

# A House of Prayer

by Bill McLeod

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of prayer in the Christian life, highlighting the need to prioritize quality time with God, commit causes to Him, and trust in His justice and power.*

**Duration:** 48:03

**Scripture:** Genesis 32:26, Psalm 119:164, Matthew 26:40, Acts 6:4, Romans 12:21, 1 Peter 3:9

**Topics:** "Prayer"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares various anecdotes and experiences to emphasize the importance of committing our causes to God. He tells a story about a preacher from Argentina who came to Canada seeking revival but later blamed Democrats for his disappointment. The preacher then decides to teach a series on soul winning, but only two people show up for visitation, revealing their lack of genuine desire. This leads the preacher to conclude that what they truly need is a revival from God. He also highlights the story of Jacob wrestling with God and emphasizes the need to trust and seek God's blessings rather than seeking revenge or getting bitter. The sermon concludes with a mention of John the Baptist's prayerful life in the desert before God revealed his ministry to him.

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## Transcript

Good evening. Thanks for the smile. Let's try it again.

Good evening. Thank you. God bless you.

It's nice to be here again. How long was it ago that I was here? Do you recall? Three years? Probably. Well, I want to talk tonight about prayer.

In Isaiah 56, God said he would make his people joyful in his house of prayer. And then in the same verse he said, my house shall be called a house of prayer for all people. Please notice, he didn't call it a house of preaching.

He didn't call it a house of testimonies. He didn't call it a house of fellowship. He did call it a house of prayer.

And I think that basically this is where we've gone wrong. Particularly in the churches in the western world, prayer is sort of an appendage that's put on at the end of things as if it wasn't really all that important. But it's in the house of prayer that God said he would make his people happy.

He would bless them in the house of prayer. And if you look at that carefully in Isaiah 56, he was talking about the strangers, that is the Gentiles, who joined themselves to the Lord. And so that applies particularly to us tonight, that God will make us joyful in the house of prayer.

So Jesus quoted that in Matthew 21 and reminded his hearers that God had said this in Isaiah 56, but he said, you've made it a den of thieves. Now we probably haven't made it a den of thieves, but at the same time we have sinned against our God in not really taking this seriously. In one of the books she wrote that I read some years ago, she told about a happening there.

They'd had some evangelistic meetings and many people had professed to be saved, but none of them were doing well. And so finally some of them were backsliding, and so they picked out 12 or 15 men in the congregation who were men that were seen to be walking with God. And they gave each one of these men a responsibility list of new converts, that they were to follow up and encourage and disciple and train and so on.

And after three years, they were all backslidden, including the men doing the discipling. And then the church didn't know what to do. So somebody said, why don't we have a special prayer meeting once a month just to pray for revival, because obviously what we really need is revival.

Well they did that, but nothing happened. They got down to the place where they were having one extra special prayer meeting a week, and still nothing happened. And finally they came to the conclusion that they needed simply to pray every day until revival came.

And so they did that every night. They had a meeting of prayer, praying for revival. Now I'm not sure, was it eight months or more than that, that they prayed this way.

And then one night, while they were praying, they heard what they thought was a storm coming, and it wasn't. It was the Spirit of God. And that might seem strange, but we find this in the Book of Acts.

And in South Africa, under Andrew Murray's ministry, this happened several times where there was a rushing mighty wind. In any case, there were hundreds of people savingly, lastingly converted as a result of this revival. Hundreds of them.

And they were solid converts because it was a work of the Holy Spirit of God. But it came when God's children got serious about prayer. Now we have a wonderful story in Genesis 32 about Jacob at Jabbok.

Do you remember the story? He got word that his brother Esau was coming to meet him. That shouldn't have been bad, but for the fact that years before, he had wronged his brother and never made it right. Have you wronged somebody? God keeps touching your conscience about it.

You better get with it because you may run into serious problems such as Jacob did as a result of the fact that he never attempted in all those years to make things right. And it's interesting to notice in that chapter that he saw, just before he met Esau, he saw a vision of angels of God. And he was quite thrilled at this.

You know, sometimes before God leads you into a deep valley, he will give you a great blessing. And so he sent, not knowing what was in Esau's heart, that Esau had not only not forgiven him, but had been looking forward apparently to the day when he could murder him. And so he sent some of his servants, Jacob did, and he humbled himself.

Now he had some plans, and dear people, what he was doing was working his plan, which is what we often do. Instead of calling on God and getting right with God, we work our plans. And so the first thing was that he humbled himself a little bit, and he instructed the servants when they went that they were to address Esau as, My Lord Esau, and tell him, My Lord Esau, that your servant Jacob is coming.

So he humbled himself a little bit, you know. My Lord Esau, thy servant Jacob. And I guess he thought that would be enough, you know, to calm the troubled waters, and it wasn't.

The servants came back, and they were quite alarmed. They said, Esau has 400 armed men with him. And it says, Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed.

So he worked plan number two. He divided his whole group into two separate groups, and he thought to himself, if Esau smites this group, this group will get away. So he did that.

But he still felt very uneasy in his heart because he really did not know whether this plan would work or not. And besides, he might be in the wrong group himself. So then he tried what we might call standing on the promises.

He reminded the Lord that the Lord had promised to richly bless him. Hey, God, now don't forget, you've made these great promises to me. You can't let Esau, he didn't say this.

I think he thought something along these lines. But still, his conscience was bothering him, and he did not feel secure. So, he tried another plan.

Boy, he had lots of them. The one thing you can't do is outwit God. All you do is dig a deeper hole.

You can never outwit God. Well, he tried, and it's written for our instruction, lest we try, make the same mistakes he made. So the next thing he did, and this must have killed him because he was a very covetous person.

He lived to make dollars, you know, like some of us maybe do. And so he made a present for his brother Esau of 600 beasts. And then he had a thought, a smart thought.

He thought. Now what he should do was divide these beasts. Put the oxen here and the camels here, and he had ten different groups.

And they were to go in a line, these ten groves, it says, and the leader of each group was to address Esau as, My Lord Esau, and tell him, Thy servant Jacob has sent these beasts for you as a present. I mean, how could he fail? Ten groves? Surely this would be enough to take care of the problem. But he still wasn't sure because he hadn't met with God.

He had all his plans. And so then later on that day, he knew tomorrow was the day when judgment might come. And so he sent all his company over the river, over the floor.

And you know what it says? And Jacob was left alone. He had no more plans. He had nothing left now but God.

And all these plans he had were really for nothing. And he sensed that inwardly. And he began to wrestle with God.

And he wrestled all night. We don't know what went on between them, word-wise. We're not told, except this.

That when the day began to break, the angel of the Lord with whom he was wrestling said, Let me go because the day is breaking. And he said, Jacob said, I will not let you go unless you bless me. In other words, what happened was, he prevailed.

He got through to God, which is where he should have started. But we're hard learners, all of us are. Sometimes God has to really spank us hard before we get the lesson.

Like our children sometimes have to be chastised severely before they understand. That we mean what we said, and said what we mean. And so the angel said to Jacob, Your name will not be called Jacob any longer.

The word Jacob meant supplanter or deceiver. That's what he had been. Deceived his dad at his mother's instigation.

And deceived his brother. And wronged him and all. He said, your name will be called Israel.

Which meant prince of God. Prince of God. Because he said, as a prince, you've had power with God and with men.

And you have prevailed. Now we hear very little among Christians today about prevailing prayer. In churches and times of revival, they're constantly talking about prevailing prayer.

Prevailing with God. There's a verse in Isaiah that says that Moab will come to his sanctuary to pray, but he will not prevail. And we do a lot of that.

We're Moabites. To a large extent. We don't really get through with God because we don't give God the time.

We don't have the time. Billy Sunday, I think it was, who said that the average Christian, he prays like a jackrabbit nibbling at a cabbage. That is, we say our prayers.

In Jeremiah 29, God said, you will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you. So God's waiting to be found of us.

But on our part, we have to pray through with God and give God what we sometimes call quality time. Well, that was Jacob. David was called a man after God's own heart.

Have you ever thought of him as being a man, a great man of prayer, one of the greatest men of prayer in the Bible? Ever thought of him that way? He said, I prevented the dawning of the morning and cried, which means he was up before the sun was up praying. Seven times a day, he said in Psalm 119, seven times a day do I give thanks unto thee because of your righteous judgments. Now, again, Psalm 119 is a verse that speaks about the judgments of God's mouth.

That is the word of God. That's what he's talking about there. He thanked God seven times a day for the word of God.

Ever do that? Do we thank God once a day for his word? Maybe once a week. I don't know. But David did.

In Psalm 55, evening and morning and at noon will I pray and cry aloud and he shall hear my voice. So he prayed at least three times a day and prayed seven times a day. In Psalm 88, he said, day and night have I cried before thee.

So he prayed day and night. He wrote most of the Psalms, as you know. And I remember one time going through the Bible.

I did a study on prayer and I wrote all the prayers of the Bible and indexed them and that kind of thing. And I'd read some books about this and they said there were 400 prayers, actual prayers in the Bible. And in the Psalms, there were about 200 ejaculatory prayers.

An ejaculatory prayer are these short prayers, maybe three or four words long. God save me, God deliver me, Lord remember me. You'll find these.

And I counted them. There were 500 of them in the Psalms, not 200. So David was most certainly a man of prayer.

He was also at the same time an extremely busy person because he was a head man in the nation of Israel for many, many years. Forty years altogether. But dear people, he made time for God.

Which is where we fail. We don't give God time, we don't have the time. We've got too many other things to do.

George Mueller, the famous man of faith and prayer from Bristol, England, that had that orphanage, you've all heard about him. He said, if I don't pray three hours a day, plus an hour with my wife, I can't get the work done. He had 2,000 orphans.

He had a staff of close to 300. He had to administrate this thing. And if he didn't pray four hours a day, he couldn't get the work done.

We never think of it that way. We think prayer is taking up more time. But the more time we spend with God, the easier our work becomes because God will cut corners for us.

God will do things for us that otherwise are never done. So David left us a wonderful example of prayer. Indeed, we find this, I say, all through the Bible.

One of the surprises I got when I made that study on prayer, by the way, was this. I discovered there was over a hundred places in the Bible where God refused to answer people's prayers. And sin was always the problem.

If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. That's quite plain. That's one of those hundred verses or more that I mentioned just a moment ago.

He that covers his sins shall not prosper. Whoso confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy. So sin is the problem when prayers are not being answered.

Isaiah, a great man of God, we think of him as a prophet. He was also, I'm positive, a praying person. Isaiah chapter 6, he had a vision of the Lord sitting on a throne high and lifted up.

He was filled with a sense of awe as he heard the cherubim praising God. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts. And then he saw his own sinfulness, which is really, you know, the beginning of revival in any person's life, is to see yourself as God sees you.

I knew a couple. They went home from a revival meeting. And he said something like this to his wife, You know, honey, I don't know whether I have any sins or problems in my life or not.

What do you see in me? See anything wrong? Be honest. Now you tell me. And she said, No, I don't see anything wrong in you.

I think you're a great husband. I wouldn't want anybody else. And I don't see anything wrong in your life.

So then she said, Now you tell me about me. What do you see in me? And he said, Well, honey, I feel the same way. I don't know of anything I'd like to see changed in your life.

So then they concluded that they were both righteous before God. When I heard this story, I said to myself, I wonder what would have happened had they asked God to do the searching instead of asking each other to do the searching. I am positive the story would have been different, and I have reasons for saying that.

I remember a lady one time, she told me what a wonderful man her husband was. And he was sitting there, you know, he had this halo around his head almost. She told him what a wonderful, wonderful... He didn't drink, he didn't smoke, he didn't swear.

She didn't know this, but I'd heard him swear down at the bank where he worked, you know. So she'd never heard him swear. Anyway, sitting with his halo around his head.

And then she, they weren't Christians. And then he began telling me what a wonderful woman he was married to. And then of course she had a halo around her head too.

And my job was to get the halo down 14 inches to make a noose out of it, you know. Which I attempted to do. And I succeeded to a point, but was rather impolitely asked to leave.

I wasn't even allowed to pray before I left. But you know something? I'd rather have a couple of people get angry like that because then you know something's got across to them than having me sweet and kind and nice and thank you for coming, you know. Anyway.

Isaiah prayed. He saw himself as a man of unclean lips in the nation, as a nation of unclean people. Indeed he said elsewhere in Isaiah that the nation was a nation of hypocrites and adulterers.

He saw this. And he felt himself to be unclean in the presence of a holy God. I think if any of us, I don't care who we are, had to stand in the presence of God as we are now in this body of flesh, we would feel completely defiled.

Totally defiled. And God cleansed him as God is able to do and God wants to do if we're willing to humble ourselves and be cleansed from our sin. Then Jeremiah, you go through the book of Jeremiah and notice all the little prayers all through the book.

There are scores of them. He seemed to be constantly breathing out to God, you know. Unto thee have I opened my cause, he said.

Unto thee have I revealed my cause. In Jeremiah 11, Jeremiah 20. He didn't try to defend himself.

He didn't make that mistake. Don't you make that mistake either. Don't try and defend yourself.

If someone's accusing you of something, just leave it in the hands of God. That's what Christ did. 1 Peter 2, it says, when he was reviled, he did not revile again.

When he suffered, he didn't threaten. And Christ could have threatened those soldiers when they were nailing him on the cross. He could have told those men, you guys will be cracking rock in the hottest place in hell.

He never said a word. He didn't have anything. He didn't defend himself before Herod.

He didn't defend himself before Pilate. And they couldn't understand this. Usually, people in the condition Christ was in, facing death by crucifixion, were crawling on their faces up to Pilate or Herod and licking their feet and begging for mercy.

And this guy stood there like a king. And so it said in 1 Peter 2, were to follow his steps, who did no sin, neither was any guile in his mouth, who when he was reviled, reviled not again. When he suffered, he didn't threaten.

He committed himself, and the marginal reading says, he committed his cause, to him that judges righteously. Dear people, we're to do the same. One preacher I know, the gospel preacher, took a lot of criticism.

And somebody was talking to him one day about this. But what they were saying, whoever they were, you know, what they were saying about him. And he said, They say, what do they say? Let them say.

That was his attitude. Because he committed his life to God. He committed his cause to God.

He didn't have to defend himself. You think you can defend yourself better than God can? You think God isn't in business or something? You commit your cause to God, whatever it is, leave it in the hands of God, and God will work. And sometimes in dramatic, and sometimes desperate ways.

A fellow came from South America, a preacher from Argentina. We raised money to get him a plane ticket. He wanted to be up in Canada and get into the revival.

And so he came. And we took care of him while he was in Canada. Then he went back to South America and started telling people down there that Del McLeod had lied to him.

It wasn't really a revival at all. And I didn't know this until I went to South America for meetings. And then the missionaries who had invited me told me what had happened.

And this man had a lot of influence. So what do you do? Well, I called for a meeting with this man to find out what he was talking about. And he told me that in a certain meeting he'd heard me say that after the revival, our congregation swelled from 300 to 1,000.

So I checked with the lady who had interpreted for me in that particular meeting and asked her, did she hear me say this? And she said, no, I never heard you say that. So we had another meeting with the brother, tried to get it settled. We did not get it settled.

And I didn't know what to do because he was well-known in South America and he was still yakking against us. So all I could do was commit it to God and that's what I did. I think I did right in trying to make it right with him.

That's the first step you take. And then we committed it to God and left it with God. And one day, dear people, he dropped dead in the street.

He was only 35 years of age. I felt very badly about it. He had a lovely wife and children.

But God took the matter into his own hands. I found out afterwards from one of his close personal friends that the problem was he did not want me to come to Argentina. He wanted to be God's channel for a revival to Argentina.

And that's why he had been saying the things he had been saying. Well, I can understand that. I never did feel any ill will towards him.

You can't do that. You can't feel bitter towards some person that lies about you. You have to commit that to God and love the person just the same.

Be not overcome of evil, it says in Romans 12, but overcome evil with good. You never help a situation by getting bitter, you know. The Bible says in 1 Peter 3, but contrary wise blessing.

You're not to render evil for evil to any man, but contrary wise blessing, because he says if you do that, then you'll inherit a blessing. That is, you'll get a blessing from God. These are principles that we as Christians oftentimes are not really aware of to the extent we ought to be.

John the Baptist, was he a praying person? When you think of John the Baptist, you don't normally think of him as being a praying person. But you know, he was in the desert for 30 years. What do you think he did in the desert? Made sand castles? I think he did a lot of praying.

And one day God appeared to him and laid out the ministry to him that he was to be involved in. It was a short thing, only six months, and then he was killed. But it says John taught his disciples how to pray, which tells me he was a praying man, because if he was not a praying person and was teaching his disciples how to pray, then he was a hypocrite and God would never have chosen him for the very important work he had, to be a forerunner of Christ.

John the Baptist. Jesus, did he pray? Of course he did. He prayed and he prayed, and Luke there's a verse that tells us that he continued all night in prayer to God.

So there ought to be times when we attempt to pray all night, to wait in the presence of God, to pray all night. And in times of revival, this kind of thing happens. And sometimes revivals have been precipitated.

They've come because God's children were giving an abnormal amount of time to prayer and calling on the God, the one who controls the taps. And so Jesus prayed. Before he chose the twelve apostles, he prayed all night.

And he taught us how to pray in Matthew chapter 6. After this man are there for pray you, he said. So he taught us how to pray and set an example by being, I say, a man of prayer himself. And remember, he was the one that re-emphasized Isaiah 56.

My house shall be called a house of prayer for all people. I get into a lot of churches, different denominations, small ones, large ones, churches with 20 people, churches with 3,000 people. It doesn't make any difference.

Jesus spent most of his time with 12, you know. But when I ask this question, how many attend the prayer meeting? That's when I feel a pain in my heart. I was in a church.

They had over 1,000 people in Minneapolis. And they had 25 people attending the prayer meeting. So I asked the second question, and how many of these are men? And the pastor was embarrassed and he said, well, about five.

So I said something about this from the pulpit. And I reminded the congregation, 1 Timothy 2.8 says, Paul said, I will therefore let men pray everywhere. And I pointed out, he meant men in a specific sense because the next verse says, in like manner that the women also adorn themselves in modest clothing.

So he's talking specifically to men in a specific sense in verse 8, 1 Timothy chapter 2. I will therefore let men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting. So I emphasized that in the next meeting and called on the men to take the lead in prayer. You know what happened? Afterwards a bunch of ladies got a hold of me and they politely bawled me out.

They said, Brother McLeod, we want you to understand that the men in this church are very wonderful Christians. I didn't hear any amen from heaven when they said that. And I'm not being critical of them, but this I find everywhere.

I was in a church in Vancouver and the pastor said, Well, I'm thinking of closing the prayer meeting down. We only have five people coming to the church now to the prayer meeting. Well, I said, You know something, Brother? Five is more than nothing.

Stay with it. So we had a week of meetings. The prayer meeting jumped up to 35 and 40, he told me some weeks later.

Thank God for that. But it should have been this way before I came. Why is it? Well, basically, people, it's because of a defect in our theology, the way we think.

We don't think prayer is important. We think we have to... They seem to have a tremendous following. I won't mention who, but I know one of them.

He grosses \$70 million a year from his broadcast. And another one, \$40 million. And one of the lesser lights, \$15 million a year from the broadcast.

Are they men of prayer? Well, I don't really know. But I don't hear anything along the circuit, you know, that would indicate they were men of prayer. In any case, it's something that's been forgotten, dear people, but not by God.

My house. Is this house a house of prayer? Is it the paramount thing to make it that in our homes? Do you have family altars in your homes? I've asked this question and people wrinkle their brows and you know what they say? What's a family altar? When I was first converted, every Christian home in the country had a family altar. When John Song came to the United States of America from China years ago, he became a famous evangelist in China.

They used to call him the Billy Graham of China or the Billy Sonny. He was more like Billy Sonny than Billy Graham. He was a rough, kind of an uncouth speaker, and he didn't like Americans, but he learned something in America that he took back to China that saved China when the Communists took over.

The family altar. He saw this in America. He took it back to China.

Everywhere he went there's great crusades in China. He instructed people to have family altars and everybody began doing that. When the Communists took over, he had died of cancer in the meantime, age 45, I think, John Song had.

When the Communists took over and closed the churches down, the church just went right on because we were doing that at home already. The Bible speaks about the church in your house. And we take that to mean, oh, that's the church that meets in your house.

It never ever says that. It just talks about the church in your house. Maybe in some cases it meant that.

It's mentioned several times, as you may know in the New Testament Scriptures. A house of prayer. The apostles, before Pentecost, it was like this.

Walk, he said. Could you not watch with me one hour? They couldn't pray for an hour with the Lord Jesus, the Son of God. We sang that hymn.

Oh, the pure delight of a single hour that before thy throne I spend, when I kneel and pray and with thee, my God, I commune as friend with friend. Some wank said, the average Christian would have to save up for a month to get the hour. And many times, dear people, that's true.

After Pentecost, what do we find? In Acts chapter 6, the apostles said, we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word. Today we reverse that. We will give ourselves to teaching the Word of God in every way we can.

Young people, Sunday school, ladies' meetings, men's meetings, conferences, seminars. We'll teach all we can, and if we have a little time left over, then we'll pray. So we've lost it, dear people.

We've lost it. I know in Saskatoon, before the Revival in 72, I got so discouraged with having special meetings. We had good evangelists come, good singers.

We had one fellow come. He was a good preacher, very good preacher. He could play the trombone, lead song services.

He used to train a choir of 40 every night. After these meetings were over, nothing seemed to have happened. The church was exactly the same as before.

And I finally got to a place where I said, dear God, I'm not going to do this. I'm not going to go this route again. Have these programs packed up your program.

People are trying to pack your pew and so on, you know. Plans, personalities, programs. And I just said, God, I'm not going this way any longer.

We'll never do this again. We're praying for Revival now. We started praying for Revival for five years.

And then Revival came. Then we saw what God could do through prayer. You know, we used to close all our Sunday evening meetings in the church for that five-year period.

We closed them with a half-hour prayer for Revival. For those who wanted to stay, we didn't put people under bondage. We just said we're going to have half an hour to pray for Revival, save the can, 30, 40, 50 people will stay.

Then we had a prayer wheel, you know, in the choir of the church, and it was set off in 15-minute slots all the way around. And people were to fill in the 15-minute slots that they would take to pray daily, every day for Revival. Pretty soon we had the whole 24 hours taken up.

And sometimes two names in one slot even. And so we just pushed prayer. All we did was pray.

When Ralph and Lusitera were coming, we didn't even advertise it. We did practically no advertising at all. Revival is not something you need to advertise.

God advertises Himself. You know, when they came, they had a great big banner. It was about this deep and about 12, 14 feet long and big lettering on it about the Revival, and they wanted me to put that up on the church outside.

Well, I had some misgivings about it. I said, we don't need that. You know, we've been praying.

But I put it up. You know what happened? The first night there was a big rainstorm, wind, and it blew it down in the mud, and we just stuck it in the closet and forgot about it. The Lord didn't even want that stuck up.

And then what happened, of course, our church, we could see 350 within a matter of days. It was far too small. We moved to a church seating 600.

It was too small in two nights. Well, the first night we had 700 there, and the second night about 850. So we had to get out.

We moved to another building seating 1,000, and it was too small within a couple of nights. And so we moved to a building seating 1,400, and the first night we had 1,600 people there. And the caretaker, you know, he lost his cool.

He was running up, and he told me, he said, and he was swearing, he was so angry, he said, you've got to get rid of some of these people or the fire marshal will close this place down. But you know what happened? By the grace of God, he got saved a couple of days later. And he said, hang them on the lights, put them anywhere, you know.

And it was wonderful, but you know, it was just God. We had to start having double services in that church that was too small. Then we had to move to an auditorium seating 2,200, and there we had to have double services.

And instead of going as we planned for a week and a half, we had to go for almost seven weeks. And God did a wonderful thing in the lives of thousands of people at that particular time. But dear people, it was not plans or programs or personalities.

It was prayer. We prayed through. I used to spend hours in my office and my face just crying to God.

I thought to myself, if this church ever finds out how little of normal ministerial work I'm doing, how much time I'm spending in prayer, they'll fire me. Well, they found out later on. I don't think they would have fired me anyhow.

They were a good church in many ways. Trouble was, you know, many of them were Bible school graduates and, you know, they loved the Lord and they liked gospel preaching. They believed in missions and everything and all this like good preaching, you know.

And I used lots of scripture in preaching to them before the revival even. But, you know, they were not soul winners. They were not standing up for God.

They weren't trying to win anybody to Christ. They wanted to see people saved but didn't want to be the instruments, you know. And I remember trying to get them involved in evangelism.

What a job. I divided a whole church into five teams arbitrarily. I just, after I got to know the people I did this, I saw I had balanced teams and then I announced what I'd done.

I said, check the log on the bulletin board, see which team you're on. They're numbered one to five and once every five weeks your team will be on deck to go out and we'll do some cold calling. And so, but I did leave the door partly open.

I said, you know, if you feel you're not quite ready and prepared to do this, feel free to stay at home and pray for your team as they go on. So everybody stayed home and prayed. So then I thought, well the problem is they don't know how to do it.

So I announced I was going to have a series on soul winning, how to do it. We had a good attendance. As a matter of fact, the people that began coming, all of them came, it seemed, right to the end of the eight weeks that we had this study on soul winning.

Then I told them the same thing. Monday night will be visitation night. I expect to see all of you up, but if you feel you're not quite ready spiritually, stay home and pray.

You know what happened? Two guys showed up, both of them scared spitless, you know. The rest stayed home to pray. Then it dawned on me they never had a heart to do it.

And it just reinforced what I'd already been thinking that what we really need here is a revival sent from God. And after revival came what happened? We had a guy in our church, he'd been a Christian six years, he never missed a service. He and his wife were always there.

But in six years they'd never ever tried to win a soul to Christ. God touched them in the revival and within the next nine months they led 35 people to Christ. And we had numbers of people like that that got out there and began talking for God, you know, because they wanted to.

And some of them are still doing it, thank God. Well, we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Lord. And that's the right order.

And you know, the language there, we will give ourselves, that means we'll throw ourselves into this, we'll pray all we can, we'll give it everything we've got and we'll preach the word of God beside it. And that's how it should be. Then look at the Apostle Paul and the heavy emphasis to people on prayer and all his epistles, constantly asking for prayer.

You might take Ephesians 6.18 from Paul, he said, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit and watching down through all perseverance and supplication for all saints. And then he said, for me too. Pray for me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel with an ambassador and bonds, that I may make it plain or bold, he said.

And so both in Ephesians 6 and in Colossians chapter 4, he begged them to pray for him. But you find this emphasis on prayer everywhere. He told them to pray for him day and night.

The church I'm associated with in the Winnipeg area now, when I'm home I attend there usually. And some while ago we got the people involved in, we've always emphasized prayer, we've also gotten involved now in making prayer lists of unconverted people and then praying for them daily. And I don't know about the others, I know I have a prayer list of 50 unconverted people that I pray for every day.

I prayed for them this morning. And what they're finding in the church now is that the people, it's people on the prayer list that are getting converted. They're the ones whose lives God is touching.

One of the churches in Canada, they had Rabbi Zacharias come for a week of meetings and they had good evangelistic meetings, some people got saved, so they asked him to come back two years later. This time they decided to do something different. So they announced they were going to have a prayer meeting, a special prayer meeting once a week on a Thursday night, apart from the regular Wednesday night prayer meeting.

The Thursday night prayer meeting they were going to do nothing but pray for unconverted people by name. You know what happened? Before Rabbi Zacharias got there, about 70 of these people they had been praying for got converted in the regular services of the church. And Rabbi came and preached for a week and I think two people professed to be converted.

So the staff, it was a large church, and the staff asked me this question, do you think God is trying to teach us something? I said, what do you think? I said, you can think as well as I can think, what do you think? And they all agreed he was. But somehow we haven't seen it yet in the western world. So we're still trying our programs and our plans and our five star meetings, you know, thinking that somehow we're influencing God.

When Jonathan Edwards, a Canadian Presbyterian missionary, went to China many years ago, he was so discouraged, you know, because nothing ever seemed to happen. Unconverted people never came to their meetings, the Christians were dead and lifeless, and then he heard about revival in Korea and he went over to Korea and he saw what God could do. And then he read a book by Charles Finney on revival and he said, I thought to myself, if God can do it then, God can do it today.

So he got praying for revival and got a few other people interested in praying for revival and they really spent hours before the throne of God and finally revival came and thousands were converted. You know what happened? Within a matter of days their meetings were packed out with sinners. You know what the world was saying? The Christian God has come! He's in their church! And they came by the hundreds to see what the Christian God was like and they were converted by the hundreds as a consequence.

Do you know something? Communism took over years ago. They're still in power as you know in China. Do you know where the church is the strongest today in China? It's the strongest today in the area where Jonathan Goforth had those revivals years ago.

And in other areas in China where other great Chinese missionaries saw revival, that's where the church is the strongest in China today. And I'm not surprised. That's how it should be.

Well if I had a text for tonight I would simply refer you to that text again from Isaiah 56 and Matthew 21. My house should be called a temple. I have to become a praying person.

Do you remember Anna in Luke chapter 2? It says she was a widow of 85 years and she never left the temple and said she served God with fastings and prayers night and day. Ever thought of serving God by fasting? Ever thought of serving God through prayer? It's a tremendous ministry. It's in behind the curtains.

Nobody will ever write a biography about you just because you were a great person of prayer. But we can serve God by fasting. Well in North America we munch and crunch and lunch and brunch and all of these things.

There's places to eat in every street corner almost in our big cities. Same in Canada. Same here in the states.

We don't know how to eat. We don't know how to fast. One preacher jokingly said every time I fast all I can think about is food.

And he made a big joke about it. But you know it wasn't that long after he made this big joke that he didn't know how to how to fast. He didn't know how to fast.

He didn't know how to fast. He didn't know how to fast. He didn't know how to He didn't know how to fast.

He didn't know how to how to He didn't know how to fast. He didn't how to He didn't know how to fast. He didn't know how to fast.

He didn't fast. He didn't know how to fast. He didn't know how to He didn't know how to walked New Testament as compared to the Old.

There are 3.5 times as many words in the Old Testament as there are in the New. If you keep that in mind, then fasting is mentioned more frequently in the New Testament than it is in the Old. But we've forgotten it again.

Let's just pray, shall we?

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