

Leading A Concert of Prayer for Spiritual Awakening
Lewis A. Drummond
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(titles)

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presents

LEADING A
CONCERT OF
PRAYER
For Spiritual Awakening
with
Dr. Lewis Drummond

This antique bust I have here is of the great London preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Thousands came eagerly to hear his eloquent speaking in the last century.

A hundred years later, and many miles away from London, I stood before a sea of eager Korean faces. Every eye was lifted up, every face beamed. It was difficult to believe what I was witnessing. They had not come to hear me preach. The time was 10:00 Friday night in a simple church prayer meeting. Few people normally come to church at ten o'clock on Friday night -- especially for this kind of a service. It was the beginning of an all night prayer meeting.

Hello, I'm Louie Drummond, Billy Graham professor of Evangelism at Southern Seminary. What a meeting I was attending there in Seoul, Korea. Now, there was nothing particularly special in the church program that had brought the people out for prayer. In this particular congregation, the people assemble EVERY Friday night simply to intercede through the hours for God's blessings upon their lives, their families, the church, the city and the world. What was most startling was the fact that there were about twenty-thousand people attending. That does sound incredible, doesn't it? Actually, in that dedicated congregation, there are groups of people praying 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The prayer life of that particular congregation of Christians is phenomenal.

They have a so-called "Prayer Mountain" where people go, simply to fast and pray. So many make their way up Prayer Mountain to intercede before the Lord, that a fleet of buses is required to carry prayer warriors up the mountain for a protracted season of fasting and praying. Beyond any shadow of doubt, this church is one of the most praying congregations in the history of Christianity. As a consequence of their dedication and depth of prayer, they baptize into their fellowship ten thousand new converts every MONTH. The pastor of this great congregation, Paul Yonggi Cho, said, "When I preach the Word of God, sinners immediately respond for salvation. Why do we have this spiritual atmosphere? The answer is prayer." The church has become something of a parable and challenge to the entire Christian community world wide. The Central Full Gospel Church of Seoul, Korea, well exceeds one-half million members and has become the largest congregation in the world.

But what is going on in the Central Church of Seoul under the leadership of its able pastor is actually no more than a barometer of what is taking place all over that blessed land.

Actually, in South Korea, there are four people born into the Kingdom of God to every person that is born in their country. Church growth generally is exceeding the general population growth by four to one; and Korea is in a part of the world where the population explosion is taking place. What a phenomenon! We must ask, what is taking place? The Korean church is in the grip of a mighty spiritual awakening. In answer to their fervent prayers, God has poured the might and majesty of His marvelous Holy Spirit. The Korean Christians recognize, as Frank Lauback, the father of modern literacy put it. (CG:)** "Prayer is the mightiest power on earth. Enough of us, if we prayed enough, could save the world."

The Koreans are doing just that, and the visible results are staggering. They have learned the secret that the prophet Zachariah uttered thousands of years ago when he said:

(CG:) "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts: . . .

. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord." (Zech 8:20-22 KJV)

** (CG:) means Character Generator" material typed on screen

That pungent passage from the Word of God was picked up and implemented, centuries ago by Jonathan Edwards (picture), one of God's key instruments in the great eighteenth century revival that swept both Britain and the early American colonies. In 1736, during the early days of the awakening, Jonathan Edwards penned a small book under the title, "A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God in Northampton, Massachusetts." (picture) A fascinating story lies behind that small volume. In the winter of 1734-1735, the "Surprising Work" of God began in Edwards' church. Jonathan Edwards had assumed the pastorate of the Northampton, Massachusetts Congregational Church on the death of his grandfather, the godly pastor, Solomon Stoddard. Through much prayer, in the winter of 1734-35, God rent the heavens and a revival burst out all around him. He had claimed the promise of the prophet Zachariah. In that setting he penned the little book on the "Surprising Work of God."

The writing of the account of the revival sparked deep interest, concern, and burden for an awakening in many parts of the early colonies, as well as in Britain. It set people praying everywhere.

What came to be known as the Concert of Prayer was born. On both sides of the Atlantic, earnest Christians began praying for spiritual awakening. In that stroke of the Holy Spirit, something tremendous happened. Through the Concert of Prayer, God set his people praying, and suddenly, revival broke out all around.

It became known in America as the First Great Awakening and in Britain as the Eighteenth Century Revival. Now, all that raises a very basic question: What is a Concert of Prayer? We can gain the needed

insight concerning the meaning of the Concert of Prayer by reflecting on another significant book that Jonathan Edwards wrote. Some years into the First Great Awakening, in 1748, Edwards penned a volume entitled,

"An Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and visible Union of God's People in Extraordinary prayer for the Revival of Religion and Advancement of Christ's Kingdom on Earth." That's the title, not the book.

But what a tremendous book it was. In that small volume, Edwards called the English speaking people to fervent prayer for the continuation, spread, and deepening of the awakening that was already in progress in many parts of North America and Europe. What did Edwards say?

(CG: Edwards' Principles of PRAYER
1. confession and surrender)

Notice first of all, Edwards called for a "humble attempt." He meant that the people of God must submit themselves to God in confession of sin and absolute surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, recognizing God alone as the one who gives true revival. Edwards argued that God in His sovereign grace pours out His reviving Spirit, and we must humbly implore Him so to do. As paradoxical as it seems, God in his unequivocal sovereignty moves according to the prayers of the people of God.

(CG: 2. unified, corporate prayer)

Edwards also emphasized that there must be agreement and visible union among God's people. There is something about unified, corporate

prayer that is as vital as individual, personal prayer. When the people of God come together in explicit agreement and visible union and corporately pour out their fervent prayers before the throne of grace, surprising things happen. God honors such Concerts of Prayer. It is a concert, not a solo performance. The scene is like a great symphony striking a beautiful theme.

(CG: 3. sacrificial, agonizing prayer)

Edwards also called for EXTRAORDINARY PRAYER. So often prayer is merely perfunctory and at times almost meaningless. What is called for is SACRIFICIAL, AGONIZING, intercessions, pleading that God might do something extraordinary. God does extraordinary things in response to extraordinary prayer. Real intercession is costly. It demands discipline. It will stretch us to our limits.

(CG: 3. sacrificial, agonizing prayer)

Notice also that his extraordinary, unified prayer is specifically towards a revival of religion and the advancement of Christ's kingdom on earth. How easy it is to make our prayers so ill-defined and nebulous that they really do not ask for anything. But what is needed is definite prayer for a true revival. That is, a spiritual awakening of such magnitude that tremendous advancements are made by Christ's kingdom on earth.

(CG: 4. scriptural prayer)

Finally, Edwards called for this extraordinary prayer according to Scriptural promises. All of our praying must be performed on Scriptural lines. We shall be sharing more about that in just a moment.

Now, all this is what goes into an effective Concert of Prayer.

When Edwards sounded his call to a Concert of Prayer, the people of God in both Britain and America responded in such a depth of dedication that it ultimately precipitated one of the most mighty movements of the Spirit of God in the history of the church. It spawned revivals and awakenings in many parts of western Christianity.

As a result of growing prayer concern, the First Great Awakening spread far and near. The revival at Northampton, Massachusetts actually began in the winter of 1734-35. Many of the young people in the church came to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the whole community became stirred. The spirit of revival tapered off from 1736 to 1740. Then in 1741, Edwards preached his most famous sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." (picture) That magnificent message was first delivered in the Northampton Church where Edwards was pastor, but apparently with little effect. A short time later, Edwards preached the same sermon in Enfield, Connecticut. It was here that the Spirit of God fell in overwhelming power.

There were cries and groans as people literally were smitten to the floor of the church building in a deep agony of conviction. It was incredible to behold. The revival fires flared up.

In 1742, George Whitfield (picture) came to New England. He began his American ministry in Edwards' church. Then he moved throughout the whole of northeast America. Words can scarcely describe the impact of the preaching of Whitfield. The revival spread all up and down the East coast, largely because of the itinerate ministry of the great

British preacher.

After America's Revolutionary War, Isaac Backus, (picture) a Baptist preacher and astute church historian, along with approximately 23 other ministers, once again called the nation to a Second Concert of Prayer for spiritual awakening. A letter was sent from this small band of concerned ministers to every pastor and church in the newly formed United States. They implored church leaders to once again revive the old Concert of Prayer for revival. And the churches responded. Prayer meetings began to spring up ever where -- even on the frontier. God struck up the symphony once again, as in His sovereign grace He decreed once more to pour out unusual mercies. In 1792, the break came. Again, it was in the new England area. The Holy Spirit began to move in isolated spots in small churches until finally there was such a stream of revival blessings flowing that the dam broke and a deluge of glory swept over the entire East Coast.

The Second Great Awakening, as historians called that marvelous movement, burst on the scene.

The revival first broke out in 1800 on the frontier in Logan County, in south central Kentucky. Under the preaching of James McGready, a mighty revival occurred at the Gasper River and Red River Meeting Houses where McGready served as pastor. In the little frontier rural church, 6,000 people arrived one weekend for a four day meeting. Hundreds upon hundreds were converted. The next year, in the summer of 1801, Barton Stone, pastor of the Cane Ridge Meeting House in Bourbon County, Kentucky called for a similar four day weekend meeting. To the utter amazement of all, over twenty thousand people

came to the little rural church (picture) on the cane breaks of Bourbon County. They literally had to send in the army to help in crowd control. Multitudes came to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Where the masses came from still remains a mystery. Kentucky was still a frontier. This movement gave birth to the significant camp meeting motif of revivalism. (picture) That approach was blessed of God and great things began to happen all over the frontier. The Westward movement was radically changed as revival fires burned.

In 1821, with the revival fires still aglow, a 29 year old lawyer in the little town of Adams, New York, was gloriously converted. His name: Charles Grandison Finney. (picture) He became one of the singularly most powerful spokesmen in the Second Great Awakening. His preaching proved so effective that multitudes came to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ through his ministry. It was not unusual to see practically an entire town converted under the preaching of Charles Finney. Prayer abounded everywhere. The concert of Prayer blanketed the nation. The Second Great Awakening, one of the longest protracted spiritual awakenings in history, was born and carried on in the context of the Concert of Prayer.

Surely, it is crystal clear by now what was back of all of these great movements of the Holy Spirit. They were spawned through the Concerts of Prayer.

All that brings to the forefront the pressing issue: Do we need a fresh touch of revival today? Do we need to see what Edwards saw in the First Great Awakening? What Backus witnessed in the Second Awakening? and What multitudes are now experiencing in Korea? There

is something that wells up within all of us and gives a glad affirmation to the questions. We all surely acknowledge that every segment of our society demands such. Look at our contemporary world. Nationally we're in the grips of moral decay like perhaps we have never seen in all of our history: crime, licentiousness, drugs, open flaunting of the things of God, the utter secularism and humanism of the hour. Sin and immorality spread disease. All this cries out to God. No nation can carry on as we are carrying on and survive. All history tells us so. We do well to be reminded of the words of the American philosopher Santyana when he said,

"They who do not understand history are doomed to relive it." The moral and spiritual condition of our nation spells doom.

Then, look at our churches! There seems to be such a spirit of apathy pervading so many congregations that one wonders what the final outcome of even the church will be. Many of the major denominations are losing members dramatically. In the average church today, one cannot find but half of the members there on any given Sunday morning. Christians have become worldly and materialistic. As a result, multiplied millions go on heedlessly to a Christless grave. How will we ever fulfill the Great Commission as we are? Our contemporary times cry and scream for a spiritual awakening. What can we do?

The answer must be obvious. God in grace must raise up a new Concert of Prayer. Andrew Murray had it right when he said,

(CG:) "The evangelization of the world depends, first of all, on a revival of prayer. Deeper than the need for people -- deep down at the bottom of our spiritless life -- is the need for the forgotten

secret of prevailing, world-changing prayer."

We must permit the Holy Spirit to burden us and deepen concern. We need to hear Jonathan Edwards' call once more.

Edwards said, (CG:) "if there could be some contrivance that there should be an agreement of all God's people in America. . . to address the Father of mercies with prayers and supplications, an earnest cry, that he would guide and direct his own people. . . and more abundantly and extensively pour out His Spirit. . . and that he would bow the heavens and come down and establish his glorious kingdom through the earth"

Well, then we would have revival. There is the secret and there are the reasons for a Concert of Prayer for today.

Prayer can change an entire area. Revival can be nation-wide, world-wide, but it can also occur on a limited local church level. During my seminary student day, I had the privilege of serving as the first pastor of a new little congregation a short distance from the seminary campus. On one occasion, one of the church members came to me and said, "Pastor, I think we should have an all night prayer meeting every Saturday night, asking that God will bless our new church." I heartily agreed. So we set up a chain of prayer every Saturday night. Through the long night hours, people would come to the church building and earnestly pray that God would pour out His Spirit upon us. Soon the Holy Spirit began to move in our congregation in such a fashion that it was just wonderful. People were being saved. The church was being deepened. My own life was being transformed and God gave

revival to that little congregation.

Now we all agree we desperately need a revival today, in our churches and nation. And we have learned it comes essentially by prayer. How, then, does one get a Concert of Prayer started? That is obviously the key question.

(CG: Preparation for a Concert of Prayer
1. present challenge)

First of all, the challenge for a Concert of Prayer should be presented to those who are concerned for revival and open to the moving of the Holy Spirit. When Jonathan Edwards began calling the people to the Concert of Prayer in March of 1749, he wrote to John Willison and said, "I would be glad to do anything in my power, for promoting the Concert for United Prayer, and, oh, that it were spread both far and near." Edwards was on target. A challenge must be given. We should share how that a Concert of Prayer can be the key instrument in fermenting a glorious revival.

(CG: 2. Examine motives)

Secondly, we need to examine our motives for prayer.

Now, there are precious biblical promises concerning revival. Isaiah 11:9 states, "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Isaiah 11:9b)

But we should pray that will happen for the glory of God alone. That must be our primary motive for seeking a spiritual awakening.

(CG: 3. prepare for obstacles)

Thirdly, in our commitment to a concert of prayer, we must be prepared for obstacles and opposition. Nothing is more difficult than dedicated, disciplined prayer. The world, the flesh, and the devil are all enemies to disciplined prayer. The old cliché has it right. "Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees." The devil and everything in the world will be pitted against us. Even some of God's own people will criticize. In addition, we will find a multitude of things, good in themselves, to keep us busy and preoccupied rather than the one thing that is the best and essential: prayer for spiritual awakening. Now, all these impediments should be understood and forthrightly addressed and overcome in the power of Christ. We must be ready to discipline ourselves, face the foe, and be victors in Jesus Christ. Eternal souls hang in the balance.

(CG: 4. meet conditions of effectual prayer)

Then, we must meet the conditions of what real praying is. That is vital. There are certain prerequisites for prayer to be effective. Let me present ten basic principles of effectual prayer.

(CG: 10 PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTUAL PRAYER
1. dedication & discipline)

1. As already emphasized, dedication and discipline are essential. In Luke, chapter 18, verse 1 we read, Jesus "told them a parable to the effect that they are always to pray and not lose heart." (RSV)

(CG: 2. absolute surrender to the will of God)

2. There must be absolute surrender to the will of God. Only those surrendered to the will of God will see answers to their prayers. Jonathan Edwards exemplified this so beautifully in his life. He made the following resolutions:

(CG:) "Resolved: that I will do whatsoever I think to be most for God's glory, in the whole of my duration, without any consideration of the time, till I die. To never act as if I were any way my own, but entirely and altogether God's."

(CG: 3. confess known sins)

3. We must confess all our known sins up to the moment. I John 1:9, promises, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." If we are to pray with effect, all our sins must be "confessed up to date."

(CG: 4. seek Holy Spirit)

4. God wants us filled with the Spirit of prayer. Paul said, "We know not how we should pray as we ought, but the Spirit makes intercession for all saints according to the will of God." (Romans 8:26-27). Unless the Spirit of prayer is upon us, we shall do very little effective praying. The blessed Spirit of prayer comes when we are filled with the Spirit of God through the appropriation of his fullness by faith.

(CG: 5. Pray in the will of God)

5. We are to pray in the will of God. (I John 5:14-15) tells us, "And this is the confidence which we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us and whatever we ask, we know that we have a request made of Him." Of course, we remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ in his agonizing prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane as he cried out, "not my will, but thine be done." Prayer in the will of God is essential

to receiving answers.

(CG: 6. pray in faith.)

6. We need to pray in faith. James reminds us we are to "Ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that a double minded man, unstable in all his ways, will receive anything from the Lord." (James 1:6-7 RSV) We pray in faith.

(CG: 7. pray in Jesus' name)

7. The Bible tells us, we are to pray in Jesus' name. Our Lord said, as recorded by John 16:24, "Hitherto you have asked nothing in my name; ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full." (RSV) It is not our fervency or our goodness, or our sincerity that makes our prayers acceptable before God. What makes us worthy before the Father is the righteousness of Jesus Christ. So, we must pray in his name and humbly stand before the Lord in all that Jesus is, not what we are. We pray in Jesus' name.

(CG: 8. pray persistently)

8. We must pray persistently. Remember the parable that Jesus told concerning a man who continually knocked on his friend's door until finally the friend said, "yes, I will come down and give you what you need." In that parable, Jesus was emphasizing the fact that we must linger long before God. We must not give up. One thing is certain in our prayer ministry; there will be dry seasons. At times it will be most difficult to pray. On occasion, the heavens will seem as brass, but these are the testing times. God wants to see if we truly mean business. We pray persistently for revival.

(CG: 9. pray specifically)

9. That leads to the ninth point. We are to pray specifically for a spiritual awakening. The Psalmist cried out in Psalm 85, "Wilt thou not revive us again that thy people may rejoice in Thee? Show us thy steadfast love, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation." (RSV) We must guard against praying in generalities. Prayer should be specific and that for a great awakening.

(CG: 10. do all for the glory of God)

10. Finally, as already stated, all of this is to be done for the glory of God. The so-called Lord's prayer, as recorded in the Sermon on the Mount, states, "Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name." (RSV) Paul reminds us, "Do all to the glory of God." (I Cor. 10:31 RSV)). Prayer is for the praise of our Lord Jesus Christ and the exalting of our great God.

Now there are the ten conditions of prayer, and they must be met if the Concert of Prayer is to be effective. This leaves us with the issue of actually getting started. Now, how do we get started?

The basic principle is that we organize the Concert of Prayer in the various relationships of our daily lifestyle. That means several things.

(CG: Getting Started

CHURCH

--mid-week prayer service

--prayer partners

--all night prayer chains

--prayer breakfast/coffees)

For example, there should be Concerts of Prayer in our relationship to

the church as the body of Christ.

The mid-week prayer service should be a time of prayer for revival.

Prayer partners could be developed through the membership of the church.

There stands the challenge of all night chains of prayer for spiritual awakening. These can be developed in the life of the local congregation.

Moreover, there should also be special prayer meetings called to pray just for revival prayer.

Prayer breakfasts and prayer coffees are blessed by God.

We should use our ingenuity and find in and through the life of the church just how the members can band themselves together in various ways to pray for spiritual awakening and get the Concert of Prayer on a proper program basis. Some people will be able to fit into one scheme. Others will need another. Have enough situations developed that all can engage in meaningful prayer through the life of the local church.

Of course, one of the primary relationships of life is our home. This is certainly the secret of the great prayer ministers of the Korean churches. It is not just the twenty thousand that come every Friday night to pray in the Central Church of Seoul that is the beginning and end of the Concert of Prayer. There are thousands of small house groups that meet every week, praying for God's continued revival blessings. How wonderful it would be to have a Concert of Prayer in the relationship of the home. Why not call people in and have a

Concert of Prayer in your home? Why not get a prayer group for spiritual awakening started there?

(CG: Getting Started

CHURCH

--mid-week prayer service

--prayer partners

--all night prayer chains

--prayer breakfast/coffees)

HOME

WORK

Concerts of Prayer can perhaps be organized where you work. It was prayer during the noon hour among businessmen that the Prayer Revival of 1858 had its birth. Surely, there are ways we can find to pray with those with whom we work. That could develop into a marvelous Concert of Prayer. The same principle is true in schools, or whenever our relationships of life carry us. The whole idea is to band together in united prayer.

If we can grasp and assimilate the principle, it is certainly not beyond imagination that one day, in our time, we shall see, as Edwards put it, "a surprising work of God" to the establishment of his kingdom on earth, the salvation of many souls, and the praise and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, dear people of God, let us have a Concert of Prayer for spiritual Awakening.

(credits)

written & narrated by
Dr. Lewis Drummond

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Home Mission Board, SBC
1350 Spring St. N.W.
Atlanta, GA 30367-5601
(404) 873-4041

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