

John Nelson Hyde: The Prevailing Life

Adapted and paraphrased from *They Found The Secret* by V. Raymond Edman, along with additional information from articles *Praying Hyde* by Francis McGaw at www.omegafaith.com and from *Profiles in Prayer: Praying John Hyde* by Richard Klein at www.cbn.com

Angrily John Hyde (11/09/1865 - 02/17/1912) crumpled the letter and threw it down on the deck of the steamer. He felt sure he was justified in feeling resentful at the content of that letter. Was he not a missionary, already on board ship and leaving the shores of America for India? Was not his father an outstanding clergyman? Was not he a child of the manse, a graduate of a Christian college and of a seminary? Who should tell him that he needed the fullness of the Holy Spirit for effective service abroad? Did this friend think that he had not received the baptism of the Spirit, or that he would think of going to India without this equipment? John Hyde was angry.

But by and by better judgment prevailed and he picked up the letter and read it again. **Possibly he *did* need something that he had not yet received.**

John Nelson Hyde had been born in 1865, the son of Rev. Smith Harris Hyde, a Presbyterian minister in Carthage, Illinois. He and his older brother, Edmund, were very close. **They knew of Jesus from the earliest days of their lives**, and attended college and seminary together. Edmund intended to become a missionary in Montana, but died quite suddenly from an illness, just before John's senior year. **This tragedy brought John to deep searching of his heart, and a turning place in his life. He surrendered himself to the call of God on his life, ...whatever** that might entail. Immediately, he was impressed that he, too, should dedicate himself to serve Christ as a missionary. Having made that decision, *he determined to give himself unreservedly to study of the Scriptures and prayer, so that he could be the best, most effective missionary possible.* He was not going to miss God's best through laziness or lack of commitment on his part. **His life radically changed**, as well. His classmates remember him as being quite forgettable before that experience, a quiet young man who was "just one of us". **After this surrender, however, he became "the single most powerful instrument for [advocating missionary work on] the foreign field at seminary.** He prayed for men individually, and then sought them out, and *his soul seemed aflame. Prayer was his pathway to greater things, and it became the characteristic of his whole life and work, because it was his peculiar power.* He was a *torch* of prayer, that carried light and warmth." In his passion and self-determination, *had he forgotten the most important part, to secure the power of God for effective service?*

It is recorded that **as a result of that letter, and the question it raised in his mind, John Hyde gave himself to much prayer for the rest of the voyage.** He was praying that he might *indeed* be filled with the Spirit, and that he might know *by actual experience* what Jesus meant when He said, "You shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit has come upon you: and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

How the Lord answered that heart cry during the long voyage to India in 1892, Hyde gave us no indication. The outworking of the Holy Spirit through his life in India would provide ample testimony of the change in his life.

When he arrived, he found himself on the field with three women and one other male missionary, ...God's forerunners to reach the *more than one million non-believers* in that land! The first twelve years in India were largely "hidden years," devoted to long periods of intensive language and Bible study. He had difficulty learning the language, undoubtedly due to the partial deafness with which he was afflicted. As a result, **he gave himself even more vigorously to Bible study and prayer.** He wanted to be certain that, when he finally was *able* to communicate, he would accurately and clearly understand what he was talking *about*.

Often troubled by tropical diseases, he nevertheless **devoted himself to visitation work** in the many villages of his area. He was a faithful undershepherd, seeking the lost for the Good Shepherd. In that service he was increasingly learning to pray effectively for the unsaved and unconcerned.

In 1896, there were no converts at all! He sought the Lord about this, determined to "find the reason". **It was revealed to him that "the life of the church was far below Bible standards".** People were not serious about following Jesus in radical obedience. They were compromising, partly through self-indulgence and partly through fear of persecution. **He began to cry out to God for revival, and to preach a higher standard of holiness.**

In 1898, he was sick with typhoid fever for more than seven months. During that time, **God impressed the prayer of Jabez upon his heart**, "'Oh that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my border! Let Your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain!' And God granted him what he requested" (1 Chronicles 4:10). **This verse became the cry of his own heart**, as he sought for Heaven's favor from his sick bed.

The relative barrenness during those years drove him, and others of like spirit, to deeper depths of travail in prayer, and to wider frontiers of faith. Having experienced outright persecution by some of the native peoples, and few conversions, in 1899 *he began to spend entire nights face down in prayer before God.* He wrote to

those back home, "Have felt led to pray for others this winter as never before. I never before knew what it was to work all day, and then *pray all night* before God on behalf of others... In college, or at parties at home, I used to keep such hours *for myself, or for my pleasure*. Can I not do this much *for God and souls*?" Many thought he was becoming too extreme or fanatical. How many others have been misjudged or misunderstood who have sought diligently to follow God? Those who are spiritual *will* be led to do things that the natural mind will not understand (1 Cor. 2:14,15). **Hyde was not concerned about what others thought. He was concerned only with securing God's power and blessing. He persisted in his passion for prayer and his ministry of the word of God.**

In 1904 a group of Indian Christians and foreign missionaries gathered for a convention at Sialkot (now in Pakistani territory). The purpose for this meeting was for spiritual renewal and encouragement in their missionary efforts. Hyde and the other leaders believed **there was one primary method of obtaining the spiritual awakening they were longing for, ...prayer! They set themselves deliberately, definitely, and desperately to cry out to God until they secured the result.** Hyde and another missionary, R. M'Cheyne Patterson, waited and prayed for an *entire month* before that first meeting. A third missionary friend, George Turner joined them after nine days, *so for three weeks before the first meeting there was continual intercession before God* by these three men. They sought God for the teeming thousands of India who did not know Christ. They worshiped, praised, cried out and yearned for the Holy Spirit. They agonized over the souls of those who were lost. They wrestled against the spiritual darkness of India. They called down the revival fires of Heaven to reignite the passion of God's people and empower them to live and serve Christ in the power of the Spirit. **The Sialkot revival was not at all an accident, nor an unsought breeze from Heaven. Charles G. Finney wrote: "A revival is no more a miracle than a crop of wheat." In any community, revival can be secured from God when heroic individuals enter the conflict determined to win, or die – or, if need be, to win and die.** "The Kingdom of Heaven advances forcefully, and forceful ones obtain their claim to it." (Mat. 11:12).

Inspired by Hyde's prayer life, and his vision for prayer, his friends helped form the Punjab Prayer Union. Those becoming members were required to sign these five simple, yet searching, principles:

1. Are you praying for quickening in your own life, in the life of your fellow workers, and in the church?
2. Are you longing for greater power of the Holy Spirit in your own life and work, and are you convinced that you cannot go on without this power?
3. Will you pray that you may not be ashamed of Jesus?
4. Do you believe that prayer is the great means for securing this spiritual awakening?
5. Will you set apart one half-hour each day as soon after noon as possible to pray for this awakening, and are you willing to pray *until the awakening comes*?

It was at this convention of 1904 that John Hyde received revelation from God regarding the exchanged life. Through all his passion and pressing after God, he still very much struggled with temptation and sin. During the convention, as he was speaking with others about the working of the Holy Spirit, God spoke to him about his own soul. **The Lord marvelously opened his mind up to perceive His plan for "sanctification by faith". Holiness and victory over sin does not come from self-discipline, or striving against the flesh. Rather, it came from seeing that Christ did it all!** He took our sinful self, our flesh, with Him to death on the cross. We are to stop looking at that quivering victim, in its death throes, as though *that* were us. No. God has made *us* new! He has made available to us an entirely new life! **Holiness and victory over sin comes as we trust in the working of God's Spirit inside of us. By faith, we put aside the old life and embrace the new life of the Spirit in us.** If we will yield to Him, He *will* produce in us the heart and character of Christ. There is no striving or struggling. It is simply trusting in Him, moment by moment! Hyde exclaimed, "I must not lose this vision!" And he never did.

When he was scheduled to speak, he did not appear until after several hymns had been sung. Then he sat silently in Indian fashion for some time before arising to declare:

"Brothers, I did not sleep any last night, and I have not eaten anything today. I have been having a controversy with God. I feel that He has warned me to come here and testify to you concerning some things that He has done for me, ...and I have been arguing with Him that I should *not* do this. Only this evening, a little while ago, I got peace concerning the matter and have agreed to obey Him, and now I have come to tell you just some things that He has done for me."

As he unburdened his heart in confession of what God had done *for* him, and *in* him, he said, "Let us have a season of prayer." One who was present at the service stated later, "I remember how the little company prostrated themselves on the mats on their faces in the Oriental manner. Then, for a long time, ...how long I do not know..., man after man rose to his feet to pray. How there was such a confession of sin as most of us had never heard before, ...and such crying for mercy and help!"

To another audience, expecting a challenging message on the Holy Spirit, Hyde could only say: "I thank God, He has given me no message for you today." Thereupon the chairman added, "The Holy Spirit is the Leader of this meeting." The people began to speak as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, and there was liberty but not license. Conviction of sin came over the people like a tidal wave. Many were in great mental agony and intense

physical strain as they felt the near presence of God settle on the congregation. Men and women forgot each other as the divine searchlight was flashed on their lives. Some began to confess sins that blazed in their hearts, and others, as they arose to speak, trembled as hidden sins were brought to light."

Afterwards, "the sunshine came and flooded the place, and joy was depicted on many countenances... "The fruit of the Spirit is joy."

The fullness of the Holy Spirit in John Hyde's life made him a prayer warrior, a watchman on the walls, as depicted in Isaiah 62:6,7: "I have set watchmen upon your walls, O Jerusalem. They will never be silent day or night. You who remind the LORD, take no rest for yourselves. And give Him no rest, until He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

He was likewise a tireless witness for the Savior. In time, he received assurance in prayer that *at least one soul would come to the Savior each day* through their outreach during 1908. This was a staggering faith-goal to these missionaries who had scarcely seen more than a few handfuls of new converts come to Christ in most years. To their amazement, there were more than 400 converts added that year! The following year the Lord laid *two souls a day* on his heart, and prayer was fully answered. At the 1910 convention, those around Hyde marveled at his faith, as they witnessed his near-violent supplications to God, "Give me souls, oh God, or I die!" Before the meeting ended, John Hyde revealed that he was again doubling his goal for the coming year. *Four souls a day*, and nothing less! During the next twelve months, Hyde's ministry took him throughout India. By now he was known as "Praying Hyde," and his intercession was sought at revivals in Calcutta, Bombay, and other large cities. If on any day four people were not converted, that night there would be such a weight on his heart that he could not eat or sleep until he had prayed through to victory. The number of new converts continually grew.

On one trip to a distant and tiny village, Hyde came under the persuasion that *ten souls* would be won to the Lord. En route, he and the native evangelist, with their ox cart, stopped at a cottage of strangers to ask for water. The missionary presented the Savior, and as he pleaded with the family the native worker became insistent that they should go onward. Hyde persisted, however, in his earnest presentation of the Lord, and by the end of the afternoon all nine members of the family had received Christ.

"But what about that *one*?" was Hyde's reply to the insistence of his native worker that they be on their way. Then it was that the father in the home, just a new Christian himself, brought in a nephew who had been playing outside the house; and *all ten* were in the fold.

On his final journey home in 1911, the missionary, in ill-health, great weakness and pain, stopped in the British Isles to visit fellow workers who had been in India. There he learned that the American evangelist, Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman, and the song leader, Charles M. Alexander, were holding services in a place that seemed *spiritually hard*, even impossible. Hyde went to Shrewsbury to take up the burden of prayer. Of this, Dr. Chapman wrote as follows:

"At one of our missions in England the audience was extremely small, results seemed impossible but I received a note saying that an American missionary was coming to the town and was going to pray God's blessing upon our work. He was known as 'Praying Hyde.'

"*Almost instantly the tide turned.* The hall was packed, and my first invitation meant fifty men for Jesus Christ! As we were leaving I said, 'Mr. Hyde, I want you to pray for *me*.' He came to my room, turned the key in the door, dropped on his knees, waited five minutes without a single syllable coming from his lips. I could hear my own heart thumping and beating. I felt the hot tears running down my face. I knew I was with God. Then with upturned face, down which the tears were streaming, he said: 'Oh, God!'

"Then for five minutes at least, he was still again. Then, when he knew he was walking with God, his arm went around my shoulder and there came up from the depth of his heart such petitions for men as I had never heard before. I rose from my knees to know what real prayer was"

Such is a portion of the story of John Hyde who became "Praying Hyde," the man who was anointed by the Holy Spirit to pray.

Observations From John Hyde's Life:

Raised in a Christian home

Through tragedy, was brought to a great searching of heart.

Decided to *surrender his life* to do God's will, ...no matter what that was.

Was impressed that God was calling him to mission work.

Committed to Bible study and prayer, ...to become the most effective missionary possible.

His life was radically transformed. From "forgettable" to a "powerful instrument for God"

Prayer became the gateway to greater things. From the beginning, he was a “torch of prayer”
Letter from friend caused him to pray for the fullness of the Spirit to be empowered for ministry.
Experienced twelve years of struggle and relative barrenness of fruit in ministry
During these years, began to pray for revival of the church, and expansion of his ministry.
Frustration and desperation motivated him, and others, to press in more radically after God.
Others misunderstood, misjudged and ridiculed his extreme persistence in prayer.
Helped to organize a convention for spiritual renewal and encouragement in Sialkot
He and others interceded diligently, day and night, for a month before the meeting date
God gave to Hyde a revelation of “the exchanged life”, or “sanctification by faith”
As he shared what God had done for him, revival broke out at the convention.
After this experience, his ministry expanded with great power and fruitfulness.

God Hunt 5: Prayer For Spiritual Awakening and Power

"The heart of this people has become dull, and with their ears they scarcely hear, and they have closed their eyes, lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart and return, and I should heal them." Matt. 13:15

"Our mouth has spoken freely to you, ...our heart is open wide. You are not restrained by us, but you are restrained in your own affections..." II Cor. 6:11,12

"In the days of His flesh, He [Jesus] offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One who was able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation... Concerning Him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing." Heb. 5:7-9,11

"Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart." Jer. 29:12,13

"So let us know, let us press on to know the Lord. His going forth is as certain as the dawn; and He will come to us like the rain, like the spring rain watering the earth." Hosea 6:7

"This also I will let the house of Israel ask Me to do for them: I will increase their people like a flock." Ezekiel 36:37

"And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak the word of God with boldness." Acts 4:31

More verses on seeking God:

Jeremiah 29:12,13*

50:4-6

Cf. Ezekiel 34:11,12,16 – Note that God seeks *us*, as well.

Hosea 10:12*

Zephaniah 2:3

Zechariah 8:21,22