

Praying the News

By Dave Butts

It was my father who first opened the door for me to look at world events as connected with God's Word and His purposes unfolding on planet Earth. It has been a joy and an exciting adventure to watch the news on television or read a newspaper and see happenings as something more than a depiction of events that are out of my control. Instead, the very things taking place around us are an indication that God is indeed in control and has put in His word some amazing details of what is about to happen.

All too often, Christians feel powerless and at the mercy of a very big world. Watching or reading of news events can feel like an exercise in futility and even worse, bring a sense of anxiety and worry into our lives. One way to deal with this is to shut yourself off from the world. Turn off the television news and unsubscribe to your daily newspaper. Doing so may provide temporary relief, but certainly does nothing to change the situation.

There is a better way. It involves a commitment to change your world through prayer. It happens as you see God's commitment to prayer as a change agent. You begin to see yourself as a player on the world stage. Rather than passively watching and worrying, or ignoring and hiding, you begin to take significant action to bring God's power to bear on situations going on in the world. You pray!

The Bible is filled with examples of God's people watching political and national events unfold around them, and then intervening through prayer to bring change. Sometimes a national leader, such as King Asa or King Jehoshaphat of Judah, prayed when faced with a crisis. In both cases, a

military attack against the nation was overcome by the prayer of a godly leader.

Sometimes, though, the intervention of God comes through the prayers of more common people, such as Anna and Simeon in the New Testament. These two faithful prayer warriors were watching the signs of the times and understanding the prophetic Old Testament scriptures that pointed to the soon appearing of the Messiah. God used their prayers to prepare for Messiah's coming in ways that we won't understand until heaven.

A group of ordinary believers crowded into a house in Jerusalem when they heard that the Apostle Peter had been arrested and was chained to a prison wall. What a different twist world history would have taken without the powerful leadership of Peter! But God heard the prayers of these little-known believers and sent an angel to release Peter, allowing him to continue helping shape and lead the fledgling church for years.

Throughout church history, God has used the prayers of believers to change the flow of events and alter what might have been. One of the more dramatic instances of this occurred during World War II and involved the small group of intercessors that gathered in Great Britain under the leadership of Rees Howell. Again and again, God led them to pray over particular battles and situation, many of which they could not have known about through their natural senses. In numerous situations, the Lord used their prayers to ensure victory and change human history.

Obviously, in cases like this, the prayers by themselves did not bring about victory. Men and women in dangerous places fought fierce battles and some paid the ultimate price. But the prayers of Rees Howell and his band of intercessors brought the power of God into the battles and altered history. For further reading on this amazing story, I recommend Norman

Grubb's book, Rees Howell: Intercessor.

Most of us don't feel like world changers. We're just trying to get through to the end of the week. But God has provided an amazing opportunity for us to join with Him in intercession and see His power bring transformation. Making the most of this opportunity will take a change of attitude and a different way of responding to the news.

Changing our attitude is probably the most difficult. That's why I've spent the time I have to point out that God has always used people's prayers to bring about changes in world events. If we believe God, then our attitude will begin to shift from passivity to action. Rather than sitting and complaining about things as we watch the news or read the newspaper, we will begin to pray to bring about change. A changed attitude—agreeing with God that someone ought to do something and that He (God) is probably the best someone—will bring us into serious prayer.

That changed attitude will cause us to redeem the time we are using to become aware of world and national events. We begin to approach the evening news or morning newspaper as serious times of prayer. Instead of passive intake, we move into aggressive intervention. I call it prayer!

Let's talk about some practical ways to pray about the news.

First of all, decide to become mentally and spiritually prepared and involved. Very intentional praying is required. It doesn't happen accidentally. We don't just sit down to watch a news show and in the midst of a particular segment suddenly remember or decide to pray. This is not bad, but it is so irregular. Make a decision to sit down and watch the news as a prayer event. It will change everything about your experience.

Second, ask the Lord to guide you as you pray. There are so many times we respond to events by telling God what He should

do. You'd think we would have learned that He really isn't looking for our advice. He is, however, looking for our cooperation in releasing His power into situations. Many times the best question we can ask is, "God, what are You doing in this situation?" Then follow that up by asking, "God, what do You want to do?" Then pray with God's heart about what you are seeing.

Third, watch the news with God. Invite Him into the experience with you. Ask Him to allow you to see things from His perspective. Things that didn't formerly upset you may cause you to weep in sorrow. Other things that used to make you angry now may become side issues. His ways are so far beyond ours!

Fourth, bring your journal to your prayer time. By your prayer time, I'm talking about your time of watching the news or reading the newspaper. Journal what you are praying about. Write down insights the Lord provides over situations you are watching.

Fifth, ask the Lord if there are any actions for you to take as a result of what you saw and prayed. Prayer is always the first step but rarely the last. You may need to write a letter to someone involved in a news story. You might be called to give money to someone or something. There might be action steps for your family, especially as it relates to preparation for difficult days ahead. The Lord may direct you to change where your money is invested. He may even call you to move from one city (or nation) to another. Prayerful watching can help prepare you to be a more effective servant in the Lord's hands.

Sixth, bring your Bible with you when you watch the news or read the newspaper. As you pay closer attention to the prophetic Word of God, you will often be reminded of a passage of scripture as you are watching or reading. Having your Bible with you will help you look up passages and verify that you

are, in fact, literally living the Bible as you see things happen right before your eyes.

I will never forget June 6, 1967. I was almost fourteen years old. Dad was watching television news and called me in to watch with him. Pointing to the news that Israeli forces had just taken possession of the Temple Mount and the rest of Jerusalem, he said, "You've just seen a fulfillment of Bible prophecy. Jesus said that Jerusalem would be trampled on by the Gentiles until the time of the Gentiles was fulfilled. Now you've seen it with your own eyes." That was a powerful demonstration for me of how to view the news through biblical eyes. In the very near future, you will see many such things if you are watching.

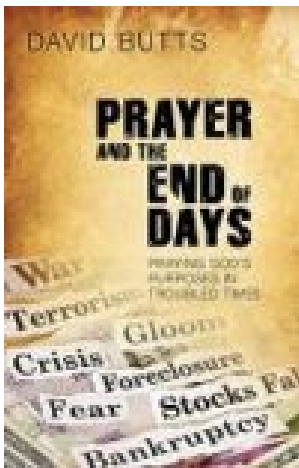
That brings me to another practical idea: Bring others to your prayer meeting. If you live with family, invite them to join you as you pray about the news. What a wonderful way to teach your children or spouse how to join their prayers to God's purposes. Perhaps you could have a weekly time when you invite friends to your home to pray about the news with you. What dramatic times of intercession might be unleashed as we pray together over the great events of our day!

Prayer

Father, give me eyes to see what is happening around me. Help me to see things from Your perspective. I choose to use times of exposure to news from around the world as valuable times of intercession. Help me to be disciplined in praying as I watch and read. Show me how You would have me pray. Thank You for allowing me to be a part of what You are doing in the world today.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Have you ever tried to pray regularly as you watched or read the news? Was it easy or hard for you? Why?
2. Can you think of biblical examples where individuals prayed and national or world events changed? What incidents come to mind?
3. Has there been a particular news event that prompted you to pray? What about that event caused you to pray?



Note: This is taken from the book, [*Prayer and the End of Days: Praying God's Purposes in Troubled Times*](#) by Dave Butts (PrayerShop Publishing 2009). It is used with permission. [To Order Book Click Here.](#)

Dave Butts was the president of [Harvest Prayer Ministries](#) and the chairman of [America's National Prayer Committee](#) until his death in 2022.