

Teaching for 1-30-08

The Rise of Prayer

Last week was an encouraging and historic meeting of the America's National Prayer Committee in Miami. As we looked back over the past 25 years, it was remarkable to see how far the prayer movement has come because of unrelenting prayers of faithful leaders. But it was also encouraging to witness the significant movement that is developing even this year. This annual meeting affords us the opportunity to get a broader picture of what God is doing around the world through prayer.

The National Prayer Committee (NPC) has grown profoundly in 25 years, from a small group of 15 prayer leaders to more than 100 leaders of prayer ministries around the country. But the growth of the prayer movement is increasing in wave after wave even this year as it appears God is orchestrating something profound and unprecedented in 2008. Many of the prayer leaders rejoiced at seeing the fruit of their agonizing prayers over the years, desperate for God to move His hand as in the revivals of the past.

This year may be the year that the Lord increases the fervency of prayer over our nation—and in turn responds with a national awakening. There are many initiatives that seem to be pointing toward a common goal—the exaltation of Jesus Christ and the awakening of our nation toward a movement of repentance. As Dave Butts, chairman of the NPC, stated: “We need to have *prayers of astonishment* at what the Lord is doing *this year* in answer to years of prayer!”

A Look at Past Perseverance

Most of you know that the National Day of Prayer (NDOP) occurs on the first Thursday of May each year. But you probably don't know the strategic battle that took place 20 years ago to get Congress to designate a specific day for prayer. Vonette Bright (Campus Crusade co-founder) shared the history of how the NDOP came into law under the administration of President Ronald Reagan. A handful of faithful intercessors and prayer leaders relentlessly pursued the seemingly impossible through prayer and persistence. With the backing of Congressmen and Senators, a National Day of Prayer was finally signed into law—during a time when it had been determined that no more national days were to be designated by Congress. But the perseverance of Vonette Bright and others, coupled with powerful prayer, broke through governmental barriers. Today we enjoy a national observance because a small group of prayer leaders refused to give up on our government recognizing the place of prayer.

Many other prayer ministries have been raised up over the last several years as well, including a global prayer movement through the Global Day of Prayer (now on Pentecost Sunday each year). Other prayer ministries that are working together to encourage a national revival and awakening include Waymakers (*Seek God for the City* prayer guide), National Revival Network, Mission America, Campus Renewal Network, Great Commission Coalition, Intercessors for America, Lydia Prayer Fellowship, Mom's In Touch, Youth with a Mission, Reformed Church of America, United Prayer Ministry (Evelyn Christenson), Denominational Prayer Leaders Network, Promise Keepers, International Renewal Ministries, National Pastor's Prayer Network, Prayer Transformation Ministries, and many more.

A Look to the Immediate Future

For many years, the fledgling National Prayer Committee and other faithful intercessors have asked the Lord for an increase of prayer over our nation. This year may hold more answers to that prayer than we have ever witnessed.

January 2008 began with a call to 21 days of fasting and prayer called by Awakening America (www.awakeningamerica.us). In April ministry leaders from across the country will gather in Northampton, Massachusetts, to pray and seek the Lord for revival and awakening in the nation. On April 26 the nation will be called to prayer and repentance through ReignDownUSA (www.reigndownusa.com). National Day of Prayer will be May 1, which will launch ten days of prayer and fasting leading up to the Global Day of Prayer on May 11. Then we will perhaps witness one of the most profound gatherings of youth ever as an estimated 100,000 or more will pilgrimage to a field near Paradise, Kansas, on May 25 to worship and exalt the Lord Jesus Christ (www.paradise08.com). These next few months could welcome the most incredible move of repentance and returning to the first love of Jesus Christ that we have ever witnessed in our nation!

In addition, there are multiple gatherings that will call the Church to prayer, such as The Call and Passion conferences. Across the country there is a powerful surge of 24/7 prayer in cities and on college campuses. This is also an election year, so the National Day of Prayer Task Force is calling for special election prayer. There will be a major, non-partisan prayer initiative surrounding the Republican National Convention in Minneapolis/St. Paul in September, with likely a similar initiative in Denver for the Democratic National Convention. More and more people are coming to the realization that the only hope for the condition of the Church and our nation is prayer and the powerful presence of Jesus Christ.

Be Both Concerned and Encouraged!

Have you been discouraged about what you see when you look around at the condition of society—and even the Church in many ways? There certainly are reasons for deep concern. As one attendee of the meetings said, “We need a couple of spiritual roosters to awaken America.”

But we want you to be encouraged by this brief overview of the rise of prayer across our country. God is on the move—and He is calling His people to a new level of devotion to prayer. Many years ago J. Edwin Orr stated that when God is getting ready to move, He sets his people to praying.

2008 will be a year when we will experience wave after wave of prayer breaking across our nation. Just imagine the things that God has in His heart by calling us to a year of such extraordinary prayer! Let us join in this move of prayer with a renewed expectation that if God is calling us to prayer, then He will surely continue to move in our hearts and across the nation for His purposes and His glory. Let us keep the cry on our lips and in our hearts, “Come, Lord Jesus!”