

Interview of Leonard Ravenhill by David Mainse

by Leonard Ravenhill

Leonard Ravenhill emphasizes the critical need for prayer in ministry and the church's revival in his interview with David Mainse.

Duration: 12:07

Scripture: Matthew 21:13, Luke 18:1, Acts 6:4, Romans 12:12, Ephesians 6:18, Philippians 4:6, Colossians 4:2, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, 1 Timothy 2:1-2, James 5:16

Topics: "Interview", "Prayer in Ministry", "Revival"

Description

Leonard Ravenhill, in an interview with David Mainse, emphasizes the critical need for prayer in ministry, arguing that a lack of prayer life among preachers leads to a spiritually stagnant church. He reflects on the early church's commitment to prayer and contrasts it with the modern church's focus on organization and performance. Ravenhill calls for a revival of genuine prayer and intercession, suggesting that the church must return to its roots of seeking God earnestly. He also highlights the importance of preachers dedicating time to prepare spiritually, not just intellectually, for their messages. Ultimately, Ravenhill urges ministers to prioritize their prayer life to foster a vibrant and impactful church.

Transcript

America is too young to die. That's the title of a book on revival by Leonard Ravenhill that first came out about ten years ago. This month's issue of Reveille Magazine includes the title chapter from that book, America is too young to die.

I'll tell you later how you can get a copy. And this visit features an interview I first did with Leonard Ravenhill back in 1983. Stay tuned, please, for the Chapel of the Air.

Hi, friend. David Mainz greeting you. Maybe you recall Leonard Ravenhill when he was here in Chapel Studio B. Our conversation was about people in ministry, preachers, yes, and musicians.

And the question time began with me saying to Leonard Ravenhill, in many of your books which call for revival, you refer to ministers. Is there a special relationship between those God has called to ministry positions in the present condition of the church? Well, to use an old phrase, yes, I think like priests, like people. And I go to many ministers' conferences, small ones, great ones.

I know if I get under a certain theological subject, I'm, you know, throwing a cat amongst the pigeons, as you say, or a tiger amongst the peacocks. But I find the most vulnerable spot with preachers is to talk about their prayer life. And sometimes I'll say, how much do you pray? And they duck their heads.

The early church, the apostolic church, was a praying church. I like, I don't know if you read that definition, but I think it's a superb, I don't think it's an unsurpassed definition of the early church by J.B. Phillips, in which when he'd read the first six chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, he said, this is the church before it became fat and out of breath by prosperity. This is the church before it became muscle-bound by over-organization.

This is the church where they did not gather together a brilliant people to study psychosomatic meds and they healed the sick. This is where you did not sign articles of faith, you acted in faith. And then he says, and this is where they did not say prayers, but they prayed in the Holy Ghost.

The preacher has only two things to do, Brother David, as far as I know. According to Acts 6, he gives himself continually to prayer and to the Word of God. If you don't get a praying pastor, you don't get a praying church.

And there is a little book that's out of print now, I think, called *The Burden of the Lord* by Ian Macpherson. He's a leader of the apostolics in England. And he refers to the fact that the preachers of old in the past century, they had one whole day they were not available to the congregation.

They gave that day to preparing the message. And then Saturday they were not available because they prepared the man to deliver the prepared message. We don't find that.

McLaren did that when he went to Manchester. He told the deacons, you can have my head or my feet, but not both. And so they appointed people to visit hospitals and so forth, and they preached that from Genesis to Revelation in what's still one of the classic expositions of the Scripture.

And I believe the great failure, I get preachers that will, that have churches 2, 3, 4, 5, 6,000, but they've come to my office and privately say, I have no prayer life. And I believe that that's the failure. What do you see as affirming about the clergy in America today? Is there some good sign to you? The good sign is that some of these men have got to the end of their confidence in their degrees and their academic knowledge.

And what I say to them, I say, look, brother, what we're doing today, it's like me going into a restaurant, they bring me an elaborate, very gorgeous menu, and I ask for this, oh, I'm sorry, we don't have that. I said, we can all make the menu, we can't make the meal. We can all say what the church should be, who's doing it.

Other countries, there's a pristine innocence and beauty about it. To use the words of the apostle, when he said, I have nothing but I possess all things, now the church possesses every gimmick and gadget and does nothing. I mean, okay, 120 people were in the upper room and they turned the world upside down.

Now we have 120 churches at least, and nobody knows we're in the city. Well, I've asked this question, David, to leading Pentecostals in the world. Nobody gives me an answer.

What's the difference between their baptism of the Spirit and our baptism of the Spirit? How could 120 men turn a nation upside down when we say we have 10 million people in this country with the baptism of the Spirit? An interesting aspect of ministry in our contemporary scene is that of music. The whole ministry

of music has just arisen in a phenomenal way. Is this an encouraging scene to you? I know you were very close to the late Keith Green and have been close to numbers of contemporary musicians.

I think it's both good and bad. I think they become obsessed that it's the only thing and it's the main thing to reach. I don't believe that.

You're trying to tell me there's a substitute for Holy Ghost anointing, Holy Ghost brokenness. I don't believe that. As I said to one of the best-known singers in the world, as many records are, and he was talking about his singing, I said, well, while you were talking, I was thinking of the disciples coming to Jesus when they said, Lord, teach us to sing.

And they looked. Oh, I said, I'm sorry, I got that wrong. It was the Apostle Paul who said, sing without ceasing.

Or was it James that said, if you're sick, sing to one another. I said, what are you talking about? I said, it amazes me that the disciples went to Jesus. They didn't even say, Lord, teach us to sing.

They didn't even say, Lord, that sermon on the Mount Samant teach us to preach. They said, Lord, teach us to pray. And we're most deficient in this.

What if we spent as much time, Brother David, teaching people to pray as we teach training a choir? The choir master says, 10% of the choir were missing last Thursday night. A preacher would hit the ceiling if he said, you know, only 10% of our 7,000 members were missing in the prayer meeting. We've put an emphasis.

It's glamorous. It brings money into the church. We sell records for our choir.

Every revival has seen a birth of two things. It has seen a birth of new hymns, genuine hymns, and it has seen a birth of misreactivity. Why is it that preachers have such a struggle with prayer? There must be some reason behind that, because it seems to be almost a universal.

Okay. This startles people. I've talked a number of times with Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones of London, one of the greatest, some say the greatest modern expositor.

It was very great. He said, Mr. Ravenhill, I want to tell you that everything you write, I read it avidly. I said, well, that's an encouraging thing.

Now he said, I can sit for hours writing expositions of Ephesians. I can write for hours. And he shook his head.

He said, Mr. Ravenhill, prayer is very difficult to me. Now, that stunned me. I never quoted it while he was alive, never, and very seldom since, because he told me privately.

Now, on the other hand, I preached in the Bible School of Wales. After I'd talked with the students and staff, we went upstairs in the big old mansion, and Mrs. Howells is telling me her husband, Rhys, went into that room at 6 o'clock in the morning and stayed till 6 at night every day for 11 months with the exception of the one day when his mother died. And that was Rhys Howells.

That was Rhys Howells, intercessor. I told Norman Grubb. I've known Norman Grubb 50 years.

I said, his name is Ruby. You know, they give them fancy names on the mission field. And I said, Ruby, you wrote a marvelous book.

I said, you were very brave to call him an intercessor. And he said, he was an intercessor. The intercessor, it must come through me.

There's a level of justification. There's a higher level of sanctification. There's a level of praise.

There's a higher level of worship. There's a level of prayer. There's a higher level of intercession.

We need to probably define that word for people, too. We're talking about praying on behalf of others, when we're interceding. And so it's one thing just to pray, and then there's another thing to really travail or intercede on behalf of others, or for a nation even.

This coverage may be wrong, but it suits me. Prayer is preoccupation with our needs. Praise is preoccupation with our blessings.

Worship is preoccupation with God himself. Okay, the average prayer meeting, we want you to pray for money for this. We want you to pray for that.

How often are lots of the prayer meetings now, are pray for America. And I say, hold it a minute. America isn't the church of God.

She's possibly bottom of the totem pole when it comes to spirituality. For organization and big showmanship, yes. But when you go to foreign countries, and prayer meetings last five and six hours, where the normal thing in a church like that, in the meetings that Buck Singh has, when I asked him about, he said to me, I go to big churches in America, they're very good, they're very generous.

I've never been in a church where they know how to worship. So I said, well, Brother Singh, what happens in your church on the Lord's Day? He said, the first three hours, we give to praise, adoration, so forth. All right.

The second three hours, we give to prayer, intercession, so forth. The third three hours, we give to breaking of bread. I said, do you have nine hours every Sunday? He said, no, no, no.

Some Sundays the glory comes down, where they have 11 hours and 12 hours. We don't know a thing about that. But they'll have a three, four hour prayer meeting.

Nobody thinks it's abnormal. Let me come back to where some people can still identify even with your words. Say back in our early history in America, in the 1800s, they had what they called Aaron and Hur societies, when the people of the church would hold up the hands of the minister in prayer.

Could that be revived in our churches, do you feel? Is it even conceivable that people would start to pray on behalf of preachers? Because I think for the most part, the sermons are preached without the prayer support of the people. Okay. When I was a boy, if you went to a Pentecostal or a holiness church, there were more people at the altar before the service than after.

We gathered 30 to 40 minutes before, and there was a battery of prayer that brought the glory of God down. The atmosphere was already made. You didn't have to get everybody clapping happy.

God was there. There was a sense of His majesty in it, which we're not having. We don't have the majesty of God.

Our people are not eternity conscious. They don't come to church to meet God. They come to church to hear a sermon about Him.

That's a tragic thing, isn't it? The greatest tragedy. I'm guessing at your age, are you, what, in your early 70s? Is that fair? I'll be... I start my 70th, 70th year next month. 77th.

My. Beautiful. Share what you would with a younger minister coming along in the faith.

You say, looking back on my years, this is very important. I would get 10 outstanding books. I would have at least one day a week when nobody could see my face.

Say, after Tuesday night meeting, you can't see me till Thursday. Shut myself in with God like Dr. Tozer did. Discipline my life, which preachers are so terribly undisciplined.

Say to the church, you're going to have to visit the sick. You're going to have to do this. People say, well, who buries the dead? And I say, the deacons.

The scripture says, let the dead bury the dead. But anyhow, I say, I will not visit the sick. The deacons do that.

I will not look after the poor Judah. But, if I don't come out of eternity with something of another world on me when I preach, fire me. The preacher ought to live in eternity and come down to earth, as it were.

He'll have his feet on the earth all the time. I say to young preachers, preach through the Bible, but say, by the grace of God, I'll master one book. I'll be an expert in Hebrews, which is a neglected book.

Or Romans, or something. But, if anything has happened in my life, I've stuck with my prayer life. I will not let anything interfere with my prayer life.

At certain times, I pray. Certain days, I pray. I've urged others to pray.

I've got ministers who say, when you came to our church, my life turned around on my prayer life. My prayer life was negligible. I'm so busy.

And, as Luther said, the man who is too busy to pray is too busy. Well, Leonard Ravenhill just kept coming back to that same point about the importance of the prayer life for those of us in ministry positions. David Maynes, finishing up this visit.

Again, you've been hearing a rebroadcast of an interview from 1983 with Leonard Ravenhill.

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