

Leonard Ravenhill: This Is the Only Type of Prayer God Answers

“God doesn’t answer prayer. He answers desperate prayer.” I can still remember my feelings of shock and bewilderment as Leonard Ravenhill, the late church statesman, spoke these difficult words to me.

Of course God answers prayer, I thought. But after much reflection I’ve come to recognize what Ravenhill meant: Often we approach prayer with the wrong attitude.

If we’re honest with ourselves, we must admit that our prayers frequently degenerate into little more than religious incantations and shallow platitudes spoken out of a sense of religious duty. Yet the Bible compares prayer with the travail of childbirth.

It is, in essence, a passionate activity. I have found that it is often in times of desperation that I pray with a genuine passion to the Lord—a passion that allows no room for mediocrity or compromise.

That’s the kind of prayer that God answers.

In November 1996, God led me to organize a time of passionate, city-wide prayer that became known as the Houston Prayer Mountain. For 40 days and nights, Christians gathered together across racial and denominational lines to pray, worship, repent and cry out for people to come to Christ.

One night, as men’s ministry leader Ed Cole spoke to the group, he pointed to one of the banners on the platform. It read, “.”— the acronym for “Pray Until Something Happens.” That banner reminded him, he said, of a woman in labor being

coached to “push, push, push” during the final stages of delivery.

His comparison rang true to us. We sensed that we were in a critical stage, pressing heaven for the birth of God’s purpose for our city. In fact, the fourth chapter of Micah—which talks about a woman in labor and points to the process of “birthing” revival—was one of our themes.

Birthing Revival

Revival is coming—and it will arrive in one of two ways. It’s interesting to note that the first part of Micah 4 is virtually identical to the first part of Isaiah 2, although the two chapters end differently. Micah 4 is a picture of revival by birth, while Isaiah 2 shows revival by judgment.

I believe it is God’s desire to bring revival by birth—by our choosing it and pressing in for it—rather than by judgment—by His strong hand bringing us to our knees. Yet at times it may take a shaking to bring us to a place of genuine passions and intimacy with Him.

God’s mercy is present even in His judgments. Better to be judged now than for eternity! For too long the church has tried to compensate on the outside—through programs, formulas and various styles of window dressing—for prayerlessness and a lack of truly changed character on the inside.

But what the Lord wants to do among us in our day is neither fleeting nor shallow; in the words of the children’s song we sang often during the Prayer Mountain, it is “deep and wide.” For a move of God to be deep and wide, there must be a revival of prayer and of godly character among believers.

The Lord’s desire is that we bear fruit and fulfill His destiny for our lives. This is possible only if we become desperate enough to stop covering up our fears, pains, insecurities and sin and allow Him to replace our compensatory

facades with His healing virtue and power.

God wants to take off our “cosmetic Christianity,” our proverbial fig leaves. The first cover-up was not Watergate, Whitewater or Lewinskygate; it was “Fig-gate,” as recorded in Genesis 3. We have been covering up ever since!

Instead of running to the Lord, our tendency is to cover up and hide from God. But God wants to change all that. He wants to satisfy the deep longing in our souls—in our spiritual wombs, if you will. He wants us to push.

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