

**Revivals And Church History :: Prayer Meetings and Revival in the Church**

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Excerpt from Prayer Meetings And Revival In The Church  
By Joel R. Beeke

Beginning in the fall of 1857, six men gathered at noon every day for corporate prayer in the consistory room of a Reformed church in New York City. Prayer was the Spirit's means to germinate the seeds of revival. By early 1858 more than twenty prayer groups were meeting at noon in New York City. In Chicago, more than 2,000 people gathered daily for prayer at the Metropolitan Theatre. The movement spread to nearly all the major cities of America, then made its way to the British Isles and around the world. Prayer meetings sprang up everywhere: in churches, on college campuses, in hospitals, among sailors, on mission fields, and at orphanages and colleges. To mention only one example, at Hampden-Sydney College, one student found another student reading Joseph Alleine's *Alarm to the Unconverted*, and told him that there were two other students who were also in favor of such literature. The four students held a prayer meeting, while fellow students harassed them. When the president heard that the four young men were accused of holding a prayer meeting, he said with tears, "God has come near to us," and joined them himself at their next meeting. A remarkable revival swept through the college and into the surrounding area. Soon, more than half the college was attending prayer meetings.<sup>13</sup> Scholars estimate that two million or more were converted in the revivals of the late 1850s, while hundreds of thousands of professed Christians were deeply affected.