

Churches Strong in Prayer

by Mack Tomlinson

Prayer is essential for the church to experience God's presence and power, and it is the key to seeing answers to prayer and experiencing the power of God in our lives.

Duration: 42:50

Scripture: Matthew 9:38, Acts 1:14, Acts 2:1-4, Acts 4:31, Acts 6:4, Acts 12:5, Acts 13:2, Acts 14:23, Acts 20:36-38, Acts 21:5

Topics: "Prayer"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit. He encourages believers to pray simply and sincerely, without feeling the need to be eloquent or fancy. The preacher also highlights the privilege believers have in approaching God in prayer, knowing that He desires to answer their prayers. He provides practical steps for believers to take in order to cultivate a consistent and effective prayer life, both individually and corporately.

Transcript

Good evening. I bring you greetings from Texas, from our church, Providence Chapel in Denton, and Michael Durham, who is here with me. And I think he preached on that Sunday following when I was here with you.

He sends greetings. He and his wife have moved their family and their ministry. Does this lower? Chris, you're too tall for me.

I need something lower. I just made history. So Michael Durham has moved his family and ministry to Texas from Kentucky.

And he is now an itinerant evangelist widely out of our church. And it's a great blessing. He speaks many places in the States and the U.S. So he wants to greet you and pray for him.

He leaves this Tuesday for Romania for a number of days of ministry in Romania. So I am delighted to be back. It's a pleasure.

I want to speak tonight as briefly as I can on churches, a local church being strong in their prayer meeting. So I want to read two Scriptures. I would like for you to look at these with me if you have a Bible.

And then look at them later and just let the reality of this sink in. Acts 2.42 is the first one. The early church in the book of Acts were not only sound and solid in doctrine, they were sound and solid in true fellowship and church life, but they were sound and solid in prayer.

They prayed together. They had meetings. Well, let me just read it.

Acts 2.42. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship and breaking of bread. Now that phrase, either or both, means observing the Lord's Supper and fellowship meals together. And commentators are divided.

They usually say it could mean both, but the breaking of bread was central church life. And in prayers, they continued steadfastly in prayer. That means they kept doing it.

In season, out of season. They didn't stop. They were consistent.

As Colossians 4.2 says, which is the other verse, the Apostle Paul exhorts the Colossian Christians, continue in prayer. Be devoted to prayer. And watch.

And the same with Thanksgiving. So, why aren't churches strong in their prayer meetings? Often, they're not. Many churches, evangelical churches, don't even have a prayer meeting.

I'm presuming you have a prayer meeting. But how strong is it? Where are you in your own individual life as a believer? Where are you in your life in relation to you strengthening your own church's prayer meeting? You say, well, how do I strengthen it? Well, you strengthen it by being faithful to it, unless God's providence hinders you from coming. You're dead, you can't come.

You're sick, you can't come. You're out of town, you can't come. You have to work, you can't come.

But if you can come, a believer should be at their prayer meeting. Your presence strengthens a prayer meeting. Another way you strengthen it is to pray for the prayer meeting.

Another way is to pray when you pray. A lot of Christians are uncomfortable with praying in public. I wonder why.

Let's talk a little bit about that tonight. Every church should have a true prayer meeting. And every Christian should be a part of a true and consistent prayer meeting.

Why? Because the Lord Jesus Christ so emphasized prayer and made it a high priority. He did that by His example in prayer. He did that by His teaching in prayer.

For instance, the Gospel of Luke has been called the Gospel of Prayer because it emphasizes more of Jesus' practice of prayer and His teaching on prayer. For instance, Luke 11 and Luke 18 are chapters that are virtually given to teaching about prayer. Those parables about the friend who's in bed with his family and a friend comes at midnight and needs food.

And he says, no, can't do it. But he finally rises and gives his friend the food. Why? The friend, he's not going to stop knocking.

So persistence, shamelessness, he will not be denied. Luke 11. Luke 18 is the same thing.

This widow, little widow, she's a broken record. A one-note string on the guitar. She needs justice from people who have cheated her.

She goes to an unjust, wicked judge who doesn't care about her or anybody and she will not leave him alone. And she says, give me justice against my adversary. Jesus is teaching that.

And it's amazing, it's the only parable where He gives the meaning of the parable before He gives the parable. And He spoke this parable to the end that men ought always to pray and not faint. And then He gives the parable.

So, Jesus so emphasized prayer and made it a high priority. Christians and biblical churches, so let's think about this and step back a minute. Christians and biblical churches know corporate prayer is important.

We believe that. And Christians normally have a desire to pray. They do.

The struggle is often how to pray consistently and especially corporate prayer. How do churches have a prayer meeting that really works, where it's really life-giving and powerful and you're seeing answers to prayer regularly. I don't know how many of you know the name Leonard Ravenhill.

You may or may not, but he was a British evangelist and preacher who would hold prayer meetings weekly. In fact, he held two or three weekly in his life for preachers and for close friends. But he held a Friday night prayer meeting for ten years at least.

And my wife and I would go virtually every Friday night. And the prayer meetings lasted from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. Now, Keith Green, he would lead the singing. Hanging out with Keith Green was kind of cool.

He was all out for the Lord. He was all serious. He was no foolishness.

And he and Leonard Ravenhill were almost best friends. But Keith would be on the piano, would sing hymns, and Leonard would share the Word, and then we'd go into prayer. And here's how he would direct his prayer meetings.

He would say, brethren, we're going to be free. No self-consciousness about others. Don't even think about it.

You have one audience and that's God. You're not trying to impress anybody. You be free to pray to your heavenly Father.

You bring specific things. We're not praying with a shotgun scattering. We're praying like a rifle with a scope on it, targeting things.

Important things, revival, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, lost family members, your pastor's sermon this coming Sunday. Target things in prayer. And I want you to pray loud enough where the brethren can hear you.

Because if your face is down and you're praying quietly, the brethren over here, they can't hear you and be edified and agree. Pray loud enough. So when you get ready to pray, speak up, pray up, shut up, sit down, he'd say.

So we took it seriously. And then he'd say, pray briefly. You're not having your private devotions here, and you're not praying about yourself.

We're praying for others. We're praying for big things. Not Aunt Bertha's bursitis or Uncle Billy's stumped toe.

No shallow, silly little physical needs, prayer requests. We're praying about kingdom things. And so I saw Leonard Ravenhill, how he led prayer meetings and how they ought to be done.

And I came away from being in his prayer meeting 10 years, and I said, this is it. This is how churches should pray together so as to really lay hold of God together. So often Christians don't know how to pray when they're together, unless there's some direction.

And so in our prayer meetings in our church over the last almost 20 years, we've modeled those. Now we haven't had Leonard Ravenhill there in them, but what we do in our prayer meetings, we came to the conviction that we weren't gonna try to have a sermon and a prayer time or a Bible study and prayer time. Why? Because dividing the time up, both of them were weaker.

And so we said, if we're gonna have a prayer meeting, it's gonna be prayer, strictly prayer. And so what we do in our prayer meetings for almost 20 years, they've grown, they're exciting, they're life-giving. We have teenagers who cry to God for lost family members.

We pray worldwide visionary things for missionaries and church plants and revival and lost people. And so we'll sing a couple of songs, couple of hymns, and then one of our leaders will open the word for five minutes. A word of exhortation.

Let's have this thought, brethren, about prayer tonight. The Psalm says, God is the God who hears prayer. Just think of that tonight when we pray, the God of the universe, our Father, we have His attention, we have His ear.

He actually wants to answer our prayers. So let's realize what a privilege we have when we're gonna pray in a few minutes. We have a word for about five minutes that simply is to prepare our hearts to be ready to truly pray.

And then we'll share briefly, cutting out all the extra detail about a prayer request. If someone says, you know, I have a neighbor, his name is Carl, he has six children, and he moved to Texas 20 years ago, and he's been married 35 years, and he's a Roman Catholic, and he worked. No, no, no.

No details that aren't necessary. Get to the prayer request. My neighbor, Bill, is lost and needs the Lord.

I'm burdened for him. Could we pray for him tonight? We ought to eliminate all the unnecessary sharing about prayer requests, share them briefly, and spend our time praying more than we're sharing about prayer requests. So that's what we do.

And we'll go to prayer. One of the elder or the pastor leading the meeting will say, okay brethren, we're ready to pray. Now remember, pray briefly.

And if you want to pray more than once, two or three or four times, do it. But you pray briefly, target something, cry out to God, the brethren will agree with you, and then you yield time and let others pray. And so we pray like that.

Every Wednesday we have three prayer meetings in three locations, and the majority of the church comes. Adults and young people, and we'll pray for an hour to an hour and a half. It's the best meeting in our church every week.

Better than the Lord's Day in one sense. There's life-giving reality in agreeing together in prayer. So why would Jesus so emphasize prayer unless He desires His churches to pray fruitfully? He calls us to prayer.

He equips us with the truth and with the Holy Spirit to pray. And He expects us as churches to take a prayer meeting seriously. He does.

Now I want you to, don't turn there, but think about the Upper Room Discourse. John 14, 15, and 16. It's Jesus' last time with His disciples ever.

He's going to go to the Garden of Gethsemane. He's going to pray. He's going to be betrayed and arrested and soon crucified.

So this is His last time with His guys. What does He emphasize to them? He talks about joy. He talks about love.

But the main two things He talks about, anybody want to guess? Main two things He emphasizes. Prayer and the coming of the Holy Spirit. Why? He's leaving them soon.

The main weapons, the main equipment they're going to need now with Him gone is praying now through Him to the Father and the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. Think about this closely. What Jesus was to the disciples when He was here on earth, the Holy Spirit is to us now.

The Holy Spirit has replaced the Lord Jesus on the earth. He's in heaven, isn't He, at the right hand of the Father. He went, He sent the Spirit.

The Spirit now is the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, in the church permanently. And He's the one who is with us to equip us and give gifts and empower us in worship, empower us in prayer, empower us in witness, and empower us in holy living. The Spirit of God.

What kind of relationship do you and I have with the Holy Spirit, really? We feel comfortable in saying and thinking, I have a real relationship with the Heavenly Father. I have a real relationship with Christ. But are we comfortable in saying, I have a real relationship with the Holy Spirit? He's God, equally with the Father and the Son, and He now is God with us.

So Jesus mentions prayer and the coming of the Holy Spirit. And so I want us to think about this tonight, about Jesus saying, my house should be called a house of prayer. Is it? If our churches say that, is it true or is it false? Is my house, my church, a house of prayer? Are we marked by prayer, real prayer? Corporate prayer honors the Lord.

Corporate prayer pleases the Lord. A church is not biblical until prayer is a special thing. I get the feeling, in New Brunswick, the most important room in the house in the winter is which room? Which one, brother? Which would be the most important room in your house in the winter? The one with the furnace, right? That's the most important room in the winter.

Because if that ain't working, excuse the Texas slang, if the furnace isn't working and the kitchen isn't gonna be a pleasant place, or the bathroom, or the bedroom, no, that's the most important room in the

house, the furnace. The prayer room, the prayer meeting, is the furnace room of the church. Because prayer fetches down grace from God.

You don't believe that? Read Hebrews 4, 14 through 16. We come with confidence, where? To the throne of grace. That we might obtain what? Mercy and grace to help us in time of need.

Prayer fetches down grace from God. So prayer, when you pray for Chris in his preaching, he will get something from God that he won't get if you don't pray for him. God will save sinners more and more to the degree a church has a unified burden to target sinners in prayer.

Lord, this guy, let's keep praying for him. We prayed for a lady in our church, the mother, she's not in our church, she was the mother of one of our pastors. She had stage four bone cancer terminal.

And every prayer meeting for two years, we cried out to God for her. We didn't know God's secret decree, whether He was gonna want to heal her or not. We just knew His heart and His promises said, call unto me and I will answer you and show you great and mighty things.

So we prayed for her every week for two years. She was in remission. She was cancer free.

She came to our church looking healthy in tears to tell our whole church, thank you so much. We prayed for her far more than her big church did. So the prayer room is the furnace room of the church.

Until the prayer meeting is vital and the prayer meeting concentrates on prayer, we will not lay hold of the ground in prayer and see God do things that we could see Him do. The prayer meeting is vital and important in the church. So the place and priority of prayer is mighty in the kingdom.

Think about it. The priority of prayer, if you have never read, if you don't have E.M. Bounds works on prayer, E.M. Bounds, get the big paperback book. It's all of his books on prayer.

The priority of prayer, the place of prayer, the purpose of prayer, power in prayer. Prayer prevails in situations that are so desperate that nothing else is gonna win the day. Think about Peter in Acts 12.

Herod had killed James. When he saw it pleased the Jews, he arrested Peter. Peter's in the inner dungeon.

He's toast. He's gonna be executed, I guess, the next day. What'd the church do? It didn't.

But the church prayed earnestly to God for Peter. What happened? God sent an angel down into the prison, brought him out. Peter thought he was dreaming.

Angel leads him out. Iron gates open. He goes out in the street.

He realizes, I'm not seeing things. God just delivered me. He goes to the house where they're praying for him and he interrupts the prayer meeting.

Prayer is the only thing that will change some things. So Ezra's, think of the Old Testament, Ezra's praying brought an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all of Jerusalem. Isaiah prayed and God turned the sun's shadow back 10 degrees.

Hezekiah prayed and God sent an angel and killed how many enemies? 185,000. Daniel's praying opened to him God's vision and caused him to be able to administrate national affairs. God answers the continual

cries of His children.

But we don't believe it enough or we would pray with more devotedness as churches. The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous person avails much, is very effective. Now I could go on and on, but let me get practical here.

A church prayer meeting will accomplish things that singing and teaching and preaching do not accomplish. A church praying will accomplish things that you being available in the community and doing outreach and singing wonderful songs and teaching and preaching, prayer will accomplish things that those things will not accomplish. More answers to prayer, more unity, more body life, more ministry, more empowering upon the saints of God.

It was when the church was gathered and praying that the Holy Spirit was poured out in Acts chapter one. It was when the church was gathered praying that they continued steadfastly because grace came to continue steadfastly. It was when they were gathered praying in Acts four that the house was shaken and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

And it says in Acts four, great grace was upon them all. What would a church look like and feel like and be like if great grace was powerfully upon them? Be life-giving, be joyful, be powerful. It was when the church was in prayer in Acts six when there was needs within the body that they chose new leaders and the word of God continued and many Jewish priests were converted.

It was in a prayer meeting for Peter that he was delivered. It was in the Antioch church praying in Acts 13 that missionaries were sent forth. In the church at Antioch, there were prophets and teachers.

And as they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, separate from me Barnabas and Saul to the work where to I've called them. A prayerful church will advance the gospel. A prayerful church will send out more laborers.

Pray therefore to the Lord of the harvest. What? That he'll send forth laborers. It was in a prayer meeting where Paul met with the Ephesian believers and Acts, toward the end of Acts, it says, and kneeling down on the beach, they prayed.

And they prayed in tears and they hugged Paul and they told him goodbye because they knew they weren't gonna see him again. Now, I wanna mention this to you. Just catch this survey.

There's 10 corporate prayer meetings in the book of Acts. Acts 1, Acts 2. Actually, there's two of them in Acts 2. Acts 4, Acts 6, Acts 12, 13, 14, Acts 16, and Acts 21. And virtually in every one of them, God does something as a result of the church praying together.

Read it, look and see. Things will happen in corporate prayer that aren't gonna happen in private praying. Why? Because there's power in agreement.

There's power in unity in prayer. They lifted up their voices to God in one accord. And Jesus said, if two or three of you on earth shall agree as touching anything.

There is authority, there's spiritual reality that happens when God's people take prayer seriously and they band together and they're of one heart and one voice and they're crying out to God together. God takes notice and He will move in ways that are real. So, in our prayer meetings, we sing briefly.

We have the word briefly. We target practice prayer. We target things.

We have targets of people or great needs or national issues. I hear you have a prime minister that isn't all that good. I've heard that.

So, how about some regular target praying? Dave and I have been praying for him every day while I've been here. Target praying, Lord, save him, remove him, judge him, but sick him, get him. Do something for our nation.

God can do it in five minutes, in one minute. He can do what all politics can never do. God saved America from us having Hillary Clinton as a president.

I'm serious, I'm not joking. And some of the reason had to be real prayer was going up. So, I'm just saying prayer meetings ought to be like target practice when you're on the shooting range.

You're targeting, you're going for that target and you're targeting a loved one, a lost person, a neighbor, a very needy relative, friends that are so messed up. You're targeting things in prayer and you're crying out to God about that. You pray briefly, you cry out to God and you stop and you let others pray and you keep praying that way.

You pray relationally. You're crying out to your Father in heaven. Don't be in a rut, don't be ritualistic about it.

Just Jesus, did you know that the Old Testament only about four times speaks of God as a Father? But when the Lord comes and He starts praying and starts teaching His disciples, say our Father in heaven. Every time Jesus prayed, Holy Father, I thank You that You always hear me. Pray relationally.

Every time we pray, when we're coming to that moment, we ought to remind ourselves, right now, my heavenly Father, I have His heart, I have His ears, and I'm gonna do the most awesome thing that any human being gets to ever do. I'm gonna talk to God, the God of the universe, who's my Father, and right now He's gonna hear me. Don't be in a dead rut in your praying.

Pray relationally and pray in faith. Because the promises of God tell you, for the newest Christian, the weakest Christian, when a Christian prays, they are being, unless they're harboring sin, because Scripture says, if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. But if your heart's clean and you're right with Him and you're sincere and humble, when you pray, God is hearing you, believe right then that He's hearing you and He's gonna answer.

We have to ask in faith. And our faith is in the promises of God where God has said, call unto Me and I will answer you. So, we pray about spiritual things, kingdom things, important things, urgent things.

Well, let me hurry on. Let me mention, real quickly, some hindrances when we pray and some helps. What hinders the prayer meeting? Number one, when Christians have a wrong attitude about its importance.

Christians that don't think it's important to be in the prayer meeting or pray together, that hinders the prayer meeting. It's secondary. It's not all that important.

Oh, it's kind of optional. No, it's a called meeting by Christ to the church. Therefore, I ought to view it as important.

Secondly, what hinders a prayer meeting? Wrong motives in praying. I desire to be seen as spiritual. I desire to impress others with my spirituality.

The heart being lifted up with the temptation to impress others. But you know what? When we pray, we have an audience of one. That's our heavenly Father.

And we ought to shed wrong motives and purify our heart. And when we come to the prayer meeting, we ought to be praying, Lord, help me to pray with sincerity just to You. I don't have to impress anybody.

I don't have to please anybody. I just want to pray to You. And the brethren who love me, they're going to be encouraged by my praying as I will be by theirs.

True prayer, sincere prayer, serious prayer, and humble prayer. But no impressive prayers. Robert Raymond, the theologian, said this, when you pray, remember whose attention you're trying to gain.

It's the Lord, only the Lord. Another hindrance to the prayer meeting is it can be self-centeredness. When people try to basically have their private devotions at the prayer meeting, it doesn't work.

They start praying, they're praying about themselves, and they keep praying about themselves and their struggles, their eyes are on themselves, and they'll pray three minutes and four minutes and five minutes, and oh brother, it gets wearisome. That quenches the spirit of a prayer meeting. And they pray too long.

I think it was Spurgeon, it was Spurgeon, he told the story, one brother began to pray in our prayer meeting, and when he started, we were praying with him. And the longer he prayed, we started praying for him. And finally, we started praying against him.

Lord, please make him stop. Don't draw attention to yourself in your praying in the prayer meeting. Pray for others.

Pray for God to do things. Don't pray about your own needs. Now, if a brother or a sister comes in, and they're hurting, and they're sad, and they're depressed, it's fine for them to say, Lord, tonight I'm just poor and needy.

I'm hurting, please help me, have mercy on me. That's real, isn't it? But I'm talking about being self-centered. That will hinder, self-centeredness will hinder the spirit of a prayer meeting.

Another hindrance. You ever feel like sometimes people are preaching in prayer rather than praying? Yeah, people start rambling. They're giving God information about doctrine as if He doesn't know it.

One pastor admitted he was trying to emphasize different truths to people who were in the prayer meeting so they would somehow get it. And he thought that was okay, and he finally realized, no, I'm not speaking to others to try to correct them or teach them. I'm addressing God.

And the Lord would think my theologizing in prayer or my preaching in prayer is nothing but hypocrisy. And it's a horrible use of prayer when we do that. All right, let me hurry on.

What makes a prayer meeting good when believers are really willing to pray? You say, I'm a new Christian and I don't know how to pray well enough. Or I'm a young person and Chris prays great. And if I prayed, I'd be embarrassed to pray.

I don't know how to pray in public. Well, let me give you some baby steps. Number one, realize you don't have to pray eloquent or fancy, just be real.

Pray simple. If you know as a Christian, you ought to pray in the prayer meeting and you've never done it, here's what you do. Next prayer meeting you're gonna come to, you say, okay, I'm gonna get out of my comfort zone and I'm gonna take a step to please the Lord and pray in the prayer meeting.

I'm gonna choose something to pray. Chris's sermon, Paul Washer's health, the church plants in New Brunswick, a lost person I know. Choose one thing and when you have an opening to pray, open your mouth, set your heart on the Lord and pray for 15 seconds.

Lord, I pray You'd bless the sermon this Sunday that our pastor preaches. Be with him. Amen.

That's real prayer. And any young person can pray that way if they're a Christian. But see, we think we gotta be fancy.

We think we gotta be long. We think we gotta be theologically accurate. And so we lay out in prayer and we leave the praying to the big shots or the older Christians or the knowledgeable ones.

And the prayer meetings are hindered when they could be a lot better if every Christian there would be willing to learn to pray. Pray briefly, long-winded prayers or awareness to the flesh. D.O. Moody said this, Some people's prayers need to be cut off at both ends and set on fire in the middle.

That means don't be long-winded, be real, be passionate, cry out to God and then quit. And some of you young people that are true Christians, you can start praying and it'll be a great blessing to the church. There was a teenage boy in Scotland and he was there with Duncan Campbell in a meeting when revival broke out.

That 14-year-old boy began to cry out to God. And he said this, Lord, there's power at your right hand at the throne. Let it loose.

And Duncan Campbell said the Spirit of God came on the building, on the house, and God began to move all across that island that night. So, Spurgeon said this, It is necessary to draw near to God in prayer, but do not prolong your prayer until everyone there is longing for you to stop. There's wisdom in corporate prayer that has to be practiced.

Now, the greatest thing, and I'm gonna close with this, the things to really pray for as a church are the urgent kingdom things. God protecting and blessing and building up the church here. Praying for your pastor and your leaders.

Praying for the lost, specifically by name, targeting them in prayer and not stopping until God saves them. And you don't have to get creative. You don't have to find a different way to pray for them.

Lord Bill Thomas, get him, haunt him, convict him. You're praying that from heart. You don't have to change how you're praying.

Keep praying for him till God saves him. And then revival. How much do our countries need a fresh, genuine outpouring of the Holy Spirit from heaven? What do we mean by the word revival? Revival, it is a sovereign, sudden, genuine moving of the Holy Spirit from heaven to earth, a divine visitation.

It is a spiritual hurricane. You know, the States coast, we've been getting hit by some pretty heavy hurricanes on our East coast. They do real damage.

Nobody's ever gonna say, well, a hurricane hit, but nobody felt it. There wasn't anything that happened. When revival comes, things happen.

God intervenes. He shakes the nation. He shakes the city and sinners are suddenly gripped under conviction who are just pagans, unchurched people.

They come under conviction of sin. God moves. It's another repetition of the day of Pentecost.

God coming down and visiting his people in sudden power. In Luke 11, 13 says this, if we being evil know how to give good gifts to our children, those of you who are grandparents and parents, you know how to give good gifts to your children and you want to, and you enjoy it. And you're wise about it, I hope.

If you being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly father give what? The Holy Spirit to those who are asking. We ought to always be asking. We ought to never let a prayer meeting go by that someone is not crying out.

Oh God, send your spirit again upon New Brunswick. Send revival. Rend the heavens.

The enemy has come in like a flood. Spirit of God, raise a standard against him. And move again like you've done in days of old.

May your church, beloved, listen. God can make your church a mighty force in prayer if you will increasingly pray together this way you'll see more and more amazing things happen. Paul said, unto him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think.

Let's continually cry out to our heavenly father and he will hear the cries of his elect the more we cry out to him. So I'll pray and then Chris can lead us as he wants to. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for the truth, just the simple reality that God hears and answers and delights in the prayers of his people. So tonight, begin a new work of prayer in this church and in each of our hearts that this would be real. Fan the flame, increase the desire, quicken us with faith, enable us, Lord, teach us to pray in all that that means and make this church more and more, Lord, a church that's mighty in prayer.

In Christ's name I pray, amen.

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