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INTRODUCTION

When Christ built His church, He built a praying church.

Is your church a praying church?

When Jesus made disciples, He made praying disciples.

What kind of disciples are you making?

The size of your ministry is determined by the size of your prayer life.

For what are you asking God?

The size of your prayer life is revealed by the size of your answers to prayer.

What size answers are you receiving?

God set the early church on fire with the manifest presence of Christ.

Is God setting your church on fire?

This book defines church the way Jesus defined church—as a house of prayer for all nations on fire with the manifest presence of Christ.

Two years ago my phone rang on a Sunday afternoon. “My name is Jack Sara, pastor of the only evangelical church in the old city of Jerusalem,” the man calling explained. “Several of us pastors here in Jerusalem have heard about the College of Prayer. We are desperate for God. We want to invite you to bring the College of Prayer to our land. If you are ever in Jerusalem, we would love to meet with you.”

“Ever in Jerusalem?” I laughed. “I’ll be there Tuesday!” I explained to Jack that while I had never previously been to Israel, after three years of planning, I would arrive that week with a team for a Holy Land prayer trip. He and I both marveled at the miraculous timing of his phone call.

Two days later I was sitting with a dozen pastors and leaders from Israel and Palestine, and these leaders invited the College of Prayer to return to Israel a month later to help the church in the Holy Land to experience a fresh encounter with Christ and help them become a praying church. I explained to them that while I was honored to be

invited to serve them in any way I could, there was no way that I could possibly return that year.

“We are desperate for God,” they explained. “We can’t wait until next year. We can’t even wait six months. The church in the Holy Land needs a genuine move of the Holy Spirit. We need a breakthrough. We need you to return next month to train us to reach a lost world through a revived church.” Needless to say, their desperation for God was impressive.

My wife and I fell in love with this group immediately. Our initial meeting with these leaders was the beginning of an ongoing kingdom partnership with some very special people. I have had the privilege of serving both local and regional churches all over the world through the College of Prayer, but the wholehearted earnestness and zeal of the church in the Holy Land is truly unique.

Since then my team and I have returned twice each year to serve the church in Israel. The biblical principles I have taught them are the same principles that are contained in this book. They are the very same principles that Jesus first taught right there in Israel and Palestine two thousand years ago. They are the principles that have shaped my local church in metro Atlanta and have been used to build Christ-exalting, nation-reaching, God-encountering churches in forty-one other countries of the world through the College of Prayer.

For the next thirty-one days, it will be my honor to stand with you in the same way I stand with the precious believers in Jerusalem. You will discover that not every day of our six-week adventure is of equal length, but each day is, nevertheless, of equal value. Some days require more reading, some more time in reflection. Take your time to fully engage with both the readings and the reflection questions. These kingdom principles will help you not only to build a praying church but will empower you to reach a lost world through a revived church.

If you have a gnawing hunger deep down in your belly for more of
Christ,
if you want to see marriages healed,
if you want your children to see dramatic answers to specific prayers,
if you want to see people in your church and in your neighborhood set
free from demonic bondages and self-destructive behavior,
if you want physical and emotional healings to be a daily occurrence,
if you want to see every member in your church experience firsthand
the joy of leading a neighbor to Christ,

then I can assure you that you are in the right place!
And if you are a pastor who is putting in seventy-plus hours a week
with little to show for it,
if you have seen modest results but know that there is much more
where those came from,
if you are tired of spending all your energies just keeping the church
machinery moving,
if you have been working too hard and praying too little,
if you are ready to shift from focusing on what you do at church to
what God does,
if you want to build a praying church and make upper-room, God-
encountering disciples,
if you want to activate and utilize the revelatory gifts in your life and
in your church family,
if you want to equip your people to effectively reach their neighbors
and the nations,
then our thirty-one-day adventure has far-reaching potential both for
you and your church family.
Welcome to *church on fire*!

Now It's Your Turn: Action Steps

This book is intentionally called a thirty-one-day adventure because it is designed to take you places. This is not simply reading material or busy work; through it you will have an opportunity to move forward in your journey with Jesus. As you read it, you will be invited to encounter the manifest presence of Christ on a personal level; and as a gatekeeper in your local church, you will have an opportunity to include others with you in the adventure. Each week specific action steps are included just for your benefit.

Questions for Small Groups

Small group questions have been provided for each week of this adventure as well. If you lead a small group, select the questions that you would like to use from the list included after each week's adventure.

Advice for Pastors

Although this book has been written for ministry leaders of all kinds, it is particularly applicable to pastors. Since you are a leader, and since

leaders like to know where they are going, you may want to look ahead before reading this book at the “Advice for Pastors” section at the end of each week’s adventure.

Be blessed as you journey toward *church on fire!*

GET READY FOR FIRE

On the surface, church is what we do. It is the gathering together of Christ followers in order for us to love God, love each other and love our neighbors for Jesus' sake. Churches come in various shapes and sizes, but no matter how we slice it, our gathering is our effort to engage with God and His people.

Fire, on the other hand, is what God does. It is the initiative of the invisible God to demonstrate His supernatural power in tangible ways that we can all understand. Answers to prayer, physical healings, saved marriages, deliverance from evil strongholds, dramatic conversions and changed lives are all examples of fire. It is what happens when God comes to church. Point-blank, fire is the manifest presence of Christ.

Church on fire is what happens when what we do and what God does slam together. It is church the way God intended—where we become even more conscious of His presence among us than we are conscious of those with whom we gather.

Fire is what sets apart the church from the sports bar or the fitness center down the street. Any organization on earth can show what people can do; only the church can show what Christ can do. For this reason, whenever God is about to send the fire of His manifest presence, He always prepares His people in advance.

Welcome to an adventure of a lifetime. Week one is your get-ready-for-the-fire week, in which you will rebuild your own heart to seek after Christ. I hope that you are not only ready and eager—I also hope that you will bring others with you on this journey. In many ways the effectiveness of your entire thirty-one-day adventure depends on how thoroughly you allow Christ to get you ready during this first week. An Olympic gold medalist wins the center platform at the awards ceremony, not just at the sporting event, but in the months of preparation leading up to it. For the next thirty-one days, beginning with week one, we will aim to encounter the manifest presence of Christ and experience firsthand *church on fire*.