

Last week we talked about the four devotions of the early church which included the Apostolic teaching, fellowship, breaking a bread and prayer.

We are going to talk about the culture of the church today, more specifically what should happen at our gatherings when we yield to the person of the Holy Spirit who brings revelation of Jesus Christ who is the head of the church. *Did you know the corporate gathering is not designed for the lost it was designed for the Christ follower and was purposed to be a place of worship, of learning and equipping, a house of prayer marked by His tangible Presence.* I am not saying one of our major purposes is not evangelism. I am speaking about our gathering.

Acts 2:42-47 (NKJV) 42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. 43 Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. 44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, 45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. 46 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

People were not coming into the kingdom because the church was seeker sensitive. The world witnessed the beauty of a unified body moving in one accord in love with Jesus and each other. The Presence- both the practices and power of the Holy Spirit was evident in all of their life. **Fear or awe of God marked their gatherings and preceded the miraculous.**

- I. **In order to understand what the fear of the Lord is, we must understand both His nearness and His superior qualities that make Him God.**
 - His nearness has to do with intimacy, how He relates to us, perfect fellowship and how He abides in us (John 15:4)

- **This other essential aspect of God is His transcendent, Holiness and glory.** He is all powerful, all knowing, all present sovereign God. We can be guilty of overlooking this aspect of the Lord because it highlights our smallness, weakness and lack compared to His perfect beauty and greatness.

We need the parts that we are enabled to grip and understand and we need the depth and vastness of a God who hold all eternity in His hands.

When we begin to hold God's intimate nearness and transcendence in balance, we come to know that the fear of the Lord is a reverential awe for God because of His overwhelming otherness, but a delight because of His intimate fellowship with us.

Because of salvation, our fear of the Lord is not a terror of punishment but an awe before the majestic, holy, and awesome God who has drawn us to Himself. In His presence, it is all we can do to fall to our knees before Him in a posture of humility and worship Him.

1 John 4:17-19 (NKJV) 17 Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. 19 We love Him because He first loved us.

- So, it is right for us to fear God, not as those under His wrath, but as those in awe of His overwhelming greatness.
- **The fear of the Lord for the believer is a gift released by the Holy Spirit who illuminates our path and says this is the way, this is His way of holiness,** to Christ-likeness. Fear of God keeps us from sin and empowers us to love, be fascinated by Him and be led by His voice .
- Throughout the book of Acts when you saw an increase in the fear of the Lord, you saw an increase in signs and wonders. The truth is they go together.

Isaiah 11 tells us there is delight in the fear of the Lord. God wants His church delighting in Him and being fascinated with Him.

II. We must continue to develop a culture that is Presence centered not people or program centered. Jesus is the emphasis of our gatherings.

Matthew 6:33- But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

As we prioritize and cultivate first love for Jesus Christ, His purpose His plan he does all the addition and multiplying.

The number one task of the church is not the attraction of the lost it's the attracting of Holy Spirit and the fire of God. The marginal followers of God did not show up in the upper room, it was the 120 that were desperate for His Presence because they realized they were not filled with the power that would transform the world so they were desperate for the person of Jesus Christ to be alive in them.

God always starts with a remnant of people that will persevere in prayer, worship cultivating intimacy and hunger, longing for the kingdom of heaven to be fully released.

The danger with being seeker sensitive-We are letting people dictate what will happen and we move into a worldly paradigm that seemingly meets peoples' initial needs but is far removed from the power of God to save, heal, deliver, transform individuals, renew their minds. *Can you imagine meeting Jesus and having Him adapt to what people expected rather than move from the voice of the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit to release Heaven on earth.* **If people don't encounter the Holy Spirit in our gatherings we are missing the mark.** It doesn't mean we don't honor people or love them or meet them where we are at but it does mean we know there is only One who will satisfy every desire and His name is Jesus and He is both incredibly loving and incredibly powerful.

As a church we should embrace the truth that our goal is not how comfortable people are in their sin, strongholds and sickness. **Jesus came to offer complete freedom and that means a radical death to self in order to be filled with the Holy Spirit of God. This is God's house, it's Jesus body and He is jealous for His bride.** *Jesus wants to reign here and it will always make the flesh uncomfortable when He is present. His very Presence demands we make a decision. Holy Spirit calls us to adjust to Him, not Him to adjust to us.*

Listen as Paul explains the power of the Holy Spirit in the church working through the prophetic gifting.

1Corinthians 14:24-25 ²⁴ But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all. ²⁵ And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on *his* face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you.

What a gift to offer unbelievers. They are convinced and convicted by God, they fall down in His Presence and worship because the anointed words flowing out of the believers tongue are so encouraging, strengthening and equipping that they fall on their face and say God is real and He is here! They don't leave commenting on how orderly everything was and it was exactly what I expected. They leave unhinged because they met Jesus.

When naturally minded people walk into the fire of the Holy Spirit and God's supernatural activity, they should be unsettled! Honestly we should want people to be touched by the Holy Spirit in intimacy and power not for them to feel comfortable and have a nice down to earth sermon with music that is catchy. **Each one should be asking Holy Spirit who they can minister to because we love when Jesus loves on people.**

Leviticus 6:12-14 ¹² The fire on the altar must be kept burning; it must not go out. Every morning the priest is to add firewood and arrange the burnt offering on the fire and burn the fat of the fellowship offerings on it. ¹³ The fire must be kept burning on the altar continuously; it must not go out.

The entire body has a part to play in adding firewood to the altar! Our daily preparedness in Jesus presence, in His Word, prayer, worship and ministry set the table for His Presence to be poured out upon us when we gather.

Jesus vision for us is so glorious, he is longing for all of us to burn with His passion and His glory. Holy Spirit is able and willing to take us into deep experiences (Fellowship) if we will just be willing to follow Him clinging to no

one but Him. What could God do with a church that will not settle but is overflowing with the Spirit and the power of God?

Our time together must include setting the table for and expecting the miraculous. This is for every person here-we must continue to be thankful yet remain hungry for more of His presence while developing first love for Jesus Christ giving Him all of our affections. Do what many do not and press through until the promises of Kingdom are realized and lived out in your life.

The fear of God will be restored to His church once again in order to prepare the church for revival. Jesus walked in it, the early church walked in it and we must value and pursue the fear of the Lord as a main thing.

Following the Fear of God is increased of signs and wonders.

Jesus life perfectly interpreted how the fear of the Lord can empower you to exalt Him and Him alone. If we don't have this reverent awe, this special place above all others reserved for God we are not seeing Him scripturally/ rightly.

Hebrews 5:7 who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear,

Pursue delight in the fear of the Lord walking in deeper fellowship and growing in awe and expectation of His glory. (Isaiah 11:3)