

Garrett Howell knows how to pray and he's passionate about helping others learn to step into the presence of God. This book is more than theory; it is a primer, offering practical first steps in learning a new way to begin the discipline of prayer.

—**John A. Bray**, dean of the chapel at Indiana Wesleyan University (IN)

This book will shed light on a lot of general questions you may have around prayer. There is so much wisdom in here that it leaves you wanting to dive in more. Garrett does a great job expounding not only on the spiritual aspect of prayer, but also on practical ways to live a life of prayer. I can confidently say this book has been instrumental to my prayer journey with the Lord.

—**David Dennis**, worship director at Crossroads Church (TN)

In this book, Garrett offers an inspiring “front door” to a life of prayer. It speaks truth, inspires hearts, and encourages action toward such a life. It is born out of an authentic life that consistently practices the very things he teaches and follows—the example of Christ. May our hunger for God grow!

—**Tommy Gray**, lead pastor of Asbury Church (AL)

This book reminds me of A. W. Tozer. There is the same genial urgency—passionately seeking to persuade—but in a way that draws rather than pushes. There is the same commitment to prayer and spiritual perceptiveness that cuts to the heart in a way that heals. Like Tozer, Garrett focuses on what matters most—a living, breathing relationship with God. If you want to learn to pray, read this book from a young prophet.

—**Steve Lennox, PhD**, president of Kingswood University (CAN)

I have personally benefited from the call God has placed on Garrett's heart to teach one million people to pray. *The Front Door* is filled with practical tools that have changed the trajectory of my prayer life and given me the strong desire to teach others how to pray. Prayer is the only way to see God's people become awakened once again. I have seen Garrett's teachings on prayer evoke hunger in getting this generation to pray once again for a fresh move of God.

—Emily Jacklin, college student

*The Front Door* is both practical and inspirational. It provides a starting place where anyone can begin, while providing a pathway to deep interaction with God—and all in an encouraging way. It not only invites the reader to hunger for God but increases your appetite as you glean from its insights.

—Wayne Schmidt, General Superintendent of The Wesleyan Church

In an engaging style, Garrett Howell has written a book that answers the question that many are asking, "How do we pray?" His book inspires, challenges, encourages, and motivates one to enter the spiritual discipline of prayer. A powerful resource!

—Jim "Umfundisi" Lo, campus intercessor/division chair at Indiana Wesleyan University and practical theology/prayer coordinator for Crossroads District of The Wesleyan Church (IN)

The principles and pathways that Garrett lays out in *The Front Door* are based on both Scripture and experience. Our relationship with Jesus Christ becomes a powerful cornerstone where spiritual battles are fought and won, and lives are transformed. This book offers to the body of Christ a much-needed pathway of hope and spiritual victory.

—Sue Ellen Wampner, chairperson of Deep Tree Movement

# The **Front** Door

*First Steps into a  
Life of Prayer*

GARRETT HOWELL

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## **1. Finding the Front Door**

During January of 2018, I flew to Sussex, New Brunswick, in Canada, to preach for a spiritual emphasis week at a private Christian university on the east coast. My excitement was high, particularly since I'd spent the better part of three months writing sermons for the event.

Late one wintery night, the small plane touched down in New Brunswick and taxied toward the terminal, where we deplaned on the tarmac and walked into the airport on foot. Inside the terminal, two students from the university eagerly greeted me, carried my bags, and piled them into the back of their car. Then, we started our journey toward the campus.

During the drive, I learned that both were ministry students and highly involved in the university's chapel program. Extremely kind and welcoming, they asked me what I planned to speak about during the coming week. "Prayer," I told them.

Immediately, one student responded, “That’s so crazy, because for several weeks leading up to this spiritual emphasis, we students have been gathering to pray for revival.” While I was encouraged by this statement, it in no way prepared me for the degree of passionate prayer and expectation I discovered when I arrived at the college. From the moment I walked onto campus, everyone I encountered seemed to be talking about revival.

“We’ve been praying for a move of God,” one student in the cafeteria told me.

“We’ve been asking God to visit us in a fresh way,” another student in the dorm shared.

The next day, when I lunched with the university president, he too expressed his fervent, heartfelt desire and belief that God was about to move.

Later that day, we held the first session of the spiritual emphasis week. My message focused on Elijah’s life and how he prayed. *When Elijah prayed, revival broke out in Israel.*

In that opening session, we corporately sensed a call to be like Elijah in our prayer lives. As I began my message with prayer, a powerful wave of intercession washed over the sanctuary. Many lifted up spontaneous prayers from their seats, imploring God to move, while others began coming to the altar, unprompted by me. Students wept as they sensed the Lord stirring in their hearts.

Spiritual emphasis week continued with a second session the same evening. Reflecting back on that session, I specifically remember feeling doubtful and discouraged about the

delivery of my sermon—that I could have done far better as a speaker. What still amazes me is that the students didn't seem to notice. There were more breakthroughs, visits to the altar, and meaningful moments of prayer than I would have ever expected. These students *wanted* to meet with God, and my ability or lack of ability would not stop them.

The next morning, I asked permission from the campus pastor to invite any students who desired to discuss revival to remain after the morning session. He heartily agreed. When I made the invitation, around twenty students remained after the session. We arranged our chairs in a circle, and as I looked around, I saw the hungriest, most eager expressions I'd ever seen.

I cannot begin to explain to you the shift that occurred in my life during the conversation that ensued. It was as if God reached inside my heart and flipped a switch. As I listened to the heart-cries of those twenty students, saw the tears in their eyes, heard their longing for God, and felt their desperation for revival, something in my heart shifted to the point that it would never be the same again. Some might say it was a *calling*. I knew I had been awakened to a key component of revival.

I left that session gripped by a compelling question that would change the course of my life: "How do we teach people to pray?" I was convinced that this question contained the key to revival—not only for one college campus, but for the entire nation.

When the week was over and I flew back home, I was a different person! My heart was changed in a way that would



alter the trajectory of my life. That event in Canada started my life on a journey: it *marked* me in a way that will never leave me. I cannot forget the sights I saw and the movement of the Spirit I sensed.

“How do we teach others to pray?”

That question seemed impossible to ignore. I had to find the answer.

And that journey is what led me to write this book.

## Hunger for God

Imagine prayer as a house. Knowing *how* to pray is like having a floor plan of that house. This floor plan enables you to navigate around the house without getting lost. In that sense, this book is like a floor plan of the “house” of prayer. It can guide you to explore and discover new places in your personal life of prayer.

As useful as the floor plan may be, it will not help you if you do not first find—and enter—the front door to the house of prayer. No amount of studying or learning about prayer will make you into a person of prayer until you choose to find and walk through the front door.

The front door—the prerequisite to a life of prayer—is *hunger* for God.

The college students in Canada were *starved* for God. They longed deeply for a move of God. Their eagerness, passion, and desire to experience him had led them to pray—for weeks

prior to my arrival—in hopes that God would reveal himself in a special way.

To grow in prayer, you must become like them. You must pick up their yoke. While this book is filled with knowledge, wisdom, and practical tools that can aid your prayer life, without hunger for God, they will be no more useful to you than the floor plan of a neighbor's house. They will be practically useless to you.

I have both attended and spoken at prayer conferences over the years. Every time I walk away from such an event, I am reminded of the one thing about prayer that cannot be taught in a seminar, a sermon, or a book. No one can teach you how to hunger after God. Hunger for God is a personal decision each individual must make. No one can choose for you.

Hunger is the *birthing point* of a great prayer life. No one ever became a deep person of prayer without first cultivating a hunger for God. Not only prayer but much of your Christian walk is determined by your hunger for God. It is the “secret sauce” in the gospel recipe that makes it so powerful, unique, and even addictive. It caused the truth about Jesus to spread from simple fishermen throughout planet Earth. When this secret sauce is lacking, the church finds itself asleep or even dying.

Remember how those students in Canada connected with God even when I felt my sermon was less effective? Hungry people don't need a gourmet feast in order to eat. They will eat *anything*. They aren't picky. Picky people are those who have lost their appetite. If they were truly hungry, they wouldn't be too careful or too prideful to eat what is served to them. They

wouldn't waste time evaluating the food before eating it. Too many Christians wait for the perfect feast to enjoy God's presence. This is a clear sign that they've ceased to hunger for him.

Hunger is the front door to a life of prayer.

## Two Roads to the Front Door

There are only two roads leading to this door. Either of these roads can help you start hungering after God.

The first is the path of *suffering*. Suffering includes any painful experience—such as a crisis—that forces us, through pain, to yearn and thirst after a relationship with a being higher than ourselves. Suffering teaches hunger by necessity, because we realize that we will not survive our challenges unless we connect with God. This path is difficult, painful, and extremely effective. Most people I've met who hunger after God have arrived at the front door by this path.

The second path is less frequently traveled: it is the path of *seeking*. Seeking is a voluntary, willing decision to go on a journey to find that door. It isn't a decision you make *because* you are hungry, but because you *want* to be hungry. When your willpower overcomes inertia and you say, "I want to learn to hunger after God," you've set your feet on the second path to the door of hunger.

While the path of suffering comes through crises unawares, the path of seeking is available to anyone who

is willing to take it. I want to encourage you to choose the second path right now. Maybe you're in a crisis. Maybe you're already on the path of suffering that teaches you to hunger and thirst after God. Regardless, I want to challenge you to take the second path toward hunger by praying: "God, make me hungry for you!"

This is at once the most dangerous and safest prayer I could teach you to pray. It is dangerous because God might shift your life dramatically to answer this prayer. My experience with the students in Canada woke something new in me, but it caused other things to fall away or die in my life. It changed the appetites of my heart. So be aware that this prayer may cause a shift in your appetites that will in turn demand a change in your priorities.

But this prayer is also safe—because you know that God will certainly answer it with a yes! The Bible assures us in Matthew 5, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled!" (v. 6). Matthew 7 encourages us, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!" (v. 11; NASB). We know it is the will of God for us to hunger for him. We may feel assured, confident, and safe in asking this of him, because we know we're asking what he already wants. We are asking the safest, most trustworthy Being in the galaxy to draw us near to him. There are few better decisions you can make in your life.

## Survey Your Life

So, here's what I recommend.

*Put this book down right now.*

Lay it down. Don't read a page further until you deal with this question: "Am I hungry for God? Do I want to step through the front door of this house called prayer?"

If the answer is no, the rest of this book is useless to you. It will not help. Without hunger for God, reading this book will be like receiving an incorrect prescription for an illness. It will not help change the condition you find yourself in—your prayer life will not improve. Instead, it will merely change the appearance of an already dying spirituality.

I must say this, however: Asking for hunger involves repentance—repenting and turning from anything that may be stealing your hunger for the Lord.

Take a moment and survey your life, asking the question, "What might be stealing my hunger for the Lord?" (Spend several minutes searching your heart, mind, and life.)

Once you have taken time to search your heart, use the next few moments to pray. The next page is for you to journal your thoughts, convictions, or notes from this chapter. Use it as space to process with the Holy Spirit what he's stirring inside your heart.





Stop and pray for hunger.

Now, we are in the front door of prayer. In the rest of the book, we'll look at three key steps anyone can take toward a life of prayer. You might think of these three steps as rooms within the house of prayer. They are also postures that we may adopt as we pray. They are:

Worshipper.

Warrior.

Watchman (or Guardian).