

Prayer and Worship

I. REVIEW

- a. The vision statement of Restoration Fellowship
 - i. **Our vision is to glorify God as we walk in faith, rejoice in hope and are known by love**
- b. The mission statement of Restoration Fellowship
 - i. **Our mission is to gather, equip and commission disciples of Jesus**
- c. The core values of Restoration Fellowship
 - i. **Prayer and Worship**
 - ii. **Biblical Foundation**
 - iii. **Hope of the Gospel**
 - iv. **Intentional Community**

II. SEEKERS OF GOD ARE PROMISED TO BE A PEOPLE OF PRAYER AND WORSHIP

"...Those who seek Him will praise the Lord..." (Psalms 22:26 NKJV)

- a. In the NKJV bible, the title of Psalm 22 is "The Suffering, Praise and Posterity of the Messiah". This psalm is about the suffering and death of Jesus, His praise of His Father, and the future generations who will know of His sacrifice and therefore be lovers, worshipers and servants of the Lord forever and ever. Towards the end of the psalm, the promise is given that "those who seek Him will praise the Lord."
- b. A man does not seek after something that he already has in his possession. To truly seek something, one must first come to the realization that there is some sort of distance and separation from the very thing that he desires. For though the Lord has promised that He will never leave us nor forsake us, there is a reality that the physical presence of the Father and the Son are not on the earth at this time. He is with us through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, those who seek after the Lord must acknowledge that there is a degree of separation and distance from Him.
- c. Spectators are not seekers because they desire distance and separation. Spectators purposely sit in a theater in seats apart from the stage and in a stadium in bleachers at a distance from a field so that they can watch from a distance without having to participate. Seekers of the Lord do everything they can to end the separation! Seekers aspire to walk with God hand in hand, to talk to God face to face and to dwell with God in His house. Seekers aspire to abide in His love, to be known as His beloved, to be accepted in His family through Jesus, and to be transformed daily more and more into His image.
- d. What we seek is determined by what and whom we desire. Show me your schedule and I can determine the desires of your heart. Tell me how you spend your time and I can pinpoint what is important to you. To discern the longings of your heart and whether you truly are seeking the Lord, one must ask, "Am I seeking God today...right now?" For a man's desires hates the postponement of being satisfied. A heart that longs to be fulfilled despises the idea of procrastination. And even a moment's delay to the soul of a seeker is a terrible thought. A man who is hungry wants food immediately. A man who is thirsty wants a cold glass of water immediately. And a man who is truly seeking the Lord...well, his heart and his flesh will cry out for the Living God like a deer pants for the water. And He will not relent until he is fully satisfied abiding in His presence.

"One thing I have desired of the Lord, That will I seek..." (Psalms 27:4a NKJV)

*"My soul longs, yes, even faints For the courts of the Lord; My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God."
(Psalms 84:2 NKJV)*

- e. We are given the invitation to seek Him first and empowered by His voice to find Him.

"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you"
(Matthew 6:33 NKJV)

"When You said, "Seek My face," My heart said to You, "Your face, Lord, I will seek."" (Psalms 27:8 NKJV)

- f. We are given the promise that if we seek Him...then we will find Him. And when we find Him...we will praise Him. For worship is a response to who He is! Those who seek Him...find Him...and will respond with praise!

"And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, says the Lord..." (Jeremiah 29:13-14a NKJV)

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? 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 good things to those who ask Him!" (Matthew 7:7-11 NKJV)

III. THE FATHER IS A SEEKER AS WELL...WHO IS HE SEEKING?

"But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."
(John 4:23-24 NKJV)

- a. It is not just that the time is coming...but the hour is NOW to seek and worship the Lord. This is who the Father is seeking. The Father is looking for those who are seeking Him...and worshipping Him. The Father is searching for those who have accepted His Son...have received His Spirit...and respond by giving Him glory.
- b. For so long...worship and prayer was an outward action that was mainly about sacrifices and rituals. But, the Lord sent Jesus to die on the cross as the perfect sacrifice and then released His Holy Spirit into the hearts of men who accepted His Son as Messiah. It is through His Spirit that we are able to call out to the Father from the innermost parts of our being. We have been given the honor and the right to worship Him with all of our heart, all of our soul, all our mind and all of our strength.

"For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together." (Romans 8:15-17 NKJV)

"And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you."
(John 14:16-18 NKJV)

"These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you." (John 14:25-26 NKJV)

- c. Those who seek the Lord in spirit and in truth are not satisfied with only having a form of godliness. They are not satisfied with simply speaking eloquent or loud words of prayer to look pious and holy...they want to actually converse and commune with the Living God. They are not jumping up and down in worship or laying face down on the ground to give the appearance of encounter...they want to actually enter into the presence of the One who is worthy to be praised. Their desire is not for personal glory or even seeking only the glory of the church. No...such men and women have more than a mere form of godliness. They have been transformed from the inside out by the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead. These people seek God Himself...to give glory to the Father and the Son! Those who seek Him...will praise Him.

IV. WE SEEK HIM BECAUSE OF WHO HE IS:

“Because Your faithfulness is better than life, My lips shall praise You.” (Psalm 63:1 NKJV)

“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: For He forgives all your iniquities, His mercies fill your distresses, His redemption from the enemy His destruction. He cleans you with hyssop and balm of tender mercies. His goodness your mouth will continually praise. So that your mouth is exercised like the eagle.” (Psalms 103:1-5 NKJV)

“Praise the Lord! Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercies endure forever.” (Psalm 106:1 NKJV)

“I love the Lord, because He has heard My voice and my supplications. Because He has inclined His ear to me, Therefore I will call upon Him as long as I live.” (Psalm 116:1-2 NKJV)

“I will extol You, my God, O King: and I will bless Your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless You, and I will praise Your name forever and ever. Great is the Lord, and great is He to be praised. And His greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts. I will meditate on the glorious splendor of Your mighty acts, and on Your wonderful works. Men shall speak of the might of Your awesome deeds, and I will declare Your greatness. They shall utter the memory of Your great goodness. And shall sing of Your deeds, and I will declare Your greatness. They shall utter the memory of Your great goodness. The Lord is good in all His ways. His mercies endure forever and ever. All Your works shall praise You, O Lord, and Your saints shall glorify You. They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdoms, Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Your His mighty acts. And the glorious majesty of His kingdom. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Your dominion endure throughout all generations. The Lord uphold all who fall, and raises up all who are bowed down. The eyes of all look expectantly to You, and You are their trust, food in due season. You open Your hand, and satisfy the desire of every living thing. The Lord is righteous in all His ways, gracious in all His works. The Lord is merciful and kind upon His saints, for all who call upon Him to turn. He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him. He also will hear their cry and answer them. The Lord preserves all who love Him, but all the wicked He will destroy. My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord, and all flesh shall bless His holy name forever and ever.” (Psalms 145:1-21 NKJV)

“Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song, and His praise in the assembly of saints. Let Israel rejoice in their Maker; let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. Let them praise His name with the dance; let them sing and praise to Him with the timbrel and harp. For the Lord takes pleasure in His people. He will glorify the humble with salvation. Let the saints be joyful in glory; let them sing aloud on their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their hearts, and a two-edged sword in their hand. To execute vengeance on the nations, and punishments on the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; To execute on them the written judgment— This honor have all His saints. Praise the Lord!” (Psalms 149:1-9 NKJV)

“The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying, “Hallelu, hallelu, Lord God Almighty. Who sits and is and is no coming.” If however the living creatures might worship and thank to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders will give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before Him who sits on the throne, saying, “You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power. For You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.”” (Revelation 4:8-11 NKJV)

“Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. For You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood, and we shall bring praise and incense and incense and music, and have made us kings and priests to our God. And we shall reign on the earth.” Then I looked, and I heard the voices of many angels, around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, crying with a loud voice: “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain. To receive power, and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing.” And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: “Blessing and honor and glory and power. Be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever.” Then the four living creatures said, “Amen.” And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshipped Him who lives forever and ever.” (Revelation 5:8-14 NKJV)

V.

REPENTANCE IS THE FIRST STEP OF THE SEEKER OF GOD

"Now Joshua said to Achan, "My son, I beg you, give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession to Him, and tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me." (Joshua 7:19 NKJV)

"Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?" (Romans 2:4 NKJV)

a. Wouldn't it be nice to just be the person who was abandoned to praise? We have seen them. They are face-down in tears before the Lord or dancing before Him in joyful song with seemingly not a care in the world but to be loved by Him and love Him in return. They are the people that are able to lift their hands in every season and declare His goodness. Every time you see them...it is as if they are being personally encouraged by the Lord in the place of prayer and worship. And then, I was reminded...that repentance is the beginning of prayer and worship. Returning to the Lord is an act of seeking that in itself glorifies the Father and the Son. And the Spirit gives our hearts the sweet conviction that leads us to turn and return to Him. It is God's kindness to give us the Holy Spirit that we might know our need for Him. Aren't we so thankful for the Father to send the Son...and then for the Son to leave that the Father could send us the Spirit?

"Nevertheless I led you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged."

(John 16:7-11 NKJV)

b. Once again...the seeker of God acknowledges when there is distance and separation from Him. Jesus love the veil and has given the invitation of love through his blood to enter into the presence of the Lord. But neither He, nor the Father, nor the Holy Spirit will push us through the door and force our legs to run the race set before us. Through the Holy Spirit, the seeker of God knows the bitterness of sin that keeps him from entering into His courts with thanksgiving and praise. But, only through having the conviction that reveals the bitterness of sin can we THEN walk in the gratitude of the sweetness of His tender mercies and great forgiveness. In knowing who He is...and the great love He offers us...we seek Him. And when we seek...we will find Him...and we will praise Him.