

Revival & REFORMATION

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How Specific Prayer Transformed My Church

By Travis Walker

At the church that I pastor in Daytona Beach, Florida, US, we participated in the 100 Days of Prayer initiative, alongside other churches around the world. My initial thought when it was announced back in March of 2020 was that it was in response to the COVID-19 pandemic that was quickly engulfing the world. It was only after I interviewed Ted Wilson, president of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, on my podcast that I learned that this global prayer event had been months in planning before COVID-19. God had inspired this time dedicated to prayer without its planners even knowing why!

I cannot speak for the rest of the Church, but through these 100-days of prayer, I witnessed the longest sustained revival of my entire ministry. This transpired in particular as I began to study the prayer lives of George Muller and Hudson Taylor, preaching and teaching about them. I found the key to revival in the fruitfulness of their ministry, as it directly connected to their faith in God's willingness to answer their specific prayer requests.

When I compared how they prayed to my own prayers, I quickly realized that my prayers were far too vague and general to ever know for sure when or whether God had answered them. I came to realize that I was missing out on the potential of a much more vibrant faith and walk with God, because I really did not believe He cared about the details and specifics of my life. *Lord, have mercy! Was I wrong!*

As I took hold of this new challenge, and actually began writing down my specific prayers, I quickly saw the power of specificity in prayer. Within a day, I had my first big answer to prayer, and from there I was on fire.

This realization came at the point in the 100 Days of Prayer when we had just passed day 50, and I proposed to my church that we claim the last 40 days of the 100 Days of Prayer with a daily 8:30 p.m. prayer commitment on Zoom.

So, the Sabbath before the last 40 days were about to begin, I made an appeal in my sermon for members to join this prayer group, in which we would specifically petition God each evening. To my utter amazement, we had twenty people show up on Zoom on that first night (normally we have about five to seven people come to prayer meeting). This commitment continued every night for 40 days.

I cannot begin to list all the powerful, specific prayer requests that God answered during that time, but I will tell you that I have never witnessed anything like it in my 15 years of pastoral ministry. People were healed; people lost jobs, only to get new ones in a matter of

days; children long out of the faith were startled back into a renewed interest in spiritual things; people made decisions for baptism; leaders stepped up into new roles; and the influence of our church's online ministry exploded.

At the close of the 40 days, no one wanted it to end. This corporate experience in specific intercessory prayer particularly touched the heart of one member, more than all the rest, and I encouraged her to write out a testimony. Here is a portion of what she wrote:

“Almost 40 days ago, we started a prayer group to pray together virtually as part of the 100 Days of Prayer. I have never been part of such a group. I cannot even tell you why I started that first day. My youngest son is sick with an autoimmune disease, so I started with that as my prayer request. What transpired over the next thirty-eight days was an awakening for me. It was more than just prayers, but rather a deep connection to others that led to a direct connection to God. The power of prayer with those that gather together is a powerful thing. I witnessed prayers being answered — big and small. I heard of prayers being answered for those whom we were not even aware needed prayer. Most of all, I saw the vulnerability of our group — how humble we became with each other and the Lord. We discovered that we are not alone in our journey and walk with God, and that others close by may even be struggling with similar life challenges. This experience involved more than just participating in a prayer group. Remarkably, it involved an awakening of each other. This blessed result could have never been attained, I believe, by just passing by each other at church.”

We read in the book *Steps to Personal Revival*: "Preaching, praying publicly, organizing church life, preparing evangelistic programs, giving pastoral counseling – these all can be learned and also put into practice without the Holy Ghost. Ellen G. White described this dangerous possibility as follows: "The reason why there is so little of the Spirit of God manifested is that ministers learn to do without it" (p. 36).

I must confess, this paragraph describes the majority of my ministry before COVID-19. If the Spirit was with me, it was solely because of the grace of God, not because I was desperately pleading for His presence every day. But after seeing what God has done in me and with this prayer group over the last 40 days, I never want to go back to doing things my old way again.

So — whoever you are, wherever you happen to be — I just want to encourage you to start a prayer group. Pray for the power of the Holy Spirit, and pray specifically for what you want God to do for you, your prayer partners, your church, and your community, and you will see His promises fulfilled right before your eyes: “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen” (Eph. 3:20–21).

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World Church Prayer Requests

May 14 - 20, 2021

- Pray for more churches (especially your church) to experience the beauty and power of united prayer.
- Pray for those who are suffering loss and hardship because of the COVID pandemic, or because of other natural disasters, like volcano, earthquake, fire, or flood.
- Pray for God to give us wisdom how to share the good news of salvation in the midst of these difficult times.
- Please pray for the Holy Spirit to be poured out on the meetings and seminars taking place online with the General Conference Camp meeting that runs May 19-23, 2021.
- Pray for all those that attend the 24-hour a day online prayer room. Pray they are taken even deeper in their walk with Jesus. To join this special GC camp meeting prayer experience, happening May 19-23, visit: <https://www.campmeeting.com>