

- Rev. Grant Mangold, www.RiversideChurchIowa.com

HARD TO BELIEVE - PRAYER ?

Today, millions of people in thousands of churches will bow down in community prayer services across our land, with both verbal and silent prayers, individually and corporately. Why? It's the 64th National Day of Prayer. Why pray? What difference does it make? *Good questions!*

1- WHY a National Day of Prayer? "Our nation is in trouble today, probably more than I've seen in my lifetime," says Rev. Franklin Graham. "We are contending with issues that are causing the very foundation of our country to crumble. Our moral and spiritual roots are eroding, the economy is misleading, family life is disintegrating, and political forces are at unprecedented odds," he says.

"We are reminded in Scripture that with God, nothing is impossible. No problem is too great for Him. Seasons of distress, uncertainty and hardship call for faithful, fervent prayer by God's people - and remind us of our responsibility to humble ourselves before Almighty God. We cannot expect healing to come to our nation apart from obedience to God through His Holy Word," says Graham.

The earliest history of the colonists in America began with prayer. The Pilgrims established themselves with prayer to God. Early settlers observed special days of prayer and thanksgiving to God for protection and His provision. Founding documents of the first colonies reveal their dependence upon Almighty God and the Bible. Several Presidents turned our nation toward God during times of war. In 1952, Congress passed a bill establishing a National Day of Prayer. Since 1998 the observance has been on the first Thursday of May. Millions of people will participate again this year.

2- WHY PRAY? Psalm 33:12 says, "**Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord.**" Jesus taught His disciples to pray, and not lose heart. The Apostle Paul wrote, "**pray without ceasing**" and "**do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God**" - with this promise "**And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**" (Philippians 4:6-7)

Rev. Graham explains, "The Bible commands that we repent of our sins and turn to Almighty God. And because we are confident that we serve a God of mercy and compassion, we know that He stands ready to respond out of the abundance of His divine wisdom - as we seek God's divine intervention."

3- WHAT DIFFERENCE WILL IT MAKE? Responses to a recent national survey shows 67% of the American people agree that "*God continues to answer specific prayers*" while 13% are not sure. More information is available at "www.TheStateOfTheology.com" where you can also compare your answers.

In 1 Timothy 2, the Apostle Paul encouraged prayer for influential people. "**I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.**" The Bible explains God created people in His own image. We know right from wrong. And God gave us the tools for an ordered civilization and peaceful societies. Living according to God's blueprint is good for all people. Paul continues, "**This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.**" People rebel against God and His ways. We need a Savior - and God has sent Him.

Paul continues, "**For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all.**" Praying to any other "god" will have no effect. But when believers pray to the One True God, we come with confidence to His throne of grace through the living way of the risen Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit. God hears His people - and acts!

4- WILL YOU PRAY? Participate in a community prayer service. Or just gather with friends - and pray! Go to "www.NationalDayOfPrayer.org" for more information, including ways to stay updated. Other sites include "commit2pray/7x7/" and "call2fall.com" and "iCommitToPray.com" provide additional resources.

Thank you for doing your part, today and every day, to lift up the needs around you - to the ONLY ONE who can DO what we need. Including giving you the impetus and the supernatural power to make a difference in your own life, and those around you. *Let us pray!*