

Classic Christian Writings:

As we pray and hope for a heaven-sent revival, it is imperative that our young people be prepared for what the Lord is getting ready to do. Many signs point to the great probability that revival may begin with children. If this is so, the intergenerational Church of the Lord Jesus Christ needs to be proactively preparing!

Author Cheri Fuller has developed a wonderful three-step model for engaging children in prayer: invite, equip and release. When applied to revival praying, this model takes on powerful significance.

Inviting Children to Pray for Revival

Through children's eyes, most of the prayer that goes on in the Church is done by the adults. Unless children are invited and included in prayer events and initiatives, their untapped potential may go unrealized. Begin to INVITE the children of your congregation to be actively involved in every aspect of prayer within the church. INVITE them to lay hands on and pray for the sick. INVITE them to join you on a prayerwalk, or in special times of prayer. INVITE them to be a part of the prayer team, a prayer chain, all-night prayer vigils and yes, INVITE them to pray for revival. You may be surprised how many children readily accept the invitation to pray.

Equipping Children for Revival Praying

As we train children to effectively pray for revival, it is important to note that children will respond most readily to asking God to show up at church (a very brief definition of revival). They are not burdened with the worries many adults have about what revival will look like--how people will act, etc. However, it is very important for them (and us) to learn that revival begins with individuals. Our Christian culture is often quick to pray for revival in the Church, and less enthusiastic to pray for personal revival.

A good illustration to use which will help children understand their need for personal revival comes from an evangelist by the name of Gypsy Smith. When a man asked how revival could be brought to the Church, he replied that the man should go home, kneel on the ground, draw a circle around himself, and begin praying. Smith told him not to get up until revival had come within the circle. Children need to realize that God will bring a revival in the midst of a revived people. They must be nurtured to desire that God will do a mighty work in their lives, and pray that they might be forever changed by an intimate relationship with Jesus.

Here are some specific things we need to train our children to do as they learn to pray for revival:

1. Teach them to quickly recognize the presence of sin in their lives. It is rare this day and age to find anyone willing to admit their sins. They would rather pretend that their sin is not as bad as some, and therefore not really very grievous to God. Others would prefer to keep sin quiet as long as they don't "get caught." This is not the model we want our children to follow, and yet it is the very model which our culture perpetuates. Children need to know that nothing we do which saddens God and grieves the Holy Spirit, is acceptable in His sight--even if it is a very small thing. However, they must also learn about the Lord's loving forgiveness and willingness to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

2. Teach them carefully about the need for confession and repentance of sin. Once sin is recognized, it must be dealt with. Children should be taught that they must confess their sins to God as soon as they are aware they have been committed. This sin-sensitivity will be so valuable to them as they grow. Learning to grieve over our sins as God does is a good concept to teach. If it makes God sad, then it should make us sad as well. It should make us sorry enough to repent and try to do better next time. Teach your children to keep short accounts with God.

3. Teach them to develop a life of humility before God. Perhaps the biggest barrier to revival in our day is the lack of humility among God's people. Instruction in prayer and fasting is critical as we train our children. There is no better way to deal with pride in our lives than to do without what is essential for life. If children can begin to learn the importance of fasting and prayer, they will be equipped far beyond most adults in our culture today.

4. Teach children to recognize and deal with idols. All of God's children need to realize that nothing can take first place over our relationship with our Heavenly Father. If God has a rival for our heart's affection, our

mind's attention, or our life's devotion, then changes should be made. For young people, idols can be developed in several areas: hobbies, recreation, leisure time, friends, family, jobs, or even involvement in ministry at the church. They need to be taught that whatever competes for God's attention in our lives must be recognized quickly and given lesser importance. Encourage children to make some lifestyle changes which will lessen the influence of these activities or individuals upon their lives, allowing Christ to be FIRST.

5. Teach children to earnestly seek after the heart of God. It is one thing to pray for what is on our own hearts--it is quite another to pray what is on God's heart. When these two things become one and the same, prayer increases in power and effectiveness. Children should learn that spending time in God's Word is indispensable to knowing His will for their lives. Once young people remove the idols in their lives (the pattern of this world), and focus on spending time with God in His Word, in joyful praise, in prayer, and in silence before Him, then they can be transformed by the renewing of their minds. This will allow them to have a firm grasp on God's will for their lives, as well as for the lives of those people and situations they pray for.

6. Teach children to have a heart for the lost. Once children spend time in the Word, they will see that the lost are clearly on God's heart. There is no point in praying for revival without an all-consuming passion to see lost people come to Christ. Teach children to pray that the Lord of the Harvest would send "workers into His harvest field" (Matthew 9:38).

7. Teach children to develop a lifestyle of praise. God desires our praise. Children naturally love to praise God. It is only as we get older and become self-conscious that we hold back from any form of expressive praise in public prayer. Young people must recognize that without God we are hopeless and helpless, and with God we are filled with hope and are victorious. A lifestyle of praise from the lips of repentant, humble children honors God, and opens the door for heaven-sent revival.

Once young people are equipped, and continuing to mature in the areas above, and they know that revival is all about God and not about anything man-made or man-generated, they can be released to pray for revival in the Church.

Releasing Children to Pray for a God-sent Revival

Once children have been invited to pray and equipped to pray for revival, they need to be lovingly encouraged to step out in faith. Children thrive on "prayer assignments." Give young people assignments such as these to pray--daily or weekly--alone and in groups:

1. Pray for continuing personal revival in your own life.
2. Pray for revival in the lives of your family members and friends.
3. Pray for revival in your church--pray for pastors, leaders, teachers, etc.
4. Pray for revival in churches all over your community--assign a particular church to a child or group of children.
5. Pray for revival in your nation--pray for government officials or issues.
6. Pray for revival among the Church worldwide--assign one city, nation or people group.

Remember, it is important for children to pray individually and together; however, don't exclude them from corporate prayer within the church, for this is the field upon which they can be trained. It may also be the field upon which they can teach us!