

# REDEEMER

R E P O R T

MARCH 2006

## EXTRAORDINARY PRAYER

BY: TIM KELLER

In continuing the series on prayer, I want to talk about a category of prayer not often mentioned: extraordinary prayer. Seasons of spiritual renewal often begin when a handful of people begin to pray for God's glory in the church and city in an extraordinary, prevailing way.

### Extraordinary Prayer

First, *extraordinary prayer*. This is prayer beyond what is done in only the ordinary ways—daily devotions, worship, small group prayer. Extraordinary prayer launches out into deeper waters with special prayer groups, prayer walks, prayer vigils, new prayer meetings, and round-the-clock prayer.

Jeremiah Calvin Lanphier was a layman at the North Dutch Reformed Church in the 19th century. He decided to hold a

prayer meeting at noon on Wednesdays for businessmen who worked in offices near Fulton Street. The first meeting was held on the September 23, 1857. Within months, there were so many meetings in the city (what we'd now call 'downtown,') that newspaper estimates were that 10,000 were gathering every noon to pray. By May of 1858, about 50,000 *new* people had joined the churches out of a city population of about 800,000. It started with one small group who wanted to pray.

In the early 1900's Christianity in Korea was still miniscule. In 1906 a Korean student named Sun Joo Kil organized an early morning prayer meeting which met at 4:30AM. This custom, as well as the all night prayer vigil, became vital to the spiritual life of the Korean churches. But at

the time it was quite exceptional and extraordinary. At a Bible conference held on January 17, 1907, in the city of Pyongyang, 1,500 people (a huge crowd at the time) gathered. The preacher concluded the sermon and called for prayer, encouraging them to pray aloud if they wished.

*The whole audience began to pray out loud and in unison. Suddenly they burst into a roar of prayer as people were feeling a strong urge to pray. The prayer that sounded like the falling of many waters captivated the whole congregation. William Blair, a Presbyterian missionary, was present and later described the scene: "The whole audience would break out into audible prayer, and the effect...was something indescribable. Again, after another confession, they would break out into uncontrollable weeping and we would all weep*

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## VISION STORIES

BY: MAX ANDERSON

We have heard a lot of great stories about how the Vision Campaign influenced people this past fall. The stories people have related are as varied as they are inspiring—finding fellowship for the first time in a vision group, making personal sacrifices in order to contribute to the campaign, or getting a vision for the city for the

first time. In the coming months, we'll be sharing some of these stories with you, so that we can all celebrate what God has done. (By the way, if you have one to share, either about yourself or someone you know, please email it to max@redeemer.com. We may publish it in this newsletter or use it on the website. Thanks).

This story was brought to me by Charles Osewalt. Charlie is the principal of Morris Academy, a public high school in the Bronx. He his also one of Redeemer's elders, meaning, among other things, he conducts interviews for membership at Redeemer. The membership process at Redeemer has three parts:

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## CONCERTS AT 315

### “Grief and Grace: The Music of J. S. Bach”

A unique performance of Bach chorales and solo violin music composed immediately following his wife's death, revealing how this deeply spiritual composer found solace in the midst of tragedy. The concert will feature a vocal quartet and violinist Heather Bixler. There will be a brief lecture by Delta David Gier, assistant conductor of the New York Philharmonic.

**Tuesday, March 14 at 7:00PM**  
**Theater 315, 315 West 47th Street**  
**\$5 admission. Limited seating.**

## MUSICIANS ONE-NIGHT “RETREAT”

Redeemer's musicians are invited to an evening of worship, fellowship and prayer at the Redeemer office, 1359 Broadway, 4th floor, from 6:00PM to 9:30PM on Tuesday, March 28th. The evening will include dinner, a worship service with communion led by Rev. John Lin, an extended prayer time for the music community of New York, and a talk by Dr. Timothy Keller. There is no cost, but registration is required. Please call Christie Allen at (212) 808-4460 ext 125, or email christie@redeemer.com to make a reservation.

## VISIT THE NEW EXHIBITION AT THE REDEEMER OFFICES!

*Travels* consists of over 50 photographs from missions trips and religious sites, taken by members of the Redeemer community. Included are photographs from Swaziland, Peru, Turkey, China, Hungary, Dominican Republic, Ireland, and more! If you are at the Redeemer offices, feel free to wander around and check it out. Or make an appointment to view the exhibition during office hours (Monday through Friday, 9:00AM to 5:00PM) by contacting arts@redeemer.com

The exhibition will be on display through April.



together. We couldn't help it. And so the meeting went on until 2 a.m., with confession and weeping and praying.... We had prayed to God for an outpouring of His Holy Spirit upon the People and it had come." (Young-Hoon Lee, "Korean Pentecost: The Great Revival of 1907," *Asia Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 4/1 (2001) pp.73-83)

Subsequent evening prayer meetings the rest of the week were just as powerful. This began the incoming tide of Christianity through Korean society over the last 100 years, until today Christians comprise nearly 50% of the population.

What is the lesson? D.M. Lloyd-Jones says that revivals start when we begin to pray "outside the ordinary. We have to go out of our way. Now this is the question that I want to impress upon your minds.... Are you just content to come to services and do routine things? Or have you felt that you are called to exceptional [prayer]? Are you willing to go out, to take some deliberate action, that in a way separates you?... No revival that has ever been experienced in the long history of the Church has ever been an official movement in the Church.... Believe me, my friends, when the next revival comes, it will come as a surprise to everybody, and especially to those who have been trying to organize it." (D.M. Lloyd-Jones, *Revival*, p.166, 170.)

**Prevailing Prayer**

Second, *prevailing* prayer. This is prayer that calls out to God repeatedly, in a sustained way. Isaiah says: *You who call on the LORD, give yourselves no rest, and give him no rest till he establishes*

*Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth.* (62:6-7)

As Lloyd-Jones so vividly says it, "Give him no rest. Give yourself no rest. Keep on. Bombard God. Bombard heaven until the answers come." (Lloyd-Jones, *Revival*, p. 261.) These words are startling when you realize Lloyd-Jones was a traditional, conservative man and a staunch Calvinist. But he knew the Bible—he knew its language and its spirit, and he calls us to pray as the Bible calls us to pray. But it fits in with a very similar message from Jesus himself, in which he tells the parable of a woman who nags and bothers a judge to give her justice—and then says that we should cry out to God in prayer like she did! (Luke 18:1-8.) And it fits in to the way the Psalmists often pray. They remind God about his promises, they keep telling him about what he has done and what he says he will do.

Jonathan Edwards has a remarkable sermon on Genesis 32:26-29, entitled "The Way to Obtain the Blessing of God is Not to Let Him Go Except He Bless Us." In the sermon he notices how often the Bible urges us to pray to God in a sustained, repeated way for his blessing. But why would this be necessary? Edwards proposes the following reasons:

**First**, God wants us to do it this way so our hearts lose their self-sufficiency. If God's blessings just came upon us without a lot of prayer, we would be hard-hearted and proud, assuming that a good and comfortable life is simply 'the right of all sensible folk.'

**Second**, God wants us to do it so our hearts will be prepared to rejoice in him as the author of

all blessings. If God's blessings just came upon us without a lot of prayer, we would not perceive him as the source of everything we need. When we don't pray we are robbing ourselves of our joy.

**Third**, when we do prevailing prayer *corporately* then the attainment of blessing creates community, knitting our hearts together. When we pray together for some individual's blessing that person feels a support and solidarity that cannot be given in any other way.

In short, God asks us to do prevailing prayer because he knows that it is very dangerous to give us good things unless our heart and spiritual vision are prepared through much prayer.

What is the lesson? Again, a word from Lloyd-Jones: "I commend to you the reading of biographies of those who have been used by God in the church throughout the centuries, especially in revival. And you will find this same holy boldness, this arguing, this reasoning, this putting the case to God, pleading his own promises. Oh, that is the whole secret of prayer, I sometimes think. Thomas Goodwin uses a wonderful term. He says, "Sue him for it, sue him for it." Do not leave him alone. Pester him, as it were, with his own promise. Quote the Scripture to him. And, you know, God delights to hear us doing it, as father likes to see this element in his own child who has obviously been listening to what his father has been saying." (from *Revival*, p. 209)

Shall we pester God? Shall we nag him? Shall we remind him of his promises? Only if we are obedient.

Over and over again, God has taken part of His Word and used people around me to push me deeper into its meaning. He did that for me when I learned about our church body's response to one of our congregants who is becoming increasingly home-bound due to her physical illness.

The Diaconate partnered with the Fellowship Group ministry in caring for this woman and one of our Fellowship Groups Directors enlisted small group leaders and members to care for this woman. Many individuals responded to this call by visiting her, helping her with small household chores and spending time listening and praying with her. As I reflect on how often and willing these individuals intentionally clear their schedules to meet her needs, the words came to mind: "Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions

and in truth (1 John 3:18)."

Mercy is expressed through word as well as deed. I have been shown that genuine acts of mercy start not from an activist mindset or out of a sense of duty or obligation, but from how Christ cared for us first. They do not start with more training, information and/or techniques, but where God has met us in our neediness. My fellowship group leader shared with me that he believes "Jesus came to restore the world—to mend its brokenness, and in doing so he was a model servant and gave the ultimate sacrifice. We are called to emulate Christ by serving God and serving others. Our lives are to be ones of service and mercy. Ministry includes building relationships to renew and transform the world."

I have also been shown that being a minister of mercy is not reserved only for pastors, deacons

and deaconesses, it's fundamental to being a Christian. Mercy is a character trait that grows out of the work of grace God is doing in our individual lives and our covenant community. It is not about doing a list of things but about being who we are in Christ. We are called to act justly and to love mercy (Micah 6:8), and we never know when we are entertaining one of His angels (Hebrews 13:2).

I invite you to prayerfully consider committing yourselves to service. May we intentionally make ways to live out our identity as followers of Jesus Christ by putting our faith into action and committing to a lifestyle of mercy. Jesus entered our broken world and filled it with the glory of His grace and truth. He equips us with His Spirit and calls us to "Go and do likewise (Luke 10:37)."

VISION STORIES

1. Attend a membership seminar to learn about the church.
2. Apply for membership by writing out your testimony.
3. Talk with an elder and a deaconess to discuss your understanding of the faith and your commitment to the church.

As an elder, Charlie talks with a lot of candidates about membership and recently began asking every candidate, "How has the Vision campaign affected you?" During a recent conversation, he heard a great story. The candidate responded that she was especially moved by one of the small leadership meetings with Tim Keller and Douglas Turner

she had attended last fall. Douglas Turner told a story of a single mother in another church who, when that church was having a capital campaign, made the only sacrifice she could—giving up her daily \$.99 treat at Wendy's in order to be a part of the campaign.

This woman was moved by the story because she had felt she would not be able to give much to Redeemer's campaign, and the story made her reevaluate how she might sacrifice. That night, she spoke to her roommate about the Vision Campaign and they decided to do something radical. They took stock of their discretionary income, but as they had anticipated, they found very

little "fat" to trim out of their budgets as they were already living modestly. However, they realized they could contribute to the campaign above their tithe if they eliminated their land line phone and their cable TV. They decided to do exactly that, and they began giving all the money they saved each month to support Redeemer's vision. As Charlie told me, they did it because they believe in the Vision and are excited about being a part of it.

Such stories are beautiful not just because they point to a heroism on the part of the people making the sacrifice, but also because they ultimately point to Christ. We can give sacrificially because He gave sacrificially to us.

REDEEMER REPORT

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HUNTER COLLEGE AUDITORIUM East 69TH (Between Park & Lexington) services at 10:30AM • 5:45PM	ETHICAL CULTURE West 64TH and CPW service at 9:15AM	FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH Corner of West 79TH and Broadway service at 7:00PM
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