

When Students Pray: The Power of a Generation Awakened

Psalm 24:3-6

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Introduction:

Few things are more powerful than a generation of students awakened to prayer. History is replete with examples of young men and women in prayer groups under haystacks, in churches or school rooms. Most were armed with nothing more than burdened hearts and a belief in God.

It is not pushing a point to draw lines of correlation from these prayer meetings to the major revivals of the day. I believe you can trace the exceptional movements of God back to a student prayer initiative of some nature. I also believe that Gen Z is the prime generation for the next great moving of God.

It is time for those of us who work and minister to this generation to recognize their potential. It has been predicted that this generation will be the most un-churched, non-believing generation of any generation in history. I reject that thinking! I believe we can change that premise completely.

- Who is Gen Z?
 - Born – 1995-2010
 - It is expected that only 45% of them will believe in God by the time they reach adulthood.¹
- I. **History and Haystacks**
 - A. Student Initiated Early Prayer Meetings
 - 1. 1634 – Seven German law students pray and go to Africa with the Gospel.

The earliest traceable instance in which students had a part in promoting a world outreach is found in Germany in the early seventeenth century. Gustav Wameck, the great historian-theologian of missions, writes of seven young law students, one named Peter Heiling. They banded together to pray and work for the sake of the Gospel and all went to Africa in approximately 1634.

2. 1715 – Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf in Germany was part of a spiritual revival at his school.

He and four friends, the main ring-leaders of the revival, formed a prayer and accountability group which would become known as the Order of the Mustard Seed. Each member made a lifelong vow to be:

- a. Authentic (True to Christ)
- b. Relational (Kind to People)
- c. Missional (Gospel to the Nations)ⁱⁱ

3. 1726 – Wesley brothers form the “Holy Club” in England.

Charles Wesley entered Christ Church College, Oxford, in 1726, from which his brother, John, had just graduated. There they formed the “Holy Club.”

4. 1806 – The Haystack Prayer Meeting – Williams College, Massachusetts.

In 1806, Samuel J. Mills enrolled in Williams College, Massachusetts. It was Mills’ custom to spend Wednesday and Saturday afternoons in prayer with other students on the banks of the Hoosack River or in a valley near the college. In August, 1806, Mills and four others were caught in a thunderstorm while returning from their usual meeting. Seeking refuge under a haystack they waited out the storm and gave themselves to prayer. Their special focus of prayer was for the awakening of foreign missionary interest among students. Mills

directed their discussion and prayer to their own missionary obligation. He exhorted his companions with the words that later became a watchword for them, “We can do this if we will.”

5. 1879-1885 – The Cambridge Seven – Prayer and Missions (China)
 - a. Montagu H. P. Beauchamp
 - b. William W. Cassels
 - c. Dixon Edward Hoste
 - d. Arthur Polhill-Turner
 - e. Cecil Polhill-Turner
 - f. Stanley P. Smith
 - g. Charles Thomas Studd

“Bowed in prayer, these first American student volunteers for foreign missions willed that God should have their lives for service wherever he needed them, and in that self-dedication really gave birth to the first student missionary society in America.ⁱⁱⁱ”

Illustration: *“By the end of the 19th century, these repeated student awakenings had radically transformed the culture and moral climate of many of our largest universities. As a result, many of America's ministers at this time were encouraging their congregations to send their children to college, if they wanted to see them safe and soundly converted.”* (Taken from History of the Collegiate Day of Prayer)

B. Student Influence on Early Revivals

1. 1886 – Mt. Hermon Bible Study and *Princeton Declaration*

Luther Wishard persuaded the evangelist, D. L. Moody, to plan a summer Bible study conference for students at Moody’s conference grounds, Mt. Hermon, Massachusetts. Students spent the month of July, 1886, studying the Bible under D. L. Moody at Mt. Hermon. (Many heard and answered the call to global missions.)

Many more of them signed the *Princeton Declaration*, among them John R. Mott. Mott later wrote that this meeting “may occupy as significant a place in the history of the Christian Church as the Williams Haystack Prayer Meeting.”^{iv} Through the remainder of the conference, these students continued to meet for prayer night after night. Thinking of the “Cambridge Seven” and their impact on fellow students, the students decided that a band of four young men should take the following school year to travel to as many campuses as possible. Their purpose would be to impart to others the same vision of God’s mission to the world which they had received at Mt. Hermon.

2. 1742 – Children’s prayer meetings were influential in eighteenth-century revivals in Scotland.

Prayer meetings were also influential in eighteenth-century revivals in Scotland. Prior to The Awakening in 1742, numerous prayer societies had sprung up. During the Great Awakening in Scotland, prayer meetings often began with children, then spread to adults.^v

3. Jonathan Edwards encouraged children’s prayer.

In answering objections some critics had raised to children’s prayer meetings, he wrote, “God, in this work, has shown a remarkable regard to little children; never was there such a glorious work amongst persons in their childhood, as has been of late in New England.”^{vi}

C. Student Influence on Early World Missions

1. North American Student Missions influence can be traced to Samuel J. Mills.

On the North American continent, the beginnings of overseas interest on the part of the church can be traced directly to student influence,

and more precisely, to the impact of one student, Samuel J. Mills, Jr. (1783-1818). He was born in Connecticut.

2. 1857 – David Livingstone delivers a missionary address at Cambridge.

Partly as a result of this visit, the Cambridge University Church Missionary Union was established early in 1858.

3. 1888, December 6 – Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions organized in New York.

Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions organized in New York under the executive committee, taking the name of the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions. A fivefold purpose was developed. The slogan, “the evangelization of the world in this generation.”

4. 1946 – First IVCF-SFMF international student missionary convention was held at the University of Toronto.

First IVCF-SFMF international student missionary convention was held at the University of Toronto during the Christmas vacation of 1946. Five hundred seventy-five students from 151 schools attended.

In 1948, the convention was moved to the University of Illinois at Urbana, where it became known commonly as “The Urbana Convention.”

In 1976, a total of 17,100 students and missionaries attended the eleventh convention. This was the largest student missionary gathering ever held.

5. 1960-1970's – The Jesus Movement

More recently, the Jesus Movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s touched a significant number of young people. Hippies were turning to Christ and “baptizing” their music, resulting in the revolution known as contemporary Christian music. From the college revivals such as Asbury in 1970, to the effect in churches through youth musicals (“Good News,” “Tell It Like It Is,” “Celebrate Life,” etc.), and Explo '72 in Dallas, Texas - the Jesus Movement touched a generation of young Evangelicals. Today, many leaders among various denominational and parachurch groups are products at some level of the Jesus Movement. I'm praying that we would see a new Jesus Movement today! ^{vii}

II. Awakening the Next Generation

(Note: This section is based on the findings of my seminar, “Five Reasons Gen Z Could Ignite the Next Great Awakening” and is downloadable from my website.)

A. Enlisting Gen Z

1. Connect “**cause**” with ministry outreach.
 - a. School
 - 1) Create a vision for reaching students with the Gospel.
 - 2) Organize projects to benefit students, teachers and school facilities.
 - b. Community
 - 1) Develop a plan for connecting your community with your church.
 - 2) Research meaningful projects for community care.
 - c. Missions
 - 1) Stop thinking “Internationally” and start living “Globally.”
 - 2) Give the Good News while doing good deeds.
2. Tap into their **entrepreneurial** spirit providing them opportunities:
 - a. To be **creative** – they look for solutions on their own and are not afraid to challenge the status quo.

- b. To be **proactive** – they love research and willingly take on leadership roles.
 - c. To **volunteer** – they have a strong desire to impact the world and 77% are either extremely or very interested in volunteering.
 - d. To use **technological** skills – they have intellectual and technological currency and are willing to spend it.
 - 3. Develop meaningful discipleship relationships – (**relational**).
 - a. Small group
 - b. One-on-one
- B. Equipping Gen Z
 - 1. Prayer tools
 - a. Claim Your Campus – <http://www.claimyourcampus.com/>
 - b. ECHO – <https://new.echoprayer.com/>
 - 2. Bible **study** tools
 - a. SYATP – <http://syatp.com/>
 - b. Every Student/Every School – <https://www.everyschool.com/>
 - c. Cru – [https://www.cru.org/content/dam/cru/legacy/2012/02/Prayer Meeting.pdf](https://www.cru.org/content/dam/cru/legacy/2012/02/Prayer_Meeting.pdf)
- C. Engaging Gen Z
 - 1. Small group discipleship
 - 2. Focus groups
 - 3. Missions
 - a. Short-term
 - b. Long-term internships
 - 4. Evangelistic outreach
 - 5. Community service projects
 - 6. Technology/data projects
 - 7. Media

III. Action Steps

- A. P – Pray!
- B. R – Reach one student you will disciple.
- C. A – Acquaint yourself with the culture.
- D. Y – Yearn for God to break your heart for this generation.

IV. Resources On Student Prayer

A. Organizations

- Every Student/Every School – <https://www.everyschool.com/>
- SYATP – <http://syatp.com/>
- Cru –
https://www.cru.org/content/dam/cru/legacy/2012/02/Prayer_Meeting.pdf
- Claim Your Campus – <http://www.claimyourcampus.com/>
- First Priority Global – <http://firstpriority.net/>
- Dare2Share - <https://www.dare2share.org/>

B. Websites/Articles/PDFs

- How to Lead a Prayer Meeting (CRU)
https://www.cru.org/content/dam/cru/legacy/2012/02/Prayer_Meeting.pdf
- Prayer Meeting and Revival in the Church
<http://www.prayerleader.com/resources/prayer-leader-central/prayer-meetings/pm-and-revival>
- Prayer Meetings That Made History
<http://www.chc.org.sg/emerge/downloads/heroes-of-faith/qf-bibliography.pdf>
- 4 Lessons the Haystack Prayer Meeting Teaches Us
<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/4-lessons-the-haystack-prayer-meetings-teach-us>
- Prayer is Huge – Chuck Klein
<https://www.everyschool.com/2016/06/24/prayer-is-huge/>

- Collegiate Day of Prayer
<http://www.collegiatedayofprayer.org/about/history>
- Moms In Prayer
http://momsinprayer.org/prayers-for-children?gclid=Cj0KEQjw3s6-BRC3kKL_86XDvq4BEiQAAUqtZ3Wjn8DvNKJ34Iysj3kBqrf911JZKZNXwz7wrM8knrcaAg8s8P8HAQ
- Project Pray – Links to Prayer Organizations
<http://projectpray.org/links-to-prayer-organizations/>

C. Videos/Movie

- Collegiate Day of Prayer – 2016 Promo Videos
<http://www.collegiatedayofprayer.org/content/promo-videos>
- *Woodlawn* – This movie addresses the Jesus Movement and the powerful effect of prayer in schools.
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woodlawn_\(film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woodlawn_(film))

ⁱ Pew Research Center, “Nones” on the Rise, 09 October 2012,
<<http://www.pewforum.org/2012/10/09/nones-on-the-rise/>>

Pew Research Center, *Religious Landscape Study*,

<<http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/>>

PLOS.org, *Generational and Time Period Differences in American Adolescents’ Religious Orientation, 1966-2014*, 11 May 2015 <<http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0121454>>

ⁱⁱ Jeff Rawis, *The Order of the Mustard Seed*,

<<http://rcdocuments.s3.amazonaws.com/The%20Order%20of%20the%20Mustard%20Seed.pdf>>

ⁱⁱⁱ Arthur J. Lewis, *Zinzendorf, The Ecumenical Pioneer* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), p. 12.

^{iv} *John R. Mott, Five Decades and a Forward View* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1939), p. 3.

^v Johnston, *The Prayer-Meeting, and Its History*, pp. 165-66.

^{vi} Johnston, *The Prayer-Meeting, and Its History*, p. 173.

^{vii} <http://alvinreid.com/?p=3507>