

I saw a tweet about a man who was reading the original version of Red Moon Rising in London's infamous Brixton prison. Five other prisoners apparently read the same well-thumbed copy before him and are now praying together regularly as a result. Prayer is in fact a laboratory of new possibilities, a launch pad for the wildest and most preposterous of dreams. Use of the arts in prayer not only changed my world but also opened up a whole new expression for many in our church (Ben Johnson).

15<sup>th</sup>-anniversary edition. God is calling his people to pray and Red Moon Rising got lucky—found itself surfing that particular wave. It's entirely God's problem if 24-7 fails; it's entirely His glory if it doesn't. It is intimacy with God which creates new life. According to both the prophet Joel and the apostle Peter, **God's heavenly logo for the days in which we live is the harvest moon, rising blood red.** We are witnessing the Holy Spirit being poured out upon 10,000 upper rooms, *before his return this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations* (Matt. 24:14). The trouble with genuine movements is that they keep moving. [Pete also serves as a director for HTB (Holy Trinity Brompton in London), a large Anglican church in London known for Alpha.]

Markus Lagel and thousands like him lived in the shadow of the Berlin Wall and knew nothing but the concrete realities of communism. They were armed only with prayers, nothing seemed more inevitable than guns, tanks and vodka. Then on Monday, October 9, 1989, a pastor led his congregation out onto the Augustusplatz clutching candles. Surprisingly the police never opened fire. The soldiers said, 'We were prepared for every eventuality, but not for candles and not for prayers.' Within a week the prayer rally for peace had grown to 120,000 and the East German leader had been forced to resign. Within a fortnight the prayer rally attracted 300,000 protestors, and within a month the Berlin Wall came tumbling down. Many have identified the Leipzig prayer rallies as the tipping point in the fall of East German communism. 7 years earlier a movement had begun quietly with a handful of people at a prayer meeting. 'To clasp the hands in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of the world'. The Leipzig prayer rallies embodied the defiance of praying for the kingdom of power, of crying out to the Lord of lords for regime change. Our prayers light up landing strips for the invading forces of heaven. Jackie Pullinger of International Justice Mission worked with heroin addicts in Hong Kong. She would say, 'If you want to see revival, plant your church in the gutter.'

Recent decades have seen the impact of the church wane to almost nothing. Harvard recently discovered not one believer in the whole student body. They took a poll at Princeton, a much more evangelical place, where they discovered only 2 believers in the student body.

A prayer movement started in Britain through William Carey, Andrew Fuller and others. The year after John Wesley died in 1791, the 2<sup>nd</sup> great awakening began and swept Great Britain, out of which came the whole modern missionary movement and its societies. Out of this awakening came the abolition of slavery, popular education, Bible Societies, Sunday schools and many social benefits.

I became friends with Lagel in a journey of faith together. We wear 24-7 T-shirts. On the front they say 'UC-BONES' and on the back 'ICANARMY'. 'You see bones, but I see an army!' **It's more important to know *whom* you are called to be with than *what* you are called to do.** Chemistry and relationship beat strategy and geography every time.

'sēlah' is a musical direction to pause, to stop and listen, to reflect on what has just happened and prepare for what's coming next. Sometimes the Spirit whispers 'sēlah' to our souls. When God eventually gives you words for the things that trouble you, things become easier. The chaos has a pattern now. There may be no answers yet, but at least you have questions and you will throw these at the Almighty again and again. You have learned to need and to heed. *Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.*

I could honestly say my greatest desire in life is to know that God is with me. He was caught up in my decision-making on a daily basis and I felt truly alive. If he just flooded in with answers and guidance right now, I would not have changed; I would not have learned to wait and trust without the answers and without a road map for the future. **I want to be different before I do anything different.** I feel alive and engaged with what matters. Jesus had 3 years to save the planet, and he still found time for picnics, parties, fishing and prayer.

I became sick of and fed up with my own predictability. Without a title I felt insecure. Joshua's power was not in technique; the power was in his obedience. The ancient Celtic church symbolized the Holy Spirit not as a domesticated dove but as a wild goose. God uses young people again and again to help restore and shape the destiny of nations. Young people stand at the heart of the salvation story.

Back home in England we knew that God was calling us to pray. We also knew that we were bad at it. Just a handful of worthy 'intercessors' were diligently responding to the call while the majority of us struggled even to attend our own weekly prayer meeting. We knew it was wrong, whenever we thought about it. So we tried not to think about it. Maybe, I thought, there was something in this Moravian non-stop prayer model that could help us to pray a bit more back home. This little community of 32 houses prayed non-stop for 100 years. Herrnhut, Moravia was established by Count (citizen) Zinzendorf in 1722. It was located at the junction of Germany, Poland, and the Czech Republic.

While I know pastors today who pride themselves on never being alone in a room with a woman other than their wives or daughters, it is striking that Jesus, the name above every name, risked his reputation scandalously by befriending, forgiving and dignifying women involved in the sex industry. Intercession is impossible until we allow the things that break God's heart to break our hearts as well. The prophet Isaiah rebukes the people of Israel for divorcing prayer from engagement with the poor.

**There are 3 essential gospel imperatives: prayer, mission and justice.** This is our DNA. We stumbled upon one of the keys to 24-7's impact: the biblical idea of 'tabernacle' or 'holy space'. *The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, and we have seen his glory (Jn 1:14).* Deployment of crea-

tivity would become a key factor in the growth of the movement. *Let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night.* (Neh. 1:6) *Praise the LORD, all you servants of the LORD, who minister by night in the house of the LORD.* (Ps. 134:1) *There was also a prophetess, Anna. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.* (Luke 2:36–37) *Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.* (1 Thess. 5:16–18).

Word soon spread that the best shifts were the ones in the middle of the night. In an ordinary local church it is extraordinary when people begin to travel many miles to see what you are doing. **Prayer itself is an art only the Holy Spirit can teach us.** Pray for prayer. Pray until you can really pray. People really were learning to pray, simply by praying.

People have often tried to call me the founder of 24-7 Prayer, but the embarrassing fact of the matter is that I only started one prayer room and tried to shut it down before the movement was even born. Thankfully someone else didn't let me. Many thousands of others around the world have now also started prayer rooms through which more than 2 million people have met with God.

A prayer room is first and foremost a living room—a place where the Father waits for his children to come and climb into his arms. It is the intimacy of the prayer room that keeps us meaningfully involved in the mission of God. In the contemplative traditions prayer is not primarily about changing things somewhere out there. It is first and foremost about changing something 'in here.' The most powerful thing that can happen in the place of prayer is that you yourself become the prayer. This is what it means to pray continually: to see with the eyes of Jesus and to hear with his ears with every waking moment. The literal translation of the phrase 'pray always' is 'come to rest.' Before Jesus, the Bible has only 40 references to God as Father, but the New Testament has more than 260!

While resources have been lavished upon congregational worship, corporate prayer has remained marooned in the past. There are just 90 verses in the Bible about music and 375 about prayer. **Reading the Scripture is like putting food into our mouths: meditation chews it and prayer extracts its flavor.** Further reflection enriches us. When we read in Genesis that we are made in God's image, the first thing we know about him is that he is an artist, a Creator! The first man in the Bible to be described as being filled with the Holy Spirit is not some great king or prophet. It is a craftsman called Bezalel, anointed by God to decorate the prayer room—the tabernacle (Exod. 35:30–33).

Prayer requires persistence because it is also an act of warfare against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly Realms. **Prayer reverses the Fall, in which Adam asserted his independence.** God said, *I never forget a single prayer my children ever utters, even if they do.*

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 disciplin(ed). 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, sulphuric 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 mold 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 centers. 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 3-D. 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.

It isn't new revelation, just a contemporary image for a timeless truth. 'The Vision' remained anonymous and I liked it that way. This wasn't just some new youth resource. It had come to me from a place of prayer and belonged to the emerging generation, wherever you might find them. 'The Vision' was truly touching the extremes of the earth. That month it was translated into Mandarin and published in *The Way*, the newspaper of 100,000 Chinese underground churches, read by millions of believers. And then on September 2, 2000 a crowd of 200,000 people at the Capitol Mall in Washington, DC, were sent home with the call to a life that is 'obsessively, dangerously Jesus' ringing in their ears. I tried to puzzle out how

to make sense of this movement without constraining or controlling it.

Our call was to surf waves and not to make waves. IHOP (international house of prayer) and 24-7 had started simultaneously on precisely the same day in September 1999 on different continents. Everywhere I turn I seem to hear this same call to prayer proclaimed—prayer for cities, prayer for nations. We could become successors of those Moravian refugees as we convened in Count Zinzendorf's home city on the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth. Zinzendorf had organized 24 women and 24 men into prayer 'choirs', each one taking turns to pray for one hour every 2 days. This prayer chain was to continue for 100 years. Every man between the ages of 16 and 60 was called upon to cover the night watches, prayer-walking around the village. Zinzendorf organized the community into single-sex cell groups called bands, which provided a context for radical accountability (and which would inspire John Wesley to develop the same system for Methodism).

Zinzendorf adopted the brilliant motto: 'In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; and in all things, love.' Any truly Christian prayer movement will embody his deep longing for a reconciled church. The *Lösung*, the Moravian book of daily texts is still the bestselling daily devotional in the world. Many young Germans don't like being German because they still carry an undermining sense of national shame about WW2. It can be hard for other nations to understand what it is like growing up with the knowledge that your grandparents' generation served under Hitler, but many ordinary German young people still seem to carry this gnawing sense of surrogate guilt for something they didn't do and therefore can't ever rectify. It's a sense that 'nothing good can come out of Germany. And so, as an Englishman, I thanked the Germans for their great redemptive gift to the body of Christ--Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf.

I've concluded that to be used by God we must be weak and foolish rather than all-conquering heroes. One young man said, 'the reason I don't pray for my sister is because it's just too painful. To pray for her is to think about her ['hopeless' medical] situation. It means identifying with her and feeling her pain. So I find it easier just to forget the whole thing and pretend it's not happening. But God's been challenging me to feel my sister's pain, because that's what it means to truly intercede. I also believe God is challenging us as a movement of young people to dare to feel the pain all around us. To move from praying for people from the comfort of our own salvation to interceding with them from a position of need.'

Will we allow the things that break God's heart to break our hearts too? It'll mean more tears, more listening. It may even be the reason why so many of us struggle with our own personal burdens and heartaches—God is allowing us to feel the pain, to be weak and broken so that our prayers have power. God says that if we will stand in the gap in this way—bridging the ravine between a hurting generation and a healing God—we will see breakthrough, a new level of effectiveness in prayer. In short, there will be great power in our pain. **What if the call to pray is a call to bleed as well as to receive blessing?** *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be*

*comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.*

When I am feeling weak and weary, strength comes from clinging to the promises of God in prayer. The Church of the Resurrection of Christ in St. Petersburg is also known as the Church of the Bleeding Savior. More than 25,000 people died constructing this fairy-tale skyline for Tsar Peter the Great 300 ago. The ultimate 24-7 prayer room is the human heart fully surrendered to God.

I would rather speak in a house to 5 people who don't know God than to thousands of Christians at a conference. **Whenever God sets about to do a new thing, he always sets his people praying.** The reality is that we all live with far more frustrations in prayer than breakthroughs.

I have often needed to remember the things God has said to me. These have helped me persevere in prayer and in practice. We generally try to set up a 24-7 prayer room and maintain shifts of prayer throughout the time we are there, when we start a new work. We aim to find the traces of God's goodness in every culture and enjoy these graces. Share Jesus in word and deed. Prayer rooms have always been the space and time when God has challenged me the most and moved me on in my faith. *Some wish to live within the sound of church or chapel bell; I want to run a rescue shop within a yard of hell.* One day you talk to God about people and the next you talk to people about God.

To maintain a permanent prayer facility requires a certain number of committed people, funding, and a significant momentum in prayer locally. The most elusive of these is momentum. The boiler room was a place of essential, hidden labor, an eloquent metaphor for the function of a prayer house in any community. It is a source of prayer cover for projects, empowering, extending and protecting the work of God and the people of God in the host community.

*Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it* (Jeremiah 6:16). The dominant institution of Celtic Christianity was the monastery, a combination of commune, retreat house, mission station, hotel, hospital, school, university, arts center and power-house for the local community. They established complex, redemptive communities like little 'colonies of heaven'.

A vow taken by Count Zinzendorf and his friends while at university, was to 'be true to Christ, kind to people and to take the gospel to the nations'. The heartbeat of every Boiler Room is its rhythm of prayer and worship. To be made in God's image is therefore to be creative.

**Hospitality begins by seeking to host the presence of God and continues with hosting visitors,** whether they are pilgrims coming to pray or prodigals expecting to be rejected. The ancient Celts recognized some locations as 'thin places' where God is close and prayer becomes easier. God, it seems, loves mobility.

'Disciple' means a learner. We found the footprints of God, one step ahead of us, as we walked hesitantly down this ancient path. The old abbey in Reading, England had practiced all 6 of the proposed Boiler Room priorities over 300 years. The Reading Boiler Room has given rise to 34 others on 4 continents, many in areas of extreme poverty. We have vowed to stop when God does, so I often find myself with a finger to the wind or scanning the horizon for signs of a

change in the season. But I found it wasn't going to make much difference what I did! Such hunger to pray comes from God alone. 24-7 is an accident, an adventure into the unknown. What happens if you're not sure where you're going, only who you're going with and how? What happens if you're in it for the ride rather than the results? What happens if friendship is more important than function?

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