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INCREASING EVANGELISTIC EFFECTIVENESS THROUGH
INTENTIONAL PRAYER AT OAKLAND BAPTIST CHURCH,
KING GEORGE, VIRGINIA

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INCREASING EVANGELISTIC EFFECTIVENESS THROUGH
INTENTIONAL PRAYER AT OAKLAND BAPTIST CHURCH,
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To Beth, who has supported me in life and ministry.

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PREFACE

This project is the product of a partnership of the people of Oakland Baptist Church and my family. All of these people love the Lord and his church.

I am so grateful for my incredible wife, Beth, who has encouraged me for over three decades. She is the love of my life and my wonderful partner in ministry.

Thanks to the members of Oakland who willingly participated in the project and encouraged me with many kind words and supported me with regular prayer. Together, we have grown in our relationship with God and as his representatives. They continue to seek to be all that God has called us to be.

Special thanks to Jeff Bryant, who has faithfully served Oakland as Sunday School Director and Deacon Chairman for more than his fair share. His devotion to the church and his personal friendship and encouragement enabled the completion of this project.

I appreciate all that the staff and faculty of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary do to strengthen churches through the education of church leaders. Thank you, Dr. Adam Greenway for your advice and guidance through this project.

Most of all, I thank God who has blessed me beyond imagination.

Clifford Lee Hedges

King George, Virginia

May 2014

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to increase the evangelistic effectiveness of the people of Oakland Baptist Church in King George, Virginia, through intentional prayer.

Goals

This project addressed four goals that served as the criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of this project. The first goal was to increase the prayer life of the members of Oakland Baptist Church. They were to increase the amount of praying and focus the content of their prayers on the issues which most matter to God. Specifically, they would pray for the spread of the gospel.

The second goal was to identify lost people and intercede. The people of the church were to intentionally look for lost people in their own lives. They were to pray for the salvation of these lost people.

The third goal was to germinate evangelistic encounters. Church members who had been praying for the salvation of lost people in their own context would more likely engage in spiritual conversations with these lost people.

The final goal was to improve my prayer life and increase my own evangelistic activity. Through preparation for this project and leading the people of the church to increase their own prayer lives, my prayer life improved and increased in focus. In addition, I became more open to evangelistic opportunities in my own life. My increased prayer time and improved focus on evangelistic prayer resulted in more evangelistic activity in my life.

Context

Oakland Baptist Church formed in 1885 as the daughter church of Round Hill Baptist Church. King George County was a rural, isolated area in Virginia along the Potomac River at the entrance to the Northern Neck of Virginia. The motivation of the original sixteen members of Oakland in forming the new church was one of convenience so that members would not have to cross the local creek to get to church. Oakland remained a small family church for its first three decades.

In 1918, the Federal Government obtained 1300 acres of land about two miles from the church and formed the Dahlgren Proving Grounds for naval gunfire research and development.¹ Since Oakland was the closest Baptist church to the facility, the church experienced some growth from the new employees that came to live on the naval station. The nature of the community of King George County changed because of the naval facility. World War II caused a great influx of scientists and engineers to Dahlgren. The space race which began in the late 1950's also brought more professionals to Dahlgren with the addition of ballistic missile research and the addition of a space surveillance facility.²

The community in the area of Oakland has been driven by the naval station. Prior to World War II, the workers were primarily blue collar tradesmen. The station hired mostly from the local area. After World War II, the workforce shifted to a large number of professional engineers that had to be recruited from elsewhere and moved to Dahlgren.³ Oakland reflected this change more than any other Baptist church due to its proximity to the station. This trend has continued to today. The naval station continues to be the driving force of the community. The majority of families at Oakland have some

¹Kenneth G. McCollum, ed., *Dahlgren* (Dahlgren, VA: Naval Surface Warfare Center, 1977), 3.

²Ibid., 14.

³Ibid., 114.

link to the naval base either as a government employee or the employee of a defense company.

Oakland did not have a full-time pastor until 1948. For its first sixty-three years, Oakland shared pastors with surrounding churches. The pastor would be at Oakland for one or two Sundays of each month. The Lord's Supper is still observed on the third Sunday of each month because that was the Sunday that the pastor would be at Oakland. The first two full-time pastors served for three and for four years, respectively. The third full-time pastor came while still a student at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. He commuted to the church on weekends for two years. He eventually served as pastor of Oakland for forty-one years until his retirement in 1998. The church grew steadily and constructed a new facility in 1967. The new building moved the church from a small crowded facility with white wood siding to a brick colonial style with large columns in the front.

Oakland was the largest and most affluent church in the county. Finances were abundant and the church had grown to the point of giving 22 percent of undesignated offerings to the Cooperative Program. In 1996, the church started an additional worship service and then moved to an additional Sunday school hour. The church had three full time ministers: pastor, minister of education, and minister of music and youth.

The church experienced a rapid change in ministerial leadership. The minister of education was forced to resign. During the four months between his announced resignation and his actual departure, the pastor announced that he would retire in eighteen months. The minister of music and youth shifted to part time as only minister of youth. She then resigned completely later in the year. Two search committees worked simultaneously to fill three positions. The church revised the desired leadership structure to include an associate pastor and a minister of youth and outreach in addition to the pastor and the part time music director.

The new minister of youth and outreach arrived four months before the pastor's retirement. The new pastor arrived two months after the former pastor's retirement. I came as the associate pastor four months after the new pastor. A complete turnover occurred in the leadership staff in nine months with essentially no transition time between senior pastors. Leaders from the local association and the state convention advised the church to consider using an intentional interim pastor to ease the transition, but the prevailing opinion in the church was that the members of the church were mature enough to move directly from a long-tenured pastor to a new pastor immediately.

The church members' thinking was problematic for two reasons. First, they had no experience at pastoral transition. They viewed the pastor as an employee who performed a function. They were accustomed to a model akin to the navy base, where senior leadership changed often with little adverse effect. They believed that as long as a competent replacement could be obtained, operations would continue smoothly. Secondly, they had an unrealistic view of their own maturity. They believed that since they were highly educated successful people, they were more sophisticated than the average church. They also believed that they had been well disciplined by the previous pastor and were more spiritually mature than the average church.

The new pastor arrived with much excitement, but the reality of change soon became apparent. The shift in pastoral leadership brought a degree of discomfort for many people. The difference was more than just a person – there was a generational change. The former pastor was approaching seventy years of age while the new pastor was under forty. There was a cultural difference. The former pastor was a native of Virginia while the new pastor was from Oklahoma. There was a change in priority. The former pastor placed high importance on pastoral care and made frequent visits to the older members of the congregation. The new pastor's priority was preaching and outreach. Most members under the age of fifty welcomed the changes and anticipated an

exciting future for the church. Many of the older members felt like they had lost their beloved pastor with no replacement.

The church had adopted a format with two Sunday morning worship services two years before the pastoral transition. The new early service had experimented with various worship styles. They used traditional hymns, choruses led by one or two people, a small ensemble, and a band. The new pastor rapidly brought focus to the early service and settled on a contemporary worship band. When he arrived, about 125 people attended each service. Two years later, the traditional service attendance had declined to about one hundred in attendance and the contemporary service had grown to over two hundred. The disproportionate worship attendance added to the discontent of the older members who felt as if they were losing their church. Resentment against the growing contemporary service rose along with resentment against the pastor.

The church had been growing for over fifty years, but it was all due to new people coming into the community. There had never been any evangelistic growth. For two decades, baptisms had numbered ten to fifteen each year, but they were either all children of members or transfers from other denominations. The new pastor personally engaged in evangelism and led others to engage. In 2001, his third year at Oakland, forty-six people were baptized. About one third of those baptized were adult new believers. Many of the people who came to faith in Christ were personally led to faith by the new pastor, but the majority of the growth was due to a renewed excitement in the contemporary worship service. The people of Oakland were excited about church and invited their neighbors and coworkers to attend church.

As Oakland reached new levels of evangelistic effectiveness, the hostility against the pastor increased. The youth pastor joined the underground network of efforts to undermine the pastor. Those in leadership in the church who rejoiced at the movement of the church and supported the pastor did not know how to deal with beloved fellow

church members whom they had respected for years, but were now acting in a very un-Christian manner. The pastor resigned and went to a non-denominational church in Georgia. He left in the summer of 2002 after forty-four months at Oakland.

I was the associate pastor and assumed all of the pastor's duties. The youth pastor and I shared the preaching duties. This awkward situation lasted for a year, and then the youth pastor left Oakland to start his own church in the community. About forty people left Oakland to go with the youth pastor. The movement of people from Oakland to the new startup church occurred over several months, so it was never perceived as a church split. The following year, Oakland called me as pastor.

The wounds from the conflict required healing, so subsequent change has been implemented gradually. There were three years of declining attendance and finances. The past year has shown more stability in attendance and giving. Attendance in the contemporary service is approximately 120 with attendance in the traditional service at sixty. There are about forty people in the children's worship service that spans both worship hours. The annual budget is \$575,000 and giving has been nearly equal to the budget for the past year.

Oakland purchased the property adjacent to the church in 2002. This acquisition included an office building with eighteen thousand square feet of space and a parking lot with 120 spaces on seventeen acres of land. Renovation to the facility took much longer than was expected and was more expensive than anticipated. The annex building was occupied in phases from 2003 through 2010. Costs exceeded expectations by more than \$500,000. The new building has proved to be a valuable asset with additional space for offices, children's Sunday school, youth activities, and a new fellowship hall.

I have influenced the placement of leaders in key positions for the last nine years. There were several entrenched people who clung to their positions. Through the

natural rotation of positions, I was able to remove most of the difficult leaders. The majority of leaders are now positive forward-thinking people who have accepted my leadership. We are sensitive to the concerns of the older members and are moving slowly. The future looks promising with many people who are anxious to see God's hand move in our church and in our community.

Rationale

Prayer should be foundational to everything that Christians do. Just as communication is essential to any human relationship, prayer is essential to a relationship with God. Prayer also aligns the wills of people with God's will. Paul wrote, "Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God" (Rom 12:2).⁴ God's desire is that his people know his will and reflect his will in their lives. The prayer lives of Christians should reflect the will of God.

Prayer at Oakland Baptist Church is self-centered. The condition is not limited to Oakland, but this church is where I can have an impact. David wrote, "Take delight in the LORD, and He will give you your heart's desires" (Ps 37:4). A common interpretation of this verse is that as long as I am close to God, then God will grant my desires. A relationship with God is seen as a means to an end. Many people approach God the same way they would a vending machine; if they put in the right change then they get the desired product.

A better way to understand Psalm 37:4 is that if I delight in the Lord, then the things that God desires will be the things that I desire and God will grant the desires of my heart because they match the desires of his heart. Similarly, Jesus said, "If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you want and it will be done for you"

⁴All Scripture quotations are from the Holman Christian Standard Bible.

(John 15:7). If his words remain in us and we are close to him, we will ask according to his will.

All of the prayer concerns that I see at Oakland are concerned with circumstances. The majority of concerns relate to health. All of the prayer requests on the church prayer list are health problems. Prayer requests voiced in group prayer meetings are for sickness, surgeries, job concerns, or traveling mercy. Any prayer concerns for sin, holiness, the kingdom of God, evangelism, or unity are exceedingly rare. The problem exists in the Wednesday evening prayer meeting and during prayer times in Sunday school classes.

An example of the circumstantial nature of prayer is the response of many people in the church to the deployment of friends and relatives to difficult assignments such as Iraq or Afghanistan. While the concern of people for the physical safety of their loved ones is understandable and certainly worthy of prayer, the concern is only for physical safety. Even if the deployed person is lost or unchurched, the prayers rarely include concern for the salvation or spiritual health of the individual.

Many people in the community are still on the church role of Oakland even though they may not have actually attended in decades. Since these people are often still friends of long-term members, there remains a connection to people in the church. If one of the disconnected members has major health issues, the medical concern is a topic for the prayer list and group prayer meetings. The spiritual health of the absent church member has never been a prayer concern, and after the health crisis it will not likely be a concern in the future.

The prayer priorities of church members reflect their attitudes and priorities of life. Church members do not pray for the lost because it is not a priority. This attitude plays out in life with no evangelistic activity due to the lack of concern about the lost. Similarly, attitudes drive behavior. An attitude of disinterest in the lost results in

prayerlessness toward the lost. Most Christians view evangelism as risky and people are not likely to take risks in areas where they have no passion.

My desire was to change attitudes and behaviors. I intended to guide the church members to modify their attitudes about the lost and align their wills more with the will of God. I intended to guide the members of the church in changing their behaviors with respect to prayer. As they actually pray for lost people, their attitudes should continue to change. My hope is that as they think about lost people and pray intentionally about lost people, they will be open to respond positively to evangelistic opportunities.

CHAPTER 2

A BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR EVANGELISTIC PRAYER

Prayer is communication with God. In prayer, God's people share the concerns of their hearts with the Lord and open themselves to the concerns of God's heart. His concerns are his glory and his kingdom. Evangelism is a concern of God and should also be the concern of all followers of Christ. Evangelism is the mechanism that God has chosen to disseminate the gospel. God's Word provides a theological framework with respect to evangelistic prayer.

Jesus' Instructions

The Gospels describe Jesus as a man of prayer. Luke said of Jesus, "Yet He often withdrew to deserted places and prayed" (Luke 5:16).¹ The disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray just as John the Baptist had taught his disciples to pray (Luke 11:1). John's followers exhibited certain traits and practices that differentiated them from other specific groups at that point in time.² Their manner of prayer and fasting demonstrated a fervency of faith and set them apart from the average Jew. The episode of Jesus and his disciples eating at Matthew's house highlights the religious practices of John's disciples and suggests that their habits of prayer and fasting closely matched those of the

¹Luke describes several instances of prayer in the ministry of Jesus. He prayed by himself all night on a mountain (6:12). He prayed privately with his disciples (9:18, 28). He prayed publicly at his baptism (3:21-22) and at the return of the seventy (10:21-22). Luke implies that Jesus was seeking solitude for prayer when the crowds pursued him (4:42).

²Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 440.

Pharisees.³ The disciples of Jesus noted that John had provided instruction in prayer for his disciples and they desired similar instruction from Jesus. They asked Jesus to teach them to pray. Jesus offered a model of prayer in Luke 11 and Matthew 6. Robert Stein advocates that this pattern of prayer became a mark of identification for those who belong to the group of followers of Jesus.⁴

The prayer given in Luke 11 answers a specific request for teaching about prayer. The prayer in Matthew 6 is part of the Sermon on the Mount in which Jesus describes the attitudes and practices of his followers. Carson explains that the similarities of the two prayers cause some who believe that the two Gospels are derived from the same source material to advocate that the prayer in Luke 11 is simply a condensation of the prayer in Matthew.⁵ A simpler view is that the two prayers were given in two separate historical settings and the similarity is due to the core teaching of Jesus which was often repeated.⁶

The two prayers complement one another. Neither contradicts the other. Both are complete as they stand.

Table 1 shows the similarities and differences between the model prayers of Matthew and Luke. The table gives the two prayers in side-by-side format with each topical segment on its own row.

³The event of Jesus calling Matthew and dining at his house is contained in Matt 9:9-17, Mark 2:14-22 and Luke 5:27-39. In Mark and Matthew, unnamed people ask Jesus why he and his disciples do not follow the same fasting practices as John's disciples and the Pharisees. In Luke, John's disciples ask Jesus the same question.

⁴Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, The New American Commentary, vol. 24 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 324.

⁵D. A. Carson, *Matthew* in vol. 8 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin and J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 167.

⁶*Ibid.*, 168.

Table 1. The model prayers of Matthew and Luke

Matthew 6:9-13	Luke 11:2-4
9 "Therefore, you should pray like this:	2 He said to them, "Whenever you pray, say:
Our Father in heaven,	Father,
Your name be honored as holy.	Your name be honored as holy.
10 Your kingdom come.	Your kingdom come.
Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.	
11 Give us today our daily bread.	3 Give us each day our daily bread.
12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.	4 And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone in debt to us.
13 And do not bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.]	And do not bring us into temptation."

Jesus told his followers what to do in Luke 11. He told them to pray in a specific manner with a specific content. While prayer is not limited to the model prayers given in Luke 11 and Matthew 6, the subjects that he gave in these two situations stand in preeminence for the prayers of his followers. The prayers, with their evangelistic focus, remain important for all followers of Christ for all time. Joel Green notes, "Jesus' followers pray in this way because this is a distinctive practice of Jesus' followers. Such practices nurture dispositions appropriate to the community of Jesus' followers; through its repetition the message of this prayer would engrave itself into the life of the community."⁷

Both prayers begin with who God is and the advancement of his kingdom. God is holy and his kingdom is spreading throughout an unholy world. Only God can bring

⁷Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 440.

about his kingdom. The verb “come” in the prayer is a divine passive.⁸ The coming of the kingdom will be accomplished by God. The mechanism that God has chosen for the expansion of the kingdom is evangelism.

Prayer for the coming of the kingdom must include prayer for the spread of the gospel. The task of the church includes a global imperative for evangelism that the message of Christ would spread to the ends of the earth and to all people. Evangelism contains a global element as well as a personal element. Christ’s followers must pray for global evangelism as well as their own personal evangelism. Paul told the Corinthian church that the followers of Christ are the carriers of the message of Christ.

Now everything is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed the message of reconciliation to us. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ; certain that God is appealing through us, we plead on Christ's behalf, “Be reconciled to God.” (2 Cor 5:18-20)

Paul emphasizes that Christ’s followers are acting on behalf of God as his representatives with his message. This ministry is his plan and is under his control. It can only be accomplished through his power.

Jesus responds to the request for instruction in prayer by providing a model for prayer (Luke 11:1-4).⁹ He then gives an illustration concerning prayer. He tells a story of a man who asks a neighbor for bread to feed a visiting friend at midnight. The man is initially rebuffed due to the lateness and the neighbor’s family already settled in bed. Finally, the neighbor gets up from his bed and grants the man’s request because of his persistence (Luke 11:5-8). Jesus applies the story to prayer with the comment, “So I say to you, keep asking, and it will be given to you. Keep searching, and you will find. Keep knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the

⁸Stein, *Luke*, 325.

⁹Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996).

one who searches finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened” (Luke 11:9-10).

The three imperatives to keep asking, keep searching, and keep knocking are a single unit rather than distinct commands.¹⁰ It is an example of synonymous parallelism in which a thought is repeated rhythmically to add emphasis.¹¹ The command is to persevere in prayer to God.

Jesus continued in his teaching on prayer with a comparison between sinful human fathers and God as the heavenly Father (Luke 11:11-13). Earthly fathers will naturally act in the best interests of their children. God, who is perfect, will provide perfectly for those who ask of him. He will provide perfect gifts. Luke specifically mentions the Holy Spirit as the perfect gift from God. The parallel passage in Matthew 7:11 says that God will provide good gifts. The final point of this passage is that God responds perfectly to our prayers.

Prayer has an aspect of kingdom anticipation which includes evangelism. Perseverance in prayer implies regular evangelistic prayer. These prayers are offered with confidence that God will respond.

Jesus' Pattern

Jesus provided a model of prayer at the end of his earthly ministry in John 17. At the end of the Last Supper event, prior to crossing the Kidron Valley, Jesus prayed to the Father. This prayer is the longest recorded prayer of Jesus and is his last prayer reported by John.¹² In this prayer, Jesus reveals the concerns of his heart as he faces the cross.

¹⁰R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel*, Commentary on the New Testament (n.p.: Wartsburg, 1946; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001), 627.

¹¹Stein, *Luke*, 327.

¹²Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 634.

In his analysis of the prayer, Leon Morris addresses the flow of thought. He writes, “The prayer is difficult to subdivide, for it is essentially a unity, but it is possible to discern a movement.”¹³ He divides the prayer into three topical segments: Christ’s glorification (vv. 1-5), the disciples (vv. 6-19) and those who will believe through the testimony of the disciples (vv. 20-26).¹⁴ A common theme ties the divisions of the prayer together. Key words occur throughout the prayer.

The first segment addresses Christ’s glory which flows from his relationship with the Father. This glory pre-existed the incarnation and reveals Christ’s deity. God said through the prophet Isaiah, “I am Yahweh, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another” (Isa 42:8). Jesus prayed for his glory and the Father’s glory. He also linked their glory to the mission which the Father had given him. His mission was to enable people to know God and receive eternal life.

The second segment focuses on the disciples and their relationship with Christ. They also have been given a mission to carry on the work of Christ. The third segment looks ahead to the future. Jesus concentrates on the ongoing mission which the disciples will pass on to subsequent generations. The common theme of the prayer is the mission of Christ to provide salvation.

The word “send” (ἀποστέλλω) occurs seven times in the prayer. In six of the instances, the verb is used for the Father sending his Son. The remaining instance is the Son sending his disciples. Clearly, the act of sending is a key to this prayer. The Father sent his Son with the mission of forgiveness and the Son sent his disciples with the message of forgiveness. Since God sends, the application to evangelistic prayer is to include requests for God to send. Specifically, he sends those with the gospel message to those who need to hear.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

The word “give” (διδωμι) occurs seventeen times in the prayer. In thirteen of the cases, the Father is the one doing the giving while the remaining four are the Son giving. All of the giving is related to the mission of Jesus. The Father gives to the Son authority, the mission, the gospel, glory, and his name. The Son gives to his disciples eternal life, glory, and the gospel. The mission of Jesus and the continuing mission of his followers depend on the giving of the Godhead. Evangelism as the mechanism of the expansion of the kingdom is dependent on God giving that which is necessary for evangelism.

The prayer consists of six specific petitions. Five of the petitions begin with the address “Father” (πατηρ), while one contains an implied πατηρ (v. 17).¹⁵ Borchert categorizes the petitions as

1. Glorification in mission (1-3)
2. The return of glory at the conclusion of the incarnational mission (4-8)
3. Prayer for the protection of God’s representatives to the world (9-15)
4. Prayer for the holiness of God’s representatives in the world (16-19)
5. Prayer for unity in mission (20-23)
6. Prayer for the disciples to reach their destiny (24)¹⁶

Borchert argues that verses 25 and 26 contain a seventh petition which he calls “a reality prayer.”¹⁷ Morris disagrees and designates this section of the prayer as a “retrospect” in which Jesus reviews what has been done and the reasons for his doing it.¹⁸ Morris makes the more convincing argument in that even though Jesus uses the address

¹⁵Gerald L. Borchert, *John 12-21*, The New American Commentary, vol. 25B (Nashville: Broadman, 2002), 188.

¹⁶Ibid., 189-208.

¹⁷Ibid., 209.

¹⁸Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 652.

“Father,” he is no longer asking the Father for anything. While these two verses do constitute a distinct segment of the overall prayer, there is no overt petition.

**Petition 1: Glorification in Mission
(vv. 1-3)**

Jesus asked that the Father glorify the Son so that the Son might glorify the Father. He then stated in verse 4 that he had glorified the Father by completing his mission. He defined his mission in verse 2 as giving eternal life which he equated to a personal relationship with God in verse 3.¹⁹ This petition concerns the entirety of the mission of Jesus. The salvation of the lost brings glory to God. An element of evangelistic prayer is for the glory of God through the redemption of sinners through faith in Christ.

**Petition 2: The Return of Glory at the
Conclusion of the Incarnational Mission
(vv. 4-8)**

The second petition of Jesus was that his mission would be fully completed by the sign of his return to the glory he had before creation.²⁰ This specific request has been completed through his atonement on the cross and the resurrection. Jesus completed his mission on the cross to provide atonement for sin and reconciliation with God. The resurrection provided the proof to the world of the truth of his mission and the gospel account.

After his specific petition of his return to glory, Jesus prayed about the revelation of the gospel. “Now they know that all things You have given to Me are from You, because the words that You gave Me, I have given them. They have received them and have known for certain that I came from You. They have believed that You sent Me”

¹⁹R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel*, Commentary on the New Testament (n.p.: Lutheran Book Concern, 1943; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001), 1122.

²⁰Borchert, *John 12-21*, 191.

(John 17:7-8). Current followers of Jesus can look back on the resurrection with the certainty of the truth of the gospel.

**Petition 3: Prayer for the Protection of
God's Representatives to the World
(vv. 9-15)**

In his third petition of John 17, Jesus prayed for the protection of his disciples. While he physically was with them, he personally provided for their protection. Now that his earthly ministry is complete, he asks the Father to protect them for the sake of the ongoing mission. His prayer was for those who were his disciples at that time. The principle of his prayer extends to current disciples of Jesus. An element of evangelistic prayer is the protection of followers of Jesus in order to protect the ongoing mission of spreading the gospel.

**Petition 4: Prayer for the Holiness of
God's Representatives in the World
(vv. 16-19)**

Jesus prayed that the Father would sanctify his disciples. In his prayer, he said, "Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth" (John 17:17). He said in verse 14 that they were not of the world, but he had left them in the world. The term "sanctify" means to make holy or to make separate.²¹ The disciples, while remaining in the world, were to be separate from the world. The difference between followers of Christ and the world is holiness. The people of the church are made distinct from the world by the process of sanctification which makes them holy. Holiness is an attribute of God. Sanctification makes believers like God.

Sanctification is an act of God, not an act of will by Christians. While a believer must participate in the process of sanctification, the source is God. It comes through renewal under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. *The Baptist Faith and Message*

²¹Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 646.

provides a definition of sanctification: “Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.”²²

Jesus prayed that God would perform the act of sanctification. He indicated that the mechanism of sanctification would be the Word of God. Evangelistic prayer must include the sanctification of the Christians who would share the gospel with the lost. Disciples of Christ should pray for their own sanctification as well as their fellow disciples.

**Petition 5: Prayer for
Unity in Mission (vv. 20-23)**

Jesus prayed, not only for the original disciples, but for all of the disciples who would receive the message of the gospel in faith. The mission which Jesus began could only continue if the disciples continued the task. Since their lives would only extend the mission a few more years after the death of Jesus, the ongoing mission was contingent upon the continuing missional effort through subsequent generations.

Jesus highlighted unity among the disciples as a key element essential for the success of the gospel mission. He asked that the unity among his followers would be like the unity within the Trinity: “May they all be one, as You, Father, are in Me and I am in You” (John 17:21a). He also asked that the disciples would experience unity with the Godhead. “May they also be one in Us” (John 17:21b). Unity was clearly important in Jesus’ mind as he repeated his request for unity among the disciples: “May they be one as We are one” (John 17:22b). He then made a fourth request for unity, “May they be made

²²Southern Baptist Convention, *The Baptist Faith and Message*, <http://www.sbc.net/bfm/bfm2000.asp> (accessed 22 September 2012) .

completely one” (John 17:23b). Jesus was not concerned about unity just so that the disciples would get along. He gave the mission as the reason for unity. He asked for unity “so the world may believe You sent Me” (John 17:21c). He repeated his rationale for the request with the addition that the world would see the relationship of the disciples with God: “May they be made completely one, so the world may know You have sent Me and have loved them as You have loved Me” (John 17:23).

Jesus made several references to God’s Word. The disciples had kept God’s Word: “I have revealed Your name to the men You gave Me from the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word” (John 17:6). Jesus had passed along the words of God to the disciples, “because the words that You gave Me, I have given them” (John 17:8). “I have given them Your word” (John 17:14). The Word of God is the source of sanctification. “Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth” (John 17:17). Now, in his petition for unity, Jesus refers to the message of the disciples. “I pray not only for these, but also for those who believe in Me through their message” (John 17:20). The message that the disciples passed on would be the basis for succeeding generations responding in faith. Paul considered it the foundation of the church. “So then you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the cornerstone” (Eph 2:19-20). Lenski writes, “Jesus considers the Word as given to the church through the apostles the foundation of the church for all time.”²³

Unity in faith based upon the gospel as revealed to the apostles is essential for the church of all generations to carry out the mission of evangelism to the world. This unity was significant in the prayer of Jesus. Current followers of Jesus should pray for unity. People naturally believe that their own opinions are correct, so Christians must be

²³Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John’s Gospel*, 1154.

on guard to the temptation to pray that “others will agree with me.” The unity that Jesus prayed for was that his followers would agree with him. This concept should drive disciples to pray, “let my will and the will of others align with your will.”

Just as God’s Word was a concern throughout the prayer of Jesus, evangelistic prayer must be concerned with God’s Word. The Bible is the center point of theology and the source of the gospel message. Evangelism must remain faithful to the biblical revelation from God. Evangelistic prayer should include requests that the message proclaimed to the lost would preserve biblical truth.

Petition 6: Prayer for the Disciples to Reach their Destiny (vv. 24)

In his final petition of his prayer, Jesus expressed his desire for the disciples to be with him and experience his glory: “Father, I desire those You have given Me to be with Me where I am. Then they will see My glory, which You have given Me because You loved Me before the world’s foundation” (John 17:24). This petition could be interpreted two ways. It could mean that Jesus is asking for the disciples to experience his presence and glory while still on earth, or it could mean that Jesus is asking that God will take them to heaven to witness his glory.²⁴ Morris argues for the former²⁵ while Lenski advocates the later.²⁶ Borchert looks back to the prologue of John’s gospel in which the apostle uses language similar to the prayer of Jesus in John 17.²⁷ John wrote, “The Word became flesh and took up residence among us. We observed His glory, the glory as the One and Only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). John recorded Jesus’ prayer which includes the sixth petition that his followers would see his glory.

²⁴John Calvin, *John*, The Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1994), 403.

²⁵Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 651.

²⁶Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John’s Gospel*, 1166.

²⁷Borchert, *John 12-21*, 209.

John also reported in his prologue to his gospel that they had indeed already seen the glory of Jesus in his incarnation. He linked the glory of Jesus to being sent by the Father and his representation of truth. He also associated Jesus with God's Word. The elements of sending and sanctification by the truth of the Word are significant in Jesus' prayer. The disciples are sent by Jesus but sanctified by the Father with his Word.

The overarching theme of the John 17 prayer is the continuation of the mission of Jesus after his death and resurrection. The mission will be entrusted to generations of followers of Jesus. Each disciple of Jesus will witness his glory through faith in his gospel.²⁸ Current evangelistic prayer should address the personal encounter with Jesus that each disciple experiences. Those who already know Christ will live more evangelistically and share the gospel when the glory of Christ is most real to them.

While Jesus did not imply that his prayer should be considered as a model for the church to follow, it does show what he considered important and appropriate for prayer. His followers should view these same concerns as important and appropriate for prayer.

Having a Heart for the Lost

The apostle Paul had been a faithful Jew well-versed in the Old Testament Law (Phil 3:4-6). While persecuting the followers of Jesus, he came to faith in Christ on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-7). Later, in the church of Antioch, Paul and Barnabas were sent to take the gospel to the larger world (Acts 13:1-4).

Antioch was an unusual church since it comprised both Jews and Gentiles. After the persecution of Stephen, Christians fled from Jerusalem. They spread the gospel of Christ as they went. They only told other Jews about Jesus, since they viewed him as the Messiah to the Jews. A group of Christians who settled in Antioch evangelized fellow

²⁸David J. MacLeod, "The Incarnation of the Word: John 1:14," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 161, no. 641 (January 2004): 79.

Jews along with Gentiles (Acts 11:19). When the news of the events in Antioch reached the leaders of the church in Jerusalem, they dispatched Barnabas to investigate. He traveled to Antioch and saw the movement of the Holy Spirit, so he retrieved Paul from Tarsus and the two of them provided instruction and mentoring for the Antioch church (Acts 11:22-26).

Paul and Barnabas spent a year in Antioch before the church sent them on their first missionary trip. In their travels, they sought out the local Jews as the first recipients of the gospel: “Arriving in Salamis, they proclaimed God's message in the Jewish synagogues” (Acts 13:5). Their pattern was to speak to the Jews first, but also speak to the Gentiles. “The same thing happened in Iconium; they entered the Jewish synagogue and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed” (Acts 14:1).

Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch, but Paul made subsequent missionary trips. His third journey is chronicled in Acts 18:23-21:16. This trip was likely from A.D. 53-57. While in Corinth for three months, he probably wrote his letter to the Roman church.²⁹ In this letter, Paul addressed tensions between the Jewish and Gentile believers with a theology of salvation particularly with an understanding of the place of the Old Testament Law with respect to the gospel. His desire was a unified church which would worship in the unity of the gospel and glorify God with the salvation of more Jews and Gentiles.³⁰

In his letter to the Roman church, Paul identified himself as the apostle to the Gentiles. Even with this ministry to the Gentile people, he still maintained identification with the Jews: “Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. In view of the fact that I am an

²⁹Kenneth Boa and William Kruidenier, *Romans*, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 6.

³⁰Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 20-23.

apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, if I can somehow make my own people jealous and save some of them. For if their being rejected is world reconciliation, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?” (Rom 11:13-15). In the first eight chapters of Romans, Paul laid out a theology of salvation. All people are sinners and are in need of a savior. Both Jews and Gentiles exist in the same condition of sin and lostness. The Jews have lived in a special state as the chosen people of God. Everett Harrison points out, “Those who have been under divine tutelage under God for centuries in preparation for the coming of the Messiah have failed to receive him.”³¹ In chapters nine through eleven, Paul addressed the challenge to God’s righteousness in that he has failed to deliver the promises of the Old Testament to the Jews. A looming question as to why so few of the Old Testament covenant community have responded to the gospel needs Paul’s attention.³²

Paul provided this defense of God’s righteousness in chapters 9-11. Paul began his argument with the statement, “But it is not as though the word of God has failed” (Rom 9:6). His argument was that God is faithful to his promises. Schreiner agrees with scholars who see a chiasm in the flow of thought:

- A Israel as the seed (9:6-9)
- B God’s love for his chosen (9:10-13)
- C God’s mercy, will, and power (9:14-18)
- C’ God’s mercy, will, and power (9:19-24)
- B’ God’s love (9:25-26)
- A’ God’s choice of Israel as his seed (9:27-29)³³

Schreiner summarizes, “The A and B components of the chiasm focus on God’s election, by which he chooses some in his love. The central section (C) defends God’s justice in

³¹Everett F. Harrison, *Romans*, in vol. 10 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein and J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 100.

³²Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 548.

³³Schreiner, *Romans*, 472.

choosing some rather than others.”³⁴ God never promised to save every individual of the Jewish community. He promised to save a remnant.

The next section of Paul’s argument focuses on individual responsibility in responding to the gospel of Christ. In Romans 9:30-11:10, he maintained that the Jews have had the same opportunity to follow Christ as the Gentiles. In fact, they have had a better opportunity since they have had access to the Scriptures unlike the Gentiles. Their failure to accept the gospel is because they have pursued salvation by works rather than by faith.³⁵

The final segment of Paul’s argument in Romans 11:11-3 addressed the temporary nature of the unbelief of the Jews. He maintained that the majority of the Jews will not always resist the gospel. Paul’s expectation and prayer was that the faith of the Gentiles will eventually provoke Israel to jealousy and prompt them to respond to the gospel in faith.³⁶ He wrote, “So that you will not be conceited, brothers, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery: a partial hardening has come to Israel until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written: The Liberator will come from Zion; He will turn away godlessness from Jacob” (Rom 11:25-26).

Within Paul’s discussion of the lack of faith amongst the Jews, he exposed his concern for their eternity, “Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God concerning them is for their salvation!” (Rom 10:1). He showed his personal concern for his fellow Jews and made it a matter of prayer. Boa and Kruidenier address the place of intercessory prayer within the tension of God’s sovereign election of those saved and human responsibility of faith. They opine, “The best way to learn theology is to watch the

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid., 473.

³⁶Ibid., 474.

apostle Paul in action. Did he believe only a remnant of Israel had been saved? Yes (Rom. 9:27). Did he believe that prayer for Israel's salvation was still his responsibility? Yes (Rom. 10:1). Paul's constant ministry for the saved, as well as the unsaved, was a ministry of prayer."³⁷ Boa and Kruidenier summarize, "There was nothing in Paul's doctrine of sovereignty, election, or predestination that could not, and should not be touched by prayer."³⁸ Paul prayed wholeheartedly for the salvation of his fellow Jews. His heart was broken by the corporate rejection by his countrymen of God's offer of salvation.

The degree of Paul's concern for the Jews was expressed earlier in the opening verses of chapter nine: "I speak the truth in Christ – I am not lying; my conscience is testifying to me with the Holy Spirit – that I have intense sorrow and continual anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from the Messiah for the benefit of my brothers, my countrymen by physical descent" (Rom 9:1-3). Scholars disagree about whether or not Paul is actually praying to be cut off from Christ or just speaking hypothetically.³⁹ Either way, the sincere concern he has for his fellow Jews is evident. Moo suggests that Paul is influenced by Moses and his concern for the Israelites following the golden calf incident at Mount Sinai:

The following day Moses said to the people, "You have committed a great sin. Now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I will be able to pay for your sin." So Moses returned to the LORD and said, "Oh, this people has committed a great sin; they have made for themselves a god of gold. Now if You would only forgive their sin. But if not, please erase me from the book You have written." (Exod 32:30-32)

God replied to Moses that people were responsible for their own sin. Obviously, Paul knew this fact in light of his theological teaching on salvation. His cry of compassion reveals his heart.

³⁷Boa and Kruidenier, *Romans*, 308.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 558.

Paul explained why most of the Jews had not experienced salvation in Christ in Romans 10:2-4. They had a problem with righteousness. They substituted the righteousness of their own activities for the righteousness of God. They trusted in religious activities rather than faith. Paul further explained that the condition necessary for their salvation was faith and repentance:

On the contrary, what does it say? The message is near you, in your mouth and in your heart. This is the message of faith that we proclaim: if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. With the heart one believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth one confesses, resulting in salvation. Now the Scripture says, No one who believes on Him will be put to shame, for there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, since the same Lord of all is rich to all who call on Him. For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. (Rom 10:8-13)

Paul continued his explanation that the solution to the scarceness of faith among the Jews and the mechanism of the plan to expand the faith among the Gentiles is the proclamation of the gospel. He wrote, "But how can they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe without hearing about Him? And how can they hear without a preacher? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: How welcome are the feet of those who announce the gospel of good things!" (Rom 10:14-15).

Paul quoted Isaiah, "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the herald, who proclaims peace, who brings news of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'" (Isa 52:7). In the context of Isaiah, the messenger of salvation was sent by God. Even though Paul and Barnabas were commissioned and sent out by the Antioch church, it was the result of the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Paul recognized that he had been sent by God and all subsequent evangelists would likewise be sent by God. Since this sending of messengers with the message of the gospel is an action of God, it warrants inclusion in prayer.

Paul provided two lessons for evangelistic prayer. First, his heart was sincerely broken for the lost, particularly those of his own ethnic and social background. His cry for

the salvation of his countrymen provides a model for all Christians to cry out to God for the salvation of the people of their own community. Secondly, he raises the issue of the necessity of the proclamation of the gospel. Sinners cannot come to faith in Christ unless they hear the gospel. They can only hear if God sends messengers with the gospel. Evangelistic prayer must address the calling of couriers of the gospel. Prayer must include the calling of other people to faithfulness in proclaiming the gospel message. It should also include requests for the calling of Christians to missionary service. Finally, prayer must focus on the individual Christian's call to be personally involved in evangelism.

Desire for the People of God to Point to God

God gave Moses explicit instructions for the establishment of the Tabernacle: "They are to make a sanctuary for Me so that I may dwell among them. You must make it according to all that I show you – the design of the tabernacle as well as the design of all its furnishings" (Exod 25:8-9). The Tabernacle, along with the Ark of the Covenant, represented the presence of God to the Israelites and remained at the center of the Israelite community. After King David consolidated his position over all of Israel and established his throne in Jerusalem, he moved the Tabernacle to Jerusalem (2 Sam 6:12). He intended to build the Temple for God to replace the Tabernacle, but God told him, via the prophet Nathan, not to build the Temple. God told David that his descendant would build the Temple (2 Sam 7:13).

Solomon began to build the Temple in his fourth year as king (1 Kgs 6:1). It was completed in seven years (1 Kgs 6:38). In the midst of great celebration and worship, Solomon placed the Ark in the Temple then gave a prayer of dedication. His prayer is recorded in 1 Kings 8:22-53. He began his prayer with an overall theme of the purpose of the Temple (1 Kgs 8:22-30). Solomon spoke of God's faithfulness to keep the promises of his covenant. Patterson and Austel describe Solomon's prayer as a request that that

“God might always recognize the Temple as the way for sinful man to approach a holy God.”⁴⁰

Solomon then made seven specific petitions in his prayer that asked that God answer future prayers at the Temple.⁴¹ He recounted significant elements of the covenant that God had given the Israelites. He described circumstances in which calamities will have befallen upon the Israelites as a result of unfaithfulness. These calamities are found in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28-30. The calamities are curses that result from turning away from God. Faithful obedience results in blessings, and disobedience results in curses. The difficult circumstances of the curses are incited by God in order to provoke repentance. Solomon expected that the people would fall into disobedience and experience the expected calamities. He asked that when the Israelites repent and pray via the Temple that God would forgive them of their sin and restore the blessings to the people.⁴²

Solomon’s fifth petition stands out from the others in that it is not a prayer for the Israelites, but for the foreigners:

Even for the foreigner who is not of Your people Israel but has come from a distant land because of Your name – for they will hear of Your great name, mighty hand, and outstretched arm, and will come and pray toward this temple – may You hear in heaven, Your dwelling place, and do according to all the foreigner asks You for. Then all the people on earth will know Your name, to fear You as Your people Israel do and know that this temple I have built is called by Your name. (1 Kgs 8:41-43)

Solomon saw the significance of the Temple beyond the relationship of his own people with God. He knew that all people need to know God. Israel was the mediator of this knowledge to the rest of the world and foreigners coming to the Temple

⁴⁰Richard D. Patterson and Hermann J. Austel, *1, 2 Kings*, in vol. 4 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin and J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 84.

⁴¹C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles*, Commentary on the Old Testament (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1866-91; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001), 91.

⁴²Patterson and Austel, *1, 2 Kings* 87.

in faith and prayer then returning to their own homelands would be the conduit in other nations responding in proper worship.⁴³

Following his prayer of dedication for the Temple, Solomon addressed the Israelites with a blessing: “When Solomon finished praying this entire prayer and petition to the LORD, he got up from kneeling before the altar of the LORD, with his hands spread out toward heaven, and he stood and blessed the whole congregation of Israel with a loud voice” (1 Kgs 8:54-55). Paul House sees three parts to the blessing. First, Solomon stressed the importance of the fact that God’s presence with the Israelites was the basis of their ability to continue as the community of God’s people. The Temple was a physical representation of the presence of God which was central to their existence as the community of God. Second, Solomon stressed the heart component of following God. Mere legalism will never replace faith. Obedience to the Law properly outflows from hearts that are committed to God. Third, Solomon addressed the overarching destiny of the Israelites. They were not just to live in God’s blessing as a special community, but were to represent God to all the people of the earth.⁴⁴

Solomon proclaimed in his blessing, “May my words I have made my petition with before the LORD be near the LORD our God day and night, so that He may uphold His servant's cause and the cause of His people Israel, as each day requires, and so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God. There is no other!” (1 Kgs 8:59-60). Solomon gave the purpose of his prayer to God as the desire that his purpose as the King of God’s people and the greater purpose of the community succeed so that all people of the earth might know the one true God. Paul House summarizes,

This concern for monotheism is at the heart of all Old Testament theology. Israel must confess that God is one (Deut 6:4); that idols are mere works of human hands

⁴³Paul R. House, *1, 2 Kings*, The New American Commentary, vol. 8 (Nashville: Broadman, 1995), 146.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 148.

(Exod 20:3-4; 32:1-4); and that the Lord alone has created the earth (Gen 1:1), delivered Israel (Exod 15:1-18), and established the Davidic monarchy. God's plan of blessing all nations through Abraham (Gen 12:2-3) will then be fulfilled as Israel teaches others about the only true God.⁴⁵

The inclusive plan of salvation for all nations began with the families of Noah. Genesis 10 lists the seventy nations as the descendants of Noah's three sons. These nations comprised all the people of the earth at that time. The specific lineage of Shem is given in Genesis 11 culminating with Abraham. God called Abraham to leave his family in Haran and go to a new land.

The LORD said to Abram: Go out from your land, your relatives, and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, I will bless you, I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, I will curse those who treat you with contempt, and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you. (Gen 12:1-3)

The context of the promise to bless all the peoples on earth was the Table of Nations of Genesis 10. The original plan of redemption via Abraham was universally inclusive of all families on earth.⁴⁶

The New Testament looks back to the promise given to Abraham as the basis for the spread of the gospel to the Gentiles. Paul wrote to the Galatian church,

Just as Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness, so understand that those who have faith are Abraham's sons. Now the Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith and foretold the good news to Abraham, saying, All the nations will be blessed in you. So those who have faith are blessed with Abraham, who had faith. (Gal 3:6-9)

Paul's explanation to the Galatians that salvation comes by faith alone and not through the Law and that this salvation is available to all nations follows the pattern that Jesus gave in the Great Commission: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Walter C. Kaiser, "The Davidic Promise and the Inclusion of the Gentiles (Amos 9:9-15 and Acts 15:13-18): A Test Passage for Theological Systems," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 20 (1977): 98.

always, to the end of the age” (Matt 28:19-20). In the Great Commission, Jesus commanded his followers to take the gospel to all nations. His language points back to the promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3.⁴⁷

Solomon recognized the evangelistic plan of God from the promise to Abraham and incorporated that plan into his prayer of dedication of the Temple and his blessing to the people. He recognized the evangelistic assignment given to his people and based on the role of the Temple in their relationship with God, he prayed accordingly. Just as the missionary mandate to God’s people crosses all ethnic and chronological boundaries, the necessity of evangelistic prayer continues today.

Conclusion

Prayer aligns God’s people with his purpose and plan. As people connect with God in prayer, they open their hearts to the heart of God. His purpose is his own glory. His plan is the expansion of his kingdom through the gospel. In the model prayer, Jesus taught his followers to pray for the kingdom of God. In his prayer in John 17, he showed the church to pray for his glory and the Father’s glory. God’s purpose and plan is the redemption of sinners.

God responds to the prayers of his people. Jesus taught his disciples to expect God to answer their prayers. As Christians pray in line with his will, God responds. They should pray for the overall evangelistic effort of the church, individual evangelistic zeal, and a firm foundation on the truth God’s Word. Followers of Christ should also follow Paul’s example of prayer for specific groups or individuals, in particular, those with which they have some kind of relationship or identification.

Prayer prompts believers to engage in evangelism. Behavior follows passions. Evangelistic prayer heightens awareness and fervor for the gospel and sensitizes the

⁴⁷Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 387.

church to the plight of the lost. Like Solomon, if Christians review the promises of God and the plan of God, they will see the demolition of barriers to evangelism.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORICAL AND CURRENT ISSUES LINKING PRAYER AND EVANGELISM

Church leaders and theologians have generally agreed that prayer and evangelism are core activities of the corporate church and individual Christians. They have not always agreed as to how prayer and evangelism work with one another.

Charles Finney, a well-known nineteenth-century evangelist and leader in the Second Great Awakening, advocated that prayer influences God and affects the one who prays. He wrote,

There are two goals necessary for a revival; one to influence men, the other to influence God. The truth is employed to influence men, and prayer to move God. When I speak of moving God, I do not mean that God's mind is changed by prayer or that His disposition or character is changed. Prayer produces such a change in us that God is completely consistent with His nature when He answers our prayers.¹

Theologians have argued over the relationship between the sovereignty of God and humanity's response to the gospel for centuries. Some stress the freedom of the will of individuals while others stress the sovereignty of the will of God. Some people question the role of prayer in evangelism. They question, if a response to the gospel is entirely based on free will, then how could prayer have any effect? If God has chosen the elect prior to creation, then how could prayer have any effect? The role of God in evangelism drives how Christians should pray about evangelism. In an article about the link between prayer and evangelism, C. Samuel Storms addresses the question from a reformed perspective, affirming the sovereignty of God in salvation: "But if divine sovereignty is true, how should it influence the way we pray and preach? Indeed, if

¹Charles Finney, *How to Experience Revival* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1984), 43.

divine sovereignty is true, should we do either? Is the sovereignty of God a disincentive to evangelism?”²

Jim Cymbala, pastor of the Brooklyn Tabernacle, known as a center of prayer, writes, “God’s plan for the local church has always centered in evangelism.”³ Cymbala added, “An evangelistic focus, of course, would force us back to serious prayer and emphasis on the simple gospel of Jesus Christ.”⁴

This chapter reviews three historical figures that are known for their evangelistic efforts, but were also men of deep prayer: Jonathan Edwards, Charles Spurgeon, and E. M. Bounds. These men were deeply concerned over the spiritual conditions of the society around them. They responded with the gospel of Christ but with the wholehearted dependence on God through prayer. They differed in their theology of the role of free will in salvation, but they were united in their view of the necessity and efficacy of prayer in evangelism. The chapter includes a brief biography of each man, his theology with respect to prayer and evangelism, and any practical instruction for prayer and evangelism. The chapter will conclude with a brief review of the thoughts of some contemporary church growth strategists.

Jonathan Edwards

James Eckman describes the spiritual situation in colonial America prior to the First Great Awakening:

By the eighteenth century, it was clear that the church needed renewal. There was an acute shortage of spiritual leadership in the churches, and few opportunities for adequate ministerial training existed in America. In addition, the reordering of the political relationships with the British Empire caused an unsettledness among many colonials. Finally, the second and third generations that now inhabited the American colonies has lost the original vision that had sent their forefather to the New World.

²C. Samuel Storms, “Prayer and Evangelism under God’s Sovereignty,” in *Still Sovereign: Contemporary Perspectives on Election, Foreknowledge, and Grace* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 307.

³Jim Cymbala, *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 179.

⁴Ibid.

God in His grace, therefore, sent a revival to His church. That revival is usually called the First Great Awakening.⁵

Jonathan Edwards was a central figure in the First Great Awakening.

Additionally, he was the leading theologian in the American colonies. His commitment to leading people to have a personal experience of conversion by the conviction of sin and divine forgiveness helped establish the pattern of evangelism that would shape North American Christianity.⁶

Edwards' Life

Jonathan Edwards was born in 1703 in Connecticut to a family of preachers. His father, Timothy Edwards, was the pastor of the Congregational Church of Windsor Farms, Connecticut, for sixty-three years. His mother was the daughter of Solomon Stoddard, who pastored the Congregational Church of Northampton, Massachusetts, for fifty-seven years.⁷ Solomon Stoddard was known as the “pope of the Connecticut valley.”⁸

As a child, Edwards was primarily schooled at home. He began studying Latin at the age of six and, by the time he was thirteen, he had a working knowledge of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. He entered Yale College (then known as the Collegiate School) one month before his thirteenth birthday and graduated four years later at the top of his class.⁹ Edwards' years at Yale occurred during a time of transition for the school. The trustees voted to move the college from Saybrook to New Haven in the fall of 1716. Two

⁵James P. Eckman, *Exploring Church History* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002), 84.

⁶Justo Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity* (Peabody, MA: Prince Press, 1999), 2:228-230.

⁷Philip Schaff, “Edwards, Jonathan (The Elder),” in *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1953), <http://www.ccel.org/ccel.schaff/encyc04> (accessed November 6, 2012).

⁸William Wainwright, “Jonathan Edwards,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2012 winter ed., ed. Edward N. Zalta, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2012/entries/edwards> (accessed November 27, 2012).

⁹Ibid.

dissenting trustees formed a splinter-group of tutors and students at Wethersfield. Edwards began his studies at New Haven but joined the Wethersfield group a month later. Both groups joined together in New Haven in time for Edwards' senior year, with his graduation occurring in 1720.¹⁰ He remained at New Haven for graduate school through 1722.¹¹

The curricula of Yale and Harvard were similar, but the Yale library lagged behind Harvard's acquisition of the works of more modern scholars. Wallace E. Anderson comments on the differences between Harvard and Yale,

By comparison, the intellectual diet that Edwards' tutors had received at the Collegiate School was apparently much more limited. Benjamin Lord, a classmate of tutors Smith and Johnson, later recalled studying Tully and Virgil, the Greek Testament and the Psalms in Hebrew, the logics of Ramus, Burgersdijck, and Hereboord, the rudiments of mathematics, and natural philosophy from a manuscript textbook by Abraham Pierson, the first rector of the college.¹²

Apparently the Yale students had not received exposure to the work of Rene Descartes from the previous century or even of Nicolaus Copernicus from the sixteenth century. Copernicus has championed the shift in the understanding of the solar system from the Ptolemaic earth-centered model to a sun-centered model. In reference to studies in astronomy, Anderson reports, "The Ptolemaic system was hitherto as much believed as the scriptures."¹³

Samuel Johnson graduated from Yale the same year that Edwards began his studies there and then became one of the Yale tutors. E. Edwards Beardsley writes concerning Johnson's experiences,

¹⁰George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), xiii.

¹¹Wallace E. Anderson, Editor's Note to "Scientific and Philosophical Writings" by Jonathan Edwards, in *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 6, ed. Wallace E. Anderson (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, n.d.), <http://edwards.yale.edu/research/browse> (accessed June 2, 2013).

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

The tutor in the department of mathematics and mental and moral philosophy, was Phineas Fisk, and his instructions, like those of his colleague in the classics, had a limited range, and were confined to the imperfect systems not yet brushed away by the scientific discoveries of Descartes, Boyle, Locke, and Newton. When Johnson graduated in 1714, something had been heard of these great names, as well as of a new philosophy that was attracting attention in England, but the young men were cautioned against receiving it, and told that it would corrupt the pure religion of the country and bring in another system of divinity.¹⁴

A new library for Yale opened in 1718 with an enlarged collection of books donated by Jeremiah Dummer. The new volumes contained the works of Robert Boyle, Rene Descartes, Henry More, John Locke, and Isaac Newton. Yale became the first college in America to teach Locke and Newton.¹⁵

Edwards served as pastor of congregations in New York and Connecticut then returned to Yale to complete his Master of Arts degree. In 1726, at the age of twenty-three, Edwards accepted a call to serve at his grandfather's church as assistant pastor.¹⁶ The church intended for Edwards to eventually succeed Solomon Stoddard While Edwards was at Northampton, the church experienced a revival in 1734-35 which Edwards labeled a "great awakening." This revival was limited to the immediate area of Northampton. A second revival occurred in 1740-41 that spread throughout New England. This second revival is commonly referred to as the Great Awakening.¹⁷

Edwards served at Northampton for twenty-four years. He succeeded his grandfather as pastor when Stoddard died in 1729.¹⁸ He disagreed with his grandfather's policy of serving the Lord's Supper to the unconverted and baptizing the children of

¹⁴E. Edwards Beardsley, *Life and Correspondence of Samuel Johnson D.D.: Missionary of the Church of England in Connecticut, and First President of King's College, New York* (New York: Hurd & Houghton, 1874), 5.

¹⁵Anderson, Editor's Note to "Scientific and Philosophical Writings."

¹⁶Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 110.

¹⁷Schaff, "Edwards, Jonathan (The Elder)."

¹⁸Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 124.

those who did not show evidence of regeneration.¹⁹ His position led to conflict with many of the people of Northampton. A council of representatives of ten churches met and voted to dismiss Edwards as pastor of Northampton with a margin of one vote. His own church was asked to provide an input to the council, but only twenty-three of the 230 males who were eligible to cast a ballot voted in Edwards' favor.²⁰ He moved to Stockbridge, Massachusetts where he pastored a small church and supervised a boarding school for Housatonic Indian boys. In 1757, the College of New Jersey (now Princeton) asked Edwards to serve as president of the college. He accepted, but died five weeks after his installation from a smallpox inoculation.²¹

Edwards' Theology

Edwards came from a Puritan background and was a staunch Calvinist. He approached theology with faith, but also with a rational philosophy like many of those from the eighteenth century Enlightenment.²² Unlike some of his peers, he never elevated human reason beyond God's revelation. Additionally, he never saw a contradiction between the two. Bruce Davidson advocates that "Edwards is considered by many to be one of the greatest philosophical minds that the English-speaking world has ever produced."²³ Perry Miller describes him as "the greatest philosopher-theologian yet to grace the American scene."²⁴ E. Brooks Holifield writes of Edwards, "no other

¹⁹Ibid., 354.

²⁰Ibid., 360-361.

²¹Wainwright, "Jonathan Edwards."

²²Bruce W. Davidson, "Reasonable Damnation: How Jonathan Edwards Argued for the Rationality of Hell," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 38 (1995): 48.

²³Ibid., 47.

²⁴Perry Miller, General Editor's Note to "Freedom of the Will" by Jonathan Edwards, in *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 1, ed. Paul Ramsey (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, n.d.), v, <http://edwards.yale.edu/research/browse> (accessed November 28, 2012).

theologian in America would equal him in intellectual depth or enduring influence of generations of successors.”²⁵

Edwards recognized that some biblical truths seemed difficult to resolve together. He also admitted the limitations of human reason. Holifield explains, “Theology for Edwards remained the highest expression of rationality, though he also thought that it offered the clearest insights into reason’s limits.”²⁶ Edwards chose to subordinate the finite wisdom of people to the infinite wisdom of God and his revealed truth in the Bible.²⁷

The new science and new philosophy of the late seventeenth century influenced Edwards. Anderson cites the correlation between Edwards’ discussion of metaphysical materialism with that of Henry More.²⁸ Edwards wrote in the opening paragraph of his work, “Of Atoms,” “All bodies whatsoever, except atoms themselves, must of absolute necessity be composed of atoms, or of bodies that are indiscerpible, that cannot be made less, or whose parts cannot by any finite power whatsoever, be separated one from another.”²⁹ Paul Copan contends that the term “indiscerpible” came directly from Henry More’s *Immortality of the Soul*.³⁰

In his paper, “Of Being,” Edwards discussed the nature of space: “And it is self-evident, I believe, to every man, that space is necessary, eternal, infinite and

²⁵E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 102.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 103.

²⁷Helen Peter Westra, “Jonathan Edwards and What Reason Teaches,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 34 (1991): 497.

²⁸Anderson, Editor’s Note to “Scientific and Philosophical Writings.”

²⁹Jonathan Edwards, “Of Atoms,” in “Scientific and Philosophical Writings,” in *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 6, ed. Wallace E. Anderson (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1714), <http://edwards.yale.edu/research/browse> (accessed June 2, 2013).

³⁰Paul Copan, “Jonathan Edwards’s Philosophical Influences: Lockean or Malebranchean?,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44 (2001):122.

omnipresent. But I had as good speak plain: I have already said as much as that space is God.”³¹ Anderson argues that this view of space reflects Henry More’s influence on Edwards.³² Jasper Reid agrees with the assessment that Edwards’ thinking about space in “Of Being” aligned with More.³³ Reid advocates that Edwards shifted his view of space and God over time. Later in life, Edwards migrated from a concept of absolute space with attributes which could only be attributed to God to a rejection of absolute space such as that advocated by Leibniz.³⁴ Marsden explains that while Edwards was influenced by the great thinkers of his time, his understanding of God and the universe was firmly rooted in the sovereignty of God over creation.³⁵ Edwards wrote in “The Miscellanies,”

So the infiniteness of God consists in his perfect comprehension of all things and the extendedness of his operation equally to all places. God is present nowhere any otherwise than the soul is in the body or brain, and he is present everywhere as the soul is in the body. We ought to conceive of God as being omnipotence, perfect knowledge and perfect love; and not extended any otherwise than as power, knowledge and love are extended; and not as if it was a sort of unknown thing that we call substance, that is extended.³⁶

Edwards reiterated his rejection of the concept of absolute space in his rebuttal of the Arminian view of free will in “Freedom of the Will:”

Which notion of absolute and infinite space is doubtless as unreasonable, as that now mentioned, of absolute and infinite duration. 'Tis as improper, to imagine that the immensity and omnipresence of God is distinguished by a series of miles and leagues, one beyond another; as that the infinite duration of God is distinguished by months and years, one after another. A diversity and order of distinct parts, limited

³¹Jonathan Edwards, “Of Being,” in “Scientific and Philosophical Writings,” in *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 6, ed. Wallace E. Anderson (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1714), <http://edwards.yale.edu/research/browse> (accessed June 2, 2013).

³²Anderson, Editor’s Note to “Scientific and Philosophical Writings.”

³³Jasper Reid, “Jonathan Edwards on Space and God,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 41 (2003): 391.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 394.

³⁵Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 76.

³⁶Jonathan Edwards, “The Miscellanies,” no. 194, in *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 13, ed. Harry S. Stout (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1722), <http://edwards.yale.edu/research/browse> (accessed June 1, 2013).

by certain periods, is as conceivable, and does as naturally obtrude itself on our imagination, in one case as the other; and there is equal reason in each case, to suppose that our imagination deceives us. 'Tis equally improper, to talk of months and years of the divine existence, and mile-squares of deity.³⁷

Edwards' view of God drove his concept of sovereignty and God's role in salvation. His conclusion to "Freedom of the Will" included a defense of the points of Calvinism. He began with a discussion of total depravity:

The things which have been said, obviate some of the chief objections of Arminians against the Calvinistic doctrine of the total depravity and corruption of man's nature, whereby his heart is wholly under the power of sin, and he is utterly unable, without the interposition of sovereign grace, savingly to love God, believe in Christ, or do anything that is truly good and acceptable in God's sight.³⁸

He addressed the Arminian objection to the Calvinistic doctrine of irresistible grace:

The things which have been observed, do also take off the main objections of Arminians against the doctrine of efficacious grace; and at the same time, prove the grace of God in a sinner's conversion (if there be any grace or divine influence in the affair) to be efficacious, yea, and irresistible too, if by irresistible is meant, that which is attended with a moral necessity, which it is impossible should ever be violated by any resistance.³⁹

He continued with a defense of unconditional election: "The things which have been said, do likewise answer the chief objections against the doctrine of God's universal and absolute decree, and afford infallible proof of that doctrine; and of the doctrine of absolute, eternal, personal election in particular."⁴⁰

Edwards included a discussion of unconditional election:

From these things it will inevitably follow, that however Christ in some sense may be said to die for all, and to redeem all visible Christians, yea, the whole world by his death; yet there must be something particular in the design of his death, with

³⁷Jonathan Edwards, "Freedom of the Will," Part 4 Section 8, in *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 1, ed. Paul Ramsey (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1754), <http://edwards.yale.edu/research/browse> (accessed June 1, 2013).

³⁸Jonathan Edwards, "Freedom of the Will," Conclusion, in *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 1, ed. Paul Ramsey (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1754), <http://edwards.yale.edu/research/browse> (accessed June 1, 2013).

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid.

respect to such as he intended should actually be saved thereby. As appears by what has been now shown, God has the actual salvation or redemption of a certain number in his proper absolute design, and of a certain number only; and therefore such a design only can be prosecuted in anything God does, in order to the salvation of men.⁴¹

He ended the section with a defense of the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints: “By the things which have been proved, are obviated some of the main objections against the doctrine of the infallible and necessary perseverance of saints, and some of the main foundations of this doctrine are established.”⁴²

John Locke was the leading British philosopher of the late seventeenth century.⁴³ His writings were some of the new additions to the Yale library in 1718. His empiricism differed from the epistemology of the rationalism espoused by Descartes and Leibniz. The rationalists claimed that some concepts and knowledge are gained independent of sense experience while Locke argued that all concepts and knowledge derive from sense experience.⁴⁴ His *Essay on Human Understanding* presented his theory of knowledge.

Samuel Hopkins, who studied under Edwards and lived in his home for eight months, claimed that Locke’s work has significantly influenced Edwards.⁴⁵ He recorded in his biography of Edwards,

In his second year at college, and thirteenth of his age, he read Locke on the human understanding, with great delight and profit. His uncommon genius, by which he was, as it were by nature, form’d for closeness of thought and deep penetration, now began to exercise and discover itself. Taking the book into his hand, upon some occasion, not long before his death, he said to some of his select friends, who were then with him. That he was beyond expression exertain’d and pleas’d with it, when

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Justo Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, 2:189.

⁴⁴Peter Markie, “Rationalism vs. Empiricism,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2013 spring ed., ed. Edward N. Zalta, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spring2013/entries/rationalism-empiricism> (accessed June 2, 2013).

⁴⁵Samuel Hopkins, *The Works of Samuel Hopkins, D. D.* (Boston: Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1854), 1:19-20.

he read it in his youth at college; that he was as much engaged, and had more satisfaction and pleasure in studying it, than the most greedy miser in gathering handfuls of silver and gold from some new discovered treasure.⁴⁶

Perry Miller argues that Locke's philosophy had great influence on Edwards.⁴⁷

Paul Copan disagrees with the level of that influence. He asserts that Locke was merely one of many influences.⁴⁸ Paul Helm writes, "It is too much to say that his philosophy was Locke-inspired; he draws on arguments from 'the new way of ideas' only when these serve his wider aims."⁴⁹

Isaac Newton's description of how gravity operates without attempting to explain why it works impacted Edwards.⁵⁰ He applied similar thinking in his refutation of Arminian thought with respect to faith and salvation. He did not have to explain how it worked, only the fact of it working. W. Glyn Evans explains the traditional Puritan thinking, "The earlier Puritans, including Solomon Stoddard, had preached that when a man expressed faith in Christ, this involved God on the basis of His promises and, in a sense, forced God to follow through and save the person. Thus faith was a cause of salvation."⁵¹

Edwards advocated that faith is the effect of salvation not the cause. Faith in people's hearts is caused by God through his grace. Salvation is purely a work of God. Salvation depends only on God's sovereignty apart from any human activity.⁵² His

⁴⁶Samuel Hopkins, *The Life and Character of the Late Reverend Mr. Jonathan Edwards, President of the College of New Jersey: together with a number of his sermons on various important subjects* (Boston: S. Kneeland, 1765), 3-4.

⁴⁷Perry Miller, *Jonathan Edwards* (Toronto: William Sloane Associates, 1949), xi.

⁴⁸Copan, "Jonathan Edwards's Philosophical Influences."

⁴⁹Paul Helm, "John Locke and Jonathan Edwards: A Reconsideration," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 7 (1969): 51.

⁵⁰Ryan D. Tweney, "Jonathan Edwards and Determinism," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 33 (1997): 365.

⁵¹W. Glyn Evans, "Jonathan Edwards – Puritan Paradox," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 124 (1967): 60.

⁵²Samuel T. Logan Jr., "The Doctrine of Justification in the Theology of Jonathan Edwards," *Westminster Theological Journal* 46 (1984): 36.

sermon on Romans 9:18 was a defense of God's sovereignty in the salvation of people.⁵³ His theology was not fatalistic, but reflected confidence in God's plan. The success of evangelism is not dependent on man, but God. The gospel is the means used by God for salvation. He said,

According to the divine appointment, salvation is bestowed in connection with the means of grace. God may sometimes make use of very unlikely means, and bestow salvation on men who are under very great disadvantages; but he does not bestow grace wholly without any means. But God exercises his sovereignty in bestowing those means. All mankind are by nature in like circumstances towards God. Yet God greatly distinguishes some from others by the means and advantages which he bestows upon them.⁵⁴

The dependency on God for the salvation of people drives Christians to prayer. Edwards wrote, "Hence we learn how absolutely we are dependent on God in this great matter of the eternal salvation of our souls. We are dependent not only on his wisdom to contrive a way to accomplish it, and on his power to bring it to pass, but we are dependent on his mere will and pleasure in the affair."⁵⁵

Edwards' Instructions for Evangelism and Prayer

Since salvation is an act of God, prayer for the advancement of the gospel is appropriate. Edwards encouraged people to pray for the lost to experience conversion. The form of his prayers was generally asking God to pour out his Spirit on the people.

Edwards called people to pray for the continuation of the revival which they had experienced. He set a specific date for prayer and invited other groups of believers to participate in the effort. He wrote,

Some Christian Societies in this Place who have of late observed, with no small spiritual Joy, the Outpourings of the Spirit from on High on several Corners of this

⁵³Jonathan Edwards, "God's Sovereignty in the Salvation of Men," in *Select Sermons of Jonathan Edwards* (Grand Rapids: Christian Classic Ethereal Library, n.d.), <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/gssm.html> (accessed June 3, 2013).

⁵⁴Ibid., III.1.

⁵⁵Ibid., Application 1.

wither'd Church, in Sincerity and Truth, and who long for the Coming of his Kingdom, to set a Day apart for praising and giving Thanks to his Name, for any remarkable Waterings he has given to some Spots of his Vineyard; and to pray that these may only be the Fore-runners of a plentiful Shower, to refresh the Whole. That he would carry on this good and unexpected Work with such Power and Demonstration of the Spirit, that all Opposers, whether professed Enemies to his Kingdom, or mistaken Friends, may be at last obliged to own that it is the Doing of the Lord, and wonderful in their Eyes.⁵⁶

In a sermon in 1748, he exhorted people to “do those things that have a tendency to the revival of religion.”⁵⁷ He suggested that they join together in private societies for mutual assistance in seeking and serving God. Additionally, he advised them to maintain a religious discourse among themselves. These two actions should be directed to promote “extraordinary prayer for the revival of religion.”⁵⁸

In 1747, a group of Scottish ministers asked Christians in America to pray for a revival in Scotland.⁵⁹ In response, Edwards wrote “An Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of God’s People in Extraordinary Prayer for the Revival of Religion and the Advancement of Christ’s Kingdom on Earth.” Edwards points to Zechariah 8:20-22 as a picture of God’s people uniting in prayer for the advancement of the Kingdom of God:

In the text we have an account how this future glorious advancement of the church of God should be brought on, or introduced; viz., by great multitudes in different towns and countries taking up a joint resolution, and coming into an express and visible agreement, that they will, by united and extraordinary prayer, seek to God that he would come and manifest himself, and grant the tokens and fruits of his gracious presence.⁶⁰

⁵⁶Jonathan Edwards, “The Aftermath of the Awakening: The Humble Attempt,” in *Apocalyptic Writings*, in *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 5, ed. Stephen J. Stein (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1723), 037, <http://edwards.yale.edu/research/browse> (accessed November 28, 2012).

⁵⁷Jonathan Edwards, “Matt. 6:9-10,” in *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 67 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1749), no. 922, <http://edwards.yale.edu/research/browse> (accessed November 28, 2012).

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Jonathan Edwards, “An Humble Attempt,” in “Apocalyptic Writings,” in *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 5, ed. Stephen J. Stein (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1723), 311, <http://edwards.yale.edu/research/browse> (accessed June 5, 2013).

⁶⁰Ibid., 314.

Edwards derived six lessons from the Zechariah passage.

1. “The duty, with the attendance on which the glorious event foretold shall be brought on; viz., the duty of prayer.”⁶¹
2. “The good, that shall be sought by prayer; which is God himself.”⁶²
3. “We may observe who they are, that shall be united in thus seeking the Lord of Hosts: “the inhabitants of many cities,” and of many countries, “yea, many people, and strong nations”; great multitudes in different parts of the world shall conspire in this business.”⁶³
4. “We may observe the mode of their union in this duty. Tis a visible union, an union by explicit agreement, a joint resolution declared by one to another, come into by being first proposed by some, and readily and expressly fallen in with by others.”⁶⁴
5. “We may observe the manner of prayer agreed on, or the manner in which they agree to engage in and perform the duty. “Let us go speedily to pray.”⁶⁵
6. We may learn from the tenor of this prophecy, together with the context, that this union in such prayer is foretold as a becoming and happy thing, and that which would be acceptable to God, and attended with glorious success.⁶⁶

In his conclusion to “An Humble Attempt,” Edwards restates his contention that all Christians are responsible to pray for the spread of the gospel.

And now, upon the whole, I desire every serious Christian, that may read this discourse, calmly and deliberately to consider whether he can excuse himself from complying with what has been proposed to us and requested of us, by those ministers of Christ in Scotland, that are the authors of the late Memorial. God has stirred up a part of his church in a distant part of the world, to be in an extraordinary manner seeking and crying to him, that he would appear to favor Zion, as he has promised. And they are applying themselves to us, to join with them; and make that very proposal to us, that is spoken of in my text, and in like manner and circumstances. The members of one church, in one country, are coming to others, in other distant countries, saying, "Let us go speedily and constantly to pray before the

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid., 315.

⁶³Ibid., 317.

⁶⁴Ibid., 318

⁶⁵Ibid., 319.

⁶⁶Ibid., 320.

Lord, and to seek the Lord of Hosts" [Zechariah 8:21]. Will it not become us readily to say, "I will go also?" What these servants of Christ ask of us, is not silver or gold, or any of our outward substance, or that we would put ourselves to any cost, or do anything that will be likely to expose us to any remarkable trouble, difficulty or suffering in our outward interest; but only that we would help together with them, by our prayers to God, for the greatest mercy in the world; and that a mercy which as much concerns us as them; for the glory of their Lord and ours, for the great advancement of our common interest and happiness, and the happiness of our fellow creatures through all nations; a mercy, which, at this day especially, there is great need of; a mercy, which we in this land do stand in particular need of; a mercy, which the Word of God requires us to make the subject matter of our prayers, above all other mercies, and gives us more encouragement to pray earnestly and unitedly to him for, than any other mercy; and a mercy, which the providence of God towards the world of mankind, at this day, does loudly call the people of God to pray for.⁶⁷

Edwards wrote that to neglect to pray for the revival would be sin. "And therefore I desire it may be considered, whether we shall not really sin against God, in refusing to comply with their proposal and request, or in neglecting it, and turning it by, with but little notice and attention; therein disregarding that which is truly a call of God to us."⁶⁸

Most of Edwards' calls to prayer for evangelism were for God to pour out his Spirit in the form of revival. In a few instances, Edwards referred to prayer for specific groups of people to experience salvation. He argued in a pamphlet written to explain his disagreement with his grandfather over the Lord's Supper that parents should pray fervently for the conversion of their children.⁶⁹ In his biography of missionary David Brainerd, Edwards told of Brainerd praying for the salvation of the Delaware Indian tribe to whom he was preaching.⁷⁰

⁶⁷Ibid., 432.

⁶⁸Ibid., 433.

⁶⁹Jonathan Edwards, "An Humble Inquiry into the Rules of the Word of God, Concerning the Qualifications Requisite to a Complete Standing and Full Communion in the Visible Christian Church," in "Ecclesiastical Writings," in *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 12, ed. David D. Hall (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1737), 317, <http://edwards.yale.edu/research/browse> (accessed November 28, 2012).

⁷⁰Jonathan Edwards, "The Life of David Brainerd," in *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 7, ed. Norman Pettit (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1749), part VI, 254, <http://edwards.yale.edu/research/browse> (accessed November 28, 2012).

Edwards encouraged prayer for the conversion of sinners in a sermon in 1734,

This may encourage, for there are the more to pray for the conversion of others. When persons themselves are converted, they have a longing desire for the conversion of others; they don't desire to have the benefit only themselves, to be above others in it. They desire others should share with them, and will pray for it. And this may be a just encouragement, for we are told, in James 5:16, that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."⁷¹

Edwards held a strong belief in the sovereignty of God in the salvation of sinners. He recognized the tension between man's role and God's role in evangelism, but accepted the truth of God's Word. He faithfully proclaimed the gospel to all with the conviction that God would save some. He prayed tirelessly for the spread of the gospel.

Charles Spurgeon

Alvin Reid writes, "During the latter half of the nineteenth century in England, Charles Spurgeon led in a period of continuous revival. Spurgeon (1834-92), the 'prince of preachers,' witnessed perpetual revival for many years while pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London. He serves as a model for pastors of one who walked in revival in his personal life, and therefore whose influence far transcended his own impressive abilities."⁷²

Spurgeon's Life

Charles Haddon Spurgeon was born on June 19, 1834, in Kelvedon, Essex, to a family which for generations had a history of association with churches outside of the Church of England. His father was a clerk in a coal yard but also served as an honorary pastor at an independent church where he preached a Calvinistic theology. Due to financial pressures on his family, Spurgeon's parents sent him to live with his

⁷¹Jonathan Edwards, "That We May Seek Him With Thee," in *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 49 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1734), 324, <http://edwards.yale.edu/research/browse> (accessed November 28, 2012).

⁷²Malcolm Charles E. Lawless, *Serving in Your Church Prayer Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 62.

grandparents for much of his childhood. His grandfather, James Spurgeon, served as the pastor at an independent church in Stambourne and resided in a large parsonage near the church.⁷³

While living in the parsonage with his grandparents, Spurgeon was exposed to many old Puritan books.⁷⁴ He first read *Pilgrims Progress* at age six and then over the course of his lifetime reread the book over one hundred times.⁷⁵ Spurgeon referred to the collection of old books as a “gold mine” and said that he was never happier then when he was with that collection.⁷⁶

In 1844, when Spurgeon was ten years old, Richard Knill, a visiting evangelist, stayed at the Stambourne parsonage. He interacted with Spurgeon over the course of three days. He prayed with the young boy several times and announced prior to his departure that Spurgeon would preach someday at the chapel of Rowland Hill (founder of Surrey Chapel in London) and he would preach to the largest congregations in the world.⁷⁷

Although Spurgeon grew up in the homes of pastors and regularly read the Bible and attended church services, he did not come to Christ until he was sixteen. One day, he could not get to his regular place of worship due to a snowstorm, so he attended a Primitive Methodist church. Because of the snow, the pastor was not there and only twelve to fifteen people were present. A layman gave the sermon from Isaiah 45:22. Spurgeon’s recollection of the sermon was that the man “was really stupid.” He did not

⁷³Duncan S. Ferguson, “The Bible and Protestant Orthodoxy: The Hermeneutics of Charles Spurgeon,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 25 (1982): 456.

⁷⁴Charles H. Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon’s Autobiography*, ed. his wife and his private secretary, vol. 1, chap. 3 (Database 2007 WORDsearch Corp.), Olive Tree BibleReader.

⁷⁵Eric W. Hayden, “Charles H. Spurgeon: Did You Know?” *Christian History and Biography* 29 (1991) <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ch/1991/issue29/2902.html> (accessed October 31, 2012).

⁷⁶Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon’s Autobiography*, vol. 1, chap. 3.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, chap. 5.

have anything to say beyond the biblical text and he did not even correctly pronounce the words he did use. The text of the sermon was, “Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth” (Isa 45:22, KJV). The layman challenged Spurgeon to look to Jesus Christ for salvation. Even though he had heard the gospel many times already, he believed that the Holy Spirit allowed him to really hear it for the first time and respond that day. That personal experience cemented within him the importance of clearly calling sinners to repentance.⁷⁸

Spurgeon attended various schools, finally studying at Cambridge. Although he was enrolled as a student, he was not eligible to receive a degree since he was a non-conformist (outside of the Church of England). While a student at Cambridge, he was asked by the director of the local preachers association to attend a small church’s Sunday evening service to provide support to a fellow student who was preaching for the first time. En route to the church, Spurgeon wished his companion well with his sermon. The student informed Spurgeon that he was not a preacher, he was going to the church to support Mr. Spurgeon, who he did not know, but was scheduled to preach. Committed to do what he could, Spurgeon delivered his first sermon in a church service at age sixteen.⁷⁹

Spurgeon’s ability as a preacher was immediately recognized and his fame spread as “the boy preacher of the fens.”⁸⁰ In 1852, he began the pastorate of a Baptist church, then in 1854, he was called to preach at the New Park Street Church in London. The church was in decline with only one hundred worshipers in attendance at his first service. By the end of his first year at New Park Street, the 1,200 seat auditorium was filled to capacity. A building project was completed on the Metropolitan Tabernacle in

⁷⁸Ibid., chap. 11.

⁷⁹Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon’s Autobiography*, vol. 1, chap. 19.

⁸⁰Ibid.

1861, with a seating capacity of 6,000. He remained at the church until his death in 1892.⁸¹

Spurgeon was a popular preacher and published his weekly sermons. In 1865, his sermons sold 25,000 copies every week. His collected sermons were published in sixty-three volumes and are the largest set of books by a single author in the history of Christianity. Historians estimate that Spurgeon preached to ten million people during his lifetime. Apart from the preachers in the Bible, he is the most widely read preacher ever.⁸²

Spurgeon was a central figure in three controversies during his ministry. The first was over what he saw as a diluted evangelicalism in the form of Arminianism. He received a great deal of criticism due to his preaching against Arminianism. Iain Murray describes the situation: “Spurgeon regarded Arminianism as popular because it served to approximate the gospel more to the thinking of the natural man; it bought the doctrine of the Scripture nearer to the mind of the world.”⁸³ The second controversy arose from a sermon he preached on baptismal regeneration. This sermon was his most widely circulated. In it he directly attacked the Church of England for its doctrine of baptism.⁸⁴ He declared, “Here is a professedly Protestant Church, which, every time its minister goes to the font, declares that every person there receiving baptism is there and then ‘regenerated and grafted into the body of Christ's Church.’”⁸⁵ At the close of his sermon

⁸¹Philip Schaff, “Spurgeon, Charles Haddon,” in *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1953), <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/encyc11> (accessed November 6, 2012).

⁸²Hayden, “Charles H. Spurgeon: Did You Know?”

⁸³Iain H. Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1966), 60.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 5.

⁸⁵Charles H. Spurgeon, “Baptismal Regeneration,” in *Spurgeon's Sermons*, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids: Christian Classic Ethereal Library, 1864), no. 573, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/spurgeon/sermons10.xvi.html> (accessed November 8, 2012).

he added, “Out of any system which teaches salvation by baptism must spring infidelity, an infidelity which the false Church already seems willing to nourish and foster beneath her wing.”⁸⁶

The third controversy arose from an anonymous article published in his monthly magazine *The Sword and the Trowel*. The article was written by Spurgeon’s friend Robert Shindler. In it he warned of spreading liberalism within the churches of England. Spurgeon was more concerned about Congregational churches than Baptist because higher criticism had taken deeper root within Congregationalism. Shindler called the problem a slippery slope or down-grade away from essential doctrines. The ensuing controversy resulted in Spurgeon’s withdraw from the Baptist Union.⁸⁷

Spurgeon was successful by all accounts. He preached in the largest church in the world. The attendance at the Metropolitan Tabernacle exceeded ten thousand people each Sunday. By 1899, over one hundred million copies of his sermons had been published in twenty-three languages.⁸⁸

Despite his numerical success, his true legacy is his commitment to the eternal truth of God’s Word. Spurgeon preached in 1887, “Long ago I ceased to count heads. Truth is usually in the minority in this evil world. I have faith in the Lord Jesus for myself, a faith burned into me as with a hot iron. I thank God, what I believe I shall believe, even if I believe it alone!”⁸⁹

Philip Schaff described Spurgeon in his encyclopedia in this way: “The figure of Spurgeon was a composite one. Methodist by conversion, Baptist by profession, he

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Mark Hopkins, “The Down-Grade Controversy,” *Christian History and Biography* 29 (1991) <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ch/1991/issue29/2931.html> (accessed October 31, 2012).

⁸⁸Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon*, 15.

⁸⁹Charles H. Spurgeon, “Behold the Lamb of God,” in *Spurgeon’s Sermons*, vol. 33 (Grand Rapids: Christian Classic Ethereal Library, 1887), no. 1987, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/spurgeon/sermons33.1.html> (accessed November 10, 2012).

was fundamentally Calvinistic by descent and is sometimes called ‘the last of the Puritans.’”⁹⁰

Spurgeon’s Theology

Spurgeon was a Calvinist, but he did not consider himself a follower of Calvin or any system of theology. Mark Hopkins describes his approach to theology as “biblical, unsystematic, and spiritual.”⁹¹ Newspaper editor William Nicoll called Spurgeon an evangelical mystic like John Bunyon.⁹² Spurgeon wrote, “If anyone should ask me what I mean by a Calvinist, I should reply, ‘He is one who says, “Salvation is of the Lord.”’”⁹³ He further explained, “It is a nickname to call it Calvinism; Calvinism is the gospel, and nothing else.”⁹⁴

Spurgeon looked to the Bible as his source of theology. He preached in a sermon on election,

It has been my earnest endeavor ever since I have preached the Word, never to keep back a single doctrine which I believe to be taught of God. It is time that we had done with the old and rusty systems that have so long curbed the freeness of religious speech. The Arminian trembles to go an inch beyond Arminius or Wesley, and many a Calvinist refers to John Gill or John Calvin, as any ultimate authority. It is time that the systems were broken up, and that there was sufficient grace in all our hearts to believe everything taught in God’s Word, whether it was taught by either of these men or not.⁹⁵

Spurgeon tried to bring together the biblical truths of human responsibility with the doctrine of election. By 1860, he abandoned the attempt to reconcile the two

⁹⁰Schaff, “Spurgeon, Charles Haddon.”

⁹¹Mark Hopkins, “What Did Spurgeon Believe?” *Christian History and Biography* 29 (1991) <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ch/1991/issue29/2928.html> (accessed October 31, 2012).

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon’s Autobiography*, vol. 1, chap. 16.

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵Charles H. Spurgeon, “Election and Holiness,” in *Spurgeon’s Sermons*, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Christian Classic Ethereal Library, 1860), no. 303, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/spurgeon/sermons06.xvii.html> (accessed November 10, 2012).

biblical teachings. He refused to jettison either truth, so he gave up the idea of a thoroughly systematic theology.⁹⁶ In a sermon on sovereign grace and humanity's responsibility, he said,

That God predestines, and that man is responsible, are two things that few can see. They are believed to be inconsistent and contradictory; but they are not. It is just the fault of our weak judgment. Two truths cannot be contradictory to each other. If, then, I find taught in one place that everything is fore-ordained, that is true; and if I find in another place that man is responsible for all his actions, that is true; and it is my folly that leads me to imagine that two truths can ever contradict each other. These two truths, I do not believe, can ever be welded into one upon any human anvil, but one they shall be in eternity: they are two lines that are so nearly parallel, that the mind that shall pursue them farthest, will never discover that they converge; but they do converge, and they will meet somewhere in eternity, close to the throne of God, whence all truth doth spring.⁹⁷

Spurgeon reconciled humanity's guilt as sinners with God's sovereignty in salvation by placing it beyond human comprehension. The two principles are true because they are revealed by God in his Word. He believed that the Bible clearly revealed God's sovereignty over everything, but the Bible also clearly held people responsible for sin. He also reconciled the role of people in evangelism with God's sovereignty in salvation. He categorized evangelism as an instrument used by God in his divine plan. Spurgeon said in a sermon on conversion, "First, then, here is a great principle involved—a very important one—that of INSTRUMENTALITY. God has been pleased in his inscrutable wisdom and intelligence to work the conversion of others by instrumentality."⁹⁸ He then proceeded to explain the working of the instrument of evangelism:

Perhaps in one case out of a thousand, men are converted by the immediate agency of God—and so indeed are all in one sense,—but usually, in ninety-nine cases out of

⁹⁶Hopkins, "What Did Spurgeon Believe?"

⁹⁷Charles H. Spurgeon, "Sovereign Grace and Man's Responsibility," in *Spurgeon's Sermons*, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Christian Classic Ethereal Library, 1858), no. 207, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/spurgeon/sermons04.xliii.html> (accessed November 24, 2012).

⁹⁸Charles H. Spurgeon, "Conversion," in *Spurgeon's Sermons*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Christian Classic Ethereal Library, 1855), no. 45, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/spurgeon/sermons01.xlii.html> (accessed November 24, 2012).

a hundred, God is pleased to use the instrumentality of his ministering servants, of his Word, of Christian men, or some other means to bring us to the Saviour.⁹⁹

Just as evangelism is the means normally used by God for salvation, prayer is an instrument used by God. Spurgeon preached,

None ever believe in Jesus except those in whom God's arm has been revealed, for Jesus says, "No man can come to Me except the Father, which has sent Me, draws him." But, Brother ministers, in answer to prayer, that power has been revealed among His people and is with them still! His arm is not shortened that He cannot save, neither has He withdrawn it from His Church.¹⁰⁰

In another sermon, he said, "Prayer is the most essential thing in turning sinners from the error of their ways. Then intercessory prayer will fit you for becoming God's instrument."¹⁰¹

Spurgeon's Instructions for Evangelism and Prayer

Spurgeon believed in the power of prayer. His view of the sovereignty of God caused him to see God as involved in every aspect of life, especially in matters relating to salvation. He categorized the mission of Jesus as that of intercession on behalf of others. He wrote, "Jesus has sent his church into the world on the same errand upon which he himself came, and this mission includes intercession."¹⁰² He gave the illustration of the people of God having privileged access to the Lord. With that access is the responsibility to pray for others, he said,

Others have what is far better, namely, close fellowship with the King of kings, let them be sure to plead daily for the weak of the Lord's people, the doubting, the

⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰Charles H. Spurgeon, "Conversions Desired," in *Spurgeon's Sermons*, vol. 22 (Grand Rapids: Christian Classic Ethereal Library, 1876), no. 1282, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/spurgeon/sermons22.xii.html> (accessed November 24, 2012).

¹⁰¹Charles H. Spurgeon, "Intercessory Prayer," in *Spurgeon's Sermons*, vol. 18 (Grand Rapids: Christian Classic Ethereal Library, 1872), no. 1049, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/spurgeon/sermons18.xxii.html> (accessed November 10, 2012).

¹⁰²Charles H. Spurgeon, "Evening, November 13," in *Morning and Evening: Daily Readings* (Grand Rapids: Christian Classic Ethereal Library, n.d.), <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/spurgeon/morneve.november.d1113pm.html> (accessed November 10, 2012).

tempted, and the comfortless. It will redound to their honour if they make much intercession for those who are in darkness and dare not draw nigh unto the mercy seat.¹⁰³

Spurgeon advocated that all areas of life were subjects of prayer, but he specifically cited prayer for the church and prayer for the lost as primary points of emphasis for prayer. He preached, “We need a work of the Holy Spirit of a supernatural kind, putting power into the preaching of the Word, inspiring all believers with heavenly energy, and solemnly affecting the hearts of the careless, so that they turn to God and live.”¹⁰⁴ With respect to the church, he added that “we want a revival of old-fashioned doctrine... the Scriptures must be made the infallible foundation of all teaching... urgently do we need a revival of personal godliness.”¹⁰⁷

He called for parents to instruct their children in prayer. In regard to families, he said, “We deeply want a revival of domestic religion.”¹⁰⁸ He added, “Oh, Christian men and women, be thorough in what you do and know and teach! Let your families be trained in the fear of God and be yourselves ‘holiness unto the Lord’; so shall you stand like a rock amid the surging waves of error and ungodliness which rage around us.”¹⁰⁹

Spurgeon advocated both the practice of private prayer and public prayer meetings in the church. He said, “Brethren, we shall never see much change for the better in our churches till the prayer meeting occupies a higher place in the esteem of Christians.”¹¹⁰ In another sermon he declared, “The incense altar ought to be continually

¹⁰³Charles H. Spurgeon, “Evening, November 28,” in *Morning and Evening: Daily Readings* (Grand Rapids: Christian Classic Ethereal Library, n.d.), <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/spurgeon/morneve.november.d1128pm.html> (accessed November 10, 2012).

¹⁰⁴Charles H. Spurgeon, “The Kind of Revival We Need,” Internet Christian Library, <http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/history/spurgeon/web/ss-0005.html> (accessed October 29, 2012).

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

¹⁰⁸Ibid.

¹⁰⁹Ibid.

¹¹⁰Ibid.

smoking before the Lord God of Israel, not only in our public Prayer Meetings, but in our private supplications.”¹¹¹

Intercessory prayer should begin with the people closest to the believer. It should include everyone within one’s sphere of influence. Spurgeon wrote, “We should be continually pleading for our children, for our friends, for our neighbors, for those who are hopeful and those who seem hopeless.”¹¹² In a call for prayer he asked, “Are we ever without those who seek the conversion of relatives, the reclaiming of back-sliders, or the salvation of the depraved?”¹¹³

Intercessory prayer prompts us to engage in evangelism. Spurgeon said,

If I pray for a person's conversion, especially if I single out some individual, then my heart gets warmed into love to that individual as I think over his position and condition in prayer. Very well, that instructs me, and helps me to deal out the proper word to him when I come near to him. I am like a surgeon, who, coming to a case where he has to use the knife, knows exactly where every bone is and also what part has been injured. My prayer has given me a diagnosis of the man's state. I have looked it through and considered it in my petitions, and when I come practically to work upon him, I shall be wise, by the Spirit of God, to do the right thing and in the right way.¹¹⁴

Spurgeon believed in the sovereignty of God. He believed in prayer as an instrument of God’s plan. In prayer believers align with God’s purpose and plan. They also are changed through prayer and our evangelistic actions are influenced by prayer.

E. M. Bounds

Jim Cymbala wrote, “It won’t be until Christians are gathered for eternity in heaven that we will understand and appreciate the ministry of E. M. Bounds. Only then will the vast spiritual influence of his life of prayer be fully felt and I myself will be one

¹¹¹Charles H. Spurgeon, “The Sprinkling of the Blood of the Sacrifice,” in Spurgeon’s Sermons, vol. 30 (Grand Rapids: Christian Classic Ethereal Library, 1884), no. 1780, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/spurgeon/sermons30.xxiv.html> (accessed November 10, 2012).

¹¹²Spurgeon, “The Sprinkling of the Blood of the Sacrifice.”

¹¹³Spurgeon, “Evening, November 13.”

¹¹⁴Spurgeon, “Intercessory Prayer.”

of the vast multitudes who gather to express their gratitude.”¹¹⁵ Cymbala added, “No writer outside of Scripture ever said more in short powerful sentences than E. M. Bounds. In our present day of spiritual murkiness and bland sermonizing from the Bible, we need to listen again to the fiery clarity of this prophet of prayer.”¹¹⁶

Bounds’ Life

Edward McKendree Bounds was born August 15, 1835, in Shelby County, Missouri. His father, Thomas Bounds, was a businessman and Shelby County’s first county clerk. The family was active in the local Methodist Episcopal church and many believe that Bounds’ middle name was given in honor of the Western Methodist Conference Bishop William McKendree, who was primarily responsible for bringing Methodism to Missouri.¹¹⁷

In 1849, when Bounds was fourteen years old, his father died. A short time later, due to the news of gold discoveries in California, Bounds traveled with his brother and cousins to California to pursue gold mining. With little success in mining, Bounds and his brother returned home after four years, and he attended law school in Hannibal, Missouri. He rapidly completed his studies and was installed at age nineteen as the state’s youngest lawyer.¹¹⁸

Bounds practiced law in Hannibal for three years before he felt the call of God to enter ministry at a revival led by evangelist Smith Thomas. He closed his law practice and began two years of study at the Centenary Seminary of the First Methodist Episcopal Church South. Upon completion of his studies, in 1860, he received the endorsement of

¹¹⁵Jim Cymbala, foreword to *The Complete Works of E. M. Bounds on Prayer: Contemporary English* by E. M. Bounds (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 3.

¹¹⁶Ibid.

¹¹⁷Lyle Wesley Dorsett, *E. M. Bounds: Man of Prayer* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 13.

¹¹⁸Darrel D. King, *E. M. Bounds* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1998), 15-17.

the quarterly conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church South and was assigned a pastoral circuit where he served as the Civil War began.¹¹⁹

The war had a great impact on Bounds. A few months after he assumed the position as pastor of a church in Brunswick, Missouri, federal troops occupied the state. While Bounds did not support slavery, his denomination, Methodist Episcopal South, had split with the Methodist Episcopal Church over the issue of slavery and was viewed as sympathetic to the Confederacy. The Union army arrested Bounds along with 250 others on suspicion of supporting the Confederacy. He could have won release by signing a pledge of allegiance to the United States and posting a \$500 bond, but he refused, as a matter of conscience, maintaining that as an American citizen, the government had no basis of this demand. He spent a year and a half in a federal prison in St. Louis, Missouri, as a prisoner but in fact ministered to a mix of criminals, Confederate sympathizers, and prisoners of war. During his time in prison, he functioned essentially as a Confederate chaplain.¹²⁰

Bounds witnessed abuses of the citizens of Missouri by the Union army. He conducted funerals for fellow townspeople killed by federal soldiers. Although he suffered inhumane conditions in transport as a prisoner and endured rough treatment in prison, he focused on the condition of those around him and acted as a spiritual guide and shepherd. The army transferred him to a prison in Memphis then released him and banished him from Missouri with the stipulation that he could not return until the conflict ended.¹²¹

Bounds traveled to Mississippi and joined the Confederate army as a chaplain for a regiment of Missouri volunteers. While most chaplains served in the rear

¹¹⁹Ibid., 19-22.

¹²⁰Dorset, *E. M. Bounds: Man of Prayer*, 19.

¹²¹Ibid., 20.

components of the army, far from actual battle, Bounds followed the example of a Catholic chaplain whom he had served alongside and worked in the front lines with soldiers engaged in combat. His unit moved to Vicksburg, Mississippi, where they defended the city for four months. Many of the Confederate chaplains fled the city as the siege began, fearing the eventual capture of the city. Bounds stayed, since he preached the sufficiency of Christ in the face of suffering. The Vicksburg defenders surrendered and Bounds was released after signing a pledge not to take up arms in the war.¹²²

Bounds was again in battle at Franklin, Tennessee, in November 1864. The Union force of thirty thousand outnumbered the eighteen thousand Confederates. The northern army soundly defeated the southerners. The Battle of Franklin was called, “the South’s darkest day.”¹²³ Bounds was captured and pressed into service carrying the wounded and burying the dead. He was released after signing a loyalty oath to the United States.

Bounds stayed in Franklin to minister to the citizens of the town and participate in the exhumation and reburial of almost 1500 Confederate soldiers. He served as a pastor at Franklin for two years. He enlisted several men who believed in the power of prayer to meet with him every Tuesday night. B. F. Hayes, who became the third president of Asbury College, was a boy at that time in Franklin. He recalled about Bounds and his prayer group, “They got on their knees together and prayed for revival - for themselves, the church, and the town. For over a year this faithful band called upon the Lord until God finally answered by fire. The revival just came down without any previous announcement or plan, and with the pastor sending for an evangelist to help him.”¹²⁴ Over the course of several weeks, about 150 people came to Christ.

¹²²King, *E. M. Bounds*, 42-47.

¹²³Dorset, *E. M. Bounds: Man of Prayer*, 23.

¹²⁴*Ibid.*, 28.

Bounds moved to Eufaula, Alabama, to pastor another church. He was concerned over the conflict, crime, and political corruption of the town. The church had not seen a person come to Christ in over two years. He started writing an editorial column for the local newspaper that spread to several other newspapers in the region.¹²⁵

Racial tensions ran high in the town. Bounds inserted himself between two groups of armed men on one occasion. He shocked the community by performing a wedding for two Negros. During his four years at Eufaula, the church grew from 72 adult members to 247.¹²⁶

Bounds returned to Missouri as the pastor at St. Paul's Methodist Church and saw much success. The district bishop moved him to the First Methodist Episcopal Church South to try and restore the church. First Church had turned inward with no evangelistic outreach. It was the church of the wealthy elite of the city. Bounds began to turn the attention of the church outward by abolishing the pew rental system in which the wealthy members sat in reserved seats. He succeeded in changing the attitude of the church and was allowed to return to St. Paul's where he served until he became the associate editor of the St. Louis Conference official newspaper, *The St. Louis Advocate*.¹²⁷

In his new position, Bounds engaged in a great deal of evangelistic preaching. After five years, Bounds moved to Nashville to become the associate editor of the *Christian Advocate*, the official newspaper for the denomination. Bounds used his office at the newspaper to combat the rise of liberalism in the Methodist Episcopal Church South. He urged prayer for revival.¹²⁸

¹²⁵King, *E. M. Bounds*, 77.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, 77-83.

¹²⁷*Ibid.*, 84-89.

¹²⁸Dorset, *E. M. Bounds*, 41.

In the 1890's, a debate arose within the Methodist Episcopal South denomination as to the legitimacy of the biblical office of evangelist. At the annual conference in 1894, the denomination took the position that there was no official office of evangelist. Bounds had believed that he was called to the office of evangelist in 1859. His ministry in the war and in churches had confirmed this call. Lyle Dorsett describes Bounds' response to the decision of the denomination:

In late May 1894, without fanfare or rancor, Bounds gave notice to both the editor and the bishop of his decision to take "voluntary location." In effect, to demonstrate how far he believed the church to be drifting from biblical guidelines, Bounds gave up his salary, benefits, and future pension. This was no modest protest considering that he was an evangelist who had responsibilities for a wife and five children. Furthermore, this sojourner and pilgrim owned no home and had virtually no material assets.¹²⁹

After his resignation, Bounds and his family moved to the home of his wife's parents in Georgia. He spent the rest of his life as an evangelist and a writer. He died on August 24, 1913.¹³⁰

Bounds' Theology

Bounds wrote extensively on the subject of prayer. He believed that prayer permeated all areas of life. It was the center of his theology. He wrote, "It must never be forgotten that almightily God rules this world. He is not an absentee God. His hand is always on the controls of human affairs. He is present everywhere in the concerns of time. 'His eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men' (Ps. 11:4). He rules the world just as He rules the church – through prayer."¹³¹

He believed that man naturally will not fully follow God's will unless God enables one to do so. He wrote, "We need divine aid to act brotherly, wisely, and nobly,

¹²⁹Ibid., 46.

¹³⁰Ibid., 47-60.

¹³¹E. M. Bounds, *The Weapon of Prayer* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1996), 7.

and to judge truly and charitably. God's help to do all these things in God's way is secured by prayer."¹³²

In Bounds' view, prayer is linked with the will of God. A person may cry out to God just as Jesus did in the Garden of Gethsemane prior to the crucifixion, but true prayer always shifts back to the will of God, and confesses, "Yet not as I will, but as You will (Matt 26:39)." Since God has revealed his will in the Scriptures, prayer must align with the Bible. He wrote,

But prayer in its usual uniform and deep current is conscious conformity to God's will, based upon the direct promise of God's Word, and under the illumination and application of the Holy Spirit. Nothing is surer than that the Word of God is the sure foundation of prayer. We pray just as we believe God's Word. Prayer is based directly and specifically upon God's revealed promise in Christ Jesus. It has no other ground upon which to base its plea. All else is shadowy, sandy, fickle. Not our feelings, not our merits, not our works, but God's promise is the basis of faith and the solid ground of prayer.¹³³

Salvation is based on the promises of God. The Bible is clear that salvation is promised to anyone who will believe. Those promises can be realized through prayer. Anyone who comes to Christ does so through prayer. Bounds wrote, "The praying sinner receives mercy because his prayer is grounded on the promise of pardon made by Him whose right it is to pardon guilty sinner. The penitent seeker after God obtains mercy because there is a definite promise of mercy to all who see the Lord in repentance and faith."¹³⁴

Prayer makes the plan of salvation work because God has obligated himself to answer prayer. It is God's will that the gospel spreads. He uses prayer in his plan of evangelism.¹³⁵ Bounds wrote, "Why must we pray for all people? Because God wills the salvation of all people. God's children on earth must link their prayers to God's will.

¹³²E. M. Bounds, *Possibilities in Prayer* (Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour, 2006), 11.

¹³³*Ibid.*, 23.

¹³⁴*Ibid.*, 35.

¹³⁵Bounds, *The Weapon of Prayer*, 21.

Prayer is meant to carry out the will of God. God's will is that all people would be saved¹³⁶

While prayer is aligned with the will of God and the promises of God, prayer moves God to do what he otherwise would not do. Prayer, according to Bounds,

lays its hand on Almighty God and moves Him to do what He would not otherwise do if prayer was not offered. It brings things to pass which would never otherwise occur. The story of prayer is the story of great achievements. Prayer is a wonderful power placed by almighty God in the hands of His saints, which may be used to accomplish great purposes and to achieve unusual results. Prayer reaches to everything, takes in all things great and small which are promised by God to the children of men. The only limits to prayer are the promises of God and His ability to fulfill those promises.¹³⁷

Every movement of the advancement of the gospel is linked to prayer.

Movements of God are created by prayer and inspired by prayer. These movements are so linked to prayer that prayer is a necessary condition for the movements of God.

Bounds assigns much power over God's plan to Christians. He claims that God's plan is hampered by lack of prayer. He maintains, "Little praying and poor praying have weakened Christ's power on earth, postponed the glorious results of His reign, and retired God from His sovereignty."¹³⁸

While Bounds considered prayer to be of great importance, he did not separate the power of prayer from God. He wrote, "it is not prayer itself that accomplishes things, but it is God working through it. Prayer is the instrument; God is the active agent. Prayer itself does not interfere in earth's affairs, but prayer moves God to intervene and do things."¹³⁹

¹³⁶Ibid., 68.

¹³⁷Bounds, *Possibilities in Prayer*, 39.

¹³⁸Bounds, *The Weapon of Prayer*, 24-25.

¹³⁹Ibid., 40.

Bounds' Instructions for Evangelism and Prayer

Bounds lived a life of evangelism. He believed that he was called to the biblical office of evangelist. He was also a man of prayer. He recognized the inseparable link between prayer and evangelism.

Toward the end of his life, he accepted fewer invitations to preach in order to devote more time to prayer. He rose each morning at four o'clock and prayed until seven o'clock. Dorset describes Bounds' prayer practices during the final decade of his life,

He felt God was calling him to a daily effort of prayer – what he termed the “Business of Prayerside.” Requiring daily intercession for the sanctification of preachers, revival of the church in North America, and the spread of holiness among professing Christians, this work of prayer consumed a minimum of three to four hours a day. Sometimes the venerable mystic would lie flat on his back and talk to God; but many hours were spent on his knees, or lying face down in a prone posture where he could be heard weeping for the conversion of sinners and sanctification of preachers.¹⁴⁰

Bounds' was keenly aware of the need for sinners to repent and turn to Christ. His friend Homer Hodge told of Bounds' habits,

We were constantly with him, in prayer and preaching, for eight precious years. Not a foolish word did we ever hear him utter. He was one of the most intense eagles of God that ever penetrated the spiritual ether. He could not brook delay in rising, or being late for dinner. He would go with me to street meetings often in Brooklyn and listen to the preaching and sing with us those beautiful songs of Wesley and Watts. He often reprimanded me for asking the unconverted to sing of Heaven. Said he: "They have no heart to sing, they do not know God, and God does not hear them. Quit asking sinners to sing the songs of Zion and the Lamb."¹⁴¹

Bounds practiced intercessory prayer for others and encouraged intercessory prayer. Since all areas of life fall within the realm of God's concern, all matters of each person's life should be areas of prayer. Bounds urged people to pray for their own needs and concerns. He placed a high importance on prayer for others. He wrote,

Prayer must be broad in its scope; it must plead for others. Intercession for others is the hallmark of all true prayer. When prayer is confined to self and to the sphere of one's personal needs, it dies by reason of its littleness, narrowness, and selfishness.

¹⁴⁰Dorsett, *E. M. Bounds*, 54.

¹⁴¹E. M. Bounds, *Heaven—A Place, A City, A Home*, Kindle, locs. 38-40.

Prayer must be broad and unselfish, or it will perish. Prayer is the soul of a person stirred to plead with God for others. In addition to being interested in the eternal interests of one's own soul, it must in its very nature, be concerned for the spiritual and eternal welfare of others. A man is most able to pray for himself when he has compassion and concern for others.¹⁴²

Prayer leads people to turn to the Bible and a love for the Bible drives people to prayer. To be diligent and effective in prayer, one must love the Bible. Bounds wrote,

Prayer invariably begets a love for the Word of God, and sets people to the reading of it. Prayer leads people to obey the Word of God, and puts into the heart which obeys a joy unspeakable. Praying people and the Bible-reading people are the same sort of folk. The God of the Bible and the God of prayer are one. God speaks to man in the Bible; man speaks to God in prayer. One reads the Bible to discover God's will; he prays in order that he may receive power to do that will. Bible-reading and prayer are the distinguishing traits of those who strive to know and please God.¹⁴³

Modern liberalism had been making gaining influence in the Methodist Church since the Civil War. Bounds watched the drift from fidelity to the Bible with concern. In 1890, Bounds wrote, "It is not new truth that the world needs, so much as the constant iteration of old truths, yet ever new truths, of the Bible."¹⁴⁴

The spread of the gospel is directly tied to the faithfulness of Christians praying for the spread of the gospel. Thus the success of the missionary outreach to the ends of the earth is tied to prayer. Missionaries are called through prayer and their efforts are empowered through prayer. Bounds wrote, "The trophies won by our Lord in heathen lands will be won by praying missionaries, not by professional workers in foreign lands. More especially will this success be won by saintly praying in the churches at home."¹⁴⁵ He also wrote,

If Christians prayed as Christians ought, with strong commanding faith, with earnestness and sincerity, men, God-called men, God-empowered men everywhere, would be all burning to go and spread the gospel worldwide. The Word of the Lord would run and be glorified as never know heretofore. The God-influenced men, the God-inspired men, the God-commissioned men, would go and kindle the flame of

¹⁴²Bounds, *The Weapon of Prayer*, 66-67.

¹⁴³E. M. Bounds, *The Necessity of Prayer* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2006), 122.

¹⁴⁴Dorset, *E. M. Bounds*, 41.

¹⁴⁵E. M. Bounds, *Essentials of Prayer* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1994), 131.

sacred fire for Christ, salvation, and heaven, everywhere in all nations, and soon all men would hear the glad tidings of salvation and have an opportunity to receive Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.¹⁴⁶

Just as prayer empowers and guides foreign missions, prayer leads to domestic revivals. Concerning revivals, Bounds wrote,

As God, from the beginning, has worked prominently through revivals, there can be no denial of the fact that revivals are a part of the divine plan. The kingdom of our Lord has been advanced in large measure by special seasons of gracious and rapid accomplishment of the work of conversion; and it may be inferred, therefore, that the means through which God has worked in other times will be employed in our time to produce similar results.¹⁴⁷

While he believed that revivals were part of God's plan for the spread of the gospel, he also believed that revivals would only occur when people cooperate with God in prayer. He wrote, "All the true revivals have been born in prayer. When God's people become so concerned about the state of religion that they lie on their faces day and night in earnest supplication, the blessing will be sure to fall."¹⁴⁸ He added, "It is the same all down the ages. Every revival of which we have any record has been bathed in prayer."¹⁴⁹

Just as the spread of the gospel is propelled through the effects of prayer, prayerlessness leads to the neglect of evangelism. When people become more concerned with the things of the world and less with the plan of God, prayer becomes less important. The concern for the eternity of the lost also loses significance. Thus, the practiced of evangelism suffers.¹⁵⁰

Engaging with God in prayer prompts people to become witnesses for God. Bounds wrote,

Men and women are needed for the great work of soul-saving, and they are commanded to go (Mark 16:15). It is no angelic or impersonal force that is needed.

¹⁴⁶Bounds, *Possibilities in Prayer*, 78.

¹⁴⁷E. M. Bounds, *Praying with Purpose* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1997), 152.

¹⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 158.

¹⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 159.

¹⁵⁰Bounds, *The Weapon of Prayer*, 54.

Human hearts baptized with the spirit of prayer must bear the burden of the message. Human tongues on fire as the result of earnest, persistent prayer must declare the Word of God to dying people.¹⁵¹

Bounds is best known today as a man of prayer and an advocate for prayer. He saw himself primarily as an evangelist. He saw an inextricable link between prayer and evangelism. In his view, prayer moves God to advance the gospel. Prayer moves people to engage in evangelism and aligns Christians with God's will.

Contemporary Church Growth Thinking

Many contemporary church growth writers advocate that true church growth is not just an increase in numbers within the church but an increase in disciples following Christ. Evangelism is the central mechanism of church growth.

Donald McGavran claims that the two preconditions of revivals or spiritual awakenings are prayer and dependency on the Bible. He admits that only God can bring about revival. It is a sovereign act of grace on his part. The Holy Spirit does respond to the earnest prayer of Christians seeking revival. McGavran notes, "Revivals in the churches of Europe and American were preceded by long years of careful reading of the Bible in homes and churches."¹⁵² He explains that turning to God in prayer and Bible study not only prompts God to act, but the interaction with God changes the lives of believers. He wrote, "When God grants revival to his people, the usual pattern is that holy living increases, fresh power is experienced, and the gospel is proclaimed with new fervency."¹⁵³

Thom Rainer has studied church growth in American churches. He reports a causal relationship between prayer and evangelistic growth. He found that churches which place a high emphasis on prayer have a much higher assimilation rate of new

¹⁵¹Ibid., 43.

¹⁵²Donald A. McGavran *Understanding Church Growth*, 3rd ed., ed. C. Peter Wagner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 136.

¹⁵³Ibid.

members.¹⁵⁴ In a study of churches that had experienced conversion growth at a rate well above average, he found organized revivals were used by many churches. Additionally, he found those churches who engaged in revivals reported a high reliance on corporate prayer.¹⁵⁵ Rainer discovered that churches that had endured a season of plateau or decline but then experienced sustained growth maintained foundations of devotion to Scripture and prayer.¹⁵⁶

Chuck Lawless advocates that prayer is one of the core purposes of the church along with worship, evangelism, discipleship, ministry and fellowship.¹⁵⁷ He specifically cites the relationship between prayer and evangelism. “The Bible is clear about the state of nonbelievers. They are held in the ‘dominion of darkness’ (Colossians 1:13).”¹⁵⁸ He adds, “No human power or intellect is strong enough to move them from darkness to light or from deception to truth. Only prayer can work these miracles.”¹⁵⁹

Lawless challenges churches to pray intentionally and strategically with focus and direction regarding evangelism. He states the need to pray for believers to be witnesses and to pray for God to change the hearts of nonbelievers.¹⁶⁰ He suggests, “If your church wants to pray evangelistically, begin by enlisting prayer partners to pray Ephesians 6:19-20 and Colossians 4:2-4 for each other.”¹⁶¹ He also writes, “Our research

¹⁵⁴Thom Rainer, *High Expectations: The Remarkable Secret for Keeping People in Your Church* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 25.

¹⁵⁵Thom Rainer, *Effective Evangelistic Churches: Successful Churches Reveal What Works and What Doesn't* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 33.

¹⁵⁶Thom Rainer, *Breakout Churches* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 173.

¹⁵⁷Chuck Lawless, *Disciplined Warriors: Growing Healthy Churches That are Equipped for Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002), 14.

¹⁵⁸Charles E. Lawless, *Serving in Your Church Prayer Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 62.

¹⁵⁹Ibid.

¹⁶⁰Ibid., 62-64.

¹⁶¹Ibid., 64.

at the Billy Graham School shows that evangelistic churches pray for lost persons by name, echoing the prayer of Paul in Romans 10:1 – ‘My heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.’¹⁶²

In their book, *Eating the Elephant: Leading the Established Church to Growth*, Rainer and Lawless together suggest seven applications for churches to advocate evangelistic prayer within their congregations.¹⁶³

1. Prayerwalk the community by intentionally walking through neighborhoods while praying about the people and their needs.
2. Offer prayer within the community by soliciting prayer needs.
3. Establish lighthouses of prayer within the community in which believers gather and pray for members of the community, care for them through ministry and share the gospel with them.
4. Pray for specific groups of people.
5. Pray for one another to be witnesses for Christ.
6. Pray for missionaries and unreached people groups.
7. Prayerfully guard against an inward focus.

Church strategists Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson encourage churches to pray for workers in the harvest of souls as Jesus commanded his disciples in Matthew 9:3-38.¹⁶⁴ They advise church leaders to lead the church to specifically pray for their community in order to grow the love of the people of the church for the community.¹⁶⁵ They note that in their study of churches which became more evangelistic, prayer increased in priority as part of the change. The transition began in increased emphasis on prayer in the lives of

¹⁶²Ibid., 65.

¹⁶³Thom Rainer and Chuck Lawless, *Eating the Elephant: Leading the Established Church to Growth* (Hanover, MA: Pinnacle, 2003), 93-97.

¹⁶⁴Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson, *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around and Yours Can Too* (Nashville: B&H, 2007), 40.

¹⁶⁵Ibid., 60.

the leadership of the churches then spread to an increased emphasis on prayer with the overall church.¹⁶⁶

While contemporary church growth strategists adapt their thinking to the context of the modern church, their foundational strategies to the advancement of God's kingdom are rooted in the centrality of evangelism and prayer for the local church. Evangelism is empowered by prayer and people who engage in evangelism are also people who pray.

Conclusion

Theologians have debated the details of how prayer works with evangelism, but the men surveyed in this chapter agree that prayer does work with evangelism. They maintain that prayer is essential for evangelism. God has established evangelism as his mechanism of spreading the message of the gospel. He is involved in the process of evangelism and uses prayer in that process.

Prayer aligns us with God and his purposes. The act and attitude of prayer connects us with God and orients our thinking and priorities to line up with God's plan. E. M. Bounds espoused that although man's natural inclination is to defy God, prayer aligns our wills with God's will.

God responds to our prayers. Opinions vary as to the degree of influence that prayer has upon God, but all agree that God does respond to prayer. Evangelism is his plan and evangelistic prayer is within his will. Evangelism is empowered through evangelistic prayer. Jonathan Edwards believed that the awakening experienced by the churches was wholly due to God's efforts and would only continue if willed by God. He campaigned for churches to fervently pray for revival. E. M. Bounds believed that God would not act unless his people prayed for the spread of the gospel.

¹⁶⁶Ibid., 69.

Prayer prompts us to engage in evangelism. Charles Spurgeon declared that the act of intercessory prayer prepares a person for evangelism and warms the heart to actually participate in evangelism. Thom Rainer and Chuck Lawless discovered empirically that people who pray evangelistically are more likely to engage in evangelism.

CHAPTER 4

ELEMENTS OF THE MINISTRY PROJECT

The purpose of the project was to increase the evangelistic effectiveness of the people of Oakland Baptist Church through intentional prayer. The challenge was to assess the evangelistic effectiveness of the church and engage the people in intentional prayer.

A questionnaire was administered before and after the project to assess the evangelistic effectiveness of the people. A sermon series and a Sunday School lesson series provided teaching of the nature and purpose of prayer with a specific application to evangelism.

I intended to cultivate a culture of prayer and evangelism by engaging the entire adult population of the church in a church-wide process of thinking and talking about prayer for an entire quarter. The Sunday School classes provided small groups for discussions and celebrations of growth in the area of prayer and evangelism. The Sunday School classes also provided an arena of mutual accountability for prayer and evangelistic practices.

The first goal was to increase the prayer life of the members of the church. I intended for them to increase the amount of praying and focus the content of their prayers on the issues which most matter to God. Specifically, I desired that they pray for the spread of the gospel. This goal was addressed though the teaching of the sermon series and Sunday School lessons.

The second goal was to identify lost people and intercede though evangelistic prayer. This goal was addressed through directly challenging people to pray for the lost in

the sermons and in Sunday School. Class leaders asked specifically each week if class members had engaged in prayer for lost people.

The third goal was to germinate evangelistic encounters. This goal is based on the assumption that church members who have been praying for the salvation of lost people in their own context will more likely engage in spiritual conversations with these lost people. This assumption was measured by Sunday School class leaders asking for reports on evangelistic encounters during the previous week.

The project start date was timed to occur coincidentally with the beginning of a Sunday School quarter due to logistics of literature ordering. Table 2 shows the flow of the sermon series and Sunday School lessons for the duration of the project.

Table 2. Sermon and Sunday School lessons

Week	Date	Sermon	Sunday School lesson
1	6/2	Prayer Transforms	Why Pray?
2	6/9	Pray in Faith	Prayer and Faith
3	6/16	Praise God in Prayer	Telling God "Thank You"
4	6/23	Ask God in Prayer	Asking God
5	6/30	Ask God for Direction	Asking God for Direction
6	7/7	Talk with God about Sin	Asking God for Forgiveness
7	7/14	Pray for Spiritual Deliverance	Asking God for Deliverance
8	7/21	Pray for One Another	Praying for One Another
9	7/28	Pray for the Kingdom of God	Praying for the Kingdom
10	8/4	Pray for the Lost	Praying for the Lost
11	8/11	Pray for the Church to Reach the Lost	Praying for the Church to Reach the Lost
12	8/18	Pray for the World	Praying for the World
13	8/25	Thinking About Prayer	Expect Answers to Prayer
14	9/1	The Power of a Praying Person	

Pre-Project Questionnaire

I developed a questionnaire to sample views and habits on prayer and evangelism. The purpose of the questionnaire was to determine the current habits of the adults of Oakland Baptist Church with respect to prayer and evangelism.

The questionnaire is in Appendix 1. The first part of the questionnaire asks participants to rate how much of their prayer time is devoted to various topics. The goal was to determine the degree of evangelistic prayer practiced by people.

The questionnaire asked participants to agree or disagree with a series of statements. The statements addressed prayer practices, attitudes about prayer, philosophy of prayer and evangelistic practices. The questionnaires were distributed to the adult Sunday School classes. Eighty completed surveys were received with 120 in attendance for the adult Sunday School. The results of the survey are in Table A1 in Appendix 1.

Sermon Series

I presented a fourteen-week sermon series titled Transforming Prayer. The overarching concept was that prayer transforms. It has two transformational aspects. Prayer transforms the individual who prays and prayer transforms the world. The outlines for each sermon are in Appendix 5.

The series was about prayer. I began with the general topic of prayer but moved into a focus on evangelistic prayer. I used the recurring theme of prayer as a heart-to-heart connection with God. A result of prayer is that our hearts will more closely align with God's heart and our prayers will align more with God's desires which include evangelism as a priority.

Introduction

The first two sermons provided an introduction to the series. This overview showed the path for the quarter.

Sermon 1: Prayer transforms. This sermon provided an overview of the series. It introduced the concept that prayer is transformational. Those who pray experience transformation. Prayer as a heart-to-heart connection with God results in the transformation of the world around us.

Sermon 2: Pray in faith. The Bible teaches that believers can expect God to provide that which is asked of him in prayer. Yet the Bible also gives examples where faithful followers of Christ do not receive what they asked for in prayer. This tension requires faith that God will do what is best in regard to God's plan.

Inward Transformation

Prayer is relational. It is based on a relationship with God and strengthens our relationship with God. True prayer is a heart-to-heart encounter with God. A direct encounter with God should result in change. Prayer changes the one praying.

This section of the sermon series focused on relating directly to God in prayer. Our relationship with God involves our recognition of who God is through praise. We also address our condition through confession of sin and thanksgiving for forgiveness and provision.

Sermon 3: Praise God in prayer. This sermon was a summary of the chapter titled "Praising" in the book *Prayer* by J. I. Packer and Carolyn Nystrom.¹ Praise is not heaping flattery on God hoping that it will somehow put us in his good graces. Rather, praise is the delight of recognizing who God is and celebrating our relationship with him.

Sermon 4: Ask God in prayer. Jesus gave instructions for prayer in the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 7:7-11 he used the example of a parent providing for

¹J. I. Packer and Carolyn Nystrom, *Prayer: Finding Our Way through Duty to Delight* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 97-119.

the needs of a child. The provision was based on the child asking and the desire to meet the true need. God will provide for our needs based on his love and his plan.

Sermon 5: Ask God for direction. God provides instruction for living in prayer. He tells us where to go and what to do. He even instructs us in the activity of praying.

Sermon 6: Talk with God about sin. Since prayer is relational, anything that damages our relationship with God is an impediment to prayer. Sin distances us from God and hampers our connection with God through prayer. Yet the mechanism to repair the relationship is itself prayer. We are to confess our sins to God in prayer.

Sermon 7: Pray for spiritual protection. Too often we view prayer like the intercom in a fast-food drive-through. A better image of prayer is a battlefield radio connecting us with headquarters and the rest of the troops. There is a spiritual battle underway and prayer is our connection with God who is directing our role in the struggle. Prayer is our avenue to ask for spiritual protection.

Outward Transformation

Prayer changes the world around us in that God uses prayer in accomplishing his plan. Prayer achieves results. Prayer strengthens the church and empowers evangelism.

This section of the sermon series addressed the role of prayer in the church and the global task of evangelism. It begins with a focus on relationships within the church and moves to a kingdom focus.

Sermon 8: Pray for one another. Jesus provided a model for praying for one another in his prayer recorded in John 17. While this prayer does not limit the topic of prayer for each other, it shows the main concerns of his heart particularly in light of his

impending execution. He focused on the unity of believers in carrying out the task of spreading the gospel.

Sermon 9: Pray for the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is not an abstract concept, but a reality for all believers. The Kingdom is God's priority and should be our priority as well. God's Kingdom is a topic of prayer.

Sermon 10: Pray for the lost. The focus of this sermon was to challenge individuals to identify lost people that they know and engage in evangelistic prayer on their behalf. Successful evangelism requires that we understand the necessity of sharing the gospel and have a heart of those who need to hear the gospel.

Sermon 11: Pray for the church to reach the lost. The church must make evangelism a priority. That change will only occur through prayer. Jesus gave the church a mission in the Great Commission. He gave the church a focus after Peter's confession of faith in Matthew 16. He challenged the churches of Ephesus and Laodicea concerning their commitment to his mission in his letters to the churches in Revelation.

Sermon 12: Pray for the world. The focus of this sermon was to challenge people to pray for the worldwide evangelistic effort. Specifically, I addressed missionaries as subjects of prayer. I highlighted the missionaries who are members of our church and the unreached people group that we have adopted.

Conclusion

The last two sermons provided an overview of questions about prayer and some final thoughts and challenges about prayer.

Sermon 13: Thinking about prayer. This sermon addressed common questions about prayer. Does prayer change God's mind? Does involving more people in

prayer for a particular issue improve the odds of a favorable outcome? Does prayer really make a difference? Why is corporate prayer important?

Sermon 14: The power of a praying person. Moses was a man of prayer. He provides examples of the role of prayer in accomplishing God's plan. He prayed for his own relationship with God and for the whole community of God's people. This sermon provided a conclusion to the series and a charge for the people to persevere in prayer

Adult Sunday School Lessons

Oakland has two Sunday morning worship services and two Sunday School hours. The contemporary service meets at 9:30 with Sunday School following at 11:00. The traditional service occurs at 11:00 with Sunday School preceding it at 9:30. There are ten adult Sunday School classes with five classes meeting at each hour.

Only adult classes were targeted for the project. The children and youth Sunday School departments continued to use their normal material. The adult classes suspended their regular curricula and substituted lessons prepared for this project.

The adult Sunday School classes at Oakland come from a history of independence. There has not been any centralized direction with respect to class curriculum for at least twenty years. Three classes use the Lifeway *Life Lessons* curriculum while three classes use the Lifeway *Bible Book* curriculum. Four classes use no curriculum.

Rather than direct the adult Sunday School classes to participate in the project, I invited the teachers to participate. I coordinated with the Sunday School Director for a year prior to the beginning of the project so that he could plan for the implementation. He and I informally talked with each teacher about the scope and purpose of the study and all teachers agreed to participate. Most teachers were very positive about the project and enthusiastic about the study. Two classes composed primarily of senior adults agreed to

participate since it was a church-wide project but were somewhat apprehensive about the study.

The Sunday School Director did not order any external material for the adult classes for the June to August quarter and we substituted the material in Appendix 5 for class use. I sent the letter in Appendix 3 to each adult Sunday School teacher five weeks before the beginning of the quarter inviting them to a preliminary meeting to discuss the class material. I held the meeting on Sunday at noon, following the morning services. The meeting lasted about fifteen minutes. Teachers from all ten classes attended. The primary teacher from the Bible Verse class opted to not teach during the thirteen weeks of the project and assigned a substitute teacher.²

About two years prior to the project I began leading a group on Wednesday evenings called Teach-the-Teacher (T3). The goal was to strengthen the adult Sunday School classes and link the individual classes to the overall purpose and direction of the entire church. I taught the lesson for the next Sunday from the Lifeway *Life Lessons* curriculum. My target group was primarily the adult Sunday School teachers, but I allowed anyone who wanted to attend to participate. During the thirteen weeks of the project, I continued the practice of covering the lesson for the following Sunday.

Two Wednesdays prior to the series start, I met with the class leaders and reviewed the material for the upcoming quarter. I distributed the pre-project questionnaire from Appendix 1. The teachers all completed the questionnaire and returned them that evening. I asked the teachers to take time during class the following Sunday for their class members to complete the pre-project questionnaire.

I also explained the weekly report process. Each week, there would be a weekly report form (Figure A1 in Appendix 2) in the class roll books. I asked the

²This particular teacher exemplifies the independent mindset of many of the adult Sunday School classes at Oakland. He did not openly oppose the participation of his class in the project, but he openly refused to participate in leading the class during the duration of the project.

teachers to informally poll the class members to gauge the evangelistic prayer and evangelistic activity of the class. I stressed that they should keep the tone positive and celebrate evangelistic encounters with the purpose of encouraging each other to engage others with the gospel.

On the first week of the series, all of the teachers distributed the pre-project questionnaire and took time during the class for completion of the questionnaires. The senior adult ladies class (Parlor) members elected to take the questionnaires home and return them the following week.

The thirteen lessons for the quarter augmented the sermons for each Sunday. The subject for each Sunday School lesson was the same as the sermon subject. Half of the classes attended the worship service prior to Sunday School, while the other half attended Sunday School first, so each lesson was designed to function as a stand-alone unit.

Post-Project Questionnaire

The week following the end of the Sunday School lessons, I distributed the same questionnaire as administered before the project. I received fifty-six questionnaires with usable data. The results of the post-project questionnaire are in Table A2 in Appendix 1. Seven additional questionnaires were received in which the members did not answer any of the questions but wrote out narrative feedback.

Prayer Journal

The fourth goal of the project was to improve my prayer life and increase my own evangelistic activity. Beginning one month before the project commencement, I started keeping a journal of my own experiences with prayer and evangelism. The journal was maintained through the end of the project in order to provide an assessment of my own experiences throughout the project.

CHAPTER 5

PROJECT EVALUATION

Introduction

This chapter provides an evaluation of the project in which I address how the project achieved its purpose and evaluate how the project achieved each of the goals set out in chapter 1.

I will assess the strengths of the project and explore weaknesses of the project. In light of completing the project and looking back, I will address what I would do differently if I were to do the project again.

Finally, I will provide a theological reflection on how the project impacted the church and its mission. Additionally, I will provide some personal reflection on how the project impacted me.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this project was to increase the evangelistic effectiveness of the people of Oakland Baptist Church in King George, Virginia, through intentional prayer.

Overall, the project did increase the evangelistic effectiveness of the church. The degree of success is best addressed by looking at the individual goals.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

The project involved four goals of increasing evangelistic effectiveness. Three of the goals were for the people of the church and the fourth goal was for me.

Goal 1: Increase the Prayer Life of Members

The first goal was to increase the prayer life of the members of Oakland Baptist Church. They should have increased the amount of praying and focused the content of their prayers on the spread of the gospel.

The attitudes and practices of the people of the church were measured by the pre-project questionnaires administered before the sermon series and Sunday School lessons began. The attitudes and practices were measured again with the post-project questionnaire.

The questionnaire included an assessment of the percentage of time in prayer that people spend on various topics. Figure 1 shows the breakdown of topics.

My prayers include:	Percentage
Thanksgiving	_____
Praise	_____
Confession of sin	_____
My needs	_____
The needs of others	_____
The advancement of God's Kingdom	_____
Salvation of lost people	_____
Other	_____

Figure 1. Prayer Topics Survey

The advancement of God's Kingdom and salvation of lost people are the two topics most closely aligned with evangelistic prayer. I averaged the sum of these two topics for all respondents. The 80 pre-project questionnaires reported an average of 17 percent of prayer time devoted to evangelistic prayer with 30 minutes per day in prayer. The post-project questionnaire received 56 responses with 17 percent of prayer time devoted to evangelistic prayer and 33 minutes per day in prayer.

The project had no effect on the reported emphasis on evangelistic prayer with no change in the percentage of prayer time devoted to the advancement of God’s Kingdom or the salvation of lost people. Additionally, there was no appreciable difference in the time reported in prayer each day.

Five of the twenty survey questions had appreciable changes in responses between the pre-project questionnaire and the post-project questionnaire. These questions are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Survey questions with shift in opinion

	Question	Pre-Project	Post-Project
3	I pray for lost people daily.	25% agreed 27% not sure 48% disagreed	58% agreed 23% not sure 19% disagreed
8	The more people that pray for something increases the chances of a favorable outcome.	37% agreed 26% not sure 37% disagreed	19% agreed 27% disagreed 54% disagreed
10	I pray for my will to be conformed to God’s will.	80% agreed 8% not sure 12% disagreed	91% agreed 6% not sure 4% disagreed
18	Prayer comes naturally to me.	38% agreed 29% not sure 33% disagreed	47% agreed 21% not sure 32% disagreed
19	Prayer changes God’s mind.	21% agreed 17% not sure 63% disagreed	11% agreed 17% not sure 72% disagreed

Statement 3 says, “I pray for lost people daily.” The level of agreement with that statement started at 25 percent, but increased to 58 percent at the end of the project. Similarly, statement 10 showed an increase in people praying for their will to align with God’s will. Statement 18 indicated that overall, people were more comfortable with prayer after the project. The responses to these statement show some measureable change in the prayer lives of the members of the church.

Statements 8 and 19 measured attitudes about prayer. In both cases, there was a shift in view toward a more biblical stance.

While the questionnaire do not show a dramatic change over the course of the project, the teacher of one of the larger Sunday School classes who is also a deacon told me that the sermon series and Sunday School lessons were the best study on prayer that he had ever seen and his personal prayer life had grown as a result.

In another anecdotal example, a lady who was fairly new to the church gave me the letter in Appendix 7. She told me that she had greatly grown in prayer through the project.

Goal 2: Identify Lost People and Intercede

The second goal was to identify lost people and intercede. The people of the church were to intentionally look for lost people in their own lives and pray for their salvation.

Sunday School leaders were given weekly class reports. Part of the weekly report was to informally poll the class and ask how many members prayed daily for lost people by name. Since the question could only measure those who felt bold enough to share that information in a group setting, the data was likely to be inaccurate. I hoped that trends would be indicated even if only by an enhanced atmosphere of talking about prayer and evangelism would encourage more people to share. The data from the weekly report is given in Table A3 in Appendix 2. There are no discernable trends in identification and prayer for lost people.

Goal 3: Germinate Evangelistic Encounters

The third goal was to germinate evangelistic encounters. It was postulated that church members who had been praying for the salvation of lost people in their own

context would more likely engage in spiritual conversations with these lost people in their normal encounters.

The Sunday School weekly class reports furnished data on the number of people who engaged in evangelistic encounters and the total number of encounters. There were no noticeable trends in evangelistic encounters.

Goal 4: Improve My Prayer Life

The final goal was to improve my prayer life and increase my own evangelistic activity. I keep a journal throughout the project to record my own prayer life and evangelistic activity.

I started the journal one month prior to the project commencement. I did not establish a specific frequency for making entries in the journal. My intention was to make daily entries. I started well with making daily entries for the first week. For the next three weeks I was able to make at least three entries per week. After the first month, the sermon series started and I made entries on most days.

My prayer life did become more focused regarding intercessory prayer for the lost. I found myself evaluating all of the people I had encountered each day and praying for their spiritual condition. I particularly prayed for those people that I regularly encounter as to how I could be used by God to reach that person.

Since part of the journal process was to record evangelistic opportunities, the process forced me to evaluate each day with respect to the opportunities that I encountered and how I responded to those opportunities.

While there was undoubtedly some artificiality in the journaling process due to my running the project, I did pray more intentionally and look for more evangelistic opportunities. So, with respect to the fourth goal, my prayer life did increase as did my evangelistic activity.

Strengths of the Project

The primary strength of this project was the subject area. Prayer and evangelism are pillars of the church. While churches can exist with weak prayer and non-existent evangelism, a strong church must have a dynamic prayer life. An effective church will have a culture of evangelism. All churches can grow in the areas of prayer and evangelism.

While prayer and evangelism are essential elements of the church, many members feel inadequate in both areas. Just as all churches can grow in prayer and evangelism, all church members can grow in these areas. The mission of the church includes equipping the people of the church in prayer and evangelism. This project provided equipping for the people of Oakland.

The majority of the church responded well to the project. They readily embraced the subject area and eagerly participated in the study.

Weaknesses of the Project

The areas of prayer and evangelism are deeply ingrained in people. The duration of this project was too short to reasonably expect to see marked change. While this project can be part of an ongoing discipleship effort to grow the people of the church in their relationship with God, measurable change in attitudes and habits would probably take much longer than thirteen weeks to occur.

The pre- and post-project questionnaires were the primary means of measuring attitudes. Some people found the questionnaires confusing. The initial question of the percentage breakdown for prayer caused difficulty with approximately 20 percent of the respondents. They interpreted the question to be asking what percentage of prayers contained the various topics. So, if a person gave thanksgiving and praise as part of every prayer, that person answered 100 percent to both categories. Many respondents gave multiple 100 percent answers.

The questionnaires sampled the Sunday School class population that was present at the beginning and end of the project. It is unknown how many of the post-project questionnaire respondents had actually completed pre-project questionnaires. The average age of the pre-project questionnaire was 51. The average age for the post-project questionnaires was 44.

Some older members of the church responded negatively to the project. The teacher of the senior adult women's class (Parlor class) rewrote the Sunday School lessons so that they could be tailored to the needs of the class members. His negative reception of the material spilled over to the individual members of that class.

Several older members chose not to complete the post-project questionnaires. The end of the questionnaire asked demographic questions. Respondents were asked to check their age group and answer how long they had been at Oakland. Nineteen pre-project questionnaires were received from members sixty years old and older. Only eleven post-project questionnaires were filled out from that age group. Seven post-project questionnaires were submitted with the over sixty age block checked, but no data was provided. They all had written in that they preferred to use their regular Sunday School literature. An example of comments received on the post-project questionnaire is provided in Figure A3 in Appendix 8. The respondent provided a reference to John 13:34-35, which states, "I give you a new commandment: love one another. Just as I have loved you, you must also love one another. By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." It seems that some of the older members felt that the project was forced upon them. They also felt that the material was delivered in an unloving way.

What I Would Do Differently

The Sunday School class leaders were essential to the success of the project. If they passed along the class material that was provided but indicated that the material was

sub-standard or had been forced upon the class, their negative attitude could affect the entire class. An individual with a negative attitude toward the project can quickly develop a hardened heart and miss any potential benefit of the process. Hardened individuals can poison the environment in a small group. For this project, gaining the trust of the class leaders and proceeding with them as allies is crucial.

For this project, six of the ten class leaders were eager and willing to participate in the process. They enthusiastically embraced the concept and taught the material with passion. Two leaders dutifully participated with no explicit negativity. They participated and faithfully taught the material. One assigned a substitute teacher who readily participated. Only one grudgingly participated with a blatantly negative class.

I should have involved the class leaders more in the planning process for the project. Rather than just tell them that the project was going to happen, they might have engaged more in the process had they seen more concrete plans and material earlier. I should have invited the class leaders to be part of an on-going prayer time together before and during the project.

I was busy preparing the sermons and Sunday School material and overlooked opportunities for church-wide practical projects or activities. If I were going to do the project again, I would recruit a intercessory prayer team to plan and implement projects to increase the participatory aspect of the project.

In retrospect, I did not model prayer well during the project. I focused primarily on teaching the material. We did not do anything special during the worship services or Sunday School classes with respect to evangelistic prayer.

Theological Reflections

I have taught sermon series on prayer before. This series was different in part due to its academic aspects. The project forced me to focus on measurable results rather than just proclaim the Word of God and trust the Holy Spirit to make changes. While true

life transformation is a function of the Holy Spirit, my preaching must have more intentionality for that transformation.

I do not lead the church alone. I have many leaders who are my partners in leading the church. The Sunday School teachers are key components of that leadership. This project highlighted the partnership of the class teachers in life transformation of the members of the church.

This project was a success in just doing it. Anytime that we intentionally focus on prayer and evangelism, we will profit. We grew as a church in the process. We grew as leaders through working together. We grew closer to the Lord as individuals, as classes, and as an entire church.

Personal Reflections

Through the process of this project, I grew personally in knowledge gained in research for the material of the project, leadership as I led the church in this endeavor, and in my own relationship with God as I more closely examined and put into practice the discipline of prayer.

This project has renewed within me the commitment to make prayer the central component of this church. We must grow beyond the point of using prayer to open and close meetings and serve its place at the appropriate points in the worship service. We must grow in our dependency on God and our intimacy with him. God has given me the assignment as the leader of this church to lead these people to depend on prayer and grow in prayer.

Leading a church that has never had much of a history of evangelism to be more evangelistic is a difficult task. This project is just one step in that ongoing process. I will continue to seek avenues to lead the church to be more evangelistic

God has blessed me in more ways than I could have ever imagined. He has given me the opportunity to lead an incredible church. He has provided me with a

wonderful family. He has graced me with an exceptional wife. But most of all, he has revealed himself to me and allowed me, a sinner, to represent him to a lost world around me.

I would like to repeat this effort in two or three years. I intent to update the material and incorporate lessons learned in this process in order to continue the movement of this church to a more prayer-driven church and a more outreach-oriented church.

Conclusion

Over a period of three months, I led Oakland Baptist Church through a coordinated series of sermons and Sunday School lessons about prayer. The lessons provided a theological background of prayer but moved to a focus of evangelistic prayer. True prayer is transformational. The person who prays is transformed through a direct encounter with God and the world is transformed through the action of God responding to prayer.

The project was of great value to me in that I grew in my prayer life and evangelistic activity through the project. The people of the church grew in the area of evangelistic prayer and by extension, the kingdom of God profited.

APPENDIX 1
PRE- AND POST- PROJECT QUESTIONNAIRE

Prayer Survey

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to sample the understanding and practices of church attendees in the area of prayer. This research is being conducted by Pastor Cliff Hedges for a doctoral project assessing prayer and evangelism at Oakland. In this research, you will be asked to provide information about prayer and to agree or disagree with a series of statements. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By your completion of this survey, and checking the appropriate box below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

- I agree to participate
- I do not agree to participate

Please describe your prayer life by completing the following table. Give a percentage of your time in prayer devoted to each area over the course of a normal week. Please give your best guess.

My prayers include:	Percentage
Thanksgiving	_____
Praise	_____
Confession of sin	_____
My needs	_____
The needs of others	_____
The advancement of God's Kingdom	_____
Salvation of lost people	_____
Other	_____

How much time do you think you spend in prayer each day on average? _____

For the following statements, please agree or disagree. Place a check or X in the appropriate box for each question. If you are not sure of have no opinion, then mark the middle column.

Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	
			1. I have one main time of prayer each day.
			2. I pray continuously throughout the day.
			3. I pray for lost people daily.
			4. I pray for lost people by name.
			5. I pray for lost people that I know.
			6. I pray for my role in advancing God's Kingdom.
			7. I ask God to give me opportunities to share the gospel.
			8. The more people that pray for something increases the chances of a favorable outcome.
			9. I have spiritual conversations with lost people at least weekly.
			10. I pray for my will to be conformed to God's will.
			11. I share the gospel with a lost person at least monthly.
			12. I regularly pray with another person who is not in my family.
			13. I regularly pray with my family.
			14. I regularly pray for my relationship with Christ to grow.
			15. I fear sharing the gospel.
			16. I look for opportunities to share the gospel with lost people that I am praying for.
			17. I ask God to teach me to pray.
			18. Prayer comes naturally to me.
			19. Prayer changes God's mind.
			20. Prayer changes me.

Please provide some demographic information:

How long have you attended Oakland? _____

Please circle your age group: <18 18-29 30-39 40-49 50-59 60-69 70-79 80 & up

Table A1. Pre-project questionnaire summary data (part 1)

Question	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
agree	35	53	18	49	60	49	38
not sure	5	7	20	11	4	7	13
disagree	34	16	35	12	9	17	23
number who answered question	74	76	73	72	73	73	74
percentage who agreed	47	70	25	68	82	67	51
percentage not sure	7	9	27	15	5	10	18
percentage who disagreed	46	21	48	17	12	23	31

Table A1. Pre-project questionnaire summary data (part 2)

Question	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
agree	27	12	59	14	34	44	62
not sure	19	11	6	16	6	8	5
disagree	27	49	9	40	32	21	7
number who answered question	73	72	74	70	72	73	74
percentage who agreed	37	17	80	20	47	60	84
percentage not sure	26	15	8	23	8	11	7
percentage who disagreed	37	68	12	57	44	29	9

Table A1. Pre-project questionnaire summary data (part 3)

Question	15	16	17	18	19	20
agree	22	25	42	26	15	72
not sure	20	20	10	20	12	1
disagree	28	25	18	23	45	1
number who answered question	70	70	70	69	72	74
percentage who agreed	31	36	60	38	21	97
percentage not sure	29	29	14	29	17	1
percentage who disagreed	40	36	26	33	63	1

Table A2. Post-project questionnaire summary data (part 1)

Question	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
agree	24	42	31	39	46	34	25
not sure	6	5	12	8	4	9	16
disagree	24	7	10	6	3	8	11
number who answered question	54	54	53	53	53	51	52
percentage who agreed	44	78	58	74	87	67	48
percentage not sure	11	9	23	15	8	18	31
percentage who disagreed	44	13	19	11	6	16	21

Table A2. Post-project questionnaire summary data (part 2)

Question	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
agree	10	9	49	10	24	32	45
not sure	14	16	3	14	6	10	6
disagree	28	28	2	28	21	9	1
number who answered question	52	53	54	52	51	51	52
percentage who agreed	19	17	91	19	47	63	87
percentage not sure	27	30	6	27	12	20	12
percentage who disagreed	54	53	4	54	41	18	2

Table A2. Post-project questionnaire summary data (part 3)

Question	15	16	17	18	19	20
agree	15	18	31	25	6	20
not sure	19	18	12	11	9	54
disagree	18	14	8	17	38	0
number who answered question	52	50	51	53	53	0
percentage who agreed	29	36	61	47	11	100
percentage not sure	37	36	24	21	17	0
percentage who disagreed	35	28	16	32	72	0

APPENDIX 2
WEEKLY CLASS INTERACTION

Weekly Class Report

Class Name: _____

Date: _____

Total attendance today _____

Number of people who
prayed daily for lost
people by name _____

Number of people who
reported evangelistic encounters _____

Total number of encounters _____

Figure A1. Weekly class report

Table A3. Weekly class report data (part 1)

		6/2	6/9	6/16	6/23	6/30	7/7	7/14
Parlor	attendance							
	pray for lost							
	people w encounters							
	total encounters							
DT Gray	attendance		5	5	5		6	5
	pray for lost			3	3			
	people w encounters			0	0			
	total encounters			0	0			
Shared Und.	attendance			8				
	pray for lost			0				
	people w encounters			1				
	total encounters			1				
Bible Verse	attendance			10	17		11	6
	pray for lost			2	3		4	2
	people w encounters				2		2	1
	total encounters			2	many			3
Glenwood	attendance			12			14	
	pray for lost			1			3	
	people w encounters			0				
	total encounters			0				
Potter's Clay	attendance				19		21	23
	pray for lost				7	5	11	
	people w encounters				1			4
	total encounters							
Sowers	attendance							
	pray for lost							
	people w encounters							
	total encounters							
WOW	attendance		5	9	8	10	10	6
	pray for lost		1	6	4		6	2
	people w encounters		0	4	3		2	
	total encounters		0	4	3		8	2
TNT	attendance			8	10		7	6
	pray for lost			1	3		2	2
	people w encounters			1	0		1	0
	total encounters			1	0		3	0

Table A3. Weekly class report data (part 1) (Continued)

Our Space	attendance			12	9		7	14
	pray for lost			6	0		2	2
	people w encounters			2	2		2	0
	total encounters			8	3		3	0
Total	attendance	0	10	64	68	10	76	60
	pray for lost	0	1	19	20	5	28	8
	people w encounters	0	0	8	8	0	7	5
	total encounters	0	0	16	6	0	14	5

Table A3. Weekly class report data (part 2)

		7/21	7/28	8/4	8/11	8/18	8/25
Parlor	attendance						
	pray for lost						
	people w encounters						
	total encounters						
DT Gray	attendance	5	3	5	3	5	4
	pray for lost	5		3			
	people w encounters	1		0			
	total encounters	1		0			
Shared Und.	attendance		5	7	7	5	
	pray for lost			0	0		
	people w encounters			0	0		
	total encounters			0	0		
Bible Verse	attendance	9	6	12	10	14	10
	pray for lost	4	2	4	2	8	2
	people w encounters	0		4	1	1	2
	total encounters	0		4	3	1	4
Glenwood	attendance						
	pray for lost						
	people w encounters						
	total encounters						

Table A3. Weekly class report data (part 2) (Continued)

Potter's Clay	attendance					25	18
	pray for lost					10	5
	people w encounters					3	
	total encounters						
Sowers	attendance		13				
	pray for lost						
	people w encounters						
	total encounters						
WOW	attendance		14		5	7	8
	pray for lost		3		3	5	3
	people w encounters		2		0	2	1
	total encounters		2		0	2	1
TNT	attendance	6	8	9	2	5	4
	pray for lost	4	4	2	3	1	0
	people w encounters	0	1	0	0	1	1
	total encounters	0	1	0	0	1	1
Our Space	attendance	5	10	6	8		9
	pray for lost	1	3	3	3		3
	people w encounters	0	2	1	1		2
	total encounters	0	6	2	2		4
Total	attendance	25	59	39	35	61	53
	pray for lost	14	12	12	11	24	13
	people w encounters	1	5	5	2	7	6
	total encounters	1	9	6	5	4	10

Table A4. Wednesday teacher training attendance

	5/29	6/5	6/12	6/19	6/26	7/3	7/10	7/17	7/24	7/31	8/7	8/14	8/21
parlor	1				1								
DT Gray	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Shared Und	1	1	1	1	1	1	1						
Bible verse				1	1		1	1				1	
Glenwood	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1			1
Potter's clay	2	1	3	1	1	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	1
Sowers			1		1	1					1		
WOW		1	1		1	1		1	1			1	1
TNT													
Our Space													1

APPENDIX 3

LETTER TO ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS



OAKLAND
BAPTIST CHURCH

"Alive in Christ and Growing Changed Lives"

5520 James Madison Parkway
King George, VA 22485
(540) 663-2548

Dear Adult Sunday School Teachers,

I am beginning a new series in June that I am very excited about and I want to invite you and your Sunday School class to participate. I am spending three months on prayer. This is more than a study about prayer. My intention is that we change the way we think about prayer and change our prayer habits.

Most of us have:

- Confused theology of prayer
- Limited experience with prayer
- Weak habits of prayer
- Misguided motivations for prayer
- Little success in prayer
- A lot of guilt about prayer

We hear about "prayer warriors" but we feel unarmed. We read about the spiritual giants, who spend two or three hours every day on their knees in prayer, but we find that after two or three minutes, our minds wander. We know that we are promised power in prayer, but we do not experience any, yet we know that prayer is important and God wants us to pray. Prayer is learned and the truth is that most of us never really learned to pray.

Prayer should be transforming. God is in the transforming business and He uses prayer. We should be transformed by prayer and the world around us should be transformed through prayer. Prayer is linked to God's purpose and we will never be fruitful in fulfilling God's will for our lives apart from prayer.

I want to use a similar format to what we used when we went through *The Peacemaking Church*. We will have Sunday School topics which correspond to the sermon topics. The series will start on June 2nd and run through the end of August.

Please join me after church Sunday May 5th for a brief informational meeting. I will continue to have T3 (Teach the Teacher) on Wednesday evenings, but I am changing the time to 6:00 PM. The first session will be an overview on Wednesday May 22nd and the lesson for June 2nd will be covered on Wednesday May 29th.

Thank you for your service to the Lord.

Blessings to you,

Pastor Cliff

Figure A2. Letter to Adult Sunday School teachers

APPENDIX 4
SUNDAY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Table A5. Weekly class attendance

Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Bible Verse	14	11	9	13	12	11	6	9	9	10	10	13	10
DT Gray	6	5	5	5	5	6	5	5	3	5	3	5	4
Parlor	14	17	13	18	13	17	11	11	11	11	12	8	14
Shared Und	5	9	8	7	9	6	8	4	5	7	7	5	9
Glenwood	8	10	12	10	17	16	9	9	12	15	7	9	9
TNT	6	6	8	10	9	7	6	6	8	9	3	5	4
Sowers	19	14	20	10	7	15	13	19	13	15	0	9	10
WOW	6	8	9	9	10	20	7	13	14	6	7	7	8
Potters Clay	25	20	20	19	28	23	24	33	21	21	24	25	18
Our Space	10	8	12	9	5	7	14	5	10	6	8	9	9

APPENDIX 5
SERMON SERIES

Transforming Prayer

Week 1

Prayer Transforms

Acts 4:23-33

Prayer transforms people

1. Prayer opens us to the Holy Spirit
Acts 4:31
2. Prayer gives courage for the mission
Acts 4:31
3. Prayer unites believers
Acts 4:32
4. Prayer brings a true sense of stewardship
Acts 4:32
5. Prayer makes us attractive
Acts 4:33

Prayer transforms the world

6. Prayer shakes things up
Acts 4:31

Transforming Prayer

Week 2

Pray in Faith

1. Have faith

Matthew 21:21-22

John 14:14

2. Accept reality

Matthew 17:14-20

2 Corinthians 12:7-9

Luke 12:42

3. Seek God's perspective

James 4:3

2 Corinthians 12:9

Luke 12:42

Matthew 17:20

4. Desire more faith

Luke 17:5

Romans 8:26

Luke 22:31-32

Transforming Prayer

Week 3

Praise God in Prayer

Matthew 6:9

Praise is:

1. Declaring and distancing

Psalm 95:1-7

2. Discipline and diet

Psalm 96:1-3

3. Duty and delight

Psalm 106:1-2 (What it does)

Psalm 50:23 (Gives Him glory)

Psalm 136:1-26 (Why we praise)

Psalm 42:1-2 (Longing for God)

Psalm 42:5, 11 (Questioning self)

Psalm 42:6 (Longing leads to remembrance – duty)

Psalm 42:4 (Remembers to delight in God)

Psalm 66:1-2, 8, 16 (Duty and delight)

Transforming Prayer

Week 4

Ask God in Prayer

Matthew 6:11

Matthew 7:7-11

1. Humbly depend on God

Matthew 7:7-8

2. Earnestly desire from God

Matthew 7:7-8

3. Actively entreat God

Matthew 7:7-8

4. Trust God for the best

Matthew 7:11

Transforming Prayer

Week 5

Ask God for Direction

Ask God to:

1. Show me where to go

Psalm 143:8

2. Show me what to do

Psalm 119:133

3. Show me what not to do

Matthew 6:13

4. Show me how to pray

Romans 8:26-27

Transforming Prayer

Week 6

Talk with God about Sin

2 Samuel 11:1-12:31

Psalm 32:1-11

1. Seek a close relationship with God

Psalm 32:1-2

2. Realize that unresolved sin damages our relationship with God

Psalm 32:3-4

3. Resolve sin with God

Psalm 32:5-7

4. Recognize the joy of a healthy relationship with God

Psalm 32:8-11

Transforming Prayer

Week 7

Pray for Spiritual Protection

1. Understand the spiritual struggle

2 Corinthians 10:3-4

2. Pray for strength

Luke 22:31-32

2 Thessalonians 3:2-3

3. Pray continually

1 Thessalonians 5:17

4. Trust God's power

2 Corinthians 12:9-10

Transforming Prayer

Week 8

Pray for One Another

1. Pray in love

John 17:9

2. Pray for unity

John 17:11

3. Pray for spiritual protection

John 17:15

4. Pray for spiritual growth

John 17:17

5. Pray for each other's witness

John 17:20-21

John 17:23

Transforming Prayer

Week 9

Pray for the Kingdom of God

1. Pray for understanding

Acts 1:3-8

2. Make the Kingdom a priority in prayer

Matthew 6:9-13

3. Pray for opportunities to show the Kingdom to others

Romans 14:17-18

4. Pray for God to bring the Kingdom

1 Corinthians 4:20

Transforming Prayer

Week 10

Pray for the Lost

1. Pray for God's will

Matthew 6:10

2. Pray for salvation of the lost

1 Timothy 2:2-4

Romans 10:1

3. Pray for God's means to salvation

Romans 10:14-15

2 Corinthians 5:18-20

4. Pray for those you know

John 16:8-11

Transforming Prayer

Week 11

Pray for the Church to Reach the Lost

1. Pray for the church's mission

Matthew 28:18-20

2. Pray for the church's focus

Matthew 16:18-19

3. Pray for the church's priority

Revelation 2:1-7

4. Pray for the church's passion

Revelation 3:14-22

Transforming Prayer

Week 12

Pray for the World

1. Pray for the Kingdom

Matthew 6:10

2 Peter 3:9

2. Pray for our outreach

2 Corinthians 5:14-20

3. Pray for our missionaries

John 4:37

4. Pray for our people group

2 Corinthians 4:4

Transforming Prayer

Week 13

Thinking About Prayer

1. Does prayer change God?

Matthew 6:7-8

Jonah 3:10

2. Does more prayer matter?

Exodus 2:23-25

3. Does prayer make a difference?

Hebrews 4:16

4. Why pray together?

Psalms 133:1-3

Transforming Prayer

Week 14

The Power of a Praying Person

1. Pray for the mission of God

Exodus 33:3

Exodus 33:12-16

Exodus 33:17

2. Pray to experience God

Exodus 33:18

3. Pray for others

Numbers 12:1-2

Numbers 12:9-10

Numbers 13-14

4. Pray for the salvation of others

Numbers 14:11-12

Numbers 14:19-20

APPENDIX 6
ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

The following pages contain the Adult Sunday School lessons.

Why Pray?

What is the purpose of prayer?

Luke 11:1 One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

Have you ever thought about how we learn to pray? How did you learn to pray? Do you feel like you ever really did learn to pray?

For some skills, we learn by formal instruction. We are taught the basics then practice under supervision. Other skills are learned through trial and error. We develop our own method based on what works for us. Still other skills are developed by observation. We learn by watching others and imi-

tating what they do. For most people, prayer is probably learned by the observation method.

We learn to pray by seeing what other people do. Unfortunately, we also pick up bad habits and unbiblical ideas along the way.

The only way to get a biblical perspective on prayer is to go to the Bible. That's what we are going to do for the next three months.

Lord, teach us to pray.



What is unique about people that comes from being made in the image of God?

Genesis 1:26-27 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

That man is the most immortal who has done the most and the best praying.

God is relational. He exists in a trinity. God is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They relate to one another. They were in relationship prior to the creation of the universe. When God created people, He created them in His image. This means that we have a spiritual element and a moral capacity. It also means that we are relational. We can relate to one another and to the rest of creation, but we alone can have a relationship with God.

E. M. Bounds
Purpose in Prayer

2 Corinthians 6:14-18 Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

Don't team up with those who are unbelievers.

New Living Translation (NLT)

People are different from the rest of creation because they have the ability to have a relationship with God. However, even though everybody has the oppor-

tunity to know God, not all do. Only those who experience the forgiveness of Christ can know God. So, just as people are distinct from the rest of creation in their capacity to know God, believers are distinct from the rest of humanity in actually knowing God.

We should seek ourselves connected with God more than we are connected to

the world around us. While we are still in the world as Christ's representatives, we live in a close relationship with Him. He wants to walk with us. He wants to be our Father and our God.

Think of prayer in terms of walking with God and relating to God as your Father.

They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.

John 17:16-18

John 17:1-3 After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

In His prayer to the Father, Jesus equates eternal life with knowing God. The amazing thing about salvation, is not just getting to go to heaven, but the privilege of knowing God. We can actually have a relationship with God.



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God reveals Himself with the image of a Father. He adopts us as His children when we come to faith in Christ. When that happens, we have access to God. We have permission to approach Him. In other words, we can then pray.

Any relationship requires communication in order to be healthy. Prayer is our communication with God.

Think about these attitudes about prayer in light of a relationship with another person:

Duty—I talk to you because I have to

Selfish desires— I talk to you only about my needs

My plans for you— most of my communication is telling you what you ought to be doing

Love— I talk to you because I enjoy your company and value our relationship

You could come up with other analogies, but the point is to view prayer in light of a relationship with God.

Read the Lord's prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) in light of a child speaking with a loving father.

We will not pray as boys repeating their lessons, as a mere matter of rote. Much less will we speak as if we were rabbis instructing our pupils or, as I have heard some do, with the coarseness of a robber stopping a person on the road and demanding his money. No, we will be humble yet bold petitioners, humbly asking mercy through the Savior's blood.

Charles Spurgeon
The Power in Prayer

Looking ahead

Next week, we will be looking at the link between prayer and faith. Read the following passages:

Matthew 7:7-11

How does this fit with your view of prayer?

Hebrews 11:1, 6 How does faith relate to trusting God?

Hebrews 4:14-16

Can we really approach God with confidence? Confidence in what?

John 14:12-14

What is Jesus promising here?

Pastor Cliff



Transforming Prayer

Adult Small Groups

June 9, 2013
Week 2

Prayer and Faith

Prayer is more than just asking God for favors. Prayer is communication with God. Effective prayer requires faith. We must believe that God really hears our prayers and cares about us. We must believe that God is able to answer our prayers.

Trust that God cares.

Matthew 7:7-11 7 "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. 9 "Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 11 If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

Jesus tells us to ask, seek, and knock. All three of these verbs are meant to describe how we approach God. In the context of the teaching, Jesus is addressing all of our needs, but He highlighted the spiritual aspect of our lives.

Matthew 6:33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Jesus said that those who do not know God make their personal needs their top priority, but those who do know God make the things of God their top priority.

Jesus compares God with an

earthly father. A decent father will not try to trick a child who is hungry by substituting something that is not food. God is so much better than an earthly father, so He can be trusted to provide that which is good.

A father does not automatically provide anything that a child wants. Often what a child wants is not his or her own best interest. A parent must make judgments on the requests of a child and provide that which is really best for the child. Since God perfectly knows what is best, He makes decisions that are the best.



How does the fact that God cares for you affect the way you pray?

Trust that God is able.

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

We often look to this verse as a definition of faith. However, it really does not tell us what faith is. It tells us what faith looks like. The whole chapter is devoted to painting a picture of faith. The writer of Hebrews tells us about people that were instrumental in God's plan in the Old Testament. They were used by God because they believed God. It was more than just believing in God; they actually believed God.

In chapter 10, he tells his readers that the storyline of the Old Testament has been moving toward Christ. He is the fulfillment of the promise that the people of the Old Testament were looking toward. He encourages his readers to hold fast to Christ because He will return.

How do you trust God if you don't understand what He is doing?

God has been at work in the world since creation. He moves things along toward the end that He has in store according to His plan. He has chosen to include people in His plan from the beginning.

His theme is that God is at work. The promises will come. The faithful wait for God and trust Him as they wait. There is an implied "yet" at the end of Hebrews 11:1. He is talking about Christ coming soon. Then he talks about those who waited for God's plan in the Old Testament. When he says that faith is being certain of what we do not see, he is not referring to things that are

Hebrews 11:39 These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised.

The Old Testament heroes of the faith were faithful in that they believed God and trusted God, yet they did not actually see the promises come true.

Christians trust that Christ will return and complete that which He began even if we never see it happen in our lifetime.

What does it mean to earnestly seek God?

Hebrews 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Having faith means trusting God. Faith is necessary to please God. He wants us to trust Him. He wants us to trust His judgment. He wants us to believe that He is in control and

to trust our lives to Him. God has a plan which He is directing. He is able to accomplish His plan since He is all powerful.

How does God reward those who earnestly seek Him?

Celebrate that we have access to God.

Hebrews 4:14 - 16 ¹⁴Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. ¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are-- yet was without sin. ¹⁶Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

What tends to shake our confidence in God?

Prior to Christ, the High Priest made intercession to God on behalf of the people. Once a year, on the Day of Atonement (yom kippur), the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies in the temple. He was the only one authorized to enter the place where God met people. Now, Jesus Christ Himself is our High Priest. He has made it possible for us to have access to God directly. No longer do we have to rely on an intermediary. We now have access.

trust in God.

Because we trust God and have been given direct access, we can approach the throne of God with confidence. We have the confidence that we are allowed to be there and we have the confidence that God really cares for us and will make the best decisions.

Approach the throne with confidence in what?

We are told to "hold firmly to the faith that we profess." Faith is described in Hebrews 11:1 as having confidence that God will do what He has said He will do. So, we can trust God. We should hold firmly to this

What would an appropriate description of our approach to the throne look like?

Believe Jesus' promise.

John 14:11-14 ¹¹ Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. ¹² I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. ¹⁴ You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

Unity was important to Jesus. He prayed about unity in His prayer of John 17. He prayed about His unity with the Father, and His unity with His followers, and the unity between His followers. Here in John 14, He is teaching about His impending death. He will leave the disciples. They are naturally concerned about His departure and want to go with Him. They still don't understand that He is talking about His death. He reassures them with the subject of unity. Jesus is one with the Father and does the work of the Father. The followers of Jesus will also do that work and even greater things.

Jesus promises them that He will do any-

thing that they ask in His name. This promise should give us great confidence. It should encourage us to pray because we are assured that our prayers will be answered.

Jesus asked his disciples to believe Him. He appealed to the proof that what He was saying could be believed. The power of God was evident. There was evidence that Jesus was able to make good on His claims. He did the work of God with the power of God for the glory of God.

Then Jesus made a really outlandish claim. He said that those who have faith in Him will do what He did and even more. That means that we can do the work of God with the power of God for the glory of God.

Looking ahead

Read the following passages:

Luke 17:11-19

How should we say thank you to God?

Psalms 126:3

What has God done for you?

Colossians 3:15-16

Contrast grumbling with praise.

Psalm 66

How does praise and thanksgiving relate to proclaiming Christ?

Pastor Cliff

Ask for God to show you who He wants you to be praying about for their salvation. Commit to pray daily for that person.

Inward Transformation—Prayer Transforms Me**Telling God “Thank You”**

Your mother probably taught you to say “thank you” when someone did something for you. If an adult gave you something, there was a voice behind you saying, “What do you say?”

In a healthy relationship, we recognize and appreciate what another does for us. We also express our love and appreciation. God desires that we notice what He does and we thank Him.

Recognize what God has done for you.

Luke 17:11-19 ¹¹ Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. ¹² As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance ¹³ and called out in a loud voice, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!” ¹⁴ When he saw them, he said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were cleansed. ¹⁵ One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. ¹⁶ He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him— and he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷ Jesus asked, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? ¹⁸ Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” ¹⁹ Then he said to him, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well.”

Ten lepers sought healing from Jesus. As lepers, they were required by law to keep a distance away from people. They obeyed

the law, but shouted to get Jesus’ attention. Skin diseases were taken very seriously in the Old Testament. Any skin disease was



to be examined by the priest. The priest determined if a person had to be kept in isolation or if the disease was permanent. The priest determined if the person was healed and could return to the community.

Leviticus 13:45-46 ⁴⁵ "The person with such an infectious disease must wear torn clothes, let his hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of his face and cry out, 'Unclean! Unclean!' ⁴⁶ As long as he has the infection he remains unclean. He must live alone; he must live outside the camp.

A leper has forced to life outside of society. They were rejected. They had to wear clothing that that let everyone know that they were unclean. They had to shout out to anyone who came near them that they were unclean. Leprosy was sometimes a judgment from God upon sinners in the Old Testament. Society viewed lepers as sinners who were rejected by God.

Jesus had pity on them and healed them. They obviously had heard about Jesus and wanted healing. But their healing apparently was not immediate. Jesus told them to go and present themselves to the priest. It was not until they responded in faith and left that they were healed.

While all ten were healed, only one came back and said "thank you." Luke points out that the one who returned was a Samaritan. He was rejected as a leper, but he was also rejected as a Samaritan. Note that the one who was the most rejected was also the most thankful.

Does verse 17 imply that Jesus thought that it was appropriate for all ten to give thanks?

How was the Samaritan's faith and healing different than the other nine?

What do we have to be thankful for?

How should we express our thanks?

Rejoice in what God has done for you.

Psalms 126:3 The LORD has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.

What great things has God done for us?

What does joy look like?

How is joy expressed?

Let thankfulness lead to peace.

Colossians 3:15-16 ¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

Paul is speaking to the Colossian church about Christian unity in this section of his letter. People are naturally at odds with one another. People are also naturally at odds with God because of sin. When a person comes to faith in Christ and is forgiven of their sins, they are then at peace with God. People who are at peace with God should be at peace with one another.

Paul says that we are called to peace with each other. Closely related to this peace is thankfulness. A grateful person gets along well with other believers

because he or she has given control to God. A person who grumbles is obviously not grateful with the Lord.

It is with this attitude of gratitude that we make disciples. We teach and admonish each other with a view to the sovereignty of God in our lives and in our church rather than with selfish motives and desires.

How can I live at peace if others are not grateful to God?

How can I let the word of Christ dwell in me richly?

How do you admonish with gratitude in your heart?

Let thankfulness lead to concern for God's concerns.

Psalm 66:1-20 For the director of music. A song. A psalm. Shout with joy to God, all the earth! **2** Sing the glory of his name; make his praise glorious! **3** Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies cringe before you. **4** All the earth bows down to you; they sing praise to you, they sing praise to your name." Selah **5** Come and see what God has done, how awe-

some his works in man's behalf! 6 He turned the sea into dry land, they passed through the waters on foot-- come, let us rejoice in him. 7 He rules forever by his power, his eyes watch the nations-- let not the rebellious rise up against him. Selah 8 Praise our God, O peoples, let the sound of his praise be heard; 9 he has preserved our lives and kept our feet from slipping. 10 For you, O God, tested us; you refined us like silver. 11 You brought us into prison and laid burdens on our backs. 12 You let men ride over our heads; we went through fire and water, but you brought us to a place of abundance. 13 I will come to your temple with burnt offerings and fulfill my vows to you-- 14 vows my lips promised and my mouth spoke when I was in trouble. 15 I will sacrifice fat animals to you and an offering of rams; I will offer bulls and goats. Selah 16 Come and listen, all you who fear God; let me tell you what he has done for me. 17 I cried out to him with my mouth; his praise was on my tongue. 18 If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened; 19 but God has surely listened and heard my voice in prayer. 20 Praise be to God, who has not rejected my prayer or withheld his love from me!

Underline in the Psalm above all of the things which God has done.

Are they all things to be thankful for?

List all of the responses that the psalmist says he will do.

How does thanksgiving relate to telling others what God has done?

Should thankfulness to God cause me to have a Kingdom perspective?

God has done incredible things for us. We should have enormous gratitude. Think about how much a parent does for a child yet the child recognizes so little of it. Similarly, we recognize so little of what God has done for us.

Ask God to show you what He has done and is doing. Spend some time thanking Him for all that He has done for you as an individual. Thank Him for all that He has done throughout history. Thank Him for what He has done with our church and what He will continue to do.

Think about the Kingdom of God and your role in it.

Pray for a lost person.

Watch for opportunities to have spiritual conversations

Inward Transformation—Prayer Transforms Me

Asking God

God reveals Himself in the image of a Father. Just as an earthly father provides for his children, God provides for His children. He tells us to ask Him for things. But He also provides instructions for us to follow in our asking.

A young child asks for juice by pointing and grunting. The parent teaches the child how to ask. As the child matures, he or she learns to ask differently. She learns to ask for the item by name. She learns how to ask with the proper attitude. And she learns when to ask. Similarly, as we grow in spiritual maturity, we learn how to ask God. We learn how to properly ask and we learn to ask for that which God desires to give.

Prayer transforms. Prayers of petition (asking) transform me because they teach me dependence on God. In asking God, I learn that He is the provider of everything.

Ask for needs.

Matthew 6:11

Give us today our daily bread.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught about how to live in a relationship with God. In chapter 6 of Matthew, Jesus teaches us about prayer. He tells us to pray about our needs. By *daily bread*, Jesus did not specifically mean baked goods made from grain.

He used *bread* generically to mean food. We need food every day to stay alive. Food is one of our basic needs.

Children often confuse needs with wants. When a child comes with a request that he is convinced is a valid need, the parent may



help him to process the request by asking questions. What is it that you really want? How long have you wanted it? What would you do with it if you got it? Is this a real need or a temporary want? Is there something else that will suffice?

In our asking of God, we should hope to have the same kind of exchange with God. Asking is more than just filling out a requisition and leaving it in God's in-basket. A parent who finds a post-it note on the refrigerator from a teenager is likely to leave it unanswered until the child comes and talks.

Romans 8:26-27 tells us that the Holy Spirit helps us to pray. It also says that He searches our hearts. When we ask God, He searches our hearts and brings to light our motives and desires.

How do needs differ from wants?

What should be our attitude in asking the One whose name is hallowed?

What is our right to even ask? (see week 1)

What is our confidence in asking? (see week 2)

Ask for things that really matter.

Matthew 6:19-21

19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.

Jesus teaches us to have a proper perspective on worldly matters. He tells us that our desires should be for eternal concerns. Anything of the world is temporary. Wealth is temporary. Health is temporary. Our stuff is temporary. Our circumstances are temporary.

Some things are eternal. God is eternal in that He has no beginning or end. He has created us in His image. Part of being the image-bearers of God is that we are spir-

itual beings and will live forever. Even though we are all dying physically, we will all live eternally. Those who respond in faith to God through Jesus Christ will spend eternity with Him in heaven. Those who do not will spend eternity separated from Him in Hell.

God's plan is eternal. He had His plan in place before He created the universe. He has given us roles in His plan. We need His empow-

erment to play our part in His plan.

What do you really treasure?

What is really eternal?

What eternal things should we ask for?

Ask for things related to the Kingdom of God.

Matthew 6:24-33

²⁴ "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money. ²⁵ "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷ Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? ²⁸ "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹ Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹ So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Jesus teaches us that our first priority should be the Kingdom of God. Even people that don't know God desire that their daily needs are taken care of. We are different. Those of us who know God should have higher goals and desires.

The Kingdom of God is all that is yielded to the will of God. All of heaven is part of the Kingdom of

God. The angels in heaven are obedient to God. The angels who rebelled against God have been cast out of heaven. They are the demons who follow Satan. The people in heaven are those who followed God while on earth and now live eternally with God. They are part of the Kingdom of God. Those people alive on earth who

have responded in faith to Christ are part of the Kingdom of God. That is why Jesus said in John 17 that His followers are in the world but not of the world. We live in the world, but we are citizens of heaven.

God is making His plan work. When we came to faith in Christ, we became children of God and citizens of His Kingdom. We now have a role in His Kingdom. God is still in the miracle business, but from our perspective, He uses us to get things done. The Holy Spirit also empowers us to do the things that we are called to do. We need daily bread, but we also need things related to the Kingdom. Jesus said to seek first God's Kingdom and His righteousness. We

need spiritual strength. We need spiritual bread. We need spiritual health.

As we talk with God about our requests, we should talk about how this will glorify Him. We should talk with Him about how this relates to His Kingdom. As we interact with Him, we are transformed. Our motives and desires come into alignment with Him.

How do we ask God for things related to the Kingdom?

How do we pray for spiritual growth and holiness?

Do you pray for the fruit of the spirit? (Galatians 5:22-23)

In prayer, we ask God to fulfill our desires. But sin leads to desires that are outside of God's will. God's word guides us in prayer. The Holy Spirit also guides us in prayer. We ask because God has invited us to ask Him. He has commanded us to ask Him. But we also grow in our asking.

Asking is a two-way process; we ask and God searches our hearts. As our hearts come into alignment with His heart, He changes what we ask for. Our requests line up with what He desires to provide.

Continue to pray for a lost friend. Don't have a lost friend? Ask God to bring you into contact with lost people. Ask God for opportunities to have spiritual conversations with your lost friends.

Inward Transformation—Prayer Transforms Me

Asking God for Direction

Prayer transforms. Prayers of petition (asking) transform me because they teach me dependence on God. In asking God for direction, I acknowledge that His way is the best way. I understand that He knows more than I do and I submit my will to His will.

Ask God to reveal His heart.

Psalm 86:11

Teach me your way, O LORD, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name.

This is a psalm of David. It is a psalm of personal lament. David is in trouble with godless men seeking his life. Yet his confidence is in God. He cries out to God for mercy and deliverance. He is confident that God will answer his prayer because of his previous experience with God.

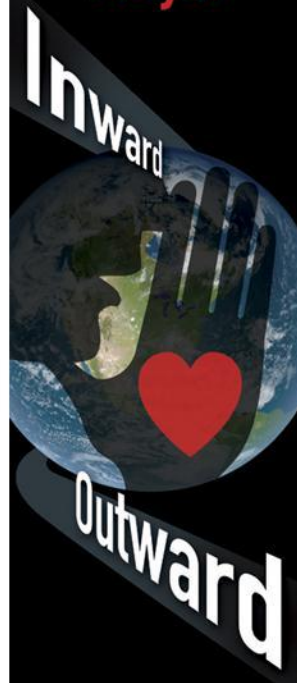
We are focusing on verse 11 in which David makes two requests and gives two expected responses to the anticipated answer to this prayer. The two requests are:

- Teach me your way
Give me an undivided heart

The two responses are:

- I will walk in your truth
I will fear your name
- David is not making a bargain with God. He is not offering something to God: if you do this, then I will do that in return. He is not offering the responses as payments for the requests. Instead, David is presenting the responses as the actual desired out-

Transforming
Prayer



come. What David really wants is to walk in the ways of the Lord and to fear His name. In order to make that happen, he needs to know God's ways and have an undivided heart.

How does God teach us His ways?

What does walking in His truth look like?

Ask God to help you follow Him daily.

Psalm 27:11

Teach me your way, O LORD; lead me in a straight path because of my oppressors.

This is another psalm of David. His circumstances are tough but his main desire is to be with God forever. His theme through this psalm is to seek the face of the Lord. He wants to walk with God and lead the people of Israel to walk with God. But it is hard to follow God when circumstances are incredibly tough. We usually want to deal with the problem at hand. David's prayer is that he be able to walk in the ways of the Lord even in the face of opposition.

The circumstances of life can distract us from following God. We must intentionally focus on God when the going gets tough. We have to know the ways of God intimately in order to resist the distractions of life. In order to follow God when life is total chaos, we must learn to follow Him daily.

What kind of oppression do we face?

How does it keep us from walking straight?

Commit each day to God in advance.

Psalm 37:4-5

Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart. ⁵ Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this:

Most of us look ahead at the day each morning. We take a look at what we have to do, where we have to go, and who we have to talk to. If we have appointments or errands then we have to factor them into our plan for the day. We have to think about what we will eat and Where we have to drive.

Many people pray at the beginning of their day. We should all take

stock of our day in light of God and His will. David says to "commit your way to the Lord." Dedicate your day to God in advance. Make your plans for the days prayerfully.

What delights God's heart?

What does trust have to do with answered prayer?

Pray for God's ways to be your ways.

Psalm 119:33-40

33 Teach me, O LORD, to follow your decrees; then I will keep them to the end. 34 Give me understanding, and I will keep your law and obey it with all my heart. 35 Direct me in the path of your commands, for there I find delight. 36 Turn my heart toward your statutes and not toward selfish gain. 37 Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to your word. 38 Fulfill your promise to your servant, so that you may be feared. 39 Take away the disgrace I dread, for your laws are good. 40 How I long for your precepts! Preserve my life in your righteousness.

Psalm 119 is the longest psalm in the Bible. We don't know who wrote it or exactly when it was written. Likely it was written after the Babylonian exile. It is an alphabetic acrostic psalm. It consists of 22 stanzas. Each stanza sequentially begins with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Each stanza consists of eight verses.

The theme of the psalm is loyalty and devotion to God. The desire of the psalmist is that the people would find joy in obedience to God. He uses eight different words for God's law: law (torah), word (dabar), laws (mispatim), statutes, commands, decrees, precepts, and word (imrah). Each of

these words is used about twenty times.

Verses 33 through 40 are the "Hestrophe." He is the fifth letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The psalmist sees the only desirable course of action in life to be in conjunction with the Word of God. His prayer is to be taught, to have understanding, and to be directed. He asks for conversion of his heart of turning of his eyes.

*How do we generally view obedience?
How can we delight in obedience?
(verse 35)*

We are naturally selfish people. We spend our time and effort seeking to satisfy our own desires. Even when we do the "right" things, we often do them with selfish motives. We need God's direction to live life as His people devoted to His ways.

God will reveal His ways and delights in our asking Him for direction.

Continue to pray for a lost friend. Don't have a lost friend? Ask God to bring you into contact with lost people. Ask God for opportunities to have spiritual conversations with your lost friends.

Inward Transformation—Prayer Transforms Me**Asking God for Forgiveness**

Prayer transforms. As I pray, I am transformed. Prayers of repentance transform me because they align my thinking with God. In confessing my sin to God, I agree with God about sin. We live in a sinful fallen world. It is easy to get comfortable with sin.

In order to have a healthy growing relationship with God, I must be serious about sin in my life. Sin damages my relationship with God. Sin damages my witness to the world around me. Sin damages my relationships with my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

Sin is light-years beyond what is legal, ethical, or even polite. Sin is a violation of the will of God. Sin creates a barrier between us and God. In order to heal the relationship, we must be willing to talk to God about the problem. We need to confess and repent. We need to pray.

Recognize that sin impedes prayer.

Isaiah 59:2

But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.

Sin, as an act, is an offense against God. Sin, as a condition, is offensive to God. Offenses strain relationships. Sin strains our relationship with God.

Isaiah is answering a question asked by the people of Israel. From verse 1, it seems that they wondered why God did not answer



their prayers. Maybe His arm was "too short." In other words, He was not powerful enough to act on their behalf. Maybe His ear was "too dull." They wondered if He just was not paying attention to them. Isaiah answers that God is not limited in His ability or willingness to answer their prayers. The problem was their hearts. Sin acts as a barrier to prayer. Sin damages the relationship.

God is neither powerless nor insensitive. But He is holy. The main characteristic of God pronounced by people who have an encounter with God is His holiness. Habakkuk

(1:13) says that God is too holy to look at evil. 1 John 1:6 tells us that sin prevents fellowship with God.

If you feel like your prayers are not reaching God, consider the effect of sin on your relationship with God.

What are some sins that we easily tolerate?

Think about how offenses damage communications with other people.

Ask God to show you sin in your life.

Psalm 139:23-24

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. 24 See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Sometimes we can be blind to sin in our lives. It is often easier to see everybody else's problems while remaining clueless about our own problems. God wants to show us our sin.

He can use a variety of means to expose our sin. He can use circumstances and consequences. Sometimes we get caught in our sin. If I tell a lie and it comes out into the open, my sin has been exposed. God can use His word to show me sin. As I read His word, if I am really

open to Him, He will show me where my life does not measure up to His standards. He can also use other believers to show me my sin.

Paul tells us in Galatians 6:1 that we are responsible to challenge a brother or sister caught up in sin. He also warns us to be careful. We must check our motives and have a clean heart.

God also uses prayer to reveal our sin. As we have a heart-to-heart connection with God, our

sin will be exposed. The purity and holiness of God shows our sin for what it is.

This prayer in Psalm 139 is for God to reveal sin in the life of the one praying. Earlier in the Psalm, he praises God for His absolute knowledge. God knows everything about us. He even knows our sin. He knows our hearts better than we do.

When we talk to God about sin, it is not just informing Him of what He already knows, we are asking Him to show us what we don't know. Ask God to show you sin in your life.

How does God tell us in prayer about specific sin?

How can prayerfully reading the Bible show us sin?

Repent of your sins.

Matthew 6:12

Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Matthew records the Lord's prayer here as using the word "debts."

Luke records a similar prayer in Luke 11:4 where he uses the word "sins." The key idea is forgiveness. Jesus used the image of forgiving debts to teach about forgiving sins. Whenever we sin, we sin against God and we need His forgiveness.

When we first come to Christ we are legally guilty and need the forgiveness of sins to be able to stand before God as innocent. Sins committed after coming to Christ do not change our legal standing for God. We are still forgiven and saved. But sins committed after coming to Christ still harm our relationship with God. We still need to confess our sins to God.

We don't confess our sins to inform

God about something that He doesn't know. We confess our sins to align ourselves with His will. Sin is outside of His will. In confessing we acknowledge the sin and agree with God about sin.

True repentance requires change. Repentance is more than just saying "I'm sorry." It involves changing attitudes and behaviors. It means having a change in heart. Jesus adds an attitude check to Matthew 6:12. Our true repentance to God can be gauged by our ability and willingness to forgive other people.

Can I have an open heart toward God while keeping a hard heart toward other people?

Pray for God's strength to keep you from sin.

Psalm 86:11

Teach me your way, O LORD, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name.

God wants to strengthen us to resist sin. The Holy Spirit empowers us to live for Christ. We cannot have divided hearts. We cannot be comfortable with sin and faithful to God. Our prayers should reflect our desire to have undivided hearts.

An undivided heart is one that is whole devoted to God. Think in terms of a relationship. Devotion requires time together. Devotion required making God's priorities my priorities. Prayer is necessary for devotion to occur. A defense against sin is to spend real time with God in a heart-to-heart connection.

John Charles Ryle was an Anglican Bishop in England in the 19th century. He wrote:

Praying and sinning will never live together in the same heart. Prayer will consume sin, or sin will choke prayer.

Note that Psalm 86 links an undivided heart with knowing God's truth and following that truth. We have to seek to know God's word and seek to follow God's word.

How can spiritual disciplines help with an undivided heart?

Can I have an undivided heart without spiritual disciplines?

We live in a sinful world that denies the authority of God. It is very easy to adopt the values of the world and deny the values of God. We need to see things from God's perspective. We need Him to show us our sin. And when He does reveal our sin, we must respond and allow God to heal the relationship.

Continue to pray for a lost friend. Don't have a lost friend? Ask God to bring you into contact with lost people. Ask God for opportunities to have spiritual conversations with your lost friends.

Inward Transformation—Prayer Transforms Me**Asking God for Deliverance**

Prayer transforms. As I pray, I am transformed. God wants me to depend on Him. He wants me to come to Him in times of need.

Often we think of deliverance as God rescuing us in times of great trouble. This is a good picture but somewhat incomplete. As followers of Christ we are always in peril because there are spiritual forces that oppose God. We need deliverance continually because we are continually under spiritual attack.

Satan is at war with those who follow God. He launches attacks aimed to cause us to question God or disobey God. Often the attacks are so subtle that we not even know that we are under attack.

Remember that Jesus equated anger with murder and lust with adultery (Matthew 5:21-28). If Satan can push you into sins of attitudes, then he has won the battle.

Adopt Jesus' perspective on spiritual warfare.

Matthew 6:13

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Jesus includes a prayer for deliverance from Satan in His model prayer. A theme throughout the Old Testament is God delivering His people from their adversaries.

As His people faced opposition or oppression, they cried out to God for deliverance. They prayed that God would rescue them from those who would prevent



them from being the people that God intended.

Satan opposes the Kingdom of God. Those who follow Christ are citizens of God's Kingdom. Satan is looking to prevent us from following God the way we should. We need God's deliverance from the opposition of Satan.

Spiritual warfare is the efforts of Satan and his followers to thwart the advancement of the Kingdom of God.

Was Jesus speaking about evil in general or a personal Satan? (Hint: check Matthew 4:1-11)

Be aware of Satan's goals.

1 Peter 5:8

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

Satan is committed to our destruction. His aim is not necessarily to make us miserable, but to cause us to disobey God. He wants to destroy our witness for Christ. He wants to distract us from the mission of Christ. He wants to dilute our passion for Christ.

Peter tells us to be alert to the ways of Satan. He is on the prowl for someone to devour. All Christians are targets of Satan, but there are two likely targets. One is the person who is spiritually weak. An immature Christian lacks the spiritual maturity to remain faithful through a spiritual attack. If Satan can convince new believers that the Christian life is too hard or not worth the effort, then he can derail their usefulness to God for perhaps the rest of their lives.

The other target is the Christian who is making a difference. Satan does not have unlimited resources. He would rather expend the resources that he has on Christians who are being used by God than on nominal Christians.

A prime target for Satan is the unity among believers. Nothing will distract a church from the mission of Christ like disunity.

What are we doing that Satan doesn't like?

How can we be strengthened by prayer?

Turn to God for deliverance.

Psalm 3:1-8

A psalm of David. When he fled from his son Absalom. O LORD, how many are my foes! How many rise up against me! 2 Many are saying of me, "God will not deliver him." Selah 3 But you are a shield around me, O LORD; you bestow glory on me and lift up my head. 4 To the LORD I cry aloud, and he answers me from his holy hill. Selah 5 I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the LORD sustains me. 6 I will not fear the tens of thousands drawn up against me on every side. 7 Arise, O LORD! Deliver me, O my God! Strike all my enemies on the jaw; break the teeth of the wicked. 8 From the LORD comes deliverance. May your blessing be on your people. Selah

David prayed for deliverance from those who sought his destruction. In this specific event, the opposition came from his own son, Absalom. Absalom tried to replace David and become the king of Israel. His plan was not from God but came from his own selfishness and hurt.

David felt inadequate to deal with the opposition and fled from Jerusalem with those who remained loyal to him. David turned to God as his only sustainment in his time of despair. He also called out to God for deliverance.

Notice the point in the narrative of 2 Samuel where this event occurs. Chapter 12 is the conclusion of the account of David's sin with Bathshe-

ba. Chapter 13 begins the account of Absalom and all of the events which led up to his rebellion against David. The opposition to David was rooted in David's sinful actions. Similarly, when we stray from God, we are not only open to Satan's attacks at that time, but we set ourselves up for future consequences.

Who seeks our destruction?

How could you reword Psalm 3 for our struggle with Satan?

Make prayer an integral element of spiritual warfare.

Ephesians 6:18

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

Our struggle is spiritual. Prayer is the final word for how to handle spiritual opposition. Paul says in Ephesians 6:12

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

The opposition is spiritual. It is spiritual warfare. Paul lists the armour of God which will protect us in the battle. He finishes the section with prayer. We must stay close to God and talk to him about our spiritual struggles.

Is our attention on God or the spiritual opposition?

God has a plan and has included us in His plan. He has given us a mission. He has assigned us the work of making disciples. Satan opposes God's plan. He will do whatever he can to keep us from making disciples.

Satan's goal is to prevent us from obeying God. The solution is to remain obedient even in the face of opposition. In order to do this, we must focus on God and our relationship with Him. We must keep God's plan in the forefront of our thinking. We must keep praying.

Continue to pray for a lost friend. Pray in light of the reality of spiritual warfare. Our mission is to make disciples. Satan does not want your friend to become a disciple. Satan does not want you to grow as a disciple.

Outward Transformation—Prayer Transforms the World

Praying for One Another

Prayer transforms. As I pray, I am transformed. Prayer is a connection with the creator of the universe. Any encounter with Him should result in a change in me.

God uses prayer in His plan. He uses it to transform us, but He also uses it in the transformation of the world. His plan is to reconcile those who are lost with Himself. He uses us in His plan. As participants, prayer is essential for us.

Christianity is a team sport. We accomplish God's will in the world as a group. We must pray for each other as we follow God. We pray for each other as fellow children of God.

We pray for each other out of love. Jesus said that the world would recognize us as His followers because of our love for each other (John 13:35).

Pray for other believers.

Ephesians 6:18

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

Paul says in Ephesians 6 that there is a spiritual struggle in progress. Satan opposes God's plan and all those who follow God. Paul explains the spiritual armor that all Christians need to withstand that attacks of Sa-

tan which are designed to keep us distant from God and prevent us from following and obeying God. The armor is God's armor. The power necessary to withstand the enemy is



God's power. Therefore we pray for others in light of this spiritual struggle.

Paul recognized the spiritual opposition to his ministry. He asks his fellow believers to pray for him and his coworkers.

Romans 15:31; 2 Corinthians 1:11; Ephesians 6:19; Colossians 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 5:25; 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2

He also mentions often in his letters that he prayed for the people in the churches that he knew. He prayed for every aspect of their lives.

If we care about the others in our lives, then we should regularly pray for them.

The closer that people are, the more we should pray for them. We have the most insight into the lives of others that we have the closest relationships with. We see their needs and struggles most.

Read all of Ephesians 6. How does the context of this passage influence how you pray for others?

Pray for brothers and sisters who are sick.

James 5:14-16

14 Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. 16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

When we are sick, we should ask others to pray for us. In this passage of James, he is describing someone with a life-threatening illness who is bedridden. This person should ask for the prayer of others.

James says to call for the elders. Some scholars think this is representative of the whole congregation.

The point is that we should feel free to call others for prayer when we are in need.

The role of small groups is incredibly important in this ministry of prayer for the sick. We pray for those with whom we have relationships. It is the people in our

small groups that we have the closest relationships.

It is vital that new people in the church are assimilated into small groups as soon as possible.

James links prayer for each other to the relationships within the church. What does this imply for the importance of being connected to others in the church?

Do you regularly pray for those in your small group?

Does your small group have a mechanism to alert each other as to needs?

Pray for brothers and sisters stuck in sin.

1 John 5:16

16 If anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray and God will give him life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that he should pray about that.

Too often, when we see a fellow believer sin, the first impulse is to talk to others about it. This is called gossip. There are two individuals that we should talk to. First is the person who has sinned. As brothers and sisters in Christ, we are commanded to challenge each other over sin. (Galatians 6:1)

We are also to talk to God about the problem. We should pray about this person's relationship with God. Sin damages one's relationship with God. We should ask God to heal and restore this person.

As we pray for the other person,

two things should occur. First, we should become more aware of sin in our own lives. As we talk with God about sin, we see things more from His perspective and we become more open to His leading in our own lives.

Secondly, as we pray for a fellow believer for whom we care, we should become aware of the role that we should play in God's restoration of this person.

How would you phrase a prayer for someone who is stubbornly refusing to submit to God?

Pray for others to glorify God.

Colossians 1:9-10

9 For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. 10 And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God

Paul told the people of the church at Colossae that he prayed for them regularly. He prayed with purpose. He prayed that they would grow in their relationship with God and that they would be used more and more in God's plan.

God has a plan and each of us is included in His plan. He has a role for each of us in His Kingdom. His desire is that each of us grow in godliness. He wants us all to grow closer to him and be transformed

into the likeness of Christ.

We should pray for each other that we could grow in spiritual maturity. We should pray for the transformation of one another. We should pray that we could all bear fruit for God.

Re-word this passage into a prayer using names of people in your small group.

Why are my prayers not transforming the world? Maybe because I have not been transformed by prayer. As we shift to the topic of prayers transforming the world, don't lose sight of God's desire that we be transformed through prayer.

Ask God to show you how He views the world around you. Then pray for His will to be done.

Continue to pray for a lost friend. Ask God to bring you into contact with lost people. Ask God for opportunities to have spiritual conversations with your lost friends.

Outward Transformation—Prayer Transforms the World

Praying for the Kingdom

Prayer transforms. As I pray, I am transformed. Prayer is a connection with the creator of the universe. Any encounter with Him should result in a change in me.

God uses prayer in His plan. He uses it to transform us, but He also uses it in the transformation of the world. The plan of God is all about His Kingdom. He intends to use pray in His advance of His Kingdom.

Pray for the Kingdom of God to come.

Matthew 6:10

your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Jesus included prayer for the Kingdom of God in His model prayer. The Kingdom of God is all that is in submission to the will of God. In heaven, everything and everybody is perfectly submitted to the will of God. Jesus' prayer is that all on earth will submit to God.

Our prayer for the Kingdom should begin with our own submission. We should talk to God about His will and our will. We should ask God to show us where

our wills are not in submission to Him. We should then pray about those areas where we hold back from God. Some people call these areas strongholds. These are places which we cling to and refuse to turn over to God. We must pray about these strongholds. Paul said,

The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. (2 Corinthians 10:4)

Our biggest weapon is prayer. It has the



divine power to demolish strongholds. By divine power, he means the power of God. In praying about the Kingdom, we must begin with our own hearts.

C. S. Lewis talks about the prayer "your Kingdom come" as a prayer for God to use our witness for the expansion of His Kingdom. Lewis calls the world "enemy occupied territory" and Christianity as "the story of how

the rightful king has landed in disguise and is calling us all to take part in a great campaign of sabotage." (*Mere Christianity*)

As our hearts connect with God and we pray about His Kingdom, we begin to see more clearly our role in the advance of God's Kingdom.

How is submission to the will of God related to the Kingdom?

Pray for the Kingdom of God to grow.

Mark 4:26-32

26 He also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. 27 Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. 28 All by itself the soil produces grain-- first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. 29 As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come." 30 Again he said, "What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? 31 It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest seed you plant in the ground. 32 Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds of the air can perch in its shade."

In several of His lessons about the Kingdom, Jesus described something that begins small and grows large. It grows in size and influence and power. In this parable, Jesus compares the Kingdom to seeds which grow into crops. The farmer plants the seed, but God makes it grow.

How it happens is a mystery and requires no understanding on the part of the farmer. The farmer has a role – he plants and reaps- but the growth is done by God.

The parables that Jesus told about the Kingdom paint a picture of growth. It is natural for

the Kingdom to grow.

Growth of the Kingdom requires that we plant and reap. That means that we must engage the world with the gospel. We

should pray for our effectiveness in planting and reaping.

Is numerical growth required for Kingdom growth?

Pray for a change of heart toward the Kingdom of God.

Mark 10:14-27

14 When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 15 I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." 16 And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them. 17 As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 18 "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good-- except God alone. 19 You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.'" 20 "Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy." 21 Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." 22 At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth. 23 Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!" 24 The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." 26 The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, "Who then can be saved?" 27 Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God."

Jesus used the children as a lesson about the Kingdom of God. He said that we must accept the Kingdom like a child. The point of the lesson is not the children but the Kingdom. Parents wanted to bring their children to Jesus so that He could bless

them. The disciples tried to stop the parents. We have to ask why the disciples acted this way.

We cannot understand this story unless we comprehend the place of children in the society at this time. Children were unimportant. They were considered a blessing to a fam-

ily and a woman with no children was considered cursed. But, the children themselves had no place in society. They had no rights.

So when Jesus said that we come into the Kingdom like children, He meant that we come helpless, dependent, and insignificant. We come into the Kingdom in weakness.

Jesus used the interaction with the rich man to teach about the Kingdom. He said that it is difficult to enter the Kingdom of God. The

difficulty for the rich man was a change in his priorities. He wanted the Kingdom, but not more than he wanted his riches. Jesus challenged his heart. In order to receive the Kingdom, the man had to give up what mattered most to him.

A heart change is required for the Kingdom. We must give up ourselves.

As I become part of God's Kingdom, what changes should happen to my will, my trust, and my priorities?

Pray anxiously for the Kingdom of God.

Mark 11:9-10

9 Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" 10 "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!" "Hosanna in the highest!"

The people of Jerusalem who celebrated the entry of Jesus were anxious for the Kingdom of God. They did not really understand the Kingdom. They thought that God would send a new earthly King to restore the throne of King David. They longed for a return of the glory days of Israel like when David and Solomon were King.

We should be anxious for the

Kingdom to be fully realized. We should anxiously await the return of Christ. We should pray with eager anticipation for the Kingdom. If we want the Kingdom more than anything else, then our prayers should reflect that desire.

Do you pray for the Kingdom with anxiousness?

Think about the Kingdom of God and how you fit into it. How does every aspect of your world fit into the Kingdom? Spend some time talking with God about it. Ask Him to give you His perspective on how your life fits into His Kingdom.

Continue to pray for a lost friend. Ask God to bring you into contact with lost people. Ask God for opportunities to have spiritual conversations with your lost friends.

Outward Transformation—Prayer Transforms the World

Praying for the Lost

Prayer transforms. As I pray, I am transformed. Prayer is a connection with the creator of the universe. Any encounter with Him should result in a change in me.

God uses prayer in His plan. He uses it to transform us, but He also uses it in the transformation of the world. The plan of God is the reconciliation of the lost to Himself. He uses prayer in that process.

Pray to see people like Jesus did.

Matthew 9:36

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

When Jesus saw the crowds in the towns as He traveled, He saw the people with the attitude of compassion. They were like sheep without a shepherd. In other words, they were lost and unable to care for themselves.

The concern is their spiritual condition. They were separated from God because of their sin but did not know how to connect with God. The Israelites had been given

instructions from God on how they were to relate to Him, but the majority of people just followed a religion.

Similarly, today, most people know something about God, but they probably don't really know how to connect to God. They think that they are OK spiritually even when they are not. They have adopted the popular idea of the society. Most people think that as long as you



live a good life, God will be happy with what you have done.

Some religious people might add that as long as you also go to church, you have done what is necessary to please God.

We should see people the way that Jesus saw them. We should

see lost people as truly lost. They are doomed. Our view should be one of compassion. Our hearts should be broken for lost people.

How do you view lost people?

Pray for opportunities to touch lost people like Jesus.

Matthew 9:9-13

9 As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. 10 While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples. 11 When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" 12 On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. 13 But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

The religious leaders in Jesus' time criticized Jesus for spending time with people who did not follow God. Jesus answered their criticism with the truth that these people needed to have an encounter with God.

As we get involved with a church, often we find that all of our friends are Christians. This is easy as we worship together and minister together. We share a common value system and worldview. Unfortunately, we

tend to find ourselves "cocooned" from the rest of the world.

Jesus said that we are in the world but not of the world. He intends that we spend time with people who do not know Christ. We should not view these people as projects or customers who I am selling a product to, but as real people who are created in the image of God just as we are.

The question is not “Do I have an unbeliever that I am working on,” but rather, “Do I have real personal relationships with unbelievers?”

How many of your good friends are lost?

How can a Christian develop friendships with non-Christians?

Pray that lost people could see your faith in Christ.

Matthew 5:13-16

13 "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. 14 "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

If we are living lives dedicated to Christ, then others will see our faith played out in real life.

There are two obstacles. First is the proximity to lost people. In order for lost people to see Christ in our lives, we must be close enough for that to occur. This means that we must have real relationships with lost people.

Second is living a life for Christ in an observable way. It is not enough just to be a nice moral person. We must be living for Christ. That means that our priorities are in tune with God's priorities. Our values must match God's values. The Kingdom of God must be the driving force in our lives.

Notice that the reason given for being salt and light in the world is so that people will be drawn to God. This means that we must make it clear why we live the way we do. It is because of our devotion to Christ. This can be done in a respectful manner. We explain why we do what we do. I do this because of my desire to follow Christ. Then when the unbeliever has a time in his life that he asks, “What do I do?”, you can invite them to follow Christ also.

Do you intentionally live so as to show Christ in your life?

Pray fervently for lost people.

Romans 9:1-5

I speak the truth in Christ-- I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit-- 2 I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, 4 the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. 5 Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.

Paul had great compassion for the lost. He particularly prayed for his fellow Jews. He said that he would give up his own salvation if that were possible if it would result in the salvation of the Jews. Paul laments that the Jews were the people who had carried the Word of God. They were the ones with whom God had worked. Yet most of them ignored what God was doing through Christ.

We could say similar things

about Americans. The people around us have exposure to the truth of Christianity. Many were raised going to church. Many even attend church regularly now. But most do not have a relationship with Christ.

Our hearts should be broken for the people around us who do not know Christ.

Do you pray with fervor for lost people that you know?

Continue to pray for a lost friend. Don't have a lost friend? Ask God to bring you into contact with lost people. Ask God for opportunities to have spiritual conversations with your lost friends.

Outward Transformation—Prayer Transforms the World

Praying for the Church to Reach the Lost

Prayer transforms. As I pray, I am transformed. Prayer is a connection with the creator of the universe. Any encounter with Him should result in a change in me.

God uses prayer in His plan. He uses it to transform us, but He also uses it in the transformation of the world. The plan of God is the reconciliation of the lost to Himself. He uses prayer in that process.

God calls us into a community. He uses the community of the church to reach the local community.

Pray for prayer to be a priority of the church.

Acts 2:42

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Acts 4:31

After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

As the early church began its ministry in earnest, they were drawn together in prayer. They recognized that their mission was from God and that they could only accomplish what God had called them to do if they did it in His power. They connected with God in prayer.

Prayer unified the people of the church. When they came together in prayer and submitted to the will of God, they jointly agreed to proceed under God's authority and follow His plan. They each set aside their own priorities and agendas and



adopted God's strategy.

Prayer empowered the people of the church. They encountered the Holy Spirit in prayer who enabled them to face their fears and live obediently to God's calling for their lives.

Prayer emboldened the people of the church. As they encountered

God, their faith was increased and they had the confidence that God was in control. They gained a more spiritual perspective on life and a higher degree of trust in God.

Do you see prayer as essential for the church?

Pray for the lost to be a priority of the church.

Philippians 1:27

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel

Paul challenged the people of the Philippian church to be careful how they lived. He told them to live their lives in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. That means that they should actually live out their relationships with Christ so that others can see.

We are an example to the community of what it means to be a follower of Christ. People see the reality of Christianity in our lives.

If all of the people in the church are focusing on living for Christ, then there is real unity in the gospel. This unity comes from each of us submitting our wills to the will of God. Paul describes this

unity as standing firm in one spirit. Very few churches are perceived by the community as standing firm in one spirit.

Paul sees the result of unity in Christ as contending for the faith of the gospel. In other words, unity leads to a church taking the gospel into the community.

For a church to take the gospel into the community, the people of the community must become a priority for that church.

Reaching the lost of the community must become a higher priority than satisfying our own desires.

This only comes when we submit to God in prayer and align our wills with His will. When His priorities become our priorities,

then our prayers will be directed outward.

How can we as a church pray for the lost?

Pray for the church leaders to lead in following God's plan.

Ephesians 4:11

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers

2 Timothy 4:3

For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.

James 3:1

Not many of you should presume to

God has placed leaders within the church. He has given us people to serve as pastors, deacons, teachers, and ministry leaders. These leaders administer programs and direct the overall activity and function of the church. To be effective in leading the church to participate in God's plan, they must be growing as disciples and growing in submission to Christ.

As leaders, they are especially accountable to God and one another for their conduct. However, as humans, they are fallen and subject to the same temptations as everyone. They are also prime

be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.

Hebrews 13:17

Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.

targets of Satan for spiritual attack.

Church leaders need the prayer support of the whole church. They need God's empowerment to do what God has called them to do. They need the boldness of the Holy Spirit to remain true to God's calling. They need to remain close to God and grow as disciples.

Pray that our church leaders would stay faithful to God's plan.

Pray for how I fit into the plan.

1 Corinthians 12:12-20

12 The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. 13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body-- whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free-- and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. 14 Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. 15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. 19 If they were all one part, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

There are many images used to describe the church. The two most common are family and body. A family works well when relationships are healthy and based on love and respect.

A body works best when all of the parts are healthy and operating correctly and together. We are all parts of the body which is the church. All of us are necessary for the body to function properly. When one part of the body is sick or non-functional, the whole body suffers.

Each of us has a role in the mission of the church. That role is determined by the Holy Spirit.

God is ready to reveal His will to each one of us and to all of us as a group. We can only be as effective as God desires if each of us looks to God for our individual roles and then is obedient in filling that role.

The Holy Spirit empowers us to do what He has called us to do. Our mission is to make disciples. We all have responsibilities in that mission. We are all called to grow as disciples and help others grow as disciples.

We all have the mission to be the embodiment of Christ in the community.

Pray for your role in the church.

Continue to pray for a lost friend. Don't have a lost friend? Ask God to bring you into contact with lost people. Ask God for opportunities to have spiritual conversations with your lost friends.

Outward Transformation—Prayer Transforms the World

Praying for the World

Prayer transforms. As I pray, I am transformed. Prayer is a connection with the creator of the universe. Any encounter with Him should result in a change in me.

God uses prayer in His plan. He uses it to transform us, but He also uses it in the transformation of the world. His plan is to reconcile those who are lost with Himself. He uses us in His plan. As participants, prayer is essential for us.

Pray for the lost all over the world.

Matthew 28:18-20

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Shortly before Jesus went to heaven, He gave what we call "The Great Commission." This is where we get our mission of making disciples. Our primary focus is reaching those in our community, but the command is bigger than just our community. Jesus came to offer salvation for all the people of the world. He

said to make disciples of all nations. The Greek phrase *panta ta ethne* is translated as *all nations*. Jesus did not mean all of the nations as we would understand nations today. His meaning was really all the people of the world. However, *ethne* is the Greek word from which we get *ethnic*. A good



way to understand the Great Commission is to think of it as reaching all ethnic groups in the world. People who live in the same country can be extremely separated from one another because of barriers of culture, language, geography, ethnicity, or economic constraints. The mission is to take the gospel across all barriers to reach all people.

God has a heart for all people. Jesus came to die for all people. As His followers, we should have a heart for all the people of the world. We should pray for all people.

Does your heart break for the lost everywhere?

Pray for people to answer God's call to reach the lost.

Matthew 9:37 - 38

37 Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

Jesus had a heart for people. When He saw the people in the towns and villages He had compassion. He saw them as sheep without a shepherd. They needed a savior. His compassion for the people prompted His comment in Matthew 9:37-38. He saw the lost as a harvest. But a harvest needs workers.

God is in charge of the harvest. Jesus said to ask the Lord of the harvest to send out the workers. We ask God in prayer. We should pray for God to call workers into the harvest. We should pray that God will give us a heart for the lost.

Anyone can be a worker in the harvest. All it takes is a heart for the lost. Some will talk to those in their community about Christ. Some will participate in programs in the church to reach the lost. Some will answer the call of God to become missionaries.

Missionaries work to take the gospel across the boundaries. Some may work in our own community to reach people who speak other languages or come from different cultures. Some are called to leave and travel to other areas.

Pray for God to call missionaries. Pray for people to answer the call. Pray for them to have a passion for a group of people to take the gospel to.

Pray for workers for global evangelism.

Pray for missionaries.

Romans 10:15

And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

Many people answer the call of God to become missionaries. They come from many countries and many denominations. The Southern Baptist Convention has about 5,000 missionaries in North America through the North American Mission Board (NAMB). We also have about 5,000 missionaries in foreign countries with the International Mission Board (IMB).

Many of the NAMB missionaries work with specific types of people. They are campus ministers reaching college students. They work with immigrants to America who still have their native language and customs. They plant new churches to reach unchurched people.

Most of the IMB missionaries work with people groups. These are groups of people who are distinct in their language, customs, or ethnicity such as to

make them a distinct population. There are 11,573 people groups in the world. 6,508 of the people groups are unreached. That means that there are very few Christians, but there is active church planting. Almost 6,000 of the unreached people groups are called "last frontier." This means that there are essentially no Christians and no active church planting.

In South America, there are 699 people groups. The IMB is working with 87 of the groups. 200 of the people groups have no evangelical presence. There are 85 unreached tribes in the Amazon Basin that have no contact with the outside world.

It takes an intentional effort to take the gospel across the barriers.

Pray for unreached people groups.

Pray for missionaries.

Pray for our church to have an impact to the ends of the earth.

Acts 1:8

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Jesus told His disciples that His followers would be witnesses. They would testify as to what they know to be true about Christ. The rest of the account given in the book of Acts follows this spread of the gospel. It began in Jerusalem at the day of Pentecost, and then spread into Judea and Samaria with the persecution of Christians in Jerusalem. Then the gospel started out to the ends of the earth with the missionary journeys of Paul, Barnabas, and Silas. Since that time, the gospel has continued to cross boundaries.

We are placed here in our local community. Our gospel witness

is primarily to those within our community. However, the global outreach to the rest of the world requires our participation and support.

We can have an impact on global evangelization in a variety of ways. We can call people to missionary service and support their development. We can go on short-term mission trips to be personally involved in the effort. We can give to support the work of missionaries. We must pray for the effort.

Pray for us to have an effect to the ends of the earth.

Continue to pray for a lost friend. Ask God to bring you into contact with lost people. Ask God for opportunities to have spiritual conversations with your lost friends.

Expect Answers to Prayer

Prayer transforms. As I pray, I am transformed. Prayer is a connection with the creator of the universe. Any encounter with Him should result in a change in me.

God uses prayer in His plan. He uses it to transform us, but He also uses it in the transformation of the world. The plan of God is the reconciliation of the lost to Himself. He uses prayer in that process.

Pray for God's plan to be accomplished according to His timetable.

Revelation 6:9-11

9 When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. 10 They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" 11 Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.

Often in prayer we cry out to God to take care of our circumstances. God invites us to come to Him in our trouble. However, sometimes, our prayers are not answered right away. We may even feel as if our prayers are being ignored. In those times

of waiting, we are challenged to trust God.

In the passage above, the people praying to God are not asking for God to intervene in their own circumstances. They are already in heaven. They are martyrs who have

Transforming
Prayer



been killed for their faith in Christ. They are crying out for God's justice. They are crying out for God's Kingdom. But though they are asking for the right things with the right heart, they still are told to wait.

God has a plan and a schedule. Often our prayers are for issues that are good and proper, but are not aligned with God's schedule. Like the martyrs in heaven, God's answer to us is to trust Him that His plan is right.

They were given white robes which is symbolic of purity and righteousness. Their righteousness is not because of what they

have done, but because of their faith in Christ. They were told by God to wait and rest in their relationship with God. Similarly, when we wait on God's plan, we can celebrate our relationship with God through Christ.

When God does not act on our requests, it may be a matter of timing. Rather than giving up on prayer, we should seek to get closer to God.

Sometimes the answer to prayer is, "Not now."

Do you pray for God's plan to be accomplished?

Pray to experience the presence of God.

2 Corinthians 12:9

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my

Paul had a real problem. He didn't explain what the issue was, but it seems to be a medical problem. He called it a thorn in the flesh. He asked God to intervene and take care of the problem. Three times he asked God to heal his problem.

But God's answer was, "no." God said that He would not heal Paul. Rather than take the problem

away, God would use it for His own glory. Paul's infirmity would show that Paul operated in the power of God rather than his own power.

If we view prayer as a means to an end, then we are missing the very essence of prayer.

When we pray to God, we are in a relationship. Prayer is the communication at the center of

this relationship. Prayer should never be viewed as successful or unsuccessful. Communication with God is always successful.

The most amazing thing about prayer is not that God would grant our requests, but that He would allow us into His presence. Prayer is its own reward.

There is always value in prayer.

Sometimes the answer to our prayer is just to be in God's presence.

Do you pray for God's grace to be sufficient?

Do you celebrate your relationship with Christ in prayer?

Pray for your motives to be pure.

James 4:3

When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

We are naturally selfish people and our prayers often tend to drift in the direction of selfishness. Our prayers can become self-centered and all about making our lives happier or easier. God expects that as we get closer to Him, we will be transformed. Our thinking will change to align with His thinking. Our attitudes will change to match His attitudes. Our values will change to align with His values. Our prayers will also change to reflect those transformations.

When we pray with the wrong motives, our prayers seem to go unanswered. I pray for the same

things again and again, but nothing ever happens. The problem is not that God is ignoring my prayers. The problem is me.

If my prayers seem to never receive answers, I must check my heart. When do I pray? Is it only in times of need? What do I pray about? Is it primarily a list of requests?

Sometimes the answer to our prayer is that we need to change.

Do you pray for your heart to be pure?

Pray for your heart to align with God's heart.

Psalm 37:4

Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.

It only makes sense that we would not see answers to our prayers if our prayers are not in line with God's will. As we spend time with God in prayer, we experience transformation. If we really connect with God in prayer at a heart level, then our hearts align with God's heart.

God is not a butler standing by to wait on us to provide what we want. He is the creator. He knows best and has the best plan. He is holy and pure. He is all-powerful and all-loving. He wants the best. We must trust that He knows best, wants the best, and will provide the best. If we really trusted Him in that

way, then we would want what He wants.

If I truly love God, then I should want His desires to be achieved. If I truly trust God, then I should believe that His desires are the best. As my heart aligns with God's heart, His desires become my desires.

God answers our prayers when our desires are in line with His desires. The answer to prayer is always to align ourselves with God.

Do you pray for your heart to match God's heart?

Continue to pray for a lost friend. Ask God to bring you into contact with lost people. Ask God for opportunities to have spiritual conversations with your lost friends.

APPENDIX 7
FEEDBACK LETTER

When I first thought about my prayer life, I looked back on how I was taught to pray as a child. In my heart I knew it was all wrong for me. I had to say certain prayers on different days, throughout the year. If I did those I would get closer to God. Baloney! Those prayers did not express my feelings, wants and needs to God!

So my prayer life began talking with to God on my NEEDS and WANTS to be a better person. I asked for world peace and peace in my life...me me me! I was going down another dead end street with this frame of mind. With the help of my Pastor and friends in my small group, who prayed for me! I changed avenues, it was hard, I was so selfish in this world, I only wanted what's best for me and my comfort. Oh and if my mother or other family members were having troubles I would mention them in my whiny prayers to God. I would say take me now Lord when the going got tough. What a wimp.

I knew I was going nowhere and fast with what is expected of me in prayer. I had to change avenues so to speak. So I did, I looked around, not at churches, but at people. There had been people coming and going in my life who said that they knew Jesus and that's who I needed in my life, the first thought on this was "Bible Thumpers", but something about them drew me to their church. The praise and worship that I encountered was unbelievable. This was not a me thing! There was a peace about everyone, they glorified Jesus and they didn't go through Mary, Peter, Saul and any other. They spoke directly to HIM!

That's when I accepted Jesus as my Savior, I knew this emptiness in my heart was because I did not know Him.

Through this walk with God, I began to realize from others like my pastor and people in my small groups that my communication with God's Son was a vital need in my life. And boy was it (and still is) a rough road, when the devil hears of someone coming to Christ, he sends all hardships to that person. We can't give up! My prayer life is still not enough for me to go to heaven and it never will. I cannot thank God enough for giving me Jesus. But instead of whining so much I give myself to Jesus knowing He will be my advocate. I know that He died on the cross for my sins. I know this world is going to be hard for the rest of my life, but I do know that I need to continue to glorify and trust in Him.

Through all of this, I now know that I cannot keep this to myself, this is not a me thing. I have to shout to the world their need to know Jesus. That's what we are suppose to do. When Pastor Cliff asks us what is the purpose for Oakland...well Christians....we need to not just automatically just say...to make disciples...we need to shout out in joy that we are advocates of God to bring other people to Christ!

I do now have peace in my heart knowing that even through the hard times and bad times, I have the greatest protector of my soul and nothing can take that away from me.

Love all of you.

APPENDIX 8
SAMPLE CRITIQUE

Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	
			6. I pray for my role in advancing God's Kingdom.
			7. I ask God to give me opportunities to share the gospel.
			8. The more people that pray for something increases the chances of a favorable outcome.
			9. I have spiritual conversations with lost people at least weekly.
			10. I pray for my will to be conformed to God's will.
			11. I share the gospel with a lost person at least monthly.
			12. I regularly pray with another person who is not in my family.
			13. I regularly pray with my family.
			14. I regularly pray for my relationship with Christ to grow.
			15. I fear sharing the gospel.
			16. I look for opportunities to share the gospel with lost people that I am praying for.
			17. I ask God to teach me to pray.
			18. Prayer comes naturally to me.
			19. Prayer changes God's mind.
			20. Prayer changes me.

Please provide some demographic information:

How long have you attended Oakland? 60+

Please circle your age group: <18 18-29 30-39 40-49 50-59 60-69 70-79 80 & up

1. the idea was good
2. the content was fair
3. the management of material was good.

John 13: 34-5,

Figure A3. Feedback on post-project questionnaire

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ABSTRACT

INCREASING EVANGELISTIC EFFECTIVENESS THROUGH INTENTIONAL PRAYER AT OAKLAND BAPTIST CHURCH, KING GEORGE, VIRGINIA

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014
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The project seeks to increase the evangelistic activity of a church through focused teaching on prayer. Chapter 1 presents the purpose, goals, context, and rationale of the project.

Chapter 2 discusses the biblical and theological basis for basing evangelistic effort on prayer. The teaching of Jesus and the model established by Jesus, Paul, and Solomon provide biblical evidence for reliance on prayer for evangelism.

Chapter 3 surveys church leaders who have taught on the need for basing evangelism on prayer. Jonathan Edwards, Charles Spurgeon, E. M. Bounds, and various contemporary authors are examined.

Chapter 4 outlines the sermons and Sunday School lessons which constitute the teaching material of the project. The chapter also provides the implementation plan for the project.

Chapter 5 analyses and evaluates the results of the project. This project advocates that a church-wide focus on evangelistic prayer can impact the evangelistic effectiveness of a local church.

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