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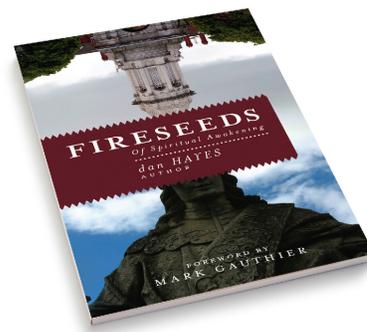
THE POWER OF FERVENT PRAYER

FIRESEEDS OF SPIRITUAL AWAKENING CHAPTER EXCERPT

For over two decades, Fireseeds has inspired us to pray, to expect the impossible, and to trust God for new works of His Spirit—in our lives and on the campus. Fireseeds is a proven tool for igniting campus wide, student-led prayer.

But it is more than a book on prayer. It is a book of stories; stories of great prayer movements, revivals, and the students who gave leadership to them.

This is not simply a reprint of an old classic. Fireseeds has been updated and expanded to include recent accounts of student revivals as well as stories from around the world and not simply the U.S. The new Fireseeds also recounts the contribution of women to these revivals as they are often overshadowed, and contains an additional chapter on the filling of the Spirit (including the Satisfied Prayer Experience). Last, the revised version opens with a foreword by Mark Gauthier, and a vision to trust God for movements everywhere.



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FIRESEEDS OF SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

THE POWER OF FERVENT PRAYER

“Through prayer, God has given us the privilege of being used by Him to help change the lives of men and nations. God has made available to us a vast reservoir of power, wisdom, and grace beyond words to define, if only we are willing to believe Him and claim His promises.”

– Bill Bright¹

“Whenever God is ready to do something new with His people, He always sets them to praying.”

– J. Edwin Orr²

Prayer has always been the precursor to revival. If we commit ourselves to prayer, there is no limit to what we can see God do. Genesis 32:26 gives us Jacob’s instructive prayer to God: “I will not let you go unless you bless me.” This is the kind of fervency and persistence that needs to characterize our prayers. Jacob was saying, “You can’t make it rough enough for me to stop. I am holding on until You fulfill Your promises.”

This is what Jesus was teaching about prayer when He encouraged His followers, “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you” (Luke 11:9). Knocking—by definition—is persistent repetition.

This is extremely difficult for us to do. We are addicted to the short term, and with every advance in technology and convenience, and every new button added to our ‘remotes’, that habit intensifies. We pray a while. When no obvious answers are forthcoming, we become distracted or discouraged and quit. But lasting revival is the fruit of persistent prayer: weeks, months, sometimes years of petitioning God for a spiritual brushfire to break forth on our campuses, converting the lost, quickening believers, and drawing the focus of the entire campus to Jesus Christ.

The Prayer of One Person

Consider the influence of just one person. James 5:16 states, “The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.” James goes on to support that idea with the example of Elijah. “Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years” (verse 17).

Like us, Elijah was a weak and sinful person, but he loved a great and powerful God. He prayed that it would not rain, so that the degenerate king of Israel, Ahab, would be brought to his knees before God.

God heard Elijah’s prayer, and He answered specifically. For three and a half years there wasn’t a drop of rain. In desperation the people turned to God, and Ahab himself finally admitted his need for divine intervention.

Elijah prayed again. This time he prayed it would begin to rain. And it poured. Through Elijah, James clearly makes the point that “the prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”

Do you believe this? Do you believe that your prayer has

the power to make it rain, both physically and spiritually? If so, even if no one joins with you, you need to begin praying for revival on your campus, persistently and expectantly.

Consider the following illustration by the great revivalist Charles Finney of what one person's prayer can accomplish. (I share with the addendum that Finney was more of a motivational preacher than a careful historian.)

In a certain town there had been no revival for many years; the church was nearly extinct. The youth were all unconverted, and desolation reigned unbroken. There lived in a retired part of the town an aged man of so stammering a tongue that it was painful to hear him speak. On one Friday, as he was at work in his shop, alone, his mind became greatly exercised about the state of the church and of the impenitent.

His agony became so great that he was induced to lay by his work, lock the shop door and spend the afternoon in prayer.

He prevailed and on the Sabbath called on the minister and desired him to appoint a conference meeting. After some hesitation the minister consented, observing however that he feared that few would attend. When evening came, more assembled than could be accommodated in the house. All were silent for a time, until one sinner broke out in tears, and said, if anyone could pray, kindly would he pray for him? Another followed, and another, and so on, until it was found that persons from every quarter of the town were under deep conviction. And what was remarkable was that they all dated their conviction at the hour that

the old man was praying in his shop. A powerful revival followed. Thus this old stammering man prevailed and as a prince had power with God.³

We are not talking about the need to be a spiritual giant. Rather, we are talking about ordinary people with a giant God who make an extraordinary effort to pray for awakening.

Multiplying the Prayers of a Few

Ready for another true revival report? This one comes from the middle of the nineteenth century.

Mr. Jeremiah C. Lanphier, a lay missionary in New York City, was greatly burdened for the salvation of souls. Almost daily in the lecture room of the old Dutch church on Fulton Street he would go alone to pray for a genuine revival.

The going was slow. A few families came but often Lanphier would return to his room in the church consistory weary and discouraged. At such times he “spread out his sorrows before the Lord.” And he never failed to draw new strength from his time of prayer.

On September 23rd, 1857, Lanphier committed to invite others to join him, announcing a weekly prayer meeting with a simple placard on the church door which read, “Prayer meeting from 12 to 1 o’clock—stop 5, 10, or 20 minutes, or the whole hour as your time admits.” It wasn’t until 12:30 until he heard a step on the stairs. One man came in, then another and another until there were six. Nothing remarkable took place. After a few minutes

of prayer the meeting was dismissed with the decision that another meeting would be held the following Wednesday. Twenty came to the next noon-hour meeting. The following Wednesday, forty. A week later it became a daily prayer meeting; the meeting room overflowed and simultaneous meetings were held in other auditoriums of the church building. The seats were all filled, passages and entrances were blocked and hundreds were turned away for lack of room as crowds swelled to 3,000, leading to the formation of prayer meetings throughout New York City.⁴

If one person praying for revival is good, two or more are better. The preceding account is of the Layman's Prayer Awakening of 1857 to 1858, and the dramatic break came when Jeremiah Lanphier went public with the meeting, calling others to join him in praying for revival. Jonathan Edwards, one of the premier channels of the First Great Awakening, said, "When God has something very great to accomplish for His church, it is His will that there should precede it the extraordinary prayers of His people."⁵

The Layman's Prayer Awakening soon spread from New York to Philadelphia as a few college and post-college men met for prayer. They became burdened for revival, and in November of 1857 they launched a daily prayer meeting as Lanphier had done in New York City. At first only a few attended, but they were not discouraged. They continued. Soon the room contained twenty, then thirty, forty, fifty, and finally sixty. The fervency of prayer increased. One could sense an explosion about to occur.

Four months after they began to pray, the revival began.

At first, only the small room was occupied, with a few in attendance. Then it became

overflowing, and the meeting moved to the main saloon, meetings starting there on the tenth of March. Twenty-five hundred seats were provided, and were filled to overflowing. The sponsors next removed a partition from the main floor space and platform; next, the floor platform and lower gallery, then floor platform and both galleries filled up; fully six thousand people gathered daily.

For months on end each separate church was opened at least each evening. Some of them as often as three and five times a day and all were filled. Simple prayer, confession, exhortation and singing was all that happened, but it was so honest, so solemn, the silence so awful, the singing so overpowering, the meetings were unforgettable.

In order to continue the work, which flooded churches with inquirers and converts, a big canvas tent was bought for \$2,000 and opened for religious services on May 1, 1858. During the following four months, an aggregate of 150,000 attended the ministry under the canvas, many conversions resulting. The churches in Philadelphia reported 5,000 converts thus won.⁶

These numbers are even more amazing when you consider that the total population of Philadelphia was then at about 5 percent of its current size. Affected by the same revival and awakening, the adjacent state of New Jersey recorded over sixty thousand converts within a few weeks. At the same time, 40 percent of the students at Princeton were converted and 18 percent entered full-time Christian ministry.

Harvard historian Perry Miller chronicled the total number of converts to Christ (and added to the churches) in the U.S. during the Layman's Revival as one million, or 3.2 percent of the U.S. population. (An analogous number of converts today would be ten million.) Dr. Miller called this revival "the event of the century."⁷

The pray-ers were just ordinary people. Few have found their way into history books. Yet through their prayers they were responsible for thousands of converts and for multitudes of believers being set on fire for God. These percentages and numbers may seem mind-boggling in light of the spiritual apathy we witness on campus today, but we have to ask the rhetorical question repeated throughout the Scripture, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" (Genesis 18:14). No, there is absolutely no reason why we should not expect something similar to happen among us today.

The people who prayed in Philadelphia caught the praying spirit of Christ. We can be infected like that today. Indeed, this infection is already spreading across our country and around the world.

Models for Revival Prayer

In recent years I have received hundreds of reports from students all over the country detailing their burden for prayer and revival. And they have been putting their concern into action. Early in the morning, late at night, and at noontime, students on hundreds of campuses are praying for revival at their schools.

Leading demographer David Barrett reports that 170 million Christians worldwide are currently praying daily for a spiritual awakening and global evangelism. George Otis Jr. observes, "About seventy percent of all prayer toward completing the Great Commission has taken place since 1900. Of that, seventy percent has occurred since World War II. And seventy percent of that has come about in the 1990s alone!"⁸ I'm curious how one would derive such a statistic,

but I'm certain about the truth it represents: prayer and missions are definitely heating up.

How did this happen? What has begun the body of Christ praying? Well, besides this being a genuine work of the Spirit, the acceleration of prayer on our campuses and around the world seems to trace back to three significant historical impulses that continue to serve as models and inspiration. The first we've already studied: the great awakenings and revivals that were launched from Europe and America in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries. The second influence that deserves our attention is the passionate and persevering prayer in Korea that launched and sustained a revival and continues to this very hour. J. Oswald Sanders described the genesis of the revival that swept Korea in the early twentieth century.

Some years ago a great revival swept over Korea, the fruits of which remain to the present day. This revival had been prayed down. Four missionaries of different denominations had agreed to meet together to pray daily at noon. At the end of one month a brother proposed that "as nothing had happened," the prayer meeting should be discontinued. "Let us each pray at home as we find it convenient," said he. The others, however, protested that they ought rather to spend more time in prayer each day, so they continued their daily prayer meetings for four months. Then suddenly the blessing began to be poured out.⁹

In less than two months more than two thousand unbelievers were converted. In one church it was announced that a daily prayer meeting would be held every morning at 4:30. The first day, four hundred people arrived long before the stated hour, eager to pray. The number

rapidly increased to six hundred. Unbelievers came to see what was happening. They exclaimed in astonishment, “The living God is among you!”¹⁰

Commenting on this, Dr. Joon Gon Kim, respected Korean pastor and leader within Campus Crusade for Christ, said:

In 1907, at Pyongyang, seven hundred people were dramatically filled with the Holy Spirit while attending a week-long Bible study conference. This conference is often referred to as the Korean Pentecost. The lives of those attending were changed. They began their new lives as fireseeds of prayer, founding a nationwide prayer movement which continues today. The fireseeds became witnesses for Christ, used mightily to start spiritual fires across our nation and into many corners of the world. Fireseeds traveled to China, Japan, and America. Anywhere Korean people assembled a spark seemed to ignite.¹¹

Bill Bright wrote the following concerning Korea’s heart and example of persevering prayer:

In Korea ... we have helped to train over two million Christians who have gone from Korea to the ends of the earth with burning hearts. There is no place in the world where one finds a greater emphasis on prayer and fasting. God has honored that spirit, and today the influence of Dr. Kim and the Korean people embrace the world. ... Their zeal for Christ, their personal prayer life, their revival spirit prompts them wherever they go throughout the world to have a vital impact for the Savior.¹²

The Korean revival began in prayer, continued in prayer, and goes on now at an accelerated pace. Tomorrow morning at 4:00 a.m. (no, the a.m. is not a typo) millions of South Koreans will rise, dress, and go to homes and churches to pray. This has set, and continues to set, an example to the world of how to pray passionately and perseveringly for revival.

The third historical impulse is the eighteenth-century Moravian Pietists, led by Count Von Zinzendorf. This interdenominational community was comprised of Moravians (believers from the Czech region) as well as other persecuted refugees of the Protestant Wars who came to Zinzendorf's estate in Germany for asylum. This little community experienced a powerful revival, and within two weeks of the outpouring, twenty-four men and twenty-four women covenanted to pray "hourly intercessions," thus praying every hour around the clock. They were committed to see that "the fire must be kept burning on the altar continuously; it must not go out" (Leviticus 6:13). This prayer meeting would go nonstop for the next one hundred years and is seen by many as the spiritual power behind many of revivals of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries.

The Moravians served as the example and inspiration for Peter Greig and the modern 24/7 prayer movement. After a visit to Herrnhut, the historic site of Zinzendorf's community, Greig figured, "If the Moravians could do a century of 24/7 prayer, we could at least try for a month in our church back home." So, in September of 1999, they began their experiment and found they couldn't stop praying after the month was up, continuing on until Christmas. Today there are thousands of prayer rooms in seventy countries and counting. They are mobilizing an army of revival pray-ers, willing to sacrifice, willing to persevere, willing to ... well, here, read Peter Greig's famous vision statement that galvanized the movement:

So this guy comes up to me and says “What’s the vision? What’s the big idea?” I open my mouth and words come out like this ... The vision?

The vision is JESUS—obsessively, dangerously, undeniably Jesus.

The vision is an army of young people. You see bones? I see an army. And they are FREE from materialism. They laugh at 9-5 little prisons. They could eat caviar on Monday and crusts on Tuesday. They wouldn’t even notice. They know the meaning of the Matrix, the way the west was won. They are mobile like the wind, they belong to the nations. They need no passport. People write their addresses in pencil and wonder at their strange existence. They are free yet they are slaves of the hurting and dirty and dying. What is the vision? The vision is holiness that hurts the eyes. It makes children laugh and adults angry. It gave up the game of minimum integrity long ago to reach for the stars. It scorns the good and strains for the best. It is dangerously pure.

Light flickers from every secret motive, every private conversation. It loves people away from their suicide leaps, their Satan games. This is an army that will lay down its life for the cause. A million times a day its soldiers choose to lose that they might one day win the great “Well done” of faithful sons and daughters.

Such heroes are as radical on Monday morning as Sunday night. They don’t need fame from names. Instead they grin quietly upwards and

hear the crowds chanting again and again:
“COME ON!”

And this is the sound of the underground. The whisper of history in the making. Foundations shaking. Revolutionaries dreaming once again. Mystery is scheming in whispers. Conspiracy is breathing ... This is the sound of the underground.

And the army is disciplined. Young people who beat their bodies into submission. Every soldier would take a bullet for his comrade at arms. The tattoo on their back boasts “For me to live is Christ and to die is gain.” Sacrifice fuels the fire of victory in their upward eyes. Winners. Martyrs. Who can stop them? Can hormones hold them back? Can failure succeed? Can fear scare them or death kill them?

And the generation prays like a dying man with groans beyond talking, with warrior cries, euphoric tears and with great barrow loads of laughter! Waiting. Watching: 24—7—365.

Whatever it takes they will give: Breaking the rules. Shaking mediocrity from its cozy little hide. Laying down their rights and their precious little wrongs, laughing at labels, fasting essentials. The advertisers cannot mould them. Hollywood cannot hold them. Peer-pressure is powerless to shake their resolve at late night parties before the cockerel cries.

They are incredibly cool, dangerously attractive inside. On the outside? They hardly care. They

wear clothes like costumes to communicate and celebrate but never to hide. Would they surrender their image or their popularity? They would lay down their very lives— swap seats with the man on death row—guilty as hell. A throne for an electric chair.

With blood and sweat and many tears, with sleepless nights and fruitless days, they pray as if it all depends on God and live as if it all depends on them. Their DNA chooses JESUS. (He breathes out, they breathe in.) Their subconscious sings. They had a blood transfusion with Jesus. Their words make demons scream in shopping centres. Don't you hear them coming? Herald the weirdos! Summon the losers and the freaks. Here come the frightened and forgotten with fire in their eyes. They walk tall and trees applaud, skyscrapers bow, mountains are dwarfed by these children of another dimension. Their prayers summon the hounds of heaven and invoke the ancient dream of Eden.

And this vision will be. It will come to pass; it will come easily; it will come soon. How do I know? Because this is the longing of creation itself, the groaning of the Spirit, the very dream of God. My tomorrow is his today. My distant hope is his 3D. And my feeble, whispered, faithless prayer invokes a thunderous, resounding, bone-shaking great "Amen!" from countless angels, from heroes of the faith, from Christ himself. And he is the original dreamer, the ultimate winner.

Guaranteed.¹³

Calling Others to Pray

Revivals escalate. A few people are revived. They begin to pray for an awakening on their campus, in their church, upon their city. The more they pray, the greater the burden becomes. Since they cannot bear it alone, they need others to bear the burden with them.

So they call others to blend their hearts and prayers with them. God then touches these new participants, and they, too, are “set on fire.” They then recruit others. Thus the numbers who are passionately praying increase.

Sooner or later, a critical mass of praying, fervent believers is gathered. Like a nuclear reaction (where molecules of radioactive material are continuously added until a certain mass is reached), when a certain number (known only to God) of fervently praying believers is reached, a spiritual explosion occurs. God then sends a sweeping movement to touch the campus, church, or city in order to revive believers and to arouse unbelievers so that they may be converted.

We see an example of this spiritual radiation and reaction in a revival that swept over India in the early part of the twentieth century. It began with a godly woman named Pandita Ramabai. In 1891 this brilliant Hindu social reformer was profoundly converted to Christ.

Ramabai had built a center/shelter/school in Pune, India (south of Bombay), for orphans, widows, and famine victims. She named it Mukti, meaning “salvation.” For years she prayed and fasted for the salvation of the women at Mukti and for revival in India. In 1898 she traveled to a Christian conference in England and recruited every one of the four thousand attendees to pray for evangelization and revival in India and for her women at Mukti.

She produced a mission magazine called the *Mukti Prayer Bell*, through which she summoned believers all over the world to pray for God to move powerfully in India.

In September, 1901, Ramabai began a special prayer meeting for an outpouring of God’s Spirit at her center in

Mukti, and as revival came, twelve hundred women were baptized in the course of two months. But her vision and burden went far beyond Mukti to the country of India itself. She organized her newly converted women in prayer circles (ten women in each) to pray daily for an outpouring of God's Spirit upon India, and she recruited friends and supporters to form similar prayer circles. Seeing the need for evangelism as well as prayer, Ramabai asked thirty of her women to give up their studies at the center to evangelize the local towns and villages.

As the thirty women prayed for God to empower them on their evangelistic mission, His Spirit powerfully manifested among them. "One of the thirty was so set aflame spiritually that the other girls saw a vision of fire engulfing her. One of the girls grabbed a pail of water to throw on her, only to discover that the fire, though visible, was not literal. It was the fire of the Spirit seen ... at Pentecost."¹⁴

As one witnessed described the scene: "One little girl of twelve is constantly laughing—her face, plain, even ugly, is beautiful and radiant. She does not know it. She is occupied with Jesus. You think you have looked on an angel face. Some claim to have seen the Lord—one, a blind girl. All speak of His coming again. One sang hymns composing them as she sang."¹⁵

The thirty women who had committed to witnessing in neighboring villages turned into seven hundred. Every day a group of sixty would go out, taking turns, while the others remained and prayed.

There is not space to describe how the revival continued to spread across India in the early twentieth century. (The "children's revival" of Khasia, where young children were so touched by God that they went door-to-door in nearby villages sharing Christ, is worthy of a book in itself.) The Methodists reported thirty-six thousand new members; the Presbyterians baptized eleven thousand in four years; the Lutherans, twenty-one thousand ... and the list goes on.¹⁶

In the Mukti revival, and in the example set by Pandita Ramabai, we witness the chain reaction of revival prayer as it grows from the burden of one into the mission of an army. The revival occurred because Pandita Ramabai saw her role extending beyond personal prayer to being a mobilizer of prayer—gathering the critical mass needed to start a chain reaction.

The place to begin, of course, is in your own devotional life. Pray daily for revival on your campus and in your dormitory or Greek house. Ask God for greater fervency and a spirit of persistence. After all, this is the basic meaning of 1 Thessalonians 5:17: “Pray without ceasing” (NASB).

Having begun your own prayer quest for revival, like Jeremiah Lanphier and Pandita Ramabai, the next step is to join with others to pray. If there is already a prayer group, great! Join that group and share with them your burden for revival. You might even share copies of this book with the group to encourage revival prayer.

If there is not a regular prayer meeting, following the courage and example of the godly individuals we’ve looked at, you be the one to call others to join you in prayer.

Besides a time of weekly prayer, I would suggest you designate and set up a prayer room on campus. This would be a place where anyone can go at any time to pray, a place where twenty-four-hour prayer can continue unabated if people are willing and committed. Be creative in setting up the environment of the room, having copies of visionary articles, prayer journals, books, music, lists of requests, and stories of answered prayer. Create an environment where, day or night, people can come and find a sanctuary to seek the Lord and pray for the needs of the ministry, the campus, and the world. Use this as the place to hold your weekly prayer times, and have a war room to set up prayer chains: 24/7 watches of prayer for the campus. As you pray, God will give you many creative ideas for mobilizing others and sustaining a prayer movement.

Let me close with the following exhortation from one of history's greatest students of revival, Leonard Ravenhill. It has pricked my prayer life for years, and I hope it will stimulate yours as well.

The church has many organizers, but few agonizers; many who pay, but few who pray; many resters, but few wrestlers; many who are enterprising, but few who are interceding. People who are not praying are playing.

Two prerequisites of dynamic Christian living are vision and passion. Both of these are generated by prayer. The ministry of preaching is open to a few. The ministry of praying is open to every child of God. ...

Tithes may build the church, but tears will give it life. That is the difference between the modern church and the early church. Our emphasis is on paying, theirs was on praying. When we have paid, the place is taken. When they had prayed, the place was shaken (Acts 4:31).

In the matter of effective praying, never have so many left so much to so few. Brethren, let us pray.¹⁷