

Renewing our Minds concerning A Culture of Prayer

I. Modern Understanding of Prayer

A. As I begin the discussion about the theme of prayer let's start by defining it. We are seeing a sweeping movement within the church towards an increase of prayer and I believe it's imperative that we define what it is we're talking about. As I talk with people about prayer both personally and corporately there are three primary expressions of prayer that come to people's minds:

1. Intercession – Undoubtedly for almost anyone in the church and in the secular world when they hear the word prayer they immediately think of intercession. They think of the act of asking God for the things they or others need or want. Most think of producing a list of people or things to intercede for and then one by one checking them off as they lift them up before the Lord.
2. Waiting/Listening for direction – Another widespread understanding of prayer is the act of quieting your soul and listening for God's voice. People desire to know what He is thinking or feeling generally or about certain topics.
3. Repentance – Another very common association that people make with prayer is taking the posture of repentance. They analyze their past thoughts, actions, and words and ask God to forgive them for their unrighteousness.

B. When viewing prayer from God's perspective we find that the primary understanding of prayer in the modern church falls alarmingly short of the biblical understanding of prayer. This is a devastating reality to consider especially considering how much emphasis the Lord has put on it in His written word to us and what He has created us for.

II. Considering the Beginning and the End

A. Let's look at Adam's role in perfect creation. Here we find nothing to intercede for, no ministry direction needed, and no sins to confess. How would Adam define prayer? How would he talk about it if he were to describe it to you?

1. (Gen 1:26) – God made man in His image and called him to steward His creation. This set Adam apart from all other creation. Even the angelic hosts did not have the privilege of being made in God's image. Only mankind was given the faculties and compacity to relate to person of God.

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2. (Gen. 2:15) – God placed Adam in a garden that He planted with His hands and told him to tend and keep it. We must remember there was no curse then. No weeds to pull, no dying branches to prune. What was he supposed to do? Doing an exegetical study of “tending and keeping” in the rest of bible reveals that God uses this language extensively to speak of the role of the priesthood not farming. It speaks of the mandate to host the presence and knowledge of the Lord. Adam’s role was to “tend and keep” the place of encounter and to position himself to walk and talk with God. Adam was made to encounter the presence of God and be filled with the knowledge of who God was and what He was like.
 3. (Gen. 3:8) – God walking through the garden in the cool of the day looking for Adam gives us great insight into what He was desiring from him and the purpose of God in creating him. Adam was uniquely designed first and foremost to simply be God’s friend. Someone who voluntarily positioned themselves to understand and love God. Prayer for Adam was walking and talking with God. Encountering God and growing in the knowledge of who He is.
 4. Prayer was not one of the many things that Adam had on his list to do. Prayer was what he existed for. It was why he was alive. His paradigm of prayer had very little in common with the current paradigm of prayer in the church today.
- B. As we consider the age to come we will find great similarity in the purpose of our eternal lives as we see in the beginning of the story. We will find ourselves once again in a normal state of life for thousands of years with very little need for the current paradigm of prayer. What will prayer look like in the age to come?
1. In the age to come everything will be restored to perfection. Jesus will establish original intent and righteousness into every aspect of life. We will be realigned in how to relate to Him if we are out of alignment in any area. We desire greatly to walk in those correct alignments now knowing that will lead to the most fruit in our hearts.
 2. (Rev. 21:1-7, 21:23-22:5) – The qualities of life in the age to come mentioned in the book of Revelation and in other places in scripture leave very little room for prayer lists and pressing in to hear His voice. It speaks of a time where every question we have about His ways are answered. All structure and methodology of how we are supposed to function and do things is defined.

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3. What we are left with? What type of communication with Him for thousands of years will encompass our prayers when we need nothing? In the restoration of all things we find once again our prayer lives restored to original design. We will be the ones who love Him. Who are simply with Him in unhindered communion walking and talking in perfection and beauty. We will hear how He feels about us and He will hear from us about how we feel about Him.

III. Fostering a Culture of Prayer

- A. Prayer Movement – There has been a clear prophetic theme here in this church family and in the many church families in across the landscape of our nation. Buzzwords like “prayer movement” “house of prayer” “praying church” and “culture of prayer” have become common language and priority.
- B. It is very important that we understand that God’s desire is not to shift the methodology and identity of the church to the modern paradigm of prayer. Rather, He is restoring the church to the biblical understanding of prayer which is communing with Him. The prayer movement is a movement of intimacy and friendship.
- C. Defining Culture – According to Wikipedia, the definition of Culture is the social behavior and norms found in human societies. Here in the society of Restoration Fellowship we are intentionally seeking to foster a culture of prayer. Because of the modern paradigm of prayer we choose to use the language of “Encountering Jesus” because that is the central purpose of prayer. (Mat. 22:37-38)
 1. Sustainable – A culture of prayer must be built with longevity in mind. We are seeking to foster prayer lifestyles that will last through the various seasons of life and shakable societal norms.
 2. Everyday Life – Currently, many people think of reoccurring corporate prayer events as a culture of prayer. Though these corporate events are necessary and powerful to foster and sustain a prayer culture they cannot be the singular expression of a prayer culture. Culture infiltrates beyond the realm of events and finds manifestation in the values and aspects of everyday life. (1 Thes 5:17)
 3. Multi-Generational – Culture also extends beyond the boundaries of age and maturity levels. It’s not something that just the young adults are doing or the expression of the lifestyle of a retiree. It covers the entire scope of generations.

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4. Continuity of Values – A culture is held together because of the continuity of unwavering values. These values are seen as priority and upheld primarily through the leadership of the family unit.

D. Biblically, producing a culture of prayer should be the central focus of every church family. For us, we have confidence beyond biblical precedent. This theme runs through our entire prophetic history with a heavy increase confirming words and events since 2012. It is with great assurance and conviction of the Holy Spirit that we are focusing upon this culture shift.

IV. Practical Expressions of a Culture of Prayer

A. Like we previously discussed at the beginning of this teaching the modern general understanding of prayer limited to about 3 expressions of prayer (intercession, listening for direction, and repentance). When we understand that prayer is encountering God and communing with Him, it opens up almost limitless expressions of personality types, structures, and methodology of encountering God.

B. Expressions of Positioning ourselves in Prayer - Every expression of prayer can usually be done either individually or corporately. Effective prayer must be accompanied by sincerity and desire to encounter God.

1. Worship with voice or instruments
2. Conversation with God using the scriptures (Thanksgiving, Repentance, Questions, Thoughts)
3. Intercession
4. Write a narrative about a passage of scripture
5. Journal your thoughts and feelings to the Lord
6. Paint or draw passages of scripture
7. Listening or waiting on the Lord
8. Write a commentary with conversation
9. Make comprehensive notes to explain it to someone else
10. Speak about it or teach it to someone
11. Do a drama on the passage
12. Create an interpretative dance
13. Walk out a passage of scripture
14. Practice Scripture memorization with conversation