

EXAMPLES AND STORIES OF 24/7 PRAYER WATCHES

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Since the beginning of 1990, there has been a new emphasis on 24-hour prayer watches worldwide. This movement, inspired by God, is spreading over the whole world. By the middle of the previous decade, there were only a few dozen active 24-hour prayer watches. Within less than ten years, this number has grown to a few thousand. The aim of these 24-hour prayer watches is to place watchmen on the walls: to mobilize churches, regions and nations to approach God in praise, worship and intercession, night-and-day.

The worldwide prayer movement implements a specific process when establishing prayer watches. Churches, towns, cities, countries and continents are mobilized to stand before God's throne 24 hours a day to praise and worship Him, and to plead for the nations. Intercessors pray for revival in the church and for world evangelism, as well as for the transformation and healing of cities and countries. In this way the Great Commandment and the Great Commission are carried out.

The ideal is to call upon thousands of churches to establish 24-hour prayer watches in their communities. A starting point is to get individual congregations to begin praying for 24 hours at least once a week, and then to extend this period systematically. Secondly, churches are encouraged to form a 24-7-365 prayer watch together with other churches to pray for their community, town/city and the country, literally for 24 hours a day. The dream is to establish this concept in every country in the world. The aim is to establish prayer watches in every town, city and continent in the world so that a constant stream of prayer for a broken and fallen world will be brought before God's throne.

The following paragraphs sketch a few examples of night-and-day prayers in the history of the church:

1 Old Testament

In Exodus and Leviticus we read that the priests had to keep the lamps in the temple burning. The Lord was very strict about the command that the fire on the altar was never to be allowed to go out. The priests worked in shifts so that the temple was filled with prayer, worship and song for 24 hours a day.

2 Essenes

In the time of Jesus one of the four branches of Judaism, the Essenes, believed in praying for 24 hours. The community was divided into three so that they could take turns every third day to stay awake and pray right through the night.

3 Early Christian Church

The early church was born out of 24-7 prayer. It is generally accepted that the disciples prayed in unison for ten days before the Spirit descended on them at the Pentecost.

4 The Egyptian desert

In the third and fourth century, many Christians in Egypt went into the desert to pray and meditate. Many devout men and women settled in the desert. Today the works of some of these people are still beacons of light. This period is often referred to as the time of the desert fathers. The following is an example of one such a prayer movement: In the western section of the Egyptian desert, in an area known as Wadi El Natrun (the Valley of Salt), St Macarios built four monasteries. (These were not the only monasteries that were built in that area, but serve as examples.) Between 8 000 and 10 000 monks lived in isolation in the proximity of these monasteries (approximately 40 000 in total). Prayer was their most important task. They prayed for 12 to 20 hours a day. Daily, they systematically prayed through the 150 Psalms, the prophets and large sections of the New Testament! These prayers, that

were offered night-and-day, lead to a revival that spread like fire from Egypt to Ethiopia, Syria, Greece and other parts of Europe and Russia. The gospel spread throughout the whole of North Africa. The monks were, in fact, busy with 24-hour prayer. They prayed the Word and the promises of God night-and-day. Believers can learn much from the lifestyle of prayer of the desert fathers. Much of what is taking place today in the field of prayer movement, is corporate/ collective prayer. In this principle lies power, but also weakness because it does not necessarily promote a believer's personal prayer life.

5 *Moravians*

In 1727, the Moravians in Herrnhut started a 24-7-365 prayer watch that was kept for 125 years. It started with 48 men and women who prayed in pairs for an hour at a time. Later more believers joined them, also young people and children. Within the first 25 years, the small Moravian church with about 600 members sent out more missionaries than the whole Protestant church over the previous 200 years. Amongst other things, the revival in the early 18th century, the planting of Moravian churches in many countries, and the origin of the Methodist Church can be traced to this prayer watch.

6 *International House of Prayer (IHOP– Kansas City)*

In the middle 1980's the Lord called Mike Bickle to follow a life of prayer. He established a number of prayer groups and encouraged people to spend more time in prayer daily. After about 13 years, these groups started a 12-hour per day prayer watch and since 1999, a full 24-7-365 prayer watch has been kept in Kansas City. It is called the International House of Prayer. The mission of these intercessors is to establish similar prayer watches all over the world. Mike Bickle, and the team that works with him, designed a model for prayer called "Harp and Bowl". The model combines scripture, worship, praise, spiritual warfare and intercession in a unique manner (www.fotb.com). This model for prayer could be described as a furnace for prayer: in the spirit of David's Tabernacle, prayer is offered 24 hours a day.

7 *Jerusalem House of Prayer for all Nations*

The Jerusalem House of Prayer for all Nations was established by Tom Hess. In 1987, he moved to Jerusalem to establish a 24-hour prayer watch there to pray for peace in Jerusalem and for the nations of the world. The Gates of Jerusalem Watch is part of this prayer initiative: 12 prayer teams pray daily for 2 hours at the 12 gates of Jerusalem. In September 1999, Hess called together the first convocation for 24-hour prayer watches. Many nations were represented at this convocation and Hess is currently working hard to establish 24-hour prayer watches all over the world. During the past decade, several other prayer watches have been established in Israel. (www.jhophan.org / jhophan@jhophan.org).

8 *Poland 24*

Poland 24 is a national watch where more than 50 cities/towns and a number of congregations each taking one day a month to pray 24/7.

9 *US/DC Prayer Watch, Washington DC, USA*

In 1988 a group of national Christian leaders arranged a week of 24-hour prayer at a strategic place in Washington, DC. The results were encouraging. The leaders felt that the Lord wanted them to continue concentrating on prayer, but they did not get round to fulfilling this calling. However, in 1997, a new call for prayer went out and the US/DC Prayer Watch was established as a national prayer watch to pray for the USA 24 hours a day, with special focus on Washington DC, the President and the strategic role of the USA in God's plan with the world. A central prayer calendar is compiled with the names of individuals and prayer groups who have committed themselves to pray at a specific hour every week, or for at least an hour at a specific time once a month. At present (2005), more than 3 million intercessors are involved in this prayer watch.

10 *Prayer towers in Indonesia*

Through the work of the national prayer network in Indonesia, prayer towers have been established in more than 500 cities. There are prayer towers in many cities and on average 16 or more intercessors will take responsibility for such a prayer tower to pray in these watches. They will take shifts of four hours a day. During the week, other people who wish to pray (individuals and groups) also come to the prayer towers to take some shifts. Sometimes intercessors stay on for a month or more before others will come for a similar period of time to replace them. Even children (4-14 years) are involved in praying in these prayer towers.

11 *Prayer Watches for drug addicts*

A pastor's wife from Pretoria, South Africa, whose son was addicted to drugs, refused to give up on her child and started praying very earnestly. In 2001 she got a group of parents together every last Friday of the month to pray through the night for their children who were involved in drug abuse. Over a period of three years (2001-2004) this one all-night group grew to 36 such 24/7/365 prayer chains that pray for children who are addicted to drugs. Presently (Sept. 2006), there are already 288 such 24/7/365 prayer watches praying for young people involved in drug abuse and the occult. Of these 288 watches, more than 50% are running literally 24 hours a day. 12 000 People are involved in these watches.

12 *Prayer rooms in churches*

In the 1990's Pastor Terry Tackle (USA) established a 24-hour per day prayer room in his church. It was very successful and ever since Tackle has been actively involved in establishing the concept all over the USA and also in other countries in the world.

13 *Fifteen towns in a 5-week prayer cycle*

In a rural area in one of the provinces in South Africa, a group of 28 intercessors prayed night-and-day during the 31 days of May 2004. Thereafter, they approached 15 small towns to participate in a night-and-day prayer watch. Three towns divided a week of 168 hours amongst them and took responsibility for a full 24-7 prayer session every fifth week. Currently they are busy establishing similar prayer watches in four other areas.

14 *Township/squatter camp saturated with prayer watches*

A pastor in a township (squatter camp) called Orange Farm, with 1.3 million inhabitants, south of Soweto in South Africa, came up with the idea to saturate the whole township with prayer watches. The township is divided into 10 extensions and includes 10 smaller towns around it. The pastor established prayer watches in all 20 sectors and towns. Presently 62 congregational based prayer watches are functioning (of which at least 25 of them are praying full 24 hours a day already), involving 40% of all the churches in the township. The police report that over the last 6 months crime decreased at a rate of 20% per month. There is a constant stream of people who accept the Lord Jesus as their Savior. They see many healings, the restoration of marriages and family relationships as well as deliverance from demons.

15 *The youth and 24/7*

A very dynamic prayer movement is the one that started among the youth in England in 1999. In September 1999, Pete Greig challenged 200 young people of a church in the small town of Chichester, near Southampton in England, to pray for their peers for 24 hours a day for 30 days. They prayed night-and-day for more than three months. By December 1999, a new prayer movement had been established. At present (2005), the movement is known amongst the youth as 24-7. Groups of young people creatively decorate a venue to serve as a prayer room and then start praying there for 168 hours, generally from Monday to Sunday. In some instances a prayer watch is kept open for a number of weeks. When these prayer watches become 24-7-365 watches, they are called Boiler Rooms. It is becoming more and more common to speak of a 24-7 as a Boiler Room. By the beginning of 2006, there were already 65 countries in which this 24-7 prayer movement had taken root and was growing. (www.24-7prayer.com).

16 *Denominations and Christian organizations*

From the 24-7 prayer movement that started amongst the youth in England, a new trend developed gradually. Initially the Salvation Army in Australia and then in England requested 52 of their branches each to pray 24-7 for a week. Almost immediately these branches started testifying that the atmosphere at the particular branch had changed. Some branches reported that the number of people who repented had tripled and that exceptional growth was taking place. YWAM, with 16 bases in Western Europe, set aside a whole year during which every base in turn took responsibility for a week and filled the whole year with 24-7 prayer. At the beginning of 2005, there were 13 denominations and Christian organizations in England alone that started to fill the whole year with 24-7 prayer.

17 *Prayer Mountains*

South Korea is well known for prayer mountains. Various denominations have established venues in the mountains where people can go to pray night-and-day. Most of these venues provide adequate accommodation, have a chapel, lecture halls, prayer stations and prayer cubicles where individuals can pray on their own. Christians often go there to pray (and also to fast) for periods of up to forty days. At most of these prayer mountains there is a continual stream of visitors who come to pray. They pray about personal matters, and also for the country, North Korea, and for the world. According to the church in South Korea, the political preservation and stability in South Korea, as well as church growth in the country, may be ascribed to the prayers offered at these venues in the mountains.

18 *Word prayer watches*

During the 10 days of night-and-day prayer of 6-15 May 2005, a church in Pretoria, South Africa, established three prayer watches that each prayed from Scripture only. In the first prayer room the intercessors read the Bible from Genesis to Revelations and prayed for 240 hours. In prayer room two they read the Psalms, Jesus' prayers and several other prayers in the Old Testament. In the third prayer room they read a volume of extracts from Scripture (thousands of promises, commands, the prayers of the apostles in the NT, Scripture on the character of God, and on God's purpose with mankind, etc). From 17-23 October 2005 in literally hundreds of places in South Africa local churches and groups of churches united to read and pray the Word (from Genesis to Revelation as well as the Psalms repeatedly) for 168 hours.

19 Prisons

In several prisons in Argentina Christians have established dynamic 24/7/365 prayer watches (i.e. Olmos and Christ the only hope). They are praying for the other inmates, their families, their communities, the country and the world. There are extra-ordinary testimonies of conversions and change of lifestyle from inmates and other types of breakthroughs in the prisons in Argentina. Much of the fruit is because of continuous night-and-day prayer. In South Africa several prisons have repeatedly prayed night-and-day for 7 day periods over the last two years.

The fire shall be burning continually upon the altar; it shall not go out"

(Lev.6:13).