



# PRAYING

ON THE MOUNTAIN

## **Dr. David B. Horton**

*President, Fruitland Baptist Bible College, Hendersonville, N.C.*

During the winter months of 2019, I received a call from Dr. Chris Schofield, the director of Prayer for Evangelization and Spiritual Awakening with the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSCNC). I have known Chris since he came to North Carolina, and shared with him in some wonderful conferences and in some great prayer meetings. When Chris asked me to be a speaker in the Fanning the Flames Prayer Conference at Truett Conference Center and Camp on Sept. 7, 2019, I gladly accepted the invitation. Over the next few months, I spent a large amount of additional time praying and preparing the message for the event.

A month before the conference, I found myself experiencing a time of spiritual dryness that I did not know how to explain. My sermon was prepared, but I was far from prepared. In a few weeks, I was supposed to preach at the Fanning the Flames Conference and I felt like my own fire was about to go out. How could I minister to others and help rekindle a fire that was so lacking in my own life?

I thought back to earlier years of ministry and was reminded how attending a great conference and hearing the Word preached was very instrumental in pulling me out of discouragement. I opened my laptop and did a Google search for Christian conferences in the area. I checked Ridgecrest and nothing was available at a time when I could get away. The same was true with the Billy Graham Training Center at The Cove. To be honest, I could not even find a Baptist Camp Meeting going on anywhere within driving distance! That is highly unusual for the late summer months. What was going on?

On Saturday morning, Sept. 7, a spiritually desperate David Horton got up early to drive for two hours to speak at the Fanning the Flames Conference. I had collected several sermons on my iPhone that I listened to on the way to the conference, hoping that would boost my spiritual well-being. I arrived at Truett still needing God to do a special work in my life. Thank God, that was about to happen!

The attendance at the conference was only about 30 people, but it became obvious that this day was about much more than attracting a crowd. This day was about God drawing people to Himself, and it was me that God had in His net. Just before I preached, the Rev. Fred Lunsford, a 94-year-old retired director of missions and pastor, shared a prayer testimony. I knew of Fred Lunsford, but had never met him personally. That too, was about to change!

Fred Lunsford slowly walked to the podium with the help of a cane. He mentioned the fact that he could not read text from the Bible because of severe vision difficulties. Fred also stated that he could only see the images of people in front of him, but could not distinguish their faces. As Fred began



# PRAYING

ON THE MOUNTAIN

to speak, it was obvious that the hand of God was upon him. What he lacked in terms of physical vision, was more than compensated for in terms of spiritual vision!

As Fred started to speak, he told of a childhood experience when he encountered Uncle Doc Barker stretched out on his face before the Lord in a laurel thicket. Uncle Doc prayed, "Oh God, I would rather die right now in this laurel thicket than to be a powerless preacher!" Fred went on to share numerous experiences and quoted various Scriptures that impacted his prayer life from boyhood until present. I was greatly moved by all that Fred shared, but especially the story of Uncle Doc. At various times in the conference, God brought the story back to my mind. As I was driving home, I kept thinking about Uncle Doc praying in the laurel thicket. God gripped my heart. The spiritual renewal that I longed for was only a prayer away.

As I was moved to a place of brokenness before the Lord regarding my own prayer life, I prayed, "Lord, there are lots of things that I believe You want me to do in the next few years. I want to be a good husband, father and grandfather. I want to serve You faithfully as the president of Fruitland Baptist Bible College. I want to preach Your Word with power. But Lord, there is a commitment I need to make that is the key to everything else. I need to be more like Uncle Doc praying in the laurel thicket. Today, I commit myself to a renewed emphasis on prayer that will characterize my life from this moment on!" Instantaneously, I experienced personal revival as God took the ebbing embers of my spiritual life, put fuel on the fire, and then with His own hand began to fan the flames.

When I returned home from the conference, I told Lisa, my wife, what had happened and of my renewed commitment to be a man of prayer. With tear-filled eyes, I told her the story of Uncle Doc and how God used it in my life. The next day, we had lunch with our son, Michael, who pastors Encouraging Word Baptist Church in Waynesville. I told Michael the story of Uncle Doc and he was moved by it as well. Over the next few days, I talked with Milton Hollifield and Chris Schofield, who were also present when the story was told. They had also been touched deeply by the story of Uncle Doc. I began to share the experience with our administrative staff and faculty at Fruitland; and each time I told the story of Uncle Doc, people were moved, often to the point of tears.

Over the next several weeks, God made it clear to me that I needed to make an appointment to spend some time with Fred Lunsford and just allow him to speak into my life. God used Fred to create a renewed hunger and thirst for God in my life, and I was eager to hear more of his experiences with God. As I contemplated making the appointment with Fred, I sensed from the Lord that I should invite three men to go with me — my son, Michael Horton; Greg Mathis, my pastor; and J.D. Grant. All three men teach at Fruitland. I called Fred and made the appointment for Jan. 20, 2020.

The visit with Fred was truly a spiritual mountaintop experience. All of us were deeply touched by the conversation with him, but the prayer time in his prayer garden was phenomenal! What God did



# PRAYING

ON THE MOUNTAIN

that day was the beginning of Praying on the Mountain — before we even knew what to call it! I don't think that any of us, with the exception of Fred, would have dreamed that God would use that experience to inspire over 265,000 Christians to pray on May 5 for revival and spiritual awakening. As a result, plans are now underway to do this event again in the fall of 2020 and have 1 million people around the world praying for revival and spiritual awakening.

Because of His gracious work in my life, God will not let me get away from effectual, fervent prayer. My life and ministry were changed on Sept. 7, 2019, and I pray that God will continue to fan the flames. After the conference, it appeared to be just a small thing that God asked of me when He put it on my heart to visit Fred Lunsford and to take some friends along. I have found through the years that when we obey God in a small thing, He often does something big with it that we never even considered. That's what God did with our visit with Fred and the birth of Praying on the Mountain.

I am so glad that we serve a God who is "able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us" (Ephesians 3:20). No matter what else happens with revival on a national and global scale (and I do believe we see some strong signs of God setting the stage for it), I know that I have truly experienced a personal revival that has radically changed my life, and for that, I am eternally grateful!