

night and day praying exceedingly

1 Thess. 3:10

Seven reasons for 24:7 **night-and-day prayer in Cambridge**:

- #1 It's a **heavenly reality**,
- #2 It's a **biblical practice**,
- #3 It's **prophetically foretold**,
- #4 It's **apostolically encouraged**,
- #5 It's **historically proven**,
- #6 It's **personally transformative**,
- #7 It's **happening now!**

#1 It's a **heavenly reality**

"And [in the heavenly throne room] they do not rest day or night, saying: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty" Rev.4:8

Jesus taught us to pray to God, "Thy kingdom come.. on earth, *as it is in heaven*" (Matt. 6:10 KJV). What would it mean for us to praise God on earth – in Cambridge! – as in heaven?

In Revelation, John is given a vision from Jesus himself – a vision given not only to encourage John in the midst of his suffering on Patmos, but to inspire the church throughout the ages to stand strong in the face of persecution one side and compromise on the other. In the vision John sees how God is praised in heaven.

We see described in chapter 4 how John is called up to heaven in the Spirit, and sees "a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne". Around the throne he sees four angelic "living creatures" who "do not rest day or night" because they are worshipping God. As John watches, twenty-four ruling elders seated around the throne begin casting down their crowns and joining in with this non-stop worship. And as he continues watching, "ten thousand times ten thousand" angels also begin worshipping, filling the heavens with ceaseless praise.

Jesus taught us to pray to God, "Thy kingdom come.. on earth, as it is in heaven." And Jesus himself exemplifies this for us. As the writer of Hebrews tells us, he "ever lives to make intercession" (Heb. 7:25) – which is to say even after his ascension He is still constantly involved in non-stop prayer!

If we are trying to imitate Christ in our prayer, and bring the kingdom of God to Cambridge as it is in heaven, then might we not at least consider **night-and-day prayer in Cambridge**?

#2 It's a **biblical practice**

"Now the first lot fell to Jehoiarib, the second to Jedaiah..."
1 Chronicles 24:7

The idea of praying non-stop for 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, strikes some people as excessive – perhaps the sort of thing that a corrupted medieval monasticism might indulge in, but far too absurd a thing to be compatible with simple biblical Christianity.

But if you turn in your Bible to 1 Chronicles chapter 24 verse 7, you will find something very interesting. What initially appears to be nothing more than the beginning of a dull list of names of no enduring significance turns out on closer inspection to look suspiciously like a sign-up list for a 24:7 non-stop prayer room. The twenty-four priests are each allocated a slot in the Temple to ensure that there would continually be someone there in that house of prayer – just as we seek to fill weeks with prayer by dividing each day into twenty-four hour-long prayer slots.

So there is biblical precedent for what we are doing. More than that, as you read the Chronicles of Israel's history, you see that whenever the Davidic order of non-stop worship is restored – whether by Jehoshaphat, Joash, Hezekiah or Josiah – there is a subsequent time of spiritual breakthrough, deliverance and military victory.

And we cannot make the excuse that such non-stop prayer was a thing for Old Testament Israel and not for the New Testament church, for the activity of the church in Acts begins with nothing else but non-stop prayer, as the followers of Jesus "all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer" (Acts 1:14).

So not only is there biblical *precedent* for non-stop prayer, but a strong biblical *argument* for **night-and-day prayer in Cambridge**.

#3 It's **prophetically foretold**

*"I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem,
Who shall never hold their peace day or night" Is. 62:6*

Isaiah is perhaps the prophet that Christians know best, famously foreseeing that the Messiah would be "wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities" so that "by his stripes we [could be] healed" (Isaiah 53:5).

Perhaps less known is Isaiah's vision that "in the last days, the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established... and all nations shall flow to it" (Isaiah 2:2). Yet this vision frames the whole of Isaiah's prophecy. It sounds the book's first note of hope in the bleak context of a Temple so corrupt that God says "[the Temple's] incense is an abomination" (Isaiah 1:12). And it provides the connecting theme which ties the whole book together, that of the true nature of God's "house of prayer for all nations" (Isaiah 56:7).

When he comes to the details of this house of prayer, we hear God speaking from the perspective of eternity of how he has set "watchmen... who shall never hold their peace day or night" (62:6) because they are "making mention of the Lord" in non-stop prayer.

Now someone might argue that if we look closely, God says that he sets watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem – not of Cambridge! But such an argument misses Isaiah's essential point: as the final chapter declares, "Thus says the Lord: Heaven is My throne, and earth is my footstool, Where is the house that you will build Me?" God is too big to be confined to Jerusalem. Which means that to see the fulfillment of Isaiah 62:6, we need ceaselessly praying watchmen to be set not only in Jerusalem, but in every city.

Which means we need **night-and-day prayer in Cambridge**.

#4 It's **apostolically encouraged**

"Pray without ceasing" 1 Thess. 5:17

Paul's instruction to the Thessalonian church is so simple, it shouldn't need any explanation.

Pray without ceasing.

What does that mean? Well surely – pray without ceasing.

But because our Western culture is one in which individualism reigns supreme, when I read that statement I assume that Paul is telling *me* to pray without ceasing. And then I think to myself, "Oh, but I need to eat and to sleep and..." and so on. And I immediately dismiss the idea of literally praying without ceasing.

"It's impossible."

But imagine if we read Paul's letters as being written to a *community* of Christian believers, who understood that only *together* could they fulfill their calling to be the Body of Christ. Imagine if when *we* read Paul telling *us* to pray without ceasing, we realized that although as individuals ceaseless prayer might be impossible, as a community it's almost easy: you would only need 24 people praying an hour a day; you would only need one-hundred and sixty-eight people praying an hour a week; you would only need 7% of Cambridge's 130 thousand inhabitants to be praying. Christians prepared to spend one hour a year contributing to ceaseless prayer...

When you think of it like that it sounds a very plausible idea for us to have ceaseless **night-and-day prayer in Cambridge**.

#5 It's **historically proven**

The historian Edwin Orr writes that "*History is silent about revivals that did not begin with prayer*". But unfortunately history is filled with examples of revivals that began in prayer and then fizzle out all too quickly as the praying comes to a halt – because if prayer is merely done to bring revival, then once revival begins what need is there for continued praying?

Fortunately, history does also tell us of some occasions where the praying didn't cease once revival broke out. The Moravians, for example, were a group of German Protestants divided (as Protestants so often are) by religious factionalism. But God is merciful – and in 1727 they experienced a dramatic visitation of the Holy Spirit. They then organized themselves to set up a watch of continuous hourly prayer – which went on for over a hundred years.

As the Moravians prayed, this small community became the launchpad for the first large-scale Protestant missions movement. The story is told of one Moravian moved by God to go to the slaves in the West Indies. The slavers would not grant missionaries access – so the man sold himself into slavery, declaring as he left his home his desire that "the Lamb receive the reward of His sufferings".

Also worth mentioning is a man called John Wesley, who met some of these pious Germans whilst on a ship in troubled waters and was impressed by their fearless prayerfulness. He then went to a Moravian prayer meeting in London in 1738, felt his heart "strangely warmed" – and the subsequent revival is well-known.

Who knows what the history books might say about us? – if we were to establish continual **night-and-day prayer in Cambridge**.

#6 It's **personally transformative**

I was just a 2nd year student doing Mathematics – or perhaps it would be fairer to say, trying and failing to do very much Mathematics – when I wandered into a 24:7 prayer room to pray.

I was a Christian, but not particularly involved in either my church or my college CU. I was a Christian who found it a struggle to pray. I came on a Tuesday evening to pray with some friends, thinking that I could hopefully get back to my room before it was too late – I needed to finish an example sheet that was due the next day.

We began to pray. We prayed for our city. We prayed for our university. We prayed for ourselves. We prayed for our friends. We prayed for those who weren't our friends. We sang songs of praise. We read scripture. We continued praying. We prayed for the kingdom of God to come. We prayed for hours and hours.

I had never prayed like that before.

In the early hours of the morning I returned to my room, still inwardly praying and praising as I went. I returned the next evening, dragging along with me as many from college as I could persuade to join me. And again, on the Friday evening. I started leading evangelistic Bible studies, with a friend who had also been part of that group praying on the Tuesday night. I switched subject from Mathematics to Theology. I graduated two years later, and am still in Cambridge trying to convince people to join me in prayer.

And I never finished that example sheet.

All because of a week of **night-and-day prayer in Cambridge**.

#7 It's **happening now**

“Let whoever has ears, hear what the Spirit is saying...” Rev. 2:7

The call to non-stop prayer is being sounded throughout the world in this generation in a way like has never happened before.

Consider this: In September 1999 Pete Greig started his first 24:7 prayer room, intending for it to go on for a month, and for that then to be the end of the matter. That ‘first’ (although, as we have seen, not really first at all) 24:7 prayer room got to the end of its first month and had too much momentum to stop – it ended up going for six.

When finally things were brought to a close, they found that the idea had spread by word of mouth to various other places where others were putting the idea into practice in their own contexts. 24-7 Prayer International was then set up to respond to the need to answer all the inquiries that were coming from people across the world, asking how they could set up a non-stop prayer room.

That *same month* – completely independently – Mike Bickle's 'International House of Prayer' had begun a meeting of prayer and praise fuelled by musicians leading worship “in the spirit of the tabernacle of David”. Their expression of non-stop prayer began on September 19th 1999 in Kansas City, USA, and has continued without stopping in that place whilst multiplying into other nations.

I am convinced that God is calling the church in every part of the world to non-stop prayer. I am convinced that God will establish **night-and-day prayer in Cambridge**.

Will you join us in being a part of what God is doing at this time?