means. Songs from the Spirit.

But teaching and admonishing, and there are hundreds of songs being sung today that neither teach nor admonish. I went through a book a while back, New Songbook, 87 songs. 75 were totally subjective.

That is, they're all about me and my problems. Those bore me to death. I know about my problems.

I want to hear about the one who can help me. Majestic sweetness sits enthroned upon my Savior's brow, His head with radiant glories crowned, His lips with grace or flow. Those kind of songs are not popular today.

I recently asked a man who has a master's degree in music why it was that there was such a paucity of references to music in the New Testament. And you know what he said? I've wondered much about it myself. Now, please don't go home and say, Bill McLeod's against music.

I am not. Now, I don't sing well. But I'll sing as well as you in heaven.

I guarantee it. And I love good Christian music, providing it's within some sane boundaries. We have all kinds of people singing in our churches today who are not really walking with God, who have no burden, love for God or souls either, and they are performers, strictly.

We are supposed to minister unto the Lord. Paul said we speak before God in Christ. And this we must always keep before us when we sing or speak or share.

We speak before God in Christ. Are they pleased? That's all we should be concerned about. Is God pleased? In the text we read here, God spoke approvingly of those who choose the things that please me.

My house, a house of prayer. My wife and I were in a church in Buenos Aires in Argentina, 500 people or so, their congregation. And in every service, there was a time when the entire congregation was called upon to kneel.

And everybody prayed out loud at the same time. It's almost like the waves of the sea rising and falling. And if there were 30 or 40 sinners there, so what? They had to kneel also.

I mean, everybody now. It wasn't long after that, I was to come there for a week of meetings, and before I got there, a revival broke that swept the entire church, and then several hundred sinners were converted without any special meetings at all. The preacher could hardly sleep at night for his door being almost beaten down by anxious sinners wanting to find Christ.

My house shall be called a house of prayer for all people. There are 7,487 promises in the Bible. Prayer is pleading the promises of God back to God.

You can't pray in faith. You can pray, but you cannot pray in faith unless you can stand on a promise of God. When Nathan came to David and said, David, here are some things God wants to do for you.

If I remember rightly, there were 7 different things that Nathan shared that God was going to do for him. Now, these were really promises. And David went into the temple of God, and it says he sat before the Lord.

How do you sit before the Lord? You cross your knees, both feet flat on the floor, plus, you know, a plush covered chair. How do you sit before the Lord? You just sit and look to Him. He's there.

And David, among other things, said in that wonderful prayer of his, Lord, do as you have said. Do as you have said. In a sense, he was pleading those promises.

God, you said you would do these things for me. Do as you have said. Now, that's prayer.

But for Jew and Gentile in Isaiah 56, God's house is supposed to be a house of prayer for all people. Churches prepare for the coming of CRF teams. Their prayer preparation is almost always a sham and a shame.

We give instructions to pastors, suggesting things they may do by way of prayer preparation. We get there. We ask the pastor, What has your church done by way of prayer preparation? And the pastor will smile and say, Oh, we really prepared.

We had an extra prayer meeting. Well, of course, I think immediately, he means every week. But I ask the question, and how often? Well, he looks startled.

Well, we did have an extra prayer meeting last week. So then I pursue it. And how many came out? About 15.

What is your membership? And by this time, he's getting nervous. Well, about 250. And in some cases, not of course in all cases, but in some cases, we could almost say in many cases, all that's ever happened by way of preparation is that the preacher keeps telling the people, Now be sure and pray more.

We're having special meetings. And God won't bless if we don't pray. That's about as far as it goes.

Billy Sunday said, The average Christian prays like a rabbit nibbling at a cabbage. I remember a fellow, his name was Walt McLeod. He was a friend of my dad's, a good friend of my dad's, but not related to us, although he had the same name.

And I remember hearing one time, he and my dad were discussing their exercise program, and my dad did a lot of walking, and this other fellow, Walt McLeod, said, Well, every morning, he said, I have a pretty thorough program. He said, I get up, and I walk to the window, and I put the window up, and I do three or four of these. And I, I thought to myself, Well, what in the world would that do? But dear people, much of our praying is about in the same category.

You know, what was that all about? The role of prayer in preparation for spiritual awakening is a topic that was assigned me for this morning. The role of prayer. The Kirk of Shotts in Scotland, they called an all-night prayer meeting, and apparently the entire congregation stayed for that.

They prayed right through the night. The sun came up in the morning. They were still praying.

Later on that day, they had a preaching service, and 500 sinners were converted. Now, we read things like that, and we say, Wonderful! Praise the Lord! But we don't copy their good example. It says in Matthew chapter 25, that while the bridegroom tarried, the bridegroom is Christ, and the tarrying has reference to his second coming.

While the bridegroom tarried, they all, the wise as well as the foolish, they all slumbered and slept. Which is to say, the church is not much different than the world. Christ said, Watch and pray.

Lest you enter into temptation. Could you not watch with me one hour? Have you ever spent an hour alone with God? The average Christian would probably have to answer, Well, no, I really haven't. About the only time that happens, the average Christian's experience, is when somebody is deathly sick, or has been hurt in a car accident, or maybe they've lost a job.

Prayer has been called the breathing of the soul, based on Lamentations 3.56, where Jeremiah said, Hide not your ear at my breathing, at my cry. Pray without ceasing. In Luke 11, Christ said, He gave us a parable related to importunity in prayer.

Importunity, someone has said, is shameless asking, or asking that will not be denied. Importunity. And in the 13th verse of Luke 11, He said, If you then, being evil, Now remember the context is importunity in prayer.

If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him? I was once reading a book on prayer, an excellent book. The book was called Prayer, Asking, and Receiving. And he was saying, We pray for God to guide us.

We pray for God to empower us. We pray for God to give us victory over sin. But we don't often, and for some, ever pray for God to fill us with the Holy Spirit who leads us, and guides us, and teaches us, and empowers us, and gives us victory over sin.

And he was referring to Luke 11, 1 to 13. Importunity. Shameless asking.

Asking that will not be denied, but based upon the Word of God. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you. But notice the qualification.

There is an if there. If you abide in Christ, if you walk in a sweet, unbroken fellowship with Jesus, and then if you fill yourself with the Word of God, if my words abide in you, then we won't be asking selfishly or foolishly, but for the glory of God, in tune, in touch with his Spirit, which is meant by the statement praying in the Holy Spirit, as he leads, when he leads, for what he has in mind. Luke 18, Christ added, it says, and spoke a parable to the sand, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.

One translation says, men ought always to pray, and not to turn coward. The antidote for fear and timidity is prayer. I mean, that's what he's saying.

The apostles said in Acts chapter 6, we will give ourselves, have you ever thought of that phrase? We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word. Please note the order. We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word.

In 1 Thessalonians chapter 3, Paul said, night and day praying exceedingly. These apostles, I don't think they were all great preachers, but I'll tell you something, I do believe they were great prayers. That's why Paul could say, I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not wrought by me to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about unto Elyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

But he was rude in speech. He said so. What will this babblers say, they said of Paul at Mars Hill? They didn't say, My, what an orator! What will this babblers say? Seed picker, what will he say? Reference being to a hen scratching the ground and picking up some seed.

He spoke, remember, of the things that Christ had wrought by him, not only by deeds but by words. My speech and my preaching, he said, was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. And that can only come through prayer.

1 Thessalonians chapter 5, Rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks. This is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Galatians 4.19, My little children, of whom I prevail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you.

Perhaps borrowing from Isaiah, he's likening prayer to childbirth. It is not easy. Paul spoke of a certain man, and he says he has a great zeal for you.

And the context shows he's talking about his zeal in prayer. You think about zeal, you think about giving out tracts, or something along those lines. What about zeal in the prayer life? We sing, O the purity light of a single hour that before thy throne I spend, when I kneel in prayer with thee, my God, that I commune as friend with friend.

Somebody made the comment that the average Christian would probably have to save up for a month to make up the hour. Would that be true for you? What about our churches then? Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints. That's being called all prayer.

We don't know much all prayer today. The pastor of one of the largest churches in America, Evangelical Churches, told me a while ago he was going back to the midweek single prayer meeting format because he said, we've got all kinds of little prayer meetings going on in our church. He said, in my church, in our experience, they serve to divide the family of God.

We do not have a unifying factor in the church anymore. Each person, each little group, is doing their own thing. And we're going back to the United Church prayer meeting.

I think it's biblical. I'm not speaking against the other concept either. It would be great to be able to do both.

But there's a need for the people of God to get together. Some of you have heard me say some of these things, of course, before, but at hindsight, England, so I understand, the fastest growing church in the British Isles. When my wife and I were over there three or four years ago in Scotland, we were not at Tyneside, but not too far away.

They were running 800. They come from zero up to 800 very rapidly. And they're just growing constantly.

And evangelicals in the British Isles were watching this church because this kind of growth is not common in the British Isles. And they're trying to figure out what the program is. What's the program? I'll tell you what the program is.

If they have 800 people Sunday morning, they have 800 people Sunday evening, they have 800 people at the prayer meeting Wednesday night. Their Wednesday night service is always as big as Sunday morning. People are taking it seriously.

My house shall be called a house of prayer. And people, we need that first and foremost before anything else we can possibly do. And I think that when the churches in America get to that place, not just these concerts of prayer, they're good, but our churches still, by and large.

The Christians are not really involved together in prayer in a truly biblical way. Be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving. Let your requests be made known unto God.

I exhort therefore that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men. This is good, Paul said, good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior who will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. 1 Timothy 2.1, 1 Timothy 2.8, he picks it up again and he says, Therefore, I will therefore that men pray everywhere lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting.

We don't pray everywhere. We talk about sports, we talk about the weather, we talk about everything under the sun. We don't pray everywhere.

And let me point out again, men, in 1 Timothy 2.8, the reference is to men in a specific sense, not in a general sense that would mean men and women, because the next verse says, In like manner that women also adorn themselves in modest clothing. He's not saying that women shouldn't pray. He's simply saying that men should lead the way.

Men, we ought to pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath. I remember one time driving from Saskatoon to Winnipeg at the time of the revival. They were setting up a revival rally in Winnipeg.

Four or five men from my church and I, we drove the 500 miles to Winnipeg. It was a prayer meeting all the way. Nobody noticed that \$200,000 house beside the highway or that beautiful herd of black Angus cattle over here.

Somebody would say, Let's pray for this preacher. Let's pray for this missionary. Let's pray for this backslider.

Let's pray for this family. And on and on and on and on it went. And the ten hours rolled by, like almost ten minutes, we got to Winnipeg, we got a motel room, and somebody said, Now, let's have a prayer meeting.

So we had a prayer meeting. Now, I'll tell you, that revival rally was a powerful, powerful meeting, packed to the doors. The Spirit worked mightily, as He always does, when God's people prepare well.

I want to share something of the way that we as a church prepared for revival. Back in 1971, prior to that, the revival began in October. October the 13th, believe it or not, was the first meeting we had, a Wednesday night with Ralph and Lou.

What precipitated the prayer? Just a feeling of desperation. So I watched the congregation, good people. Gordon Bailey was not a backslider in the classical sense.

He was always in church. He read his Bible and prayed. He was always there.

He needed a revival, as all of us did. We had a lot of Bible school graduates in the church, and in a sense, they were great people. They were very kind to me.

When I asked them about holidays, they said, Pastor, take what the Lord tells you to take. If I asked if I could spend a week or two in Bible camps, anything the Lord tells you to do, they told me. What about conducting evangelistic service? Anything you want, you just do it for the Lord's Lady, and we'll pray for you.

They were really very kind, but we weren't getting anywhere. I began to feel like Jabez, 1 Chronicles chapter 4. He prayed a mighty prayer. His biography occupies two verses, not like Joseph's.

His occupies 12 chapters. And he cried in his prayer, and he said, Oh, that Thou wouldst bless me indeed. Do you ever get tired of trotting off to church like a workman carrying a lunch pail to work, carrying a Bible in your hand? Sunday after Sunday, nothing ever happens.

Nobody gets blessed. Nobody gets saved. Nobody is touched by God in some new and powerful way.

And some people are very happy with that. At least, if they're not happy, they're quite satisfied. Oh, that Thou wouldst bless me indeed and enlarge my coast.

Well, materialistic North American Christians would think he's asking for a bigger farm. He must be. I don't think so.

I think he was asking for more influence with people. Must I go, one of our psalms says, and empty-handed? Must I treat my Savior so? God said a terrible thing about a certain man in the Old Testament. Write you this man childless.

Childless. Many Christians are totally childless. They may have four or five, six kids of their own, but they'd never let a soul to Christ.

They're childless. Enlarge my coast, and that your hand might be with me. It says, the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.

I will turn my hand upon you and purely purge away your dross and take away all your sin, Isaiah 125, that you would keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me. Does sin grieve you? Your sin, does it grieve you? Many Christians, perhaps most Christians, can live with it. It doesn't bother them.

They don't shed any tears over it. They don't get down before God and tell God they'd rather die than continue on in sin. They're not that desperate.

Maybe never will be. Jabez was. Long before Christ came, he was.

That you would keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me. And it says, and God granted him that which he requested. Oh dear people, we need that kind of a spirit.

Oh God, that you bless me. Indeed, I came to the point of desperation. I remember one time a fellow, one of the Gideons in Saskatoon, he said, we had a meeting recently and we talked about your church and I thought you'd be pleased to know this, that the consensus of opinion among our people was that Ebenezer Baptist Church was the greatest soul winning church in Saskatoon.

I almost dropped dead. I thought if we're the best, you know, we might as well close them all up. When I got there, I thought I had a good church.

I say, nice people. If they invite you in for a meal, boy, you better leave your stomach at home. Because when you finish the meal, if you got up, your stomach would still stay there.

I mean, they could really feed you. Fantastic. But I tried to get the church on the road and I couldn't.

I tried all kinds of schemes and I berated them. I think sometimes I scolded them because one day one of the ladies said, oh, pastor, I wish you wouldn't scold us all the time. I wasn't even aware of the fact I was scolding them.

I wouldn't call it that, I suppose. I wouldn't have then. I think I would call it that now.

In a sense, I was taking out my own personal frustrations on the congregation. Couldn't get them to get involved in soul winning. The odd person did it occasionally.

So we had evangelistic teams come, singers, preachers. We had a preacher come one time. He trained a 40-voice choir of our people every night and they sang how they sang.

You know something? People can sing very well even when they're living in sin. That's why I often groan when the song leader tries to get the people to shout a little louder. Anyway.

I remember we had a fellow one time. He had been a tap dancer. He got converted, became a preacher.

He was a good preacher. His wife was a great ladies' meeting worker as well. She came with him.

And his specialty as a tap dancer had been that he could stand on his hands and tap dance on a board that was suspended from the ceiling. So we got him. Well, I mean, nothing else had worked and it was worth a try.

But it was the same as the others. They came and they went and the church and its pastor were not changed in the slightest. So after exhausting all the possibilities I could dream up, I thought, what in the world can we do? And when we'd exhausted all the possibilities, God began to talk to me about prayer.

And He began to burden my heart with prayer. Then He talked about what He called the spirit of prayer and He said it was a gift from God. Now, He based that on the verse in Zechariah 12, I think it's verse 10, where God said that He would pour on His people the spirit of grace and supplication.

A spirit of supplication, that is, a spirit of prayer, God would pour upon His people. One translation says, the spirit of grace to supplicate. And God began pouring that kind of spirit on my heart.

And here's what we did. Several years before the revival, we started a Saturday night deacons' prayer meeting which began at nine and went as long as it might go. Not a preaching meeting, not a singing time, just prayer.

And the first time we did it, Saturday night, next day was Sunday, Sunday morning, there was a very unusual and powerful work of the Holy Spirit in the congregation as if God was saying, as I think now He was, you're on the right track, stay with it. Later on, in one of the deacons' prayer meetings, God broke in. We, I think, could have had a revival then had I known then what I know now.

Again, God was encouraging us to continue in prayer. You've read, perhaps, in the Moravian Revival, did you know that they started a round-the-clock prayer meeting that never quit for a hundred years? For a

hundred years, there was always day and night, any hour of the day or night, somebody from that church on their knees before God. And they became, in their century, that first century of their existence, the most powerful missionary force that had ever been seen in the church of God, with the possible exception of the apostolic times.

Then I began to emphasize the prayer meeting. I often told the people, if you have to miss Sunday morning, if you must miss Sunday night, don't you ever miss a prayer meeting unless you're dead. And I kept telling the people this.

And you know what happened? They caught on. You know, if you tell people often enough, just the blessing of God, I'm sure they caught on. Then we introduced a children's prayer meeting so parents could bring their children, which meant more parents could come.

At least they never had the excuse, we have to look after the kids at home. They came. We often had 30, 35, sometimes 40 children in the prayer meeting.

But they had their own prayer meeting downstairs with a couple of adults. We broke it up into two groups, finally with a couple of adults. And each group of the adults were to train the children to run their own prayer meetings.

Jonathan Edwards tells of some powerful Holy Spirit revivals in his day that started through children's prayer meetings. Children will get a burden to pray. Ask their superiors if they can have regular prayer meetings in the church.

This would be granted. Then adults would come and sit in the back pew and just listen to these children, some of them very little, praying, calling on God. And in numbers of cases, this was the instrument God used for powerful, community-shaking Holy Spirit revivals while we had children attending.

And the prayer meeting began to grow. Every Wednesday night for that year before the revival, the prayer meeting was larger every Wednesday night. The center section filled up, the wings were beginning to fill up, and people were really praying.

Then we ended all our Sunday evening services with a half hour of prayer for those who wanted to stay. We might have 25, 35 or 40 people stay for that half hour of prayer specifically to pray for revival. We started cottage prayer meetings, different parts of the city.

These were not well attended, but we maintained them, we kept them up. I used to tell people now, when you read the Bible and pray with your family, take an extra bit of time and pray for revival. I kept emphasizing that.

I said even when you ask a blessing over your food, take a few moments, don't worry about things getting cold, that won't hurt the salad, and pray for revival. And people began to do that. From the foyer of the church, and people began taking 15 minute slots to pray.

Pretty soon we had the whole 24 hours taken up, and in some of those slots there might be several names. I mean, it really began to catch fire. Prayer.

My house shall be called a house of prayer. We were becoming that. We had no idea what God had in mind.

I used to go down to my office. The latest I ever got to my office was 7 o'clock in the morning. Sometimes I was there at 6. And sometimes I spent the whole morning on my face on the carpet, calling on God.

I sometimes thought, if this church finds out how much time their preachers, you know, pray and not doing some of the normal work of the ministry, they'll fire me. I didn't really care. They didn't fire me.

And then God began to give me just an overwhelming burden for prayer and began to do the same to other people in the church. And then people began telling me, you know, Pastor, it seems every night I wake up to pray. And sometimes they pray for an hour.

Sometimes they pray for two hours. In the middle of the night, just a rising tide of prayer. My house shall be called a house of prayer for all people.

The stranger, the Gentile, and the Jew alike, when he joins himself to the Lord, becomes a true believer. I often ask pastors how large their prayer meeting is. And I almost always get this owlish look.

You know, they don't say it. Do you have to ask this kind of question? That's what they're thinking. I gently pursue it.

How many did you say? I remember a church with 1,200 members packed out Sunday morning, double services in the States. And I asked about the prayer meeting. And the pastor said about 25 attend prayer meeting.

And I pursued it further and said, and how many of these are men? He said to the most, about five. So on the next meeting, I mentioned this. I didn't bawl anybody out.

I just wanted to make them aware of the fact that there must be a deep spiritual need in the church when only five men out of maybe five or six hundred would attend the prayer meeting. And when I came down from the platform that night, and as I was walking through the door, a bunch of ladies laid wait for me and said, Mr. McCloud, we want you to understand something. The men in this church are wonderful men and you ran them down.

What would you say if they said that to you? I wasn't running them down. I was just trying to get them to pray. Very good Christians may be very poor prayers.

And let me say this, if we're poor prayers, our Christian life is usually a shambles. We can hide it, and all that kind of thing. It's the same thing with a church that doesn't know how to pray.

We get programmed to death. You know what God did to us? He took all the programs away. We'd had a choir.

We couldn't get a choir director. The choir folded up. Boys clubs, we couldn't get people to run them.

They folded up. Girls club folded up. Women's meeting, every time we had a ladies meeting, there seemed to be a little gossiping going on afterwards and problems and troubles.

Finally we couldn't get a lady to take it. That closed down. And God began to take away all these things that we think are so essential, which we regard as being the marks of a going church.

But I say going where? You know, we practically, as far as advertising the meetings with Ralph and Lou are concerned, we really didn't advertise them at all. When the boys came, they had a big banner which we put up in the end of the church advertising the meetings. There came a rainstorm one night, blew it down in the mud.

We stuck it in the closet. God didn't even need that. But in a matter of days, the church was packed out and we had to move to another church seating perhaps five or six hundred.

First night we were there, we had seven hundred or so in there. And the second night, eight hundred. We had to get out of that, move to another building.

That wasn't big enough. Moved to the largest church building in the city, seating fourteen hundred, I think. And the first night we had probably seventeen or eighteen hundred there.

And that church proved to be too small because we had to start having double services. And the Spirit of God was working in a powerful way. I'd never seen anything like this.

But as I look back and try to analyze it, I realize now that we did, just did the things that God has always been wanting us to do. To pray. For this, I will yet be inquired of by the house of Israel, God said, to do it for them.

He wants to work. He wants to work powerfully. But as long as we fool around with our programs and neglect our prayer life, we'll keep on doing what we're doing now.

A friend of mine was in Korea. Preached in numbers of churches. Never preached in a church with less than eight hundred people.

Sometimes twelve, fourteen hundred. But he said every church he was in, they apologized for the tiny congregation they had. Because in South Korea, eight hundred or a thousand, that's a very small church.

Fifteen thousand. That's more like it. Twenty-five thousand.

Fifty thousand. Seventy thousand. A hundred and fifty thousand.

And as you probably know, one church has over a half a million members. One church. But in South Korea, they're not fooling around when it comes to prayer.

They don't have big programs of any kind really. They keep calling down the power of God. And thousands are converted.

And the Christians in South Korea are thinking in terms of the entire nation being one to Christ. Nobody really knows. They say maybe thirty-five percent of the people are Christians now.

If you watched the games in Seoul a while ago, they had something to say on TV about the Christian witness in South Korea. Some of you probably saw that. You can't sit in a bus terminal or an air terminal in Korea for very long, for more than half an hour, before somebody will come by and ask if you're saved.

That never happens in North America. Dear people, spiritually speaking, we're dead. We don't have power with God because we've never seen the role of prayer.

It's everything. It's God that has to do it. It's not scintillating platform personalities.

It's not great preaching. It's the power of the Spirit. Paul said, this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Prayer brings the supply of the Holy Spirit into the work of God. But dear people, we can't have praying churches until we have praying Christians. I mean, the preacher can plead all he wants, but if somebody doesn't start taking prayer seriously and if somebody does, it will catch from one to another as it did in our church.

But it's almost useless to call on people, dead people. I mean, born again but dead. That's possible.

That's how we were and quite satisfied for a while to be dead. And then God put a longing for reality in our hearts and He taught us how to pray. You ever sweat praying? Jesus did.

Why is that recorded in the Bible? I think to give us an example that there's times where prayer will be such work and the Spirit of God will be so strongly on you that you'll sweat when you pray. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks.

This is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. The role of prayer, it's everything. They had a great revival in Korea many years ago.

Some hundreds of thousands were saved. It swept the nation. So they invited Dr. Reuben Archer Torrey, a great Spirit-filled American evangelist to come with Alexander, a song, a leader, a singer.

And they prepared, they advertised all over the country and they prepared and they came and preached and sang for a month and almost nothing happened because they were looking to Torrey and Alexander to do it and not looking to God. At that particular time, the South Koreans had not seen the value of prayer, the place of prayer in the work of God. Remember, Moses spent 80 days alone with God, 40 days, 40 nights on two separate occasions.

Ever think of that? He was called, remember, the man of God. It was a peculiar title reserved not entirely but almost for him alone. A man of God.

He could never get too much of God. And I was thinking one day, what in the world was Moses doing 80 days in the mountain with God? Well, people say, well, he was writing out the Ten Commandments. I mean, was he that slow? You could write out the Ten Commandments in less than 10 minutes.

Well, and people say, well, the law of Moses. But I notice from the account in the Old Testament that some of the law of Moses he got while he was down in the camp, not in Mount Sinai. But let's allow two days for writing out the law of God.

So what were these two doing for 78 days? I mean, Mount Sinai is pretty barren. Bunch of rocks. Looked like they were burnt.

I don't think he was stargazing at night or looking at the sights in the daytime. He was simply, dear people, having fellowship with God. And again, I have to ask or consider at least this question, why is this in the Bible? I can think of only one answer.

God is trying to find some people that will be men of God today. That will take time just to be alone with God. This means we'll have to change our programs.

We'll have to forsake some things that we're now doing. Things that are not really important in the light of eternity. Set our priorities right and begin to pray to be alone with God.

He speaks sometimes very strongly in those times of prayer. I would say in closing then, prayer is everything insofar as spiritual awakenings are concerned. But remember, prayer is not, as Phineas said, to change God.

Prayer is to change me so that God can, consistent with His eternal purposes and holy nature, do those things which otherwise He could not do because my life was not right. So prayer is to change me. And that's why many Christians are afraid to spend an hour alone with God because they're afraid of what God might say about their selfishness, their self-centeredness, or a thousand other things that are not honoring to Him and may in fact be impeding the progress of His work in the local church.

Are you a man of God, a woman of God? I think many of us need to repent. And why not this morning to go to the prayer room and confess our prayerlessness to God? Christian workers, pastors, others, what is God saying to your heart? We keep pleading for prayer. Pastors agree, that's it.

They agree, that's it. That's what's needed. But how seldom does anything seem to happen in this particular area.

It's difficult, it's hard, it's absolutely necessary.

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