

4 FACTS ABOUT NATIONAL PRAYER DAY

May 5th marks the 65th annual National Prayer Day, and while there's a lot we may know about prayer, there's always more to learn. The mission of this day is to engage Americans in prayer, and to encourage personal repentance and righteousness in the culture. Although many of us pray daily, this day is a chance for us to reflect on the importance of prayer in our daily lives.

This year's theme is "Wake up America," a title that cuts straight to the chase. The Scripture thoughtfully chosen for this day is Isaiah 58:1a: "Shout it aloud, do not hold back. Raise your voice like a trumpet." Dr. Tony Evans further declares the sense of urgency in the text of his National Prayer which asks that we "no longer be secret agent Christians."

In efforts to honor this year's Scripture and the words of Dr. Evans, here are 4 fun-filled facts about prayer that we can all shout out loud, or at least share with friends and family.

PRAYER DOES A BODY GOOD

For many of us, there is no question that prayer has the power to heal. However, there has been a recent surge of interest in the power of prayer from a medical perspective. In the last 10 years, research on the power of prayer in healing has doubled. The National Institute for Health, which long shunned any research of this type, has even funded a prayer study. Separate studies at Yale, Duke and Dartmouth Universities show the profound impact of prayer on health. From shorter hospital stays to more successful outcomes, people who have faith fare better when facing medical adversities. This extends to mental health, as well: People who are more religious are less likely to suffer from depression, and if they do become depressed, they recover faster. As more studies reveal the power of prayer, it only confirms what we already know from own personal stories of prayer.



PRAYER DAY IS FOR ALL

Many people think this is a day only observed by Christians. However, National Prayer Day is observed by Sikhs, Muslims, Hindus and Jews alike. There are thousands of events all over the nation that range from traditional to interfaith-eclectic. One event held in Texas a few years ago featured Sikh drummers, Islamic prayers, Hindu singers, a Jewish cantor and Methodist and Baptist congregations. Even if our beliefs differ, the power of prayer is real and connects us all to our innate faith.



PRAYER DAY IS AS OLD AS OUR COUNTRY

The earliest days of prayer observation were established in 1775 by delegates of the Second Continental Congress (the convention of delegates from the Thirteen Colonies). However, it wasn't until 1952 when a joint resolution by Congress and President Truman declared a national day of prayer. In 1988, President Reagan signed into law the designation of the first Thursday in May as the yearly observance for National Day of Prayer. Overall there have been 67 Presidential Proclamations for a National Day of Prayer from 1952 to present day. Of all the U.S. Presidents, 34 of them have signed proclamations, leaving 10 who did not. And, records indicate there have been 1,419 state and federal calls for national prayer.



PRAYER REACHES MANY

For many Americans, every day is a day of prayer. Over half of our country says that they pray every day, according to a Pew Research Center survey, and about 20% say they pray weekly. Women are more likely to pray than men, at 64% and 46% respectively. The older you are, the more likely you are to pray, too. About 65% of Americans 65 and older pray daily versus 41% of adults under 30. The majority of our country, approximately 57%, said they are in favor of the Day of Prayer, while only 5% said they opposed it. The remainder said it didn't matter to them either way. These numbers are sure to grow as research further confirms what we already know: Prayer works wonders and we should celebrate it, today and every day.