

# Prayer Burden for Revival

by Bill McLeod

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*Bill McLeod emphasizes the critical role of prayer in achieving revival within the church community.*

**Duration:** 17:26

**Scripture:** Isaiah 56:7, Jeremiah 33:3, Matthew 6:33

**Topics:** "Revival Praying"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of prayer in the church. He shares testimonies of people experiencing the power of prayer, such as a young married woman who was moved to tears by the presence of God. The preacher highlights that Jesus referred to the house of God as a house of prayer, not preaching or other activities. He criticizes the lack of emphasis on prayer in many churches and encourages believers to make prayer a priority in their personal lives and in their churches. The preacher also quotes Billy Sunday, who compared the average Christian's prayer life to a jackrabbit nibbling at a cabbage, and urges believers to pray without ceasing and give thanks in all circumstances.

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## Transcript

I was pastor, as many of you will know, of the Ebenezer Baptist Church from 1962, and I was here when the Revival began in 1971. I went on the road that same year, the Revival began in October of 71, and I went on the road then and have been on the road ever since in Revival ministry. But some years before the Revival in 1971, I became discouraged because we would have evangelistic teams come to our church and the singers and so on.

We'd have a nice week of meetings, and perhaps a few people would profess conversion, but the church remained basically exactly the same as it had been before the teams came. And I finally came to the point where I was discouraged with this, and I made up my mind I would not pursue this course any longer. We had a good church, good people, they treated me very well, they were very kind to me, and my wife and I have always appreciated that, but there was a spark missing.

And I began to pray much about it, I began to share it with our people, and then we began some special kinds of prayer ministry. For example, five years before 1971, we began a deacon's prayer meeting on a Saturday night. Now we had ten deacons in our church, we averaged about seven deacons in those Saturday night prayer meetings.

And just as if God was putting a special seal of approval on what we were doing here in this extra prayer meeting, the first Saturday night we had it, next day of course was Sunday, Sunday morning, there was a very unusual moving of God's Spirit in our congregation. For example, people leaving the auditorium, going down into rooms in the lower auditorium and praying because God had spoken to their hearts. Now I did not know what to do with that then, I appreciated what I saw and thanked God for it, but I took it as a seal of approval from God on the direction in which we were beginning to move.

We began ending all of our Sunday evening services with a half hour of prayer for those who wanted to stay. And there might be thirty, forty, fifty people stay for that half hour of prayer, and we kept that up for some months. We had two young people's groups in the church, they began ending all of their young people's meetings with a half hour of prayer.

We began children's prayer meetings in the church, that is parents could bring their children, and we had a separate children's prayer meeting in the lower auditorium, monitored by adults whose duty was to train children to run their own prayer meetings and so on. Finally we had to have two separate children's prayer meetings going on at the same time. I began to emphasize the Wednesday night prayer meeting, and my people will bear me witness that I sometimes said, miss Sunday morning, miss Sunday evening, but don't miss Wednesday evening.

It's the most important meeting of the week. And the prayer meeting began to grow. We started a prayer wheel.

We challenged people to take a fifteen minute slot, we put a chart up on the bulletin board, and sort of pie-shaped wedges, and you could write your name in if you were taking say from nine to nine-fifteen in the morning or evening. And after a while we had the whole twenty-four hours taken up. And in some cases we had more than one name in each of the slots.

Now we didn't put this on the people all at once because it wouldn't have worked. We did it gradually over a period of time. Then I suggested to our people, to the ladies especially, or men on shift work, that they take ten o'clock in the morning as a time for prayer in their home, just by themselves.

Stop what you're doing, have a time of prayer, pray for the church and its people, pray for its ministry, pray for revival. One of the last things we started were cottage prayer meetings in different areas of Saskatoon. And the prayer meeting, the Wednesday night prayer meeting, we did not have choir practice, Iwana clubs, anything of this nature, on the prayer meeting night.

Because what happens if you have all these activities on prayer meeting night, there are a lot of people in your church that will never get to prayer meeting at all because they're involved in the clubs, they're involved in something else, and so they trade one off against the other and the prayer meeting loses. Well, our prayer meeting began to grow. Every Wednesday night I saw there were a few more people in the prayer meeting.

You know, from 30 to 50 to 70 to 100. And then the revival broke after the revival, 150, 175, 200 in the prayer meeting sometimes. Fourteen months after the revival in 1971, I was still pastor of the church, but I was sometimes conducting board meetings by long-distance telephone from 2,000 miles away, and it really doesn't work.

When I was to speak at the prayer meeting that Wednesday night, there were 165 people in the prayer meeting. I counted so I know. There were nine people gave their testimony.

The meeting was just electric. I remember a young married woman, she was sitting over to my left and she didn't get to her feet to testify. She broke into tears and she said, I'm just sitting here enjoying my wonderful God.

A teenage boy gave his heart to Christ in the prayer meeting that night. I never got to preach my message. I had about five minutes to say, Hey, you people are doing pretty good without your pastor.

But we'd emphasize prayer. Now, the Lord Jesus Christ said, My house, quoting from Isaiah, shall be called a house of prayer for all people. Notice, He did not call it a house of preaching, nor a house of singing, nor a house of fellowship, nor a house of good works.

Now it should be all of those. But if it's not first and foremost a house of prayer, the preaching, the singing, the fellowship, the good works produce almost nothing in spiritual terms. Probably seventeen years ago, my wife and I went down to Akron, Ohio for a Sunday morning in the Akron Baptist Temple.

There were five thousand people in the adult Bible class that morning. Ever been in an adult Bible class that big? They were baptizing over a thousand converts a year. They had started a hundred and forty churches.

That one church had started a hundred and forty churches in surrounding areas and cities. They had five pastors. And we spent some time with Charles Billington, who was one of the associate pastors.

His father was the man who started the work. And by the way, it was the Lord attempting to show the world what he really needs to get the job done. Because Dallas Billington, the founder of that work, only had grade five education and never saw the inside of a theological institution of any kind.

His English, he murdered the king's English. His preaching was like the book of Proverbs, all text, no context. He would say, now watch it you people.

Then he'd say something great. That would take three minutes. Then he'd say, now watch it you people.

He'd say something else that was great, but they were totally unrelated. They told me, if you get sick in Akron, Ohio, you have to go to the Akron Baptist Temple to find a doctor. All these professionals, listening to this guy talk.

So I asked Charles, his son, what he considered to be the secret of it all. Ah, he said, the Saturday night men's prayer meeting. He said, it starts at eight o'clock.

It goes till twelve o'clock. We never have less than five hundred men in that prayer meeting. He said, that's where heaven comes down, our souls to grieve.

You know, in that large congregation, sixteen thousand members, they had a tiny little kitchen. And I said to Charles, my kitchen is small. Oh yeah, he said, people can eat at home, you know.

He said, each organization in the church is allowed only one social a year. That's all. He said, we believe in prayer and preaching the gospel.

That's all. He said, that's our program. They did not have an organized visitation program.

The people got so fired up, Charles said, through my dad's preaching they get so fired up they just want to do it. But prayer, my house, shall be called a house of prayer for all people. Pastors, can I challenge your hearts? Is your church a house of prayer? Or just a house of preaching and singing good works and fellowship? Well, you might say I'm trying to make it a house of prayer.

Do you know what I found? I could not induce my people to accept added responsibility in the area of prayer until I first of all did it myself. And when I did it myself and God saw what I was doing, He began to speak to the hearts of the people as well. Then He went beyond what we were doing eventually, and that you can expect because in Jeremiah 33.3 He said, Call unto Me and I will answer you and show you great and mighty things which you do not know.

So God began to respond by putting a greater burden on our hearts. You know, in Zechariah it talks about the spirit of grace and supplications. One translation calls it the spirit of grace to supplicate.

It takes the grace of God to pray. And dear people, we need that, the spirit of grace to supplicate, to pray. I spent hours every day on my face before God for weeks, for months.

I thought if my church ever finds out how much time I'm praying, how little time I'm out ringing doorbells, they're going to fire me. But God saw it all. Others had the same prayer.

Men and women in our church, waking in the middle of the night with a burden to pray, couldn't sleep, they just prayed. You know, the first time I went to South America with my wife, I spoke 105 times in nine weeks through 15 different interpreters all over the country. And we saw God at work in hundreds and hundreds of hearts.

You could just see God at work. When I got home, I found out that in western Canada there were three women, they did not even know each other, who during that entire time we were in South America, had such a burden from God to pray for my wife and I, that they sometimes prayed three hours a night. Someone told me they just walked around the house weeping and crying to God for His blessing on our ministry in South America.

Well, you read those things in books and so do I. Why do we believe it? Why do we learn something from it? When will your church become a house of prayer? Even our prayer meetings sometimes are 40 minutes preaching and 10 minutes of an evening talking to God. Billy Sunday said, the average Christian prays like a jackrabbit nibbling at a cabbage. The Bible talks about continuing, instant, which means urgent, in prayer.

Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are and he prayed earnestly, earnestly that it might not rain. And God heard him. I will therefore, Paul cried and wrote, let men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting.

And when you and I get close to God in prayer, I know what happened to myself. I saw the holiness of God and my own imperfections in such clear light that many times I said to God, God, why don't you dig a hole and bury me and forget that I ever lived? And I sometimes used stronger language than that, because that's how I saw it. My pride, my imperfections, my failures, my sins, I never saw it until I began seeking the face of God in prayer.

And then I had to confess and forsake. And then I could pray for other people. I can't ask you to pledge something here tonight.

Perhaps I can. But do it in your heart. Would you try to make, by the grace of God you can, would you make your church a house of prayer? I mentioned in a smaller session, but many of you were not there, about the fastest growing church in the British Isles.

When my wife and I were in Scotland three or four years ago, they were running about 800 Sunday morning, 800 Sunday evening, 800 in the prayer meeting Wednesday night. Is your church like that? I asked a pastor, 1,200 members, I said, how many attend the prayer meeting? He was very embarrassed at the question. It turned out about 20 or 25, and about four of those were men.

That's not a very good record, but it was looked on as being an outstanding evangelical church. I'm not too sure what they meant by the word outstanding. I heard of a fellow that said, when I was in school, I was an outstanding pupil.

And then we found out what he really meant was, he was so bad he had to stand out in the hall. He was always standing out in the hall. So he was an outstanding pupil.

Sometimes we use ambiguous language when it comes to prayer. I pray all the time, which means I think about prayer all the time, but I don't really do it. But dear people, I don't want to take any more time, but let's try and make our churches houses of prayer.

And don't forget the little church in your house of which you men are the pastor. Make that a house of prayer. Pray without ceasing, and everything give thanks.

This is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. When the winds get over a hundred miles an hour and the earth is shaking like a bowl of jelly, somehow we know how to pray. But when everything is going well, we don't.

So then these things have to happen. They poured out a prayer, it says, when thy chastening was upon them. Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God.

God in His infinite mercy, because we don't do it when we know we ought to, God will drive us to it. Through those many, many means that are at God's disposal, He can do it. God bless you.

Thank you.

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