

# If We Are So Burdened Then Why Aren't The Prayer Meetings Full?

[September 28, 2016](#) by [Erik Raymond](#)

As Christians we are right to be outraged by things we see and hear in the news and our communities. Our hearts break when we consider people being killed by gunfire, abortion, terrorism, and drug overdoses (just to name a few). But being Scripture-formed people we know better than to limit our frustration over sin to those that make the headlines. We also loathe spiritual apathy, hypocrisy, and lukewarmness in the church. We recognize that all sin is, at its core, a rebellion against God and an assault on his honor (Rom. 1:18-25).

So what do we do about it?

I know one thing that a lot of people do is talk about it. We as Christians talk an awful lot about what is wrong. Many people engage the issues on social media and there is a lot of chatter by Christians on the topics. But is this really a strategy for doing anything about it? Don't get me wrong, I'm all for talking. People are shaped and challenged by healthy public discourse. But this can't be all that we do. It isn't even the best thing we can do.

Let me put it another way, if we believe that God is good, sovereign, and holy, and that he has told us to cast our burdens on him in prayer then, where are the public prayer meetings by God's people? If we are so exercised by injustice and depravity, why don't Christians flood to church prayer meetings to gather with their brothers and sisters and plead with God in prayer? Why aren't prayer meetings overflowing with burdened and broken people who want God to intervene and act?

Many pastors who don't have a prayer meeting at their church will tell you that they don't have one because people won't come. Many others churches who have the meetings in the church have a much smaller attendance in these meetings than the regular Sunday gathering.

I often wonder why the church does not pray more. Why it is so hard for Christians to talk to God but so easy for us to discuss our complaints with others? Or to vent on social media?

Are we really as upset as we let on? Do we really believe that God will answer us and act? If the answers to the first two questions are "yes" then why don't we pray more?

If we are not prayerful in our response to sin and destruction then we ourselves are demonstrating a lack of faith and hypocrisy. We want things to change but don't believe that God can or will do anything. And, we say that we hate sin, but by not praying, we ourselves are sinning.

I wrestle with myself on this issue. Just this week I was thinking through the news reports of more violence and I'm asking these questions for myself and our church. Then I read this section from Jonathan Edwards. I think that Edwards really puts his finger on it here. His words jumped off the page at me and grabbed me by the collar. Though written nearly three centuries ago, they are relevant for us today.

I should think the people of God in this land, at such a time as this is, would be in the way of their duty while doing three times as much at fasting and prayer as they do; not only, nor principally, for the

pouring out of the Spirit on those places to which they belong; but that God would appear for his church, and, in mercy to miserable men, carry on his work in the land, and in the world, and fulfill the things he has spoken of in his word, that his church has been so long wishing, and hoping, and waiting for. “They that make mention of the Lord,” at this day, ought not to “keep silence,” and should “give God no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth;” agreeable to Isa. 62:6, 7.

Before the first great out-pouring of the Spirit of God on the christian church, which began at Jerusalem, the disciples gave themselves to incessant prayer, Acts 1:13, 14.

There is a time spoken of, wherein God will remarkably and wonderfully appear for the deliverance of his church from all her enemies, and when he will avenge his own elect: and Christ reveals that this will be in answer to their incessant prayers, or “crying day and night,” Luke 18:7.

In Israel, the day of atonement, which was their great day of fasting and prayer, preceded and made way for the glorious and joyful feast of tabernacles.

When Christ is mystically born into the world, to rule over all nations, it is represented in the 12th chap. of Rev. as being in consequence of the church’s “crying, and travailing in birth, and being pained to be delivered.” One thing here intended doubtless is, her crying and agonizing in prayer.

God seems at this very time to be waiting for this from us. When he is about to bestow some great blessing on his church, it is often his manner, in the first place, so to order things in his providence, as to show his church their great need of it, and to bring them into distress for want of it, and so put them upon crying earnestly to him for it.

Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. 1* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 426.

Is God showing you a great need for something? Are you troubled enough to cry to him earnestly for it?

As a Christian it’s not enough simply to observe that something is wrong. We are people who want to see things made right. We don’t pursue this simply by venting and we certainly don’t see it happen apart from praying.

“God seems at this very time to be waiting for this from us.” Indeed he does.

Editor's Note: This post originally published at [The Gospel Coalition](http://www.thegospelcoalition.org)