

Why Many Christians Neglect This Crucial Part of Their Relationship With God

In the life of a child of God and in the church, there often is no easier sin to commit than the sin of prayer neglect.

A primary reason for this, I believe, is because prayer is a selfless ministry/practice designed by God for His own eternal benefits and purposes (even though we do experience a deep level of joy and fulfillment that is not contingent on self, but on God's purposes and plans being fulfilled). In a culture that is focused on self-fulfillment and self-gratification, the thought of investing our lives in prayer can be challenging for many.

Several years ago, I took a college class on prayer and intercession that marked me deeply. At the onset of the semester, my professor made some opening statements about prayer that I have never forgotten.

He basically said prayer was a subject that is written about, taught about, talked about, thought about, preached about and sung about possibly as much or more than any other subject in the Bible. However, he also went on to say that prayer is neglected in practice by a vast majority of Christians, even those who believe it is important. Unfortunately, I have found this to be definitively true over more than three decades of ministry.

Recently I wrote an article on "Hidden Prayer." I felt stirred to return to the subject of prayer once again as I am feeling such a strong burden from the Lord in my own life to be more committed to this all-important mandate and practice. I know my primary role in life and ministry must be prayer, and all else has to flow from this place. To neglect prayer is to

neglect God Himself.

I have come to realize more and more that the only ongoing effective work done for the Lord comes through vessels given to much prayer and intercession. This does not mean God will not honor His Word, even if it comes forth from individuals who neglect prayer.

But it does mean there cannot be a continuous eternal flow that goes beyond human effort in order to reveal God's kingdom effectively unless we are living a life of prayer. The fact is that there is not a substitute or backup plan. Prayer alone is what makes a lasting difference in God's eternal strategy.

The current climate in much of the church (especially in America) is one of professionalism, excellence, order, timed public gatherings, coordinated humanitarian projects, marketing, management, social media presence, trendy sermon series and so forth. I don't want to say that all of these things are completely wrong in and of themselves. Some of these tools are clearly profitable. However, I do want to say that if our focus, effort, energy and hours are spent more on these things than they are on prayer, then they become sinful in the sense that we learn to rely on human ingenuity more than on the power of the Holy Spirit.

The tragic truth is that we have learned to do church effectively without prayer. This has even brought about a realm of successful ministry that is void of the breath of eternity, which is not a true biblical picture of success or effectiveness. Sadly, the result has been a weak church that is drunk on worldliness and often unable to even stand for basic biblical righteousness and truth in a day of deep darkness that is covering America as well as much of the world.

Our neglect of prayer has actually helped to foster a decaying society that now promotes perversion and ungodliness as being

a wonderful thing characterized by love, advancement, progressivism, bravery and so forth. I am convinced that prayer and intercession alone can help to turn this ungodly tide. However, the tide must be turned in the church first! We must face the truth and acknowledge that a large percentage of the church, especially in the West, is only a hollow form of what we see in the book of Acts, and even in parts of the world where the church lives under persecution.

It is very easy to diagnose the condition of a sinful society and point out the ungodly practices that characterize a generation, or even a nation. I along with other ministers that I know talk about, write about and preach about these ungodly practices, and rightly so. However, I want to deliberately emphasize that there is major blame at the doorstep of the American church (as well as the church in other nations) and her lack of commitment to prayer, as well as her own sin (which I believe is directly connected to her neglect of prayer). To refuse this reality is to perpetuate our weakness and lack of ability to make a real difference in this dark hour of history.

I have said for years that it is amazing to see the strides we have made in the church when it comes to our ability to spread the gospel. Our media outlets are vast to say the least. From television, to radio, to music, to books, to social media and beyond, we are able to cover the world with ministry expressions 24/7. Despite these technological advances, our nation and other nations continue to free-fall into darkness.

With all the advances in the modern church, the truth is that we are by and large backslidden in our commitment to prayer. Although this is true, I firmly believe that there are those who are in the place I am today—a place where men and women of past generations have willingly stepped into with a fervor that would not subside, a place of dying to self and coming alive to God's burden where we begin to feel what the Lord feels regarding a generation that does not know Him (this

generation is also present in the church), a place where we refuse to go through the motions of dead religion void of God's power, a place where we fasten or chain ourselves to prayer and refuse to recant.

As I write this, my prayer is that we would see a revival of prayer in the church once again. May the Lord raise up more prayer warriors such as John Hyde, E.M. Bounds, William and Catherine Booth, Evan Roberts, Amy Carmichael, David Brainerd and more. May there be an army of intercessors who are willing to feel the pain of God's heart for a generation in desperate need of revival and awakening as Jeremiah did when he cried in Jeremiah 4:19 (ESV): "My anguish, my anguish! I writhe in pain! Oh the walls of my heart! My heart is beating wildly; I cannot keep silent, for I hear the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war."

Closing Prayer Quotes

—"A restless thirst, a sacred infinite desire that is what I want for my own heart." —A.W. Tozer

—"Make me thy fuel, flame of God." —Amy Carmichael

—"One should never initiate anything that he cannot saturate with prayer." —Anonymous

—"The greatest thing anyone can do for God or man is pray." —S.D. Gordon

—"Men may spurn our appeals, reject our message, oppose our arguments, despise our persons, but they are helpless against our prayers." —J. Sidlow Baxter

—"Satan does not care how many people read about prayer if only he can keep them from praying." —E. Billheimer

—"Talking to men for God is a great thing, but talking to God for men is greater still." —E.M. Bounds

Keith Collins is the founder and president of Generation Impact Ministries. He is actively involved in itinerant ministry and writing and speaks in various settings nationally and internationally on a regular basis. In recent years, Keith served as the president of the Brownsville Revival School of Ministry and as the director of FIRE School of Ministry, which were both born out of The Brownsville Revival in Pensacola, Florida. His recent book, Samuel's Arising: Waking Up to God's Prophetic Call, is now available on Amazon. You can contact Keith via his website at .