

WORLD- WIDE *WIDE*

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**"How beautiful are the
feet of those who
preach good news."**



Challenge of Prayer

An interview with the pastor whose study of intercession has influenced the prayers of thousands.

What qualifies the Rev. Ronald L. Dunn to speak with authority on the subject of intercessory prayer?

He is the pastor of the MacArthur Boulevard Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas — the church renowned for its 24-hour Ministry of Intercession.

As a dynamic speaker on the subject of prayer, he travels to Christian gatherings across the United States.

He has released nearly 1,000 cassette tapes on prayer, family life and revival which are used monthly by pastors, missionaries and laymen around the world.

He is the author of *Inherit the Earth - Now* and co-author of *How to Start an Intercessory Ministry in Your Church. Intercession, the Christian's Secret Weapon* will soon be released.

Do these things qualify Dunn to speak about prayer? Probably. But there is something more — something in the intense way he discusses the subject. For his firm stand on the power of prayer apparently arises from a personal prayer experience that he describes as “interceding as a way of life.”

Dunn, a graduate of Southwest Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, extends some personal thoughts on intercession and prayer in general in these excerpts from an *Impact* interview.

WWI: Rev. Dunn, how did the 24-hour prayer ministry begin in your church?

Dunn: It grew out of a personal discovery of my own. As I began realizing the vast potential of intercession, I began to preach on the topic, we had some retreats for young couples and we began to learn to pray. As we shared answers to prayer in the service, people became really enthusiastic about intercession because we were seeing people come to Christ. Even finan-



Ron Dunn: ‘Prayer is not a religious hobby’

cial needs were being met — we didn’t need to have pancake sales any more.

So we started the 24-hour prayer ministry. We even built and furnished a building to pray in, and the members signed up to pray one hour a week, one or two people per hour, 24 hours a day.

One of our first requests was for a little two-year-old boy who had drunk a bottle of Lysol. The doctor said that if he lived, he would probably be blind. The parents asked us to pray that God would heal him. I had said we would take any request, no matter how big, so we put it in the prayer chain. Twenty hours later the parents called us with the news that the baby was fine — with no ill effects.

That was the first of many amazing answers to prayer. Throughout the two years since we began, we have seen God answer hundreds of requests from things like “I need a

new job,” to things like salvation.

WWI: You said that the prayer ministry grew out of your personal discovery. Could you explain that a little more?

Dunn: I always had a guilt complex because I didn’t pray — I think most Christians do. I remember that I would come to the service on Sunday morning and I would say, “You know, Lord, I haven’t prayed much this week, but if you will just get me through this service, I promise I will pray more next week.”

But next Sunday it would be the same thing. I just didn’t pray. I was even threatening to get out of the ministry. I was sick and tired of it. And I was desperate. But that is where God usually meets you. He revealed to me that while I had surrendered to service for Him, I had never completely surrendered to Him alone.

I committed my life once and for all to His lordship — I just abandoned myself to Him completely. He filled me with His Spirit and immediately I wanted to pray. God began to answer, and I was so amazed, I wanted to quit preaching and do nothing but pray.

WWI: How much time do you spend in prayer every day?

Dunn: It’s hard to say because I find myself praying many, many times throughout the day. Sometimes my whole day is a day of prayer. But I do take a definite time to get alone with God, open the Word, worship Him personally and pray about specific needs. No one should set any standards, but I would say, for myself, I need a minimum of an hour to be with God in the Word and in prayer. It is a discipline — I do it whether I feel like it or not.

WWI: Speaking of discipline, I

have a very practical question. How do you keep awake when you pray? How do you keep your mind from wandering?

Dunn: Prayer is work and prayer is a discipline. If I were to go to work and get sleepy, that wouldn't be any reason for me to say, "Boss, I'm sleepy. I'm going back home." So why should I do it with prayer? When I start to pray and I get sleepy, I get up and walk around the room, splash water on my face, rub my eyes, come back and start again. If I get sleepy again, I get up and do the same thing. If my mind wanders, I get it and jerk it back. I may do that 30 or 40 times, but after awhile, I'll be concentrating on what I'm praying. I don't think we ought to make prayer so mystical and so spiritual. It's really down to earth.

WWI: What changes have you seen in the lives of the people in your church since they have been praying within the prayer ministry?

Dunn: There have been so many changes. You see, I can preach and remain carnal, because these things are man-to-man encounters. But prayer is a man-to-God encounter, and you can't fake it with Him. In prayer, you will either change according to God's will or you will give it up.

One example of change was a man who came and told me, "You know, my wife and I have never been able to pray together." He could pray with other people, but not with his wife. There was an awkwardness in communication. For a special series of meetings coming up in our church, the congregation was asked to find a prayer partner and to pray 15 minutes together.

This fellow chose his wife. He said, "I was so scared. I didn't know what I was going to say for 15 entire minutes with my wife." But they began to pray, and he began to open up. For the first time in their lives they were able to share their deepest feelings with each other. They have developed a new level of communication, and it is transforming their home.

In another case, a man prayed for his father, and his father had a seri-

ous heart attack. You would think it a tragedy. But in the hospital, he had the opportunity to lead his father to the Lord. He told me that now he would like to spend all his time in prayer.

WWI: You have mentioned several men in your congregation, but it seems that organized prayer usually leans more toward women. Is there some reason for that? Do you think



The biggest challenge of all: 'To believe God'

men can be more involved in prayer?

Dunn: Frankly, we don't have that problem in our church. We have a lot of men involved. As a matter of fact, I would say that men take the lead in our prayer ministry. I think the reason is that men will respond to a genuine challenge.

WWI: What challenge for men do you see in prayer?

Dunn: It's the challenge to believe God. That's the biggest one there is. The men in our church have seen that they don't just pray about "religious" things. It's not, "God bless the services," but, "Lord, help me to know what to do about this business deal." This is the challenge.

Prayer is not a religious hobby. Anything that is a concern in the heart of man is a concern in the heart of God. If it's big enough to worry about, it's big enough to pray

about. Since we started realizing this, I've had something happen in my ministry that never had happened before. Men come to me to talk about their business problems.

I used to have men come and talk about their "spiritual" problems or sins or habits. Now a man will come and say, "I'm thinking about getting out of insurance and going to real estate, and I want you to pray with me about it." Now there is the challenge.

WWI: Talking about the challenge to believe God, how does that fit in with understanding the knowledge of God? If God knows what is going to happen, how can we really change things through prayer?

Dunn: God knows what we have need of before we ask, but God has sovereignly ordained that His will is to be carried out through our believing and also through our praying. Our prayer is not a means of getting man's will done in heaven; it is the means of getting God's will done on earth.

For instance, Jesus said, "When you pray, pray like this: 'Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is being done now in heaven.'" We bring heaven down to earth, and we bring the will of God down to earth. So prayer is the divinely appointed means of fitting man into the will of God.

In a sense, we never change God. But God acts in accordance with our prayers. That's a paradox, I know, but that's the way it is. Why doesn't God explain it to us? We wouldn't understand it. He said in Isaiah 55, "Neither are your ways My ways . . . My thoughts are not your thoughts." We are left with an "I don't know."

What do we do then? Do we stop praying? No. If we wait until we understand before we pray, we'll never pray. God does not ask us to understand, God asks us to pray.

In Romans 9, 10 and 11, Paul struggles with the sovereignty of God and the choice of man. You know how he finishes up? He says, "Oh the depth. How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!" You have asked the deepest and the greatest theological question that man has ever asked, and I cannot answer it. But I pray.