

More, Lord!

This is the prayer that we heard throughout the building, as three thousand thirsty believers stood in the presence of the Lord. Hundreds of pastors were among them. They were longing for a fresh touch from God, a deeper filling of the Spirit, a new outpouring from heaven on their lives. They came from all over Canada, the USA, and dozens of other nations to this rather obscure Toronto Airport Vineyard church.

Gordy and Jana Steck, John (myself) and Jackie Matthews were more than glad to be among them.

Why did we drive twenty hours to Toronto to be with people we did not know? Like the others who had come, we were hungry for God, and desperately thirsty for an outpouring of His Spirit on our lives. Our church was full of desperate and hungry people. There were lots of people to bless in our home town and in places as far as Ukraine and India. We needed more of God. Much more.

The time of our arrival in Toronto happened to be the one-year anniversary of the beginning of this outpouring, which started at the Airport Vineyard church in special meetings with guest speaker Randy Clark, a Vineyard pastor from St. Louis. In previous months, desperate for God, he had gone to meetings in Oklahoma where Rodney Howard-Browne was ministering. Randy testified that this was a humbling experience for him, since it meant going to a church that he had spoken against in the past. There he drank in all that he could, standing in line for prayer as often as he could, wanting more of God. Later, when unusual things began to happen back home in his St. Louis church, he was asked to come to Toronto Vineyard for four days. The meetings never stopped -- though Randy himself finally had to return to St. Louis after six weeks! They continue as you read this. During the last year, perhaps 200,000 people and 15,000 pastors have come to this church (which has 350 members) to get more of God.

We were four more.

Worship, testimonies, preaching, and ministry were the order of each meeting. The unusual was present before the meetings even began. In order to get a good seat and find parking, we had to arrive two to three hours early. Hundreds were in the lobby before the doors opened, and at times there were manifestations of God's presence right there. Some fell to the floor in the lobby trembling or laughing while we waited to get in! Some became weak in their legs on entering the meeting hall, bobbing up and down all the way to their seats. As worship began, trembling and jerking limbs could be seen here and there. In the midst of praise, a belly-laugh would ring out, then another. Some intermittently bent over double with groans, while others collapsed to the floor.

Those who were brought forward to testify of a breakthrough would do so with difficulty because of the anointing present. It was hard for many to even get near the platform as strength left their body. They would break out in laughter or even become speechless. Some would jerk, groan, or tremble in the effort to describe with wide eyes what God had done for them, and then as the leader prayed a blessing on them, they would tumble to the floor in the arms of a "catcher". There they would usually remain "resting in the Lord" throughout remainder of the meeting. Their bodies would periodically tremble, vibrate, or jerk violently as if shocked by high voltage electricity, especially at anointed points of the preaching.

In every service, an invitation was given to unbelievers and backsliders to come to Christ; and many would respond in each meeting. Following the message, everyone in attendance was invited to stay to receive personal prayer. Dozens served on ministry teams every night -- people with regular jobs who would faithfully and lovingly minister until no one wanted more prayer, which was frequently beyond 2 a.m..

Those desiring prayer were instructed to stand on long strips of tape on the large carpeted area in the rear of the room, and just worship the Lord. A ministry team would eventually come

to each one. The carpet was soon full of people "resting in the Spirit", as it was referred to. Some were quite still on the floor; others were so affected by the power of God that they were trembling, Some were laughing, some crying, some jerking, some groaning, Some even sounded like they were growling or roaring like lions! Some, on rising, staggered like drunks and had to be helped to their vehicles. This went on into the wee hours of the morning, every night!! We saw the shuttle bus bring many to our hotel from these meetings, with the after affects showing on them. I remember a dignified lady being supported on both sides by her friends. They literally dragged her through the marble and glass lobby. She had a big grin on her face, happily oblivious to everything around her.

Each night there were testimonies of healings, salvations, broken bondages, and stories of churches overflowing with a fresh presence of God.

And what of us four? God did more than we understand. We came home in awe of God, knowing that He wants to pour more and more and more and more of Himself into His people.

For eleven days Jackie was "lost in the arms of her heavenly Father". She walked with difficulty, was sometimes slurred in speech, and happy, happy, happy.... There remains with her a loving awe of her Father God; and she has a greatly increased confidence when she ministers to others.

And myself? I am convinced that a qualification for God's ministers should be many, many hours of "carpet time". Lying on the floor under the power of God, letting Him love me in His way, letting waves of His Spirit sweep through me, seemed to accomplish more than years of great effort learning about God.

One night, lying there oblivious to others around me, I became aware of the Father and the Son sitting at my feet. They seemed to be watching over me, as the Spirit was at work within me. I became aware of my discomfort at being so close to God, and to Jesus who appeared so strong. My own insecurity and shame rose to the surface. Then the Father spoke to me. He said, "John, you are a man." How such simple words could wash away insecurity and shame I don't know... but they did. Then He said, "You are as strong as any man I know." This was a puzzle, as I thought of many great men. Then I realized the Lord's sense of humor. I was flat on my back, and so weak under his presence that I could not get up! I immediately knew that He was saying that all men, whoever they are, fall to the floor in the presence of His Majesty! I began to laugh from my belly till my sides ached! Later, I was aware of the Father coming right over to me and it seemed He was actually hugging me!

The recurring testimony coming out of all of this holy rumble was that God the Father was showing His immense, powerful, and affectionate love to each one. He literally overwhelmed us with Himself.

It didn't seem to matter who prayed for us in these meetings. It wasn't necessary to get ministry from the speaker or somebody great. 15 or 20 times I stood in a prayer line worshipping God. Usually I became "lost in God" before anyone arrived to lay a finger on me, or pray a prayer. My eyes were usually closed, and I never did notice the face of anyone who prayed for me. In fact much of God's anointing and power began to descend on me as I just reached out to Him on my own. I prayed "Lord, I want more of You... much more. However, whatever, wherever, whenever You want to bless and use me, I want it. More, Lord. More of You. More of Your Spirit. More of Your power. More of Your love..."

Once I heard someone behind me prophetically praying, and I thought, "Oh that's good; I'll take it for me too, even though they are praying for someone else..." Then one of them blew softly on my cheek and I collapsed into the carpet...again. I then knew that their prayer had been for me.

Another time I went forward at the end of a message on racial reconciliation. It was an invitation for all who knew they had walls in their heart that needed to come down. At the time, I

saw myself in a maze of walls, and I almost ran to the altar. With a little prayer and touch from someone, I was on the floor, weeping and groaning in what I knew to be intercession.

On another occasion, I wandered around to find someone who might be available to pray for me. Someone tapped me on the shoulder, and asked me to "catch" while he prayed. Afterwards, I asked him to pray for me. As he prayed I bent over at the waist until my head almost touched my knees, and I collapsed in a groaning and laughing heap. I knew I was again in intercession, and in my spirit it was as if a veil was removed and I could see God's heart for our home church. I saw that the windows of heaven were wide open for this congregation. I knew that God's desire was to pour out so much of Himself on us that it will overflow in a flood of His grace and glory. I became aware of God's great affection for this congregation, and aware that Satan had no real power over the people. I saw the readiness of the Father to give us His best! I saw Him ready to give us more than enough to pour out to the lost and the hurting and those far from God. To me, this was worth falling for, laughing for, weeping for, groaning for....or whatever!

It is clear that this outpouring of God is not just about unusual manifestations, however. It's about what He is doing on the inside, in our hearts. That is where the real action is, and that is what matters -- changed lives. Its OK if we fall, if we groan, or weep or laugh. It's even OK if we are overtaken by the Spirit so that someone has to say, like Peter had to say on the day of Pentecost, "These are not drunk AS YOU SUPPOSE..."! But what really counts is how much of God's love and power remains on the inside of us.

If God in His Sovereignty is showing Himself strong and present through these various signs and manifestations, who are we to say He can't do that? Do we know everything about God? Are we going to have the pride and arrogance to say such things are not of God? Not me. Check the Bible, and check church history. When God shows up, people tremble, fall, and do alot of other strange things. In the Great Awakening 200 years ago here in America, God poured out His spirit to the point that whole cities turned to Christ. Similar manifestations came at that time-- even more intensely than what is now happening!

Since returning from Toronto, we have seen more burdens lift, more joy released, and more love flow in our church than we have seen in years!

It is a time of refreshing. And there is more to come. Much more, so that we can be a blessing at home, in our community, and *to the nations!*

May God in His mercy send more of His power and more of His love and refreshing to us all. May we in humility and hope stay open to receive all that He wants to give, and may we keep giving it away.

**MORE, LORD. MORE.
WE WANT MORE OF YOU...
MUCH MORE... MUCH, MUCH MORE...**

John Matthews