

Why We Need to Pray Without Ceasing for the Soul of the Nation

Last Thursday, May 7, was the National Day of Prayer, and Christians throughout the land prayed together corporately for the nation. Believers need to continue to pray for an awakening and healing in the church if we are to see the healing of the soul of the nation.

It will take a united church voice and church leadership If we are to see the healing of the land, the soul of the nation and the healing of racial divides that exists even today. From the moment of our receiving the revelation of the work of the cross, we, who ourselves were once separated from God and were reconciled through Christ, are now given the ministry of reconciliation.

Read These Scriptures

“Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation. And every city or house divided against itself will not stand” (Matt. 12:25).

Jesus prayed to the Father, “ that they may all be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You. May they also be one in Us, that the world may believe that You have sent Me” (John 17:21).

“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35)

“Jesus said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself”” Matt.

22:37-39).

Focus

Our first command is to love! First God and then one another. One of the biggest challenges in our society today is lack of love. This expresses itself in many ways, including the lack of civility and character displayed in our disagreements—even in the church. We allow our preferences to divide our families, friendships and churches. There is only one unshakable kingdom, the kingdom of the Lord, and we, the church, must seek to love each other even in our disagreements if we are to help others find their place in the kingdom.

It is crucial that the church returns to her first love, Jesus Christ, if we are to love one another and then the lost in a way that brings healing and hope to our communities and nation.

Unity does not mean uniformity! It is found in the midst of our diversity if our focus is on the Lord. The church's influence in America is waning in part because it is divided in heart and purpose. Many of the problems plaguing the church stem from Christians putting our personal agendas and preferences above God's plans. Rather than building on the foundations of His kingdom, we have placed our faith and hope in the institutions of men. Not surprisingly, the results are disastrous and far-reaching.

Jesus prayed a prayer in John 17 that all who would believe in Him would become one just as He and the Father are one. The fulfillment of this prayer is ongoing, across centuries and generations. Reconciliation Week is about us—the church of Jesus Christ, His family—submitting to the Holy Spirit so He can make us one in answer to Jesus' prayer in this generation. Let us first be reconciled to God; then we can cross racial, denominational and generational lines and be reconciled to one another so that the world, the lost, will not only see Jesus

in us, but come to know Him.

Pray With Me

Father God, we thank You for Your unconditional love for us. Thank You for making a way for us to be reconciled to you through the sacrifice and gift of Your Son, Jesus. Lord, we thank You that You have called us to be one family, united in heart and purpose by the blood of Jesus. Forgive us for the ways we have isolated ourselves and put our personal agendas and preferences above Your purposes and plans. Forgive us for holding fast to comfortable sin that separates us from You and from one another. Forgive us for dividing ourselves by our denominations, races, generations, and personal theologies. Forgive us for harboring any sins of racism be-it overtly or covertly. We take responsibility for the condition of the family of God, our communities, and our nation.

We confess and repent for allowing our own preferences to bring division into our families, friendships and churches. When we fail to love our brothers and sisters in Christ, we fail to be a witness and testimony to those who are far from you; forgive us and cause us to place love over personal preference. Father transform us so that we, Your church, demonstrate Your unconditional love in how we love one another, even in our disagreements. Help Your church and help me to love as we have been loved.

Today, we declare with both our words and our hearts that we will submit ourselves to Your Holy Spirit so You can conform us into a united body in answer to Jesus' prayer. Give us one heart and one purpose. We are and will be the church united for our divided nation. We commit to crossing our denominational, racial and generational lines to meet at the cross of Christ so that the world might see, through our unity, Jesus, the hope of glory. We declare today that because we are reconciled to You, we will become reconciled to one another so that we might be ministers of reconciliation to our

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Tangible Expression of Our Prayers

As a reconciled people, let us demonstrate our love for one another by intentionally seeking to love our brothers and sisters in Christ today. Consider ways you can love those in the body of Christ who do not look like you, worship like you or act like you. Find a way to cross our racial and denominational lines to embrace and publicly acknowledge fellow believers as true brothers and sisters in Christ. Develop lasting and authentic relationships.

Lord, You have taught us the power of love, the power of forgiveness and the power of joy! Lord, teach me how to pray Your way, how to hear You clearly and obey. Show me Your ways, that I may know You. Show me, instruct me, lead me and draw me near, Lord."

Doug Stringer is founder and president of Somebody Cares America and Somebody Cares International, a global network bringing hope and healing to communities through prayer initiatives, compassion outreaches and cooperative efforts. He is the author of numerous books, including *In Search of a Father's Blessing* and *Leadership Awakening: Foundational*

Principles for Lasting Success.