

AUGUST 2018

GOSPEL MOVEMENT: THE ROLE OF PRAYER

BY TIM KELLER

In the last two quarterly Snapshots, we talked about gospel movements — defining what they are and how they work. We established that we don't start gospel movements. Only God can do that. We also talked about how gospel movements are fueled by a combination of contextualized gospel theology, cross-denominational church planting and specialized ministries. Now I would like to talk about the most critical component of gospel movements: prayer.

Jack Miller, a dearly missed minister who was a friend of mine, said you never see any gospel movement without prayer that is “kingdom-centered, extraordinary, united and prevailing.”

Kingdom-centered

A maintenance prayer is when you pray about your needs, and it's a good thing. As parents and grandparents who are prone to worry, Kathy and I pray maintenance prayers for our family every night. In contrast, kingdom-centered prayer is when you really ask God to

come down and do something in the world. There are always three parts to kingdom-centered prayer.

First, there's a note of repentance. You ask God to help you repent, and it is almost always the case that gospel movements never happen without a strong note of repentance.

Second, kingdom-centered prayer has an outward focus. You're praying for your city. You're praying for people groups in your city. You're praying for institutions. You're praying for your government. There's a long list of things to pray for, and you see prayer as work, real work.

You're getting more work done than if you weren't praying. In the early days of Redeemer Presbyterian Church, I'd have prayer meetings with a group of people who had been in the city a long time. We'd come up with 30 or 40 different people groups — immigrant groups, vocational groups — and then we would just pray right through the list.

The third part of kingdom-centered prayer is to simply ask for God's presence. You don't have gospel movement without a sense of God's actual presence in the room. You want to see his face. Worship services should be worship services, not just instructional meetings, not like classrooms. You want God's presence to be so great that you can cut it with a knife, and you ask for that.

If you go to Acts 4 or even Exodus 33 or Nehemiah 1, you see kingdom-centered prayers asking for more of God. In Acts 4, the disciples' lives are threatened for preaching the gospel. And what do the disciples pray for? Do they pray for protection? No. They pray for a gospel movement. They pray for enough boldness and a sense of God's power and presence in their lives that they wouldn't shrink back from preaching.

Extraordinary

Extraordinary prayer means more than what you do now. Do you have a small group that you pray with? Do you pray on

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RIDE AND FUNDRAISE FOR NEW YORKERS IN NEED

Maybe you're an avid cyclist. Maybe you enjoy a casual ride through Central Park once in a while. Or maybe you just know how to ride a bike and are willing to step it up. No matter your skill level, you can join Team HFNY members from across the city to cycle and fundraise for our neighbors in need in HFNY's 16th Annual Charity Bike Ride on September 22.

Drive. Training rides with other Team HFNY members are available through August and September.

support a Team HFNY cyclist!), you're giving to meet needs of vulnerable populations across our city, including the homeless, the elderly, at-risk youth, and new immigrants.



You can sign up to ride as an individual or as part of a team of five or more riders who will fundraise together. Each rider is strongly encouraged to raise \$1,000 for our neighbors

Cyclists will bike 25, 50, 62, or 100 miles in the Escape New York ride that starts and finishes at Sakura Park, located at 122nd Street and Riverside

in need. But this is more than just a bike ride. Team HFNY also has a goal of raising \$155,000 for the poor and marginalized of our city. When you fundraise as a Team HFNY member (or

in need.

Interested in participating in the ride or donating to a rider? Visit hfny.org/bikeride for more!

REDEEMER REPORT

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Hunter College Auditorium
E. 69th St.
(btw Park & Lexington)
Services: 10:30 a.m.
and 5 p.m.

W83rd Ministry Center
150 W. 83rd St.
(btw Columbus & Amsterdam)
Services: 9:30 & 11:30 a.m.
and 5 p.m.

West Side Church Plant:
NY Society for Ethical Culture
2 W. 64th St.
(at Central Park West)
Service: 10:30 a.m.

Salvation Army Auditorium
120 W. 14th St.
(btw 6th & 7th Aves.)
Services: 9:30 a.m.
and 5 p.m.

WHEN IT COMES TO OUR FINANCES, WE PUT OUT THE “DO NOT DISTURB” SIGN

BY DAVID BISGROVE

New Yorkers are often described as direct and open in sharing personal things about their lives. I have found that to be the case in almost every area but one, money. People aren't shy about spending money in New York, but most put up a “do not disturb” sign when it comes to inquiries about personal finances. In fact, now that you know this article is about money you, no doubt, are already a bit more guarded or defensive than if it was about prayer.

Why? Money has a spiritual power over our lives, which is why there are 500 verses on prayer and more than 2,000 verses on money and possessions. God knows our hearts and seeks to disturb them when they are settled on the wrong things.

For example, the Bible defines “wealth hoarded to the harm of its owners” as a “grievous evil” (Ecclesiastes 5:13). In other words, we are blind to the destructive “evil” of our own hoarding which is why Jesus warns us to “be on guard against all kinds of greed” (Luke 12:15). Phyllis Tickle affirms the Bible's wisdom by defining

greed as a “sin we see readily in others but rarely acknowledge as our own — and therein lies the power.”

Yet when people from other parts of the world come to places like NYC, they are staggered at the material luxuries we consider necessities. A while back there was an article in the Huffington Post written by a woman who had moved to the US from Pakistan. She was shocked by our culture's “obsessive accumulation of unnecessary products along with the hope that buying a Chanel bag will somehow make you happier.” Be on guard! Money and material comfort have a power to deceive you into believing that the net worth of your identity is tied to the net worth of your balance sheet.

Which is why the antidote to this grievous evil is generosity. Jesus' well known interaction with a wealthy young man (Mark 10) is a case study in the spiritual danger of hoarded wealth. Jesus asks the man to sell his possessions and give the money away to the poor. The man refuses, leading Jesus to reflect upon how hard it is for those who have material

wealth to enter God's kingdom. Why? Money is a master that demands allegiance in competition with Jesus. It also gets in the way of our appropriation of grace by making us more self-reliant. In addition, it creates a hard-heartedness by keeping us less accountable to others and their needs.

So by asking the man to give all of his money away, Jesus is asking if the man (and by extension, us) is willing to let him have complete control of his money and make him the source of meaning, identity and security. Practically this means that following Jesus means taking down the “do not disturb” sign and opening up with others about your own spending habits. And it means that most of us need to be more intentional about our giving, knowing that the natural tendency of our lives is to spend and save for ourselves.

This models the life of Jesus, who laid aside his riches for our soul, giving up all that was rightfully his and becoming a man “who had nowhere to lay his head.” (Matthew 8:20)

GIFTED HANDS RESTORES HOPE — A HOPE FOR NEW YORK TESTIMONY

Sophia Miller grew up in St. James, Jamaica and came to New York a few years ago. It wasn't long after moving here, though, that she and her two daughters ended up homeless. Sophia struggled to find work and started to lose hope all together. Then she met Dustee, the founder of Gifted Hands, a Hope for New York affiliate that provides educational art programs to build self-esteem and teach new skills.

Below, Sophia shares her story of how God used Dustee and Gifted Hands to restore her hope and bring her the support and family she longed for.

Growing up, we were poor, but it wasn't much of a difference because everyone was in that same situation. We didn't have much, but we were happy. We went to church every week growing up, and my mother was always telling me about God.

Before coming here, I had worked at a bank for 17 years. I was self sufficient. Then, in 2014, I moved to New York to marry a man I met here. But I haven't seen him from six months into the marriage. He left, and my life just spiraled out of control. I have two little girls. They're five and two. We wound up homeless. Now we're in a family shelter on 28th street. It's the worst thing any mother can experience, homelessness with your two young kids.

I can't get any job because I have to drop my daughter off and pick her up and the time span doesn't let me. Being homeless, it feels like you've lost your sense of security. It feels like you've lost everything, like there's no hope. I didn't

have a family. I felt abandoned, rejected — like I'm not part of society. Or I'm a burden to society. It is unbearable.

One day, the family worker at the shelter we are staying at told me about a jewelry class Gifted Hands had in the shelter. At the time, I was right on the line between suicide and wanting to live. I told the woman I was not in the mood, but I just went anyway.

The minute I went, I felt different. I met Dustee, the founder of Gifted Hands, and she just started talking to me. She started to give me hope and one day at a time, I just began to feel I could do this.

By doing the jewelry design with Gifted Hands, it just relaxed me and made me want to do more. I brought my kids with me, and they were playing, and it made me feel like I can do this. It started to inspire me. Then Dustee invited me to church. Instead of sitting home crying and worrying, I went, and it started to give me back life.

I had times where I felt like giving up. To be honest with you, I'm done. I'm going to just give the kids up for adoption, and I'm done. And then my phone rings, and it's Auntie Dustee. And I'm like, God, how did you know that I needed to hear from her? We don't really have anyone here, so the church is like the only family that we have, and God used the church community to save my life.

When I started going to church with Dustee to hear the Word of God, that's what saved me. And it started with God using Gifted Hands and the jewelry class. Through the class, I felt the love, the patience, and the respect that the world doesn't give you when you're homeless. My self esteem was boosted. But even more, Gifted Hands has connected me back with my faith.

It feels like I'm somebody. God made me. No matter where I'm at, I'm still somebody. I'm still a human being made in God's image. And I'm worthy just like anyone else. I love that Gifted Hands teaches

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CHICAGO: CITY TO CITY NORTH AMERICA OFFICIALLY LAUNCHES WITH CONFERENCE

BY AL BARTH AND SUSAN THORSON

Since 2001, City to City has trained leaders to plant churches in urban centers across the world. Our focus in North America has been primarily in NYC and a handful of additional cities in the U.S. and Canada, but in April 2016, a group of church planters and City to City staff began dreaming together about a network of leaders who would work together in the cities of North America.

This dream has led to the formation of City to City North America (CTCNA), a fellowship of leaders, churches, church-planting networks and denominational groups that will give priority to helping develop movements of the gospel in 70 leading cities across the U.S. and Canada.

The cities of North America present both challenges and opportunities for the church. There is a vast array of cultural, religious and socio-economic backgrounds, racial divisions centered around past and present injustice, immigration issues, economic disparities and an historically inadequate or even sinful response from much of the church to these issues.

True repentance, justice and reconciliation can only come through the gospel of Jesus Christ. The aspirations for this new fellowship include bringing together leaders from across denominational, network or any other dividing lines to start thousands of new churches, replant or revitalize historic churches and strength healthy churches. We are praying that through the work of the Holy Spirit we would see the beginning of the end of tribalism within the church and deep and long-lasting impact of the gospel in our cities.

On October 18-20, 2018, we would love you to join us in Chicago as CTCNA officially launches with *The Gospel & Our Cities*, a conference that will address issues relevant to you and your community. Focusing on the theme, “Hope for North American Cities,” thought leaders and practitioners will speak on key urban ministry topics such as justice and mercy, faith and work, church planting, church renewal and leadership development.

There will also be a focus on our host city, Chicago, a great city struggling to address the

issues common to cities across the continent.

This event is designed to cast vision and encourage both lay and vocational leaders to plant or lead urban churches, address the issues of injustice and need in our cities and apply the gospel in every sphere of life.

You will hear from a diverse group of speakers including Dr. Tim Keller, Trillia Newbell, Dr. Charlie Dates, Dr. Carl Ellis, Jr., Robert Guerrero and many more. Main sessions and approximately 50 breakouts will cover a multitude of topics focused on renewal in the cities of North America.

Do you have a passion to see gospel renewal in your community? Are you seeking to understand the unique facets of urban ministry? Would you like to be inspired and equipped to work toward reconciliation in your city?

Come to Chicago to pray together, learn together and start churches together.

Al Barth is the Executive Director of City to City North America, and Susan Thorson serves the organization as a writer and editor.

REDEEMER BREAKS NEW GROUND WITH VBS 2018

BY KAREN DOLAN, DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES, DOWNTOWN

This year, for the first time in Redeemer's history, each Redeemer congregation planned and hosted their own Vacation Bible School programs! During the week of July 9-13, Redeemer East Side, Downtown and West Side/Lincoln Sq. hosted 436 children! That is over 100 more children than we were able to serve in past years.

To multiply this experience threefold took an amazing effort from each church's staff and volunteers. 248 children attended the West Side and Lincoln Square location at W83, 123 children from the East Side met at The Spence School and 65 children from Downtown met at the Salvation Army. We are so thankful for everyone

who helped make this year's three VBS programs possible. We couldn't have done it without the help of every parent, staff, volunteer and leader — Thank You!

Through Bible memory, songs, drama, projects and lessons children learned through this year's shared theme of being shipwrecked, but having hope — "Shipwrecked: Rescued by Jesus." The children learned how when they are lonely, worried, struggling, doing wrong and powerless ... Jesus rescues! Through each aspect of the week's program the kids learned to trust in God's word and they memorized this verse:

I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In

this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world. — John 16:33

Between all of the VBS's we needed a combined 350+ volunteers, who worked to decorate, teach, lead small groups, prepare snacks and lunch, set up crafts, provide childcare, sing and dance. It takes a coordinated effort and a great deal of prayer and energy from all four congregations to make this happen.

We were so excited to see God at work this week, and can't wait to see what He will continue to do in the lives of not only the children of Redeemer, but also in each youth and adult that helped make VBS happen!

GIFTED HANDS HFNY TESTIMONY ... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 4)

self-sufficiency, it teaches motivation, love, and dedication.

Now, I'm working on getting my GED. I went through

the Potential, Empowerment and Train program at Gifted Hands, so now I can make and sell my own jewelry. My hope

is to get a job and a home for me and my girls. And I'm so grateful to God for this new family I have.



GOSPEL MOVEMENT ... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 1)

Sunday? Do you have your daily devotions? Sure. Don't neglect the ordinary prayer, but none of those are extraordinary. Extraordinary prayer means going beyond the usual prayer meeting or prayer gatherings and asking God for a gospel movement.

United

Gospel movements require you to not just pray on your own but to get as many people praying for the same things as possible. You unite people to pray for a movement of God's Spirit to send the gospel into

people's lives, into cities, into institutions.

Prevailing

Lastly, you just keep at it. You prevail, you prevail, you prevail. I knew of one woman who prayed for years that a campus ministry would get started in the college in her town. She prayed for 25 years before it happened. But then it did. Our prayers must be prevailing.

Prayer is critical in preparing for and bringing about gospel movements. And we must

be bold, united and consistent in asking for God's presence and the gospel to renew global cities. City to City wants to see churches all over the world praying for gospel renewal in cities and everywhere for that matter.

For more on Gospel Movements, see *Center Church: Doing Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* by Timothy Keller (Zondervan 2012).

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