

ABC of Prayer - Part 2 - B

B is for Burden

Reading 'Rees Howells: Intercessor' by Norman Grubb, once you get past the shock of the depth of Rees' prayer life, you begin to realise the intimacy he operated in. If we consider prayer on the basis of 'Ask, Seek, Knock' we see that some results begin a process of the Lord drawing us closer to himself. We will, however, be praying the prayers on our heart and not necessarily the prayers on his heart.

'Burden' is making yourself available to God, to pray the purposes of his kingdom into existence. There is a great illustration in the book of Daniel, where he received the burden of God to pray for the land, until the oppressor (the Prince of Persia) was overcome. At one point, Gabriel, the messenger of God, says to Daniel that he had "come for his words." This suggests collaboration between heaven and earth in prayer. When a burden is given it becomes a central focus to the prayer life of any believer until the sense of release from that burden comes. It's like receiving a job to do, and then doing that job until you know it's been completed.

The challenge for us is to make ourselves available to God. Sometimes this will mean that we wake up in the middle of the night with an overwhelming desire to pray for someone. And then in the days later we find that this person was going through a difficult experience but that things changed for good at around the time we prayed.

A prayer burden is not something to boast of in public - it's something to wrestle with in private. God entrusts us with assignments from heaven and allows us to pray the burden of his heart until a situation changes accordingly.

B is for Boiler Rooms

Today 'Boiler Rooms' are synonymous with the 24-7 Prayer Movement. They are places where the fire of God is sought, prayed down, prayed in and prayed out!

It was Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the London based preacher of the 19th century, who is generally credited with first coining the phrase in relation to prayer. A visitor to Metropolitan Tabernacle in London was one day taken on a tour of the premises by Spurgeon, who commented that he wanted to show him the boiler room. He took him to the place where prayer was going on ceaselessly.

Boiler rooms are found in many places - in buildings, specially obtained for 24-7 prayer, in youth centres and in church halls. They are places that are set apart solely for prayer, and which are open and manned 24 hours a day by praying people. Typically, they will be places filled with many kinds of creative aids to prayer on a wide variety of issues. Particularly, but not exclusively, young people and children regard these as places where they can come to pray in a context in keeping with their culture. And then the mixture of creativity, colour, styles and aids draws people in to an atmosphere of prayer that is refreshing, challenging and 'mind-blowing'. It becomes a new experience.

One situation we were involved with developed a zone approach to prayer. We had a zone for sitting at the foot of the cross, and another for giving thanks - with lots of pictures of creation. A third zone focused on praying for 'prodigals' - with a sheepfold and cut-out models of sheep on which we wrote the names of individuals being prayed for. Another was in the form of a 'promise tree' with promises from Scripture hanging as fruit.

We also created a UK zone based on a prophetic word by John Mulinde - about darkness being over the land but then with the light of God breaking through. And we had a world zone, with a map and pictures from many parts of the world.

We took the door off a cupboard, put some iron railings in front of it, and then made it a place to go into and sit in and pray for persecuted Christians and the persecuted Church.

Finally, there was a place for a mirror, where we considered the difference that we as individuals could make to God's world. It was a 'contemplative zone' in which we listened to God.

The idea of having rooms set aside solely for prayer is not new. People have such rooms in their own homes, and some churches have had them for years. And recently, conference and mission centres have allocated and dedicated rooms just for prayer. But how one uses them defines how seriously one's approach is to prayer.

The first group to have a boiler room approach in recent years was the one that birthed the 24-7 Prayer Movement in Chichester. And then, later, young people in Reading acquired an unused property and developed it as a 24-7 Prayer base - open for 24 hours a day seven days a week for a couple of years (until the owners of the property wanted it for their own use again.)

This became the innovative model for many others in this country and in other parts of the world. You can find out more about this by visiting the 24-7 website: www.24-7prayer.com

Want to make prayer exciting and invigorating, so that it becomes an experience rather than a chore? Then set the youth fellowship or children's church to work on creating a boiler room in your own building.

B is for Breakfast

Prayer Breakfasts have become well known internationally as a major annual event to which political and social leaders are invited for breakfast and prayer. For a number of years, the United States has had an annual Presidential Prayer Breakfast. In Britain a committee of peers and MPs has invited leading citizens to an annual prayer breakfast near Parliament. And, the event is currently held each year in the Great Hall within the House of Commons.

At these gatherings, participants first have a good breakfast for 30 minutes and interact with people whom they may never have met before. Next, over the next hour, they listen to a respected speaker focussing on a topic of contemporary interest. And then they're introduced to people involved in prayer or Christian work on national or international levels, before being led in prayer. Sometimes this prayer is global or national significance and in which Christians have made a significant contribution or impact.

These national events have been replicated at local levels, with some places also beginning to draw people in specific walks of life together. Locally, we are shortly to start a twice-yearly 'Faith in Politics' prayer breakfast for people involved in politics at national, county, district and parish levels, and for others who are elected to some form of public service.

Prayer breakfasts can take place around many issues or interests. People in the educational or financial world could gather regularly to pray about their area of interest. Such a prayer service has been held in St Paul's Cathedral at 7:00am, which was attended by business people working in

London's 'Square Mile.' This was followed at 8:00am with breakfast in the cathedral restaurant. Over 700 people turned out for both these events!

Afro-Caribbean churches have another way to hold prayer breakfasts. They start with prayer - simultaneous, burdened with intercession, with people on their knees before God. Then, when breakfast is ready, they stop praying and sit down to eat a really typical Caribbean cooked breakfast (which has everything!) and can go on all morning - usually on a Saturday. And some churches have regular men's prayer breakfasts - where the men do the cooking, serve and eat, and then pray together for each other's needs.

One of the most memorable breakfasts the disciples had was after they had spent the night fishing, but without catching anything. But then as they approached the shore, someone shouted...So they put down the net one last time and caught 153 fish. Then Jesus said, "Come and have breakfast" (John 21:4-12)

Just as individuals and families begin every day with breakfast, prayer too should be a feature of the way we start every day. Putting the two together in a corporate sense ensures the value of both in meeting bodily and spiritual needs.

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