

PERSPECTIVE

FEBRUARY 2018

BECAUSE GOD
GIVES THE
GROWTH

A 31-DAY PRAYER GUIDE
FOR EVANGELISM



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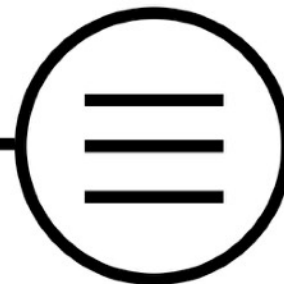


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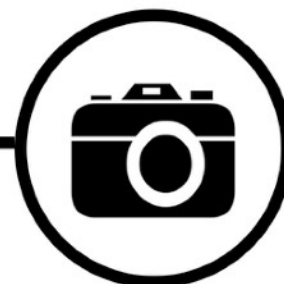
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Because God Gives the Growth

A 31-Day Prayer Guide for Evangelism

In 2018, the elders of Mount Vernon are leading us to pay more attention to evangelism. We want to think well about sharing the gospel. More than that, we want to share the gospel more often. But regardless of how well we know the gospel or how often we share the gospel, what will come of it unless the Spirit of God is at work? Nothing. As Paul told the Corinthians, when it comes to planting gospel seeds, “neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth” (1 Cor. 3:7). God gets the credit for the growth of his church because only God can give life.

Therefore, we need to be a praying people. Prayer is not optional. The success of our ministry depends upon the Lord, and the Lord uses prayer. What I’m saying here is a mystery. God is the one who saves; yet, God calls upon his church to pray for salvation. We can get bogged down by this weighty truth. We can get lost in the weeds of this mystery. But we shouldn’t. The Anglican theologian J. I. Packer says it well:

The prayer of a Christian is not an attempt to force God’s hand, but a humble acknowledgment of helplessness and dependence. When we are on our knees, we know that it is not we who control the world; it is not in our power, therefore, to supply our needs by our own independent efforts; every good thing that we desire for ourselves and for others must be sought from God, and will come, if it comes at all, as a fit from His hands.¹

I’m asking you to pray. More than that, I’m pleading with you to pray. What hope do we have of seeing a genuine awakening in our church and community and city unless we take control of our time and our words and our energy and use it all to acknowledge our “helplessness and dependence” upon our holy, omnipotent God?

I’ve singled out thirty-one ways you can pray and divided it up into thirty-one days. If you start in February, you’ll have a couple days left over! Please join me as we pray for God’s Spirit to work in us, through us, and all around us. Let’s pray we grow in our evangelism.

Day One: “Lord, give me confidence in you”

Halfway through the book of Romans, Paul reminded the church that God is generous. “If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?” All things. There is nothing *good* that God is not willing to give his children—including the salvation of our neighbors. We have no guarantee God will convert any single person on our prayer list. But we have God’s promise that “the gates of hell shall not prevail against” the church (Matt. 16:18). Until Christ comes, the church will continue to grow. The Father who gave us his Son will say “yes” to many of our prayers. Let’s pray with confidence.

Day Two: “Lord, may your word spread and be honored.”

Paul asked the Thessalonians to pray for him, “that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored” (2 Thess. 3:1). He wanted them to pray, literally, that the word “would run.” This is a prayer for God’s word to spread. But he also prayed it would be well-received by all who hear it. Let’s pray for the word, the gospel, to be spoken in schools and businesses, capitols and warehouses. And wherever the gospel runs, may it be embraced.

Day Three: “Lord, help us partner with one another.”

It takes a village to raise a child, and it takes a church to share the gospel. It really does. Paul prized his partnership with the church in the task of evangelism: “I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now” (Phil. 1:3–5). You will be called at times to share the gospel alone, but in your evangelism, you should never be alone. The prayers of the church are with you. We need the body of Christ prodding us to understand the gospel more deeply, to share it more often, and to even help us befriend unbelieving family and neighbors.ⁱⁱ Let’s pray we would partner together well.

Day Four: “Lord, keep me praying.”

Christians love fads. It’s easy for us to sign up for a 30-day prayer plan only to give it up after day 12. At times like this, we need to recall the persistent widow who kept bothering the judge for justice. She didn’t stop peppering him with her requests. We shouldn’t give up asking our Lord to do a work in the lives of our family and friends. Be persistent. Ask for the Lord’s help to keep you praying.

Day Five: “Lord, equip me with everything I need to share the gospel.”

Soldiers don’t go out to battle without the right uniform. Christians, likewise, need to be well prepared. We know the war being waged is spiritual, which is why Paul says we need “the whole armor of God” (Eph. 6:11). The author of Hebrews prayed for believers, that God would equip them “with everything good that [they] may do his will” (Heb. 13:21). What equipment do we need to share the gospel (which is certainly God’s will)? We need knowledge of the gospel and boldness to share it. Pray your understanding of the gospel would be deep. Take advantage of good books, articles, sermons, and classes. Don’t shirk your duty for lack of the right equipment.

Day Six: “Lord, help me rest in your perfect will.”

It’s hard to pray year after year for the salvation of loved ones only to feel like the sky is made of brass. We have to remember our will is not always God’s will. More than that, we have to rest in this truth. Remember Jesus who, in his humanity, didn’t want to go to the cross. He even asked for another way. But he ended his prayer with these words, “Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done” (Luke 22:42). Let’s follow Jesus’ example. Let’s pray hard for what we think is God’s will, and then rest hard with whatever answer comes.

Day Seven: “Lord, help me be sure I’m a Christian.”

We can have confidence that if we have repented of our sins and put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, in his death and resurrection, we are saved; we *have* eternal life (John 3:36). But we are called to examine ourselves too: “Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure” (2 Pet. 1:10). In other words, we are to inspect our hearts and see if we are bearing the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23). Even as we are devoting ourselves to the salvation of others, let’s be sure we have personally experienced the new birth.

Day Eight: “Lord, give me peace and freedom from anxiety.”

It is so hard to be thoughtful about the state of another person’s soul when you are overcome by unrest. This is one reason Paul urged the church to be at peace: “The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God” (Phil. 4:5–6). And this is a prayer with a promise: “And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:7). Your life is full of distractions and discouragements. It might be a busy job, unruly children, or a growing disappointment in singleness. These circumstances chip away at joy and keep evangelism on the back burner. So pray for God to give you peace, to free you from anxiety, and, in so doing, to free you up to make the glories of Christ known to others.

Day Nine: “Lord, help me believe Judgment Day is coming.”

I'm typing these words because a high school student believed in hell. She was willing to tell me I was going to be there if I didn't repent and believe! She believed in Judgment Day. The firm conviction a day of reckoning is coming will motivate us to speak when we would otherwise be silent. Paul made this clear, “For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God” (Rom. 14:11). He wrote with certainty of a day when “every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:10–11). This day will only be joyous for those who choose to bend the knee now: “It is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment” (Heb. 9:27). These are sobering texts. They are important. This world is little more than a waiting room adjoining an eternal home. The more convinced you are this is true, the more you will evangelize.

Day Ten: “Lord, lead those in power to grant us room to evangelize.”

Paul urged us to pray our leaders would allow us to live a “quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.” The goal of this prayer was the salvation of our neighbors, “This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved” (1 Tim. 2:1–4). Those in authority have the power to make life easy for Christians or difficult. In places like the United Arab Emirates and Algeria, it is illegal to share the gospel. Even in America, there are non-profits and business which prohibit volunteers and employees from evangelizing. Let's pray God would change the hearts of those in power. We desire the freedom to kindly, gently, and boldly let them know Jesus demands repentance and faith. We will find a way to speak, whatever the government says (see Acts 5:27–29). But let's pray they grant us room to evangelize.ⁱⁱⁱ

Day 11: “Lord, give me a heart for the nations.”

John Piper famously argued, “Missions exists because worship doesn't.”^{iv} There are parts of the globe where nobody is praising Jesus. Our hearts should grieve the absence of true worship. Jesus gave his apostles a mission to be carried on by the local church today: “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Jesus didn't just care about the ethnic group to which he was born. He cared for the whole world. So should we. After all, one day, when all God's elect are gathered around his throne, they will be “from all tribes and peoples and languages” (Rev. 7:9). We must be concerned for the souls of our next door neighbors. But let's also pray we'd have a heart for the nations.

Day 12: “Lord, help me to love my fellow church members more.”

God designed each of us to be a part of a local church. Before the fall, there was community. The church is the imperfect beginning of a glorious community that will be perfected upon Christ's return. How we live and love in the midst of this community matters. This is why Paul prayed for the Philippian church, “that [their] love may abound more and more” (Phil. 1:9). Church love is powerful. In fact, Jesus said the world would learn something about him when they see the love within the church, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). For the sake of evangelism, pray our love for each other would grow.

Day 13: “Lord, help me know when and how to engage unbelievers.”

Paul worked very hard to immerse himself in the lives of non-Christians. He stood firm for the gospel and personal holiness. But where he was free in Christ, he sought to know and serve his neighbors. In fact, he described himself as a servant to the lost, “For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews” (1 Cor. 9:19–20). Most of us are surrounded by unbelievers every day. It takes wisdom to know how to enter their world and serve them. We must engage them. We need the wisdom to know how. Let's pray for it.

Day 14: “Lord, lead others to believe the word of God.”

Many people think of the Bible as simply another book. We know it is the very word of God. We want others to see this, too. Paul thanked God that the Thessalonians came to trust Scripture: “And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers” (1 Thess. 2:13). We want our friends and neighbors to believe the words we deliver to them are not *our* words, but *God’s* word. This requires the Holy Spirit to be at work in them (1 Cor. 2:14). Let’s pray the Spirit leads them to believe the gospel is God’s word.

Day 15: “Lord, help me pray unceasingly for my lost friends.”

We find Paul, throughout the New Testament, praying constantly for the church (Rom. 1:8–9; Phil. 1:9; Col. 1:9; 1 Thess. 1:2). How did he do this? We don’t know exactly. Did he keep a list of names in his pocket? Did he stop every few hours to lift specific congregations up to the Lord? Again, we don’t know the mechanics of his prayer life, but we know he was a man devoted to prayer. Given our desire to see our friends and neighbors come to Christ, let’s model Paul’s commitment to prayer. Maybe it means keeping a list of names in your wallet that you see each time you pull out a credit card, or maybe you put a reminder on your schedule to stop and pray. Let’s identify lost friends and pray for them unceasingly.

Day 16: “Lord, make me righteous.”

James makes a statement in chapter five of his letter that ought to give us pause, “The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working” (James 5:16). The context here is the members of a church confessing sin to one another as they bring their requests to God. But the principle is obvious: our *unrighteousness* can harm our prayer life. Interestingly, when the men come to the church to pray they are to be “lifting holy hands” (1 Tim. 2:8). Holiness and prayer are two sides of the same coin; they go together. Don’t just pray God would save your friends; pray God would sanctify you. As God answers this prayer, you will pray with even more boldness.

Day 17: “Lord, save my immediate family members.”

We have a special responsibility for those closest to us. This explains why Paul told Timothy, “If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (1 Tim. 5:8). These are hard words. It is unconscionable to neglect the material needs of our family. How much more, then, should we be providing for them spiritually? We may wrongly conclude God would never save our family. We may be discouraged because we’ve prayed so long. Don’t give up. Pray God would save your immediate family.

Day 18: “Lord, open doors for the gospel in my life.”

We are commanded to pray in Scripture because we are prone to neglect prayer. When Paul told the Colossians to pray for him, he specified what he wanted: “pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison—that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak” (Col. 4:3–4). Even though Paul sat behind locked doors, his chief concern remained open doors for evangelism. Pray God opens up doors for you—opportunities to make the gospel clear. And when that door opens, be courageous and speak up.

Day 19: “Lord, protect me from those who hate the gospel.”

An employer may make your job harder because he knows you are a Christian. A family member may give you the cold shoulder. A co-worker may complain because you told her about Jesus. This is the reality of living in a society growing more hostile to Christianity. Pray for protection, as Paul did, “strive with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea” (Rom. 15:30–31). Every Christian is in God’s hand. We can trust him to protect us. Remember David’s prayer, “in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can man do to me?” (Psa. 56:11; cf. Matt. 10:28).

Day 20: “Lord, give me love for my neighbors.”

When asked about the most important commandment, Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Mark 12:29–31). It’s interesting Jesus *didn’t* say you should evangelize your neighbor. He said we are to love them. We are to take an interest in them, spend time with them, get to know them, care for them, serve them—in short, we are to *love* them. Of course, if you love your neighbor, you will eventually share the message they need to enter the kingdom of God. By all means, share the gospel with whomever you meet! But don’t neglect Jesus’ charge to love your neighbor. The people you meet are more than souls to be saved. They are God’s image-bearers to be loved. Pray God gives you genuine love for them.

Day 21: “Lord, make me hospitable.”

It’s often been said the qualifications of an elder are remarkable for how *unremarkable* they are (1 Tim. 3:1–7). One of the most neglected elder qualifications is found in verse 2 of 1 Timothy 3. An elder must be hospitable. He must open up his home and his life to others. Paul modeled hospitality. He didn’t just share the gospel; he shared himself (1 Thess. 2: 8). The author of Hebrews said—in one of the most incredible verses in the Bible—when we “show hospitality to strangers” we may actually be entertaining “angels unawares” (Heb. 13:2). Every Christian should be hospitable, and elders should lead out in this. We all need wisdom to know how to manage his or her time to make hospitality possible. We are desperate for God’s help.

Day 22: “Lord, give me the resources (and the generosity) to be hospitable.”

It is naïve to think hospitality is free. It costs time, and it often costs money. For those on a tight budget, cooking for a couple of extra people stretches the finances. A simple thing like going to coffee to get to know someone better can be a sacrifice. We know God wants us to get to know our neighbors with the ultimate purpose of pointing them to Christ. Let’s pray God gives us the resources—time, money, strength—to open up our lives. And when he does, we should pray for the generosity to spend what we’ve received on others.

Day 23: “Lord, please save members of my church who might not be saved.”

We’ve all heard stories of people who grew up in church but never *truly* knew the Lord. It’s possible to look like a Christian but not actually have experienced the new birth. This is why Paul told the Corinthians to be sure they are genuinely Christians, “Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith” (2 Cor. 13:5). In addition to praying that we truly know the Lord, let’s pray for our church family. There may be some going through the motions without the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Pray the Lord would change their hearts. As strange as it may sound, sometimes the visible church is the mission field.

Day 24: “Lord, help me to pray in the Spirit.”

We know prayer is powerful, but do we really pray? After reminding the Ephesians of the spiritual battle every Christian faces, Paul urged them to be “praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication” (Eph. 6:18). At the very least, this means to pray as someone who has been filled with the Spirit—who has received the new birth (John 3:6). But it means more than this. Someone praying “in the Spirit” is praying with the sense that he needs the Spirit to be at work in his heart. He is praying for something he can’t do himself. He is praying out of a profound sense of helplessness and a deep confidence in the love, power, and promise of God to save his people. Let’s not go through the motions when we pray, especially as we think about praying evangelistically. Let’s pray in the Spirit.

Day 25: “Lord, help me to live a godly, attractive life.”

A Christian life is a beautiful life. Paul prayed continually for the church, that her members would “be filled with the knowledge of [God’s] will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord” (Col. 1:9–10). We have no guarantee such a life will be attractive to unbelievers in our midst. After all, elsewhere Paul describes the believer as having a rotten smell, “a fragrance from death to death” (2 Cor. 2:16). And yet it is also true that our lives can commend the gospel, and be the very thing God uses, with his Word, to lead our unbelieving friends to Christ. This is why Peter said, “Keep your conduct among the Gentiles [unbelievers] honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.” If an unbeliever knew how you used your smartphone, your downtime—if he could see into your thought life—would she be amazed and curious about the God you follow? Pray God would help you to lead an attractive life.

Day 26: “Lord, grant the church a compelling unity.”

Before going to the cross, Jesus prayed for the church to be one. He prayed *we* would be one—united in mission, vision, and love. And he offered up this prayer for a specific reason. Jesus said by witnessing the unity of the church, the world would have a deeper understanding of God’s mission. Jesus prayed to his Father for church unity, “that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me” (John 17:22). It’s easy to separate evangelism from church “business.” We think we gather as a church simply to learn, and then we leave to evangelize. There is a grain of truth in this, but it’s not the whole truth. Our unity is compelling to outsiders. In a world fractured by division—war, partisan politics, hate—the church is to be a picture of Trinitarian unity. For the sake of the spread of the gospel, let’s pray for greater unity in the body of Christ.

Day 27: “Lord, help me pray until I run out of words.”

Could the failure to see more conversions be related to a failure to pray? It’s worth noting Paul taught us the “Spirit helps us in our weakness.” He said when we don’t know how to pray, “the Spirit himself intercedes for us” (Rom. 8:26). Have you ever prayed so hard, so long, you’ve actually run out of words, felt your weakness, and sensed the Spirit interceding on your behalf? We don’t always know God’s will; we don’t always know the best way to pray, but the Spirit is always there to help. Let’s pray hard enough that sometimes we just don’t know what else to say. Let’s care enough about the lost that we pray with a fervor worthy of the prayer-task to which we’ve been called.

Day 28: “Lord, lead me to long for your glory to spread.”

Jesus taught us to pray, “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.” Since “hallow” means sanctify, Jesus is calling us to pray the name of his heavenly Father would be sanctified—consecrated, and treated as holy—throughout the world. If a Christian wants to be a faithful evangelist, he first has to have a longing for the glory of God to spread. The promise of Habakkuk needs to be the desire of our heart if the gospel is going to be the priority of our lips: “For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Hab. 2:14). We don’t want people to go to hell. This is a strong motivation for evangelism. But it’s not the only motivation. We also want God’s name hallowed. For that to happen, we need to tell people about him. Therefore, let’s pray for a deeper longing for the spread of the glory of God.

Day 29: “Lord, help me enjoy praying . . . especially for the lost.”

Many Christians go through life deeply discouraged because they lack the boldness to share the gospel. They never feel like they are doing enough to make Christ known. If this is you, this conviction may, in fact, be the work of the Spirit in your life leading you to a greater degree of boldness. And yet, I wonder how much of our silence is rooted in our prayerlessness. If we truly pled with the Lord to open doors, to save our friends, to make us bold—aren’t these the kinds of prayers God delights to answer? Ask God to give you a joy in praying. Ask him to help you delight in spending time with him. A better prayer life will lead you to be more faithful in your evangelism.^v

Day 30: “Lord, make me bold.”

The Holy Spirit gives the Father’s children the boldness to speak freely about his Son, Jesus Christ. When the earliest Christians faced persecution, they knew exactly how to pray, “And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness” (Acts 4:29). How many times does God open an evangelistic door that you don’t enter? When you are prompted to speak, to ask a probing question, or to simply take a stand for Christ, why are you silent? The answer is simple: you lack boldness. What should you do? Pray, “Lord, make me bold.”

Day 31: “Lord, make the blind see.”

God can do it. He can make the deaf hear, the mute talk, and the blind see. He can raise the dead. He can save your mom or your dad, your son or daughter. Ask him. Pray to him. Plead with him to do what you know he *can* do, even if you are not sure what he *will* do. Only God can soften the heart of the unbeliever. He uses our words (Rom. 10:14). But he, ultimately, is the one to change the human heart. God gives the growth. Let’s pray he would do that more and more.

– AARON MENIKOFF

ⁱ J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1961), 11.

ⁱⁱ If you haven’t already, please read Mack Stiles, *Evangelism: How the Whole Church Speaks of Jesus* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2014).

ⁱⁱⁱ For more on this topic, read D. A. Carson, *The Intolerance of Tolerance* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2012).

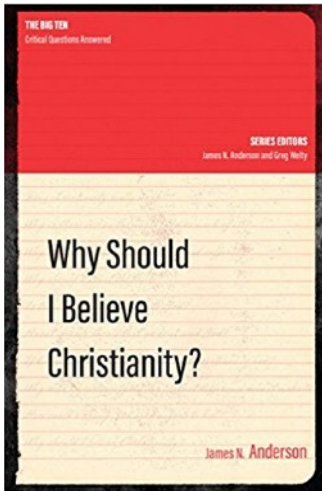
^{iv} John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God In Missions*, Third ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2010), 15.

^v The book to read is Michael Reeves, *Enjoy Your Prayer Life* (Leyland, England: 10Publishing, 2014).

Why Should I Believe Christianity?

Written by James Anderson

Bookstall Price \$11



Why Should I Believe Christianity? is a short but powerful book on apologetics. It's an introductory exposition and defense of the biblical Christian worldview, written specifically for the non-believer. James Anderson makes a positive case for believing Christianity and the central claims we know to be true. He begins by explaining that every person has a worldview—a framework for which we view and make sense of our lives. While everyone has their own, Anderson explains that only one worldview can be true—Christianity. Christianity is a comprehensive perspective on the universe

and our place in it, and is the only worldview worth believing because it's based on the infallible Word of God. He outlines the four main doctrines of Christianity: creation, fall, redemption, and consummation (fulfillment). He is clear that those who do not embrace the gift of salvation will not enjoy redemption. He honestly teaches why we need to be saved, what God has done to save us, and what we need to do for salvation.

Anderson is not focused on objections offered by non-Christians but instead makes a positive case *for* Christianity. He does a great job clarifying the central claims of Christianity, exploring what we believe and showing the reader the underlying reasons and consistencies behind those beliefs. He provides six main reasons why Christianity is the only true worldview by applying God's existence to our view of faith, reason, and science. He powerfully describes the beauty of the Scriptures and how they are a conduit where God speaks directly to His people.

This book is notably easy to read and understand—a solid presentation of the Gospel that's not full of theological jargon. Anderson pairs his straightforward arguments with brief and helpful illustrations. This is the perfect book to give to those who are curious about the credibility and beliefs of Christianity, or are open to hearing why we believe what we believe. Because it's a positive presentation of the core elements of our faith, I also recommend this as a powerful resource for Christians seeking aid in explaining the Gospel. This book will help Mount Vernon as we strive to live out 1 Peter 3:15: "but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect."

— RECOMMENDED BY ERIC BOETTNER

Excerpts From the Book

1

"One destiny is what Jesus called 'eternal life': never-ending fullness of life, utterly free from sin, sadness and suffering. Every pleasure and joy that our Creator originally intended for us will be experienced without hindrance or corruption... The alternative destiny is a grim and terrifying one, but it is an integral element of the biblical worldview that cannot be sidelined."

—Christianity as a Worldview, p. 89

2

"Even though God cannot be directly perceived like the ordinary things within the universe, it turns out that we cannot make sense of the ordinary things we do perceive—and the universe as a whole—unless God exists."

—God is There, p. 96

3

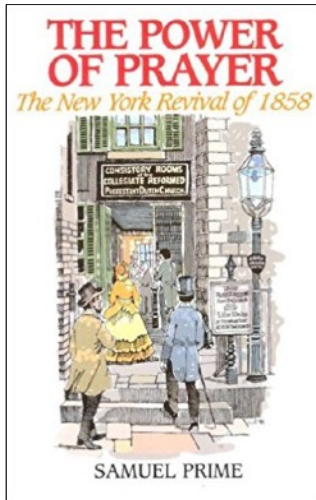
"The resurrection of Jesus is one of the most distinctive and essential teaching of Christianity... Christianity stands or falls on its claim that Jesus rose from the dead."

—Defying Death, p. 193

The Power of Prayer: The New York Revival of 1858

Written by Samuel Prime

Bookstall Price \$14



In the autumn of 1857, the United States entered its worst economic downturn in twenty years. The financial failure was particularly painful in New York City, ruining many of its one million inhabitants. “It was believed that the financial storm had driven men to pray. And it doubtless did.” The renewed spirit of prayer was followed by wonderful displays of God’s grace as thousands were brought from the trials of this world to the treasures of eternal riches in Christ. In *The Power of Prayer: The New York Revival of 1858*, Samuel Prime provides “an authentic account of the rise and progress of the work of grace in the city of New York.” The

message on every page is the *power* of prayer. Prime’s historical account of the prayer meetings and revival is a memorial of divine blessing, designed to show the faithfulness of God to his promises.

Written in the midst of the events he describes, Prime fills the pages with amazing stories of the people into whose lives God came. He describes remarkable and gracious answers to prayer; conviction of sin; touching cases of great sinners converted at prayer meetings, churches, and homes; wives praying for the conversion of their husbands; parents praying for their children; children praying for their parents; prodigals brought home; revivals at sea; the unity of church denominations; and inspired preaching of the Word. All these wonderful stories are recorded to show the faithfulness and goodness of the God to whom we pray.

This book is a great resource for encouraging individuals and the church to prayer. Prime states, “It must be that these pages will be greatly useful in stimulating the people of God to prayer. It must be that this volume will be a monument to the glory of him who converts our children and neighbors, and revives our churches with the sun and rain of his grace.” As you read this book, your heart for prayer will be stirred.

– RECOMMENDED BY DENNIS MOSBY

Excerpts From the Book

1

“Thousands on thousands of closets bore witness to strong crying and tears before God in prayer all over the land.”

–How the Revival Began, p. 16

2

“Men rushed to the place of prayer with high resolves, and with weighty demands to ask great things of God. And men rejoiced with unbounded joy when they saw what God was doing.”

–Features of the Work, p. 31

3

“The churches which are most prayerful are the most useful.”

–Prayer-Meeting at Aunt Betsy’s, p. 200



“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

-Matthew 5:7-8

We continue reflecting on the beatitudes from Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. They are some of the most well-known passages of Scripture. They are called the “beatitudes” because the word “beatus” means “blessed” in Latin, which is how each one begins.

Jesus begins the Sermon on the Mount with the beatitudes to describe what it looks like to live in the kingdom of heaven. These are characteristics of those who have trusted and are following the King of the kingdom, Jesus. In verses 7-8, we see that they are merciful and pure in heart.

The Merciful (v.7)

There is an unending flow of mercy that runs through the kingdom from the King, through its citizens. Those who have experienced the Father’s mercy naturally give it to others. Their hearts are like King Jesus, who “saw the crowds [and] had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Mt. 9:36). We should see the needs of others and have hearts that hurt and hands that help. The promise of this beatitude is that those who are merciful to others will receive more mercy from the Father. The Lord favors those who reflect his tenderness to others.

Who has the Lord put in your life in need of tender, loving compassion? What word of kindness and encouragement do they need in their helpless situation? What helping hand do they need to strengthen their weary back? Show them gospel mercy.

The Pure in Heart (v.8)

Citizens of the kingdom have one supreme goal for life—to be in the presence of King Jesus. He taught us to pray: “Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Mt. 6:10). We are to pray that the King will usher in his kingdom on earth. We long to be in the presence of our King and “see him as he is,” “face-to-face” (1 Jn. 3:2; 1 Cor. 13:12).

That promise is not given to those who simply profess Jesus to be Lord (Mt. 7:21), but to those who have a heart devoted to him with righteousness and purity. Life in the kingdom of heaven is not about outward conformity, but inward purity that produces obedience. It’s about the King changing the core character of his citizens.

Think on your own life. Are you “pure in heart?” Do you love things that are pure and holy? Our lives—actions and words—are an overflow of our heart? May there be an overflow of purity and holiness that reflects the King’s holiness.

– BRAD THAYER

NEW MEMBERS



Rachel Cochran



Kayci Dennis



Caitlin & Evan
Harrison



Susan & Sunil
John
(Yohann & Zach)



Jung Hyun (Andy)
Kim & Sinae Seo



Ajay & Diana
Reddy
(Nehemiah, Diya,
Ezra, Hesed)



Tiffany Seto



Mount Vernon
BAPTIST CHURCH