**“LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY”**

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Welcome Message to the 2018 Epicenter Prayer Summit

Jerusalem Theater

Jerusalem, Israel

Wednesday, July 11, 2018

Good evening.

On behalf of the board and staff of The Joshua Fund, welcome to Jerusalem and to the 2018 Epicenter Prayer Summit.

To every Israeli and Palestinian who is joining us tonight, welcome.

To every American and Canadian, welcome.

Indeed, wherever you have come from – or if you are watching on the Web around the world – we are so grateful you have chosen to join this fellowship of believers who love the Lord Jesus Christ and long for Him to come back to this very city to establish His Kingdom and make all things right.

In Psalm 122:6, we are famously commanded to “pray for the peace of Jerusalem.”

And so we shall.

But what exactly does this mean?

How do we keep this command from devolving into a mere cliché or meaningless bumper sticker?

And how do we make sure not simply to pray for one group who live here to the exclusion of the others? How can we encourage one another to pray for Jews and Arabs, Israelis and Palestinians, and for all who live in the Epicenter?

This is exactly what this Summit is for – learning to pray for all the souls of this extraordinary city and region, from Scripture, with real faces before us, and with purpose and great power.

And no time like the present.

Never have the Jews, Muslims, Christians and others in the Epicenter needed the faithful, fervent and unceasing prayers of the saints more than they do today.

Tragically, we live in an age of…..

* Wars and rumors of wars
* Jihad and genocide
* Rampant poverty
* Bitter injustice
* And wrenching, heart-breaking suffering and grief

And yet, even as darkness descends, there is good news – we are seeing the words of the prophet Isaiah come to pass: *“The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them.”* (Isaiah 9:2)

Today, the Light of the Messiah is shining more brightly than ever in the Epicenter.

The Holy Spirit is on the move.

* More Israelis are coming to faith in Yeshua than any time in nineteen centuries.
* More Muslims are leaving Islam and coming to faith in Christ than any time in fourteen centuries.
* There is a growing boldness in the Church to proclaim the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit friend-to-friend, neighbor-to-neighbor, and using every high-tech tool at her disposal, from radio to satellite TV to the power of the Internet.
* Perhaps most encouraging is that we see an unprecedented openness among millions upon millions of Jews, Muslims and nominal Christians from Tel Aviv to Tehran – from Ramallah to Riyadh – to at least listen to the Gospel and to at least consider the claims of Christ, even among those who are not yet ready to repent and receive Him by faith.

Why?

What accounts for such openness – even such responsiveness – amongst peoples so historically resistant to the Gospel?

There are several dynamics at work, as you’ll hear during this Summit.

But above all, we are seeing the power of prayer.

More Christians around the world are praying faithfully for the salvation of Israel and her neighbors than ever before – and God is answering those prayers.

And yet, to complete the task, much more is needed.

*“Lord, teach us to pray.”*

This was the plea of the disciples in Luke 11:1.

Should it not be ours, as well?

Over the course of three years, Jesus taught His disciples many things.

Yet, the only thing the disciples ever asked the Messiah to teach them was how to pray.

Why?

Because they saw Him praying – morning, noon and night.

They saw His intimate fellowship with His Father.

And they saw the tremendous power of humble prayers answered by an all-mighty God.

The sick were healed. The blind could see. The deaf could hear. The lame could walk. And the dead were raised to new life.

No wonder they wanted to learn how to pray like Jesus prayed.

My wife, Lynn, and I had a wonderful pastor in college who discipled us, married us, and later helped us establish The Joshua Fund and launch these Epicenter Conferences.

His name was Dr. T.E. Koshy. He was born and raised in India before the Lord moved him to Syracuse University where Lynn and I met him.

Koshy loved to commune with his Savior in prayer, and no one taught us more about the power of prayer than did he.

Koshy used to say, *“Joel, Lynn, we serve a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God, a wonder-working God.”*

Sometimes, given his thick Indian accent, we needed English-to-English translation. To understand exactly what he was saying.

But one thing was clear: Koshy believed that one of the ways we can know and experience an invisible God is through the power of answered prayers.

Not rote, routine, ritualistic prayers -- but bold, audacious, even “crazy” prayers, so long as they were according to the will of God.

Through Koshy we began to learn what it means to “pray without ceasing” and to “pray in the Spirit on all occasions.”

And we saw God answer in the most extraordinary ways.

* Doors have opened to the Gospel that once seemed shut forever.
* Hearts have opened to Christ that once seemed impenetrable.
* Lives have been transformed that once seemed irredeemable.
* Peace – even joy – has come amidst chaos and confusion.

And yet Lynn and I have so much more to learn. Perhaps this is true of you, as well. Indeed, maybe this is why you have come.

As we begin the 2018 Epicenter Prayer Summit, then, would you bow you head with me and quiet your heart?

*Dear Father –*

*Thank You for bringing us here, to the city of the Great King.*

*As we gather together, Lord, teach us to pray.*

*For security and calm – yes– but also for the Prince of Peace to be revealed to all.*

*Lord, teach us to pray for every Israeli and every Palestinian and every Lebanese and Syrian and Jordanian and Iraqi and Egyptian….*

*That You would reveal how wide and deep and high and vast is Your love for them.*

*That You would open their eyes to the beautiful reality that Jesus is the Messiah we so desperately need.*

*That You would open their hearts to hear the Good News of your amazing grace and that they would be ready to receive – not reject – Your free gift of salvation through Jesus Christ, and Him alone.*

*O Lord, grant Your servants boldness to preach the Gospel and teach the whole counsel of God and make disciples without fear and without shame.*

*And unify Your Church, O Lord.*

*Teach us to love one another. Teach us to wash each other’s feet, to bear each other’s burdens, to weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice.*

*Remind us afresh how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell together in unity.*

*O Lord, have mercy on Israel and her neighbors, and teach us to show Your mercy and kindness to every person in the region with everything we say and do.*

*Fill us with Your Holy Spirit.*

*Suit us up in Your full armor.*

*And teach us to pray like Your Son taught His disciples.*

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.*

*Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*

*Give us this day our daily bread.*

*And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*

*And lead us not into temptation, Lord, but deliver us from evil.*

*For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever.*

*Amen.*

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