

What Does Your Prayer Meeting Mean to You

by Mack Tomlinson

This sermon emphasizes the importance of church prayer meetings, highlighting how they are essential for a church's blessings and growth. It discusses the significance of believers being faithful and active participants in prayer meetings, learning to pray, and depending on God corporately. The sermon stresses the biblical foundation of prayer meetings, their power to change lives and situations, and the need for believers to prioritize and engage in prayer consistently.

Scripture: Acts 2:42, Colossians 4:2, James 4:8, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, 1 John 5:14, Hebrews 4:16, 2 Chronicles 20:12, Psalms 68:28, Amos 3:3, Matthew 18:20

Topics: "Importance of Corporate Prayer", "Faithfulness in Prayer Meetings"

Description

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Transcript

I want to speak brief. I'm actually intentionally going to purposely hurry but not where you'll fail to get the message. Earlier I spoke on relationships.

In any church that maintains right relationships, God will bless. But there's another area. That was horizontal.

I want to talk about vertical. Any church that excels in its prayer meeting being real and a priority, God will bless too. Right relationships here, right praying.

So Acts 2, 42 says this. They, that is all these new believers who were born again on the day of Pentecost. Think about it.

They knew nothing of the gospel. They didn't have a right view of God. Pagans or religious people, they learned to pray.

And verse 42 says they continued steadfastly. They were devoted to these things. The apostles doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer.

They, and they continued steadfastly in prayer. And then Colossians chapter 4, verse 3 says this. Or verse 2. Continue in prayer.

Same thought as Acts 2, 42. They continued steadfastly. They were doing it.

Paul here says to the Colossians, you continue in prayer with watchfulness. So tonight I want you to think about this. How am I in relation to my church's prayer meeting? I don't know what y'all's prayer meetings are like.

I've never been in one. And that's good because I'm not evaluating or judging or thinking of anything that I know of here. But I want you to evaluate and examine.

If you're a believer in this church, how much and how well do you participate faithfully in the prayer meeting? What do you contribute to the prayer meeting? Do you go? That's contributing. If you could go and you don't go, why don't you go? You know why a Christian shouldn't be in the prayer meeting? If you're dead. If you're sick, right, doctor? If you're sick, you shouldn't go.

If you have to work. Or if you're out of town. Or if you, if you stay home with children so your mate, your husband or wife can go.

There are valid reasons not to be there. But if you could go and you don't go, why? I'm too tired. I have to get up too early.

I've just been too busy. I gotta relax. If you could go and you don't go, does that please the Lord? And do you have a clear conscience? I'm not preaching legalism here.

I'm saying the New Testament calls believers to be faithful to the prayer meeting. The Lord saved me when I was 19 in West Texas and I was in our prayer meeting every Wednesday night. And I began to enjoy them as a new Christian.

In college, the same. In seminary in Fort Worth in the mid-1970s, same thing. In the first church that I pastored in West Texas in the mid-seventies, same thing.

The prayer meetings were good. I enjoyed them. I was in Leonard Ravenhill's prayer meetings, Linda and I, from 1980 to 91.

So I think we probably were in 200 or more of Leonard Ravenhill's prayer meetings. And they were pretty life-changing. In three months from about right now, our church in Denton will have probably our thousandth prayer meeting.

Because from the time we started, the prayer meeting was non-negotiable. It was the most important. We said we'll never not have our prayer meeting.

If two come, if one comes, one plus the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit make four. We'll never ever compromise on our prayer meeting. In over 45 years as a believer, I've probably been in 2,500 prayer meetings.

It's the single most important thing I've done as a Christian. I would rather be in a prayer meeting than at a Keith and Kristen Getty concert, or a G3 conference, or a fellowship conference. We have morning prayer meetings there because prayer meetings are important.

So I want you to think tonight, how am I in relation to my prayer meeting? The prayer meeting is the most significant thing I've ever done in my Christian life, to be a regular participant in my church's prayer meeting. Every prayer meeting, every meeting of the church, can be a real means of grace. Conferences, Bible studies, mission conferences, all those are valuable and edifying and beneficial.

But none are more biblical, nor are they as important as your church's prayer meeting. Think about this, a biblical church's prayer meeting, when it's going on, in our prayer meetings we have God as our audience, who is listening, and His heart is toward us. The Bible says the prayers of the upright are His delight.

So that means not only has He told us to pray and invited us to pray, welcomes us to pray, says I'll answer if you call on me, He delights in our prayers. He delights in your prayers as a child of God. That'll change how you view prayer when you open your mouth to pray.

What does your prayer meeting mean to you? What does it mean to the Lord Jesus Christ? Is your view of your church's prayer meeting lining up with the Chief Shepherd's view of your prayer, your church prayer meeting? Is the church prayer meeting biblical? Is it essential to church life and ministry? A true prayer meeting makes for a healthy church, just like members who are vigilant about maintaining healthy relationships. One is horizontal, the other is vertical. But it's only a prayer meeting, people saying.

You know the greatest national revival in the history of Northern Ireland that spread like wildfire in the 19th century was a group of teenage boys meeting after school at a haystack, stack of hay and they prayed and they did it regularly and God heard those boys cry and revival spread in Northern Ireland. It was only a prayer meeting where the power of God came down in 1949 in Scotland when a 15-year-old boy prayed in the house where Duncan Campbell was and Duncan Campbell said the house shook and revival spread all over that island. It was only a prayer meeting that often conversions began to happen or saved marriages are rescued or a family transformation starts.

I want to give you a few quickly, a few biblical reasons for the church prayer meeting, but I'm just not giving you information. I'm saying tonight it's unbiblical to be a Christian and not be in a prayer meeting. I know Christians, I know preachers who preach on prayer and preach on church, the importance of the church praying and they're not regularly in a prayer meeting.

They preach on it, they don't practice it. I would rather practice it than preach on it, but I like doing both. So some biblical reasons for the church prayer meeting and what I want you to do is to search your heart before God tonight and say where do I need to improve with joy and by the Spirit's enabling to be more faithful? Do I need to be more faithful? When I go, how can I pray more so as to add to the prayer meeting? You know what will make for a great prayer meeting? For believers to go and be willing to pray.

If every Christian in the prayer meeting would pray sincerely, the Holy Spirit would bless that prayer meeting. But when people lay out out of timidity or fear of man or pride and they don't pray, it's wrong. Some biblical reasons for the church prayer meeting.

Number one, it's found throughout the Old and New Testament. I'm not going to give you a litany of scriptures. The prayer meeting, the calling on God by His people in the Old and New Testament is foundationally and fully biblical.

You know it and I know it. It's throughout Scripture. When God's people have always gathered, they call on the Lord.

They seek Him. It's so biblical that think of this. In a corporate prayer meeting, there is no meeting in the earth right then more important in the world.

Not the United Nations, not meetings in the Pentagon or in the White House situation rooms. Well, you know what I'm getting at. No meeting in the world is more important than when a church is gathered and they're calling on the Lord.

Because national and international things happen when a church prays. This is really amazing that a church can have an unlimited ministry locally, nationally and internationally when they cry out to God about needs. You pray for Dan and Crystal Sim in Lebanon and you just cry out to God for them.

We're not giving God knowledge. We don't have to tell Him, Lord Dan and Crystal Sim, now they're in Lebanon and they have these children. He doesn't need our information.

He needs us to cry out to God for them. And when we pray, God is going to move to send money, to heal people, to strengthen them. The greatest ministry we can have for anybody is to pray for them.

So prayer, the prayer meeting is so biblical. And if one wants to be reforming and conforming their life to the glory of God and the Bible, that's where you begin. Am I praying with the brethren? Am I faithful to the prayer meeting? Can I be counted on? And if I'm tired, I don't know how many times Wednesday afternoon I've felt I'm tired, I'd really like to stay home.

And then I go and I get renewed and strengthened and encouraged and I'm so glad I went. So first reason, corporate prayer is throughout the Bible. Secondly, the prayer meeting is as important as Sunday worship.

Worship on the Lord's Day, worship, singing, preaching is edifying. And God ministers to us as we worship. We're the audience gathered before him and we worship and we give to him what we should.

And worship and preaching edifies the soul. But the prayer meeting, while we're the audience on Sunday worship, in the prayer meeting God is the audience. On Sundays when we worship, we get built up and edified.

But the prayer meeting puts the soul growth to work for the kingdom. In other words, you come and your edification and your renewed mind and your spirituality and your wanting to obey the Lord, you're in action for the kingdom when you're praying together as a church. In the Lord's Day worship, we would commune with God.

We sing, we hear his voice through his word and through one another. In the prayer meeting, he's our audience. He hears our cries, he delights in our prayers.

The corporate prayer meeting is as important as Sunday worship. Reason number three, the prayer meeting, listen closely to this one, the prayer meeting is where new believers and young believers learn to pray more maturely. Now think about that.

In Acts, those new believers, they didn't know how to truly pray, but they learned. Acts 2.42, they continued steadfastly. They learned to pray.

How? By being with believers, with the apostles and others who were praying, they learned to pray. If you're scared to pray in the prayer meeting, get over it. Open your mouth, come with a prayer request.

Pray for Paul Washer's continued healing. Pray for John Soxma. Pray for this upcoming trip soon, Tim Conway and the group going for three weeks.

Choose something, open your mouth, you have an audience of one, you're not trying to impress anybody, and ask the Lord to work. Lord bless them, help him, strengthen them, provide for them, protect them, and then be quiet. And you've prayed, and your prayer might be the most important prayer of the night.

And then you've broken through, you've broken the ice, and you realize, I can pray. I can pray with the brethren, because they're loving me and they're agreeing with me, they're not judging my prayers. You don't have to pray like anybody else.

You pray, and it'll please Christ. Where else can new believers or ignorant believers learn to pray better but in the prayer meeting? Where else will they have a number of examples to see what prayer really is? Where else but the prayer meeting will timid and shy and fearful people who are untaught people and inexperienced people learn to grow in prayer? Where else but the prayer meeting? Reason number four, the prayer meeting appropriates and unleashes God's power to work when we call on him. If anything's true about prayer in the Bible, it's that they prayed, and the house was shaken.

They prayed, Jesus prayed all night, and he chose his twelve disciples. Psalm 68, 28 is a favorite verse of mine. The psalmist says, Summon your power, O God, the power by which you have worked for us.

Prayer, when we call on the Lord, we are summoning, that's an old worn out word, not used. It means we're getting, we're calling for. Prayer is summoning God's power to work in behalf of people and in behalf of us.

Second Chronicles 20, they're facing the battle. Is it Jehoshaphat? They start praying. They're going to pray, and they say, Lord, we cannot win this battle, and neither do we know what to do, but our eyes are on you.

If you were to come into a prayer meeting, you're burdened, you're anxious, you're worried, you're hurting, but you want to cry out to God. If maybe all you said seven times about seven different stress points is, Lord, I don't know what to do, but my eyes are on you. Lord Jesus, my eyes are on you.

That would be the most eloquent prayer you could pray. You know why? Because the Holy Spirit takes our weak, imperfect prayers and our groanings that we can't be uttered, and he prays them according to the will of God. You've touched, you've gotten in touch with God.

Let me hurry on. Prayer meetings, especially local church prayer meetings, brings God's presence near often. He said in James, draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

So I don't understand the mystery of that. We know God's everywhere, but when we intentionally draw near and call upon him, he will draw near because he's ordained prayer. God answers prayer, the united prayers of his children.

The prayer meeting builds faith, and it builds spiritual experience. When you're in the presence of God in a prayer meeting, you're experiencing God's presence. Faith comes.

Encouragement comes. Maturity blossoms in your heart and your strength, and you're transformed in the presence of Christ in the prayer meeting. Your church prayer meeting can bring converting power to

someone's life, saving power, deliverances.

Our praying can affect and shape open doors in Jordan or Lebanon or India. I love Acts 12. Peter's in prison.

The church is praying. God sends an angel, leads Peter out, and it says the iron gates opened, and they went out in the streets. Prayer, iron gates that man can't open, will yield to prayer.

If we really saw the unlimited resource we have as the church in prayer, and we really laid hold of this, we would see phenomenal answers that we're not seeing. Nothing brings your heart and spirit in touch with God's presence like real prayer, praying together. The prayer meeting lifts burdens.

It encourages the downcast. It strengthens the weak. It gives hope where hope is fading, all by the power of Christ in the prayer meeting.

Reason number six, the church prayer meeting is where, catch this, the church prayer meeting is where the church corporately practices corporate dependence on God. When you're together and you're crying out to Him, together as a body, you are depending on God. And that's different than individual dependence.

Church prayer meetings will accomplish what private prayer doesn't accomplish, because it's united faith. It's united dependence upon Him. It's where we together say in prayer, Lord, we cannot, but you can.

We're not able, but you are. The Lord delights in that. It gets His attention.

It moves His heart, because He is a person, right? And He has perfect emotions. Right then, He loves you, and He's for you, and you have His attention. The prayer meeting is the place of united, conscious dependence on God to do what only He can do.

Reason number seven, prayer meetings change things, and they change you. Leonard Ravenhill often said, I heard him say it a lot of times, and I never agreed with it, but I never argued with him. But he would say this, prayer doesn't change things.

Prayer changes people, and they change things. Well, that can kind of be true, because a person can have quite a prayer life, and they get burdened about going to the mission field. They got changed, and then they go change things.

But it's not altogether true that prayer doesn't change things. We know prayer changes a lot of things. Prayer will be used for the conversion of soul, for the provision of need, for the healing.

We've seen a lot of people, a number of people, in Denton, two-year-old boy, mother of one of our elder's wives, healed of bad cancer, because we prayed for them every week for a year. Nephew of a lady in our church, her nephew, two years old, advanced cancer, and would have died, and God was pleased. We prayed for him at least for a year, and he's cancer-free and healthy.

Prayer does change things, and it changes us. Let me close. I just want you tonight to not try to remember everything I've said.

I want you tonight to hear the voice of your shepherd saying to you, what's your place in the church prayer meeting? Will you be faithful? When you come, will you pray? Long prayers aren't good for a prayer

meeting. Pray brief prayers. Pray specific.

Cry out to God, and then give time to the other brethren. Spurgeon said one time, a brother started praying in the prayer meeting, and when he started, we were praying with him. The longer he went, we began to pray for him.

Finally, we began to pray against him, and when he said amen, we all wanted to say hallelujah. He stopped. Don't pray long in your prayer meetings.

That's self-centeredness. It draws attention to yourself. Don't pray like a shotgun.

Pray like a rifle with a scope on it and target something. Cry out to God, and then be quiet. Let someone else pray.

Come back and pray three or four more times. Be brief. That unites the spirit of prayer because all together are praying.

Any of you that are Christians, you can pray that way in your prayer meeting. Do you? If not, why not? A church without a true prayer meeting is like a car without a fuel line, or like a bird without wings. A church member without a church prayer meeting is ridiculous.

Corporate prayer is the kingdom's limitless reach. For a church to be a true praying church, one thing is essential. Its members must pray together, and you can be a church marked by prayer, and it doesn't matter how big you are.

It doesn't matter how well-known you are. You can have power with God, and he is waiting. Scripture even uses his language.

He's searching to and fro throughout the whole earth in search of those whose hearts are fully toward him, and a church is never more with a heart fully toward God when they're meeting to actually pray and seek him for answers. In closing, let me say this. Remember that old hymn, Burdens Are Lifted at Calvary? Remember that? Any of you? Any of you old enough to remember that hymn? Burdens Are Lifted at Calvary, the hymn says.

I promise you this. Week in and week out, month after month, burdens are lifted in the prayer meeting. You can come, and you can say in your heart, Lord, I'm burdened tonight.

I'm weary. Lift this from me, please. I want to pray.

You'll leave with burdens lifted that are lifted in no other way, because God has ordained and made it clear that his will is for his people to pray together. What does Hebrews 4, 14-16 say? We have a high priest, put it in the positive, we have a high priest who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Let us, therefore, draw near with confidence to the throne of grace that we may what? Obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Implication is, you don't draw near, there's mercy you could obtain you won't get. There's grace you can lay hold of that you won't lay hold of, because you didn't draw near to the throne of grace. So be more free than ever before in your prayer meeting.

Search your heart before the Lord and say, Lord, my life can impact my church for your glory and my life can edify the body more by being a praying member of the body. We have people spread out, Dallas, Fort Worth, North Dallas, Denton, other towns, we're really spread out. So we have three prayer meetings every Friday so people can get to them and someone leading each prayer meeting.

We will sing a couple hymns, we'll share important, really important brief requests. We don't do this. You know, I have an aunt, Bertha, back in home.

She's about 80 and I love her dearly, you know, she helped raise me and, you know, she goes to the Methodist church and her brother Wilmer, he's a Lutheran, and five minutes later, well I'd like for us to pray for her back pain. I've wasted God's time and the brethren's time. Don't give details about a prayer request.

Say, my neighbor Bill really needs the Lord. I'm burdened, let's pray for him. That's all the brethren need to know.

We sing a couple hymns, we briefly share important prayer requests, and then we pray for an hour. Teenagers praying, elders praying, deacons praying, girls praying, women praying. One will start, another will, one will stop, another will start.

And it's wonderful praying. And so we see marvelous answers regularly. Sometimes, lately, we've seen on Thursday the next day, something we prayed about, God answered.

And we don't always experience that all the time, but we don't have to. Why? Because we're not looking for necessarily to see something all the time. We're obeying Christ to pray, and He's going to answer.

Call unto me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things that you know not all. This is a confidence we have in Him, 1st John 5, that if we are asking anything that's according to His will, He is hearing us. And if we know that He's hearing us, we know we have the petitions we desired of Him.

Be a praying church more than ever, and God will do things you've not thought of, that you've been longing for more and more in Corpus. Amen. Let's pray.

Father, You, not because it's me, but because Your Word has spoken to us tonight about relationships, that that makes a healthy church. And a praying people being committed to be steadfast and faithful in prayer, that makes a healthy church. So I pray You'd bless this dear church, these dear brothers and sisters, and You'd bear fruit in our lives in these areas tonight.

Bless us and dismiss us. Give us good rest tonight, and a blessed time tomorrow as we come together. In the name of our Savior, Amen.

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