

Encountering God

A PRAYER INFUSION FOR YOU AND YOUR CHURCH

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

WELCOME TO *ENCOUNTERING GOD!*

REVIVE THE CHURCH – CHRIST’S FULLNESS

1. HUNGER FOR GOD
2. ENCOUNTER THE FATHER’S LOVE
3. THE MANIFEST PRESENCE

REACH THE NATIONS – CHRIST’S FULFILLMENT

4. THE UPPER ROOM
5. THE PRAYING FAMILY
6. THE MISSIONAL CHURCH

APPENDIX

- A. NEXT STEPS – OTHER GOD-ENCOUNTERING RESOURCES
- B. WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF THE COLLEGE OF PRAYER

WELCOME TO *ENCOUNTERING GOD!*

When Christ built His church, He built a praying church.

What kind of church are you building?

When Christ made disciples, He made praying disciples.

What kind of disciples are you making?

The impact of your ministry is determined by the strength of your prayer life.

What are you asking God for?

The strength of your prayer life is revealed by the size of the answers to your prayers.

What size answers to prayer are you receiving?

The purpose of *Encountering God* is to provide churches with a resource that will give them a prayer infusion. No one is a natural born pray-er. We all need help. This *Encountering God* resource is full of material that has already been field-tested in over 70 nations and used by more than 4 million Christians worldwide through the College of Prayer International. It is having a significant impact on some of the largest church networks on earth. Now, for the first time, some of the same material taught in the College of Prayer is available for every local church.

Every sustained move of God throughout history started with hunger for God. **Hunger** for God is where **encountering** God starts. If you have a hunger to encounter God, then this prayer infusion is for you!

We will be spending roughly half the time in prayer and worship and half the time in teaching and interaction with each other. This means each lesson is designed to be taught in 20-30 minutes, so that you have adequate time for prayer, worship, and encountering God.

Encountering God is written for you and your church family to set aside time and space to encounter God. Do not allow *Encountering God* to become just another teaching seminar or just another prayer meeting. This curriculum is designed to create extended time together in God's presence for you and your local church.

To mentor, train, and equip Christian pastors and leaders
to reach a lost world through a revived church.

Mission Statement, *College of Prayer International*

REVIVE THE CHURCH
CHRIST'S FULLNESS

LESSON ONE
HUNGER FOR GOD

*"As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God."
Psalm 42:1-2*

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled." Matthew 5:6

Health and hunger go hand in hand. Hungry Christians are healthy Christians. The hungrier we are, the healthier we are; the hungrier we are, the better we pray.

"Hunger is the best cook." – Martin Luther

Hunger for God is the first gift of God. Whenever God is preparing to revive His church, He first infuses His people with a God-given hunger for Himself.

All God's great men and women have demonstrated a hunger for God.

David: "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God." Psalm 42:2

Isaiah: "Come all you who are thirsty." Isaiah 55:1

Peter: "Crave the pure spiritual milk." 1 Peter 2:2

The reason hunger for God is such a line of demarcation is because we do not naturally hunger for God. No person has ever experienced genuine hunger for God on their own, apart from God giving them hunger.

"No one seeks for God." Romans 3:11

This means that when we start to seek God, or hunger and thirst for God, it is a response to God creating hunger for Himself within us. When God creates hunger for Himself in one person, it is often an indication that God is also creating a similar hunger for Himself within the entire church family.

Because hunger is a gift from God, Jesus said, *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled"* (Matthew 5:6).

INSIGHTS INTO HUNGER FOR GOD

- » Hunger for God can be ignited inside us at any time. It is possible to go five years without genuine hunger for God, and then wake up one morning with sincere hunger for God.

"If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, 'Streams of living water will flow from within him.'" John 7:37-38.

Jesus declared these life-transforming words to a crowd of religious worshipers who had been to the place of worship dozens of times before, but this time He called out in a loud voice to ignite a new hunger in many seekers. He can do the same for you today!

- » Hunger in one person often ignites hunger in others. When we sit down at the dinner table with people who like to eat, we often eat more than usual. What is true with physical food is also true with spiritual food. When we talk with people who are hungry for God, it often ignites a greater hunger in us. When we pray with people hungry for God, it often ignites a deeper hunger in us as well.
- » While a person's physical appetite normally decreases later in life, our spiritual appetite should increase with age. The longer we walk with Jesus, the more we delight in Him and the more we desire Him.
- » When you obey your hunger for God, it will keep you from becoming a superficial Christian. Hunger for God is an internal work of God that you can't fake. Hunger for God will prevent you from simply following external expectations of the religious culture. When you obey your hunger for God, it will lead you to greater spiritual maturity.

Warning: Do not misunderstand your hunger for God. Hunger for God is not hunger for something *from* God (like a car or a bigger house), it is hunger *for* God Himself.

ACTION STEPS

If you have a greater appetite for God today than you did a year ago, please raise your hand right now. Get in groups of 2-3 people. Pray your hunger for God right now. If some would rather not pray out loud, no problem; just listen to others pray.

After 5-10 minutes of small-group prayer, sing an appropriate group

LESSON TWO

ENCOUNTER THE FATHER'S LOVE

"When you pray, say: Father..." Luke 11:2

All authentic prayer starts with **Father** because all authentic prayer starts with relationship. All prayer that is life-giving and relevant rises out of a love relationship with Father God through His Son Jesus Christ. For this reason Jesus said, *"When you pray, say: Father..." (Luke 11:2).*

Father is the one word that separates Christianity from every other world religion.

Father is the word that marks the transition from religion to relationship.

In Luke 11:1 the disciples asked Jesus a simple 5-word question: *"Lord, teach us to pray."*

In Luke 11:2 Jesus gave a simple 5-word answer: *"When you pray, say: Father..."*

1. It is obvious that Jesus had the right to call God, *Father*.

Jesus used the name *Father* one hundred seventy-five times in normal conversation in reference to God. It only makes sense that Jesus would refer to God as *Father* because He Himself was God's one and only Son (see John 1:18, 3:16).

At Jesus' baptism, Father God declared, *"This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased"* (Matthew 3:17 NIV 84).

God the Father blessed His Son with the three-fold blessing for which every child longs:

Acceptance - *"This is My Son"*

Affection - *"whom I love"*

Affirmation - *"with Him I am well pleased"*

2. What is remarkable is that Jesus offers to each of us the right to call God *Father* as well.

The reason this is so remarkable is because when we were born, we were all spiritual orphans. We were separated from God.

» Consider what Jesus did in order to give you the right to call

God *Father*: Jesus took the guilt, shame, and toxic waste from all humanity. While hanging from the cross, Jesus felt Himself separated from the Father for the first time in eternity. *"And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?'"* Matthew 27:46

Jesus Christ was temporarily separated from the Father's love, in order to reconcile us to the Father's love. We who have been separated because of our sin, can now be linked to the Father's love by Christ's sacrifice. *"But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God."* John 1:12

- » When you are in Christ, the same love the Father has for His Son, He now has for you.

Just as He said to His Son, so He says to you, "This is My son (or daughter), whom I love; with him (or her) I am well pleased."

In Christ you have the same three-fold blessing from the Father.

Acceptance - *"This is My son (or daughter)"*

Affection - *"whom I love"*

Affirmation - *"with him (or her) I am well pleased"*

When you are in Christ, you are loved as Christ.

"For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God." Colossians 3:3

Understanding the love of the Father will revolutionize your prayer life. There is nothing more important every day than to receive a fresh infilling of the love of God. It is like a vitamin to boost your immune system, or like an antibiotic to fight off disease. Once you are adopted, *Father* is the key to sustaining a vibrant, relevant, ever-increasing love relationship with God in His Son Jesus Christ.

3. Once you are adopted, the enemy is out to attack your adoption.

While he cannot steal your adoption, he can steal the confidence you have in the Father's love and in your adoption. He cannot steal your birthright, but he can lie to you about its legitimacy and make you feel like an orphan.

When tragedy strikes, it can be more difficult to trust the Father's love.

Adversity	Financial crisis
Illness	Emotional wounds
Untimely death	Sexual abuse
Divorce	Trauma
Loss	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

When tragedy strikes, the enemy will lie to us.

"If God loved you, this never would have happened."

"If God loved you, He would have answered your prayers."

"If God loved you, He would not have been absent when you went through your heartache."

Every lying voice tries to convince us that we are orphans rather than beloved children. The antidote for the orphan's voice is the Father's voice.

ORPHAN'S VOICE	FATHER'S VOICE
Fear	Freedom
Rejection	Acceptance
Poverty	Abundance
Hurts, Wounds, Pain	Healing
Abuse	Respect
Dishonor	Honor
Curse	Blessing
Insecurity/Fear of death	Assurance of salvation

Most people have heard the orphan's voice, but you never want it to drown out the Father's voice. As you look at this list comparing the orphan's voice to the Father's voice, have you ever heard the orphan voice? Please raise your hand if you have heard the orphan's voice.

Jesus said, *"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."* (John 14:18)

The Apostle Paul said, *"For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!'"* (Romans 8:15)

You must reject the orphan's voice!

To any extent that you have listened to the orphan voice, today you can silence that voice and receive the Father's blessing.

If you have listened to the lies of the orphan spirit,
if you feel as though God has been unkind to you or that you
deserve better,
if you are angry or resentful toward God,
if you are uncertain that when you die you will go to heaven,
today is your adoption day!

Today is the day to renounce the orphan voice in your head, and to receive your adoption as a child of God with all rights and privileges.

"For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:38-39

ACTION STEPS

Stand together. Sing a song declaring the Father's love.

It's time to silence the orphan's voice. We will do this together. As a group, we want to step into a fresh encounter with the Father's love. Let's read through these declarations out loud:

- » Submit to God. Read aloud in unison this declaration:

Father God, I humble myself before You. I praise You for sending Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to die on the cross as my sin sacrifice. I know I could never earn the right to become Your child, but right now I receive eternal salvation in Jesus' Name. Thank you for loving me enough to send Your Son to die for me. I am Your child.

- » Silence the orphan voice. Read aloud in unison this declaration:

I declare I am not an orphan; I am a child of the one true God whose Son is the Lord Jesus Christ. I renounce my bitterness and the feeling that I deserved better. Forgive me for my lack of gratitude. Forgive me for losing touch with the love of God. I receive forgiveness and a new beginning right now by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Restore to me the Father's love.

- » Receive the Father's love. Read aloud in unison this declaration:

Loving Father, right now I receive Your Holy Spirit of adoption, in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. I claim my inheritance as a child of God. I receive not only the fullness of your salvation, I also receive the assurance

of my salvation, in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. I am a child of God. I am loved. I am blessed. I am forgiven. I am adopted with all rights and privileges. Hallelujah. Amen.

How many of us who had heard the orphan's voice, can now say that Jesus has silenced the orphan's voice? Raise your hand.

One of the schemes of the orphan's voice is to attack the assurance of your salvation. While the enemy cannot steal our salvation, he can steal the **assurance** of our salvation. Right now we want to recover stolen property. We want to give you an opportunity to nail down your salvation and the assurance of your salvation.

Trust Christ now! Receive your adoption as sons and daughters.

"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'" John 14:6

Loving Father, I confess my sin and repent now. I relinquish control of my life and present my future into Your loving care. I receive salvation now through the blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ Your Son on my behalf. I receive my adoption as your child in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

"For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!'" Romans 8:15

How many of you have always felt a tinge of insecurity, not knowing whether or not you would go to heaven when you die, but you just nailed it down? If you now have the assurance of your salvation, please raise your hand. *"I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life."* 1 John 5:13

Get in prayer groups of 2-3 people. Thank Father God for restoring your love relationship with Him.

LESSON THREE

THE MANIFEST PRESENCE

"Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man." Revelation 1:12-13

The greatest tragedy in the church today is that we have blurred the distinction between the omnipresence (or "everywhere presence") of God and the manifest presence of God. The greatest need in the church today is to have a fresh encounter with the manifest presence of Christ.

Revelation 1 gives us perhaps that most accurate view of the ascended Christ. It is curious that in this chapter the ascended Christ appears to be on fire from head to toe: His feet are glowing like metal in a furnace, His right hand is holding seven stars (balls of fire), His eyes are like flames of fire, and His face looks like the sun at midday. (Read Revelation 1:12-16.)

Throughout the Bible, God often appears in fire.

Abraham met God in the fire. (Genesis 15:17)

Moses met God in the fire. (Exodus 3)

All Israel met God in the fire. (Exodus 13, 19)

David met God in the fire. (1 Chronicles 21:26)

Solomon met God in the fire. (2 Chronicles 7)

Isaiah met God in the fire. (Isaiah 6)

Elijah met God in the fire. (1 Kings 18)

The early church met God in the fire. (Acts 2:1-5)

In every one of these examples, fire represented the manifest presence of God. It should not be surprising that Christ appears as if He is on fire in Revelation 1. After all, Christ is the manifest presence of God.

"The Presence and the manifestation of the Presence are not the same. There can be one without the other. God is here when we are wholly unaware of it. He is manifest only when and as we are aware of His presence." A.W. Tozer, Pursuit of God

OMNIPRESENCE	MANIFEST PRESENCE
Real	Real
True to God's nature	True to God's nature
God everywhere	God tangibly perceived
Normally unknown	Always known
Theoretical	Transformational
Impersonal	Personal
Obedience optional	Obedience required
No prayer required	Prayer required

As we have seen, God often chooses to encounter His people in fire. More often, however, God chooses to encounter His people in His manifest presence without the appearance of fire. **The issue is not whether there is fire; the issue is whether there is the manifest presence of God.**

Notice also that the church appears in Revelation 1 as a flame holder. This makes sense. After all, **the church is given the distinct assignment to receive and sustain the fire of the manifest presence of Christ.**

"For where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I among them."
 Matthew 18:20

Was Jesus referring in Matthew 18:20 to His omnipresence or His manifest presence? He must have been referring to His manifest presence, because His omnipresence would be there whether or not we meet in His name.

The single factor that distinguishes the church from the fitness center or the sports bar down the street is the manifest presence of Christ.

Every revival is triggered by a fresh encounter with the manifest presence of Christ.

HELPFUL TIPS – HOW TO MORE CONSISTENTLY ENCOUNTER GOD'S MANIFEST PRESENCE

- » Consistently **invite** God to manifest His presence in your life, your family, and your church family. God loves to come where He is invited. We do not seek an experience with God, we seek an encounter. We do not seek God's manifestations, but we seek His

manifest presence. *"You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart."* Jeremiah 29:13

- » Learn to **discover** God's manifest presence as you read through the Bible. *"They said to each other, 'Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked to us on the road, while He opened to us the Scriptures?'"* Luke 24:32
- » Learn to **recognize** the manifest presence of Christ in your life, your family life, work life, and church life. *"Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God."* Matthew 5:8

ACTION STEPS

Let's stand. Get in groups of 2-3 people and pray together. Repent of neglecting the manifest presence of God. Ask God to manifest Himself in your life, your family, and your church.

Sing a song about encountering God.

Be seated. In the same small groups in which you just prayed, talk to each other. Discuss what you just learned about the difference between God's omnipresence and His manifest presence.

Share a testimony with those gathered about what you have learned, and how it will impact your life.

For a fuller understanding of the manifest presence of Christ, we recommend the book *God on Fire*, Fred A. Hartley, III (CLC Publications 2012). Order online at www.collegeofprayer.org.

REACH THE NATIONS
CHRIST'S FULFILLMENT

LESSON FOUR

THE UPPER ROOM

“On one occasion, while He was eating with them, He gave them this command: ‘Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift My Father promised, which you have heard Me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’” Acts 1:4-5

The upper room is the crown jewel of Jesus’ discipleship ministry. When He ascended into heaven, the only thing Christ left behind on earth was the God-encountering upper room prayer gathering.

Jesus established His upper room by giving His disciples a command and a promise.

Command: *“Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait...”*

Promise: *“...for the gift my Father promised...in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”*

The disciples obviously understood the command and the promise. *“Then they returned to Jerusalem...When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room (Greek: Huperon) where they were staying.” Act 1:12-13*

“Upper room” is the Greek word *Huperon*. It is an open-air space on a flat-top roof where friends and family would gather at the end of the day to share stories, welcome guests, tell jokes, sip tea, and relax. Jesus and His disciples took advantage of this social space as their private prayer gathering place. Prior to the crucifixion, the disciples met in the upper room for the Passover meal, the Lord’s Supper, foot-washing, and fellowship (Mark 14:15). Following the resurrection, the disciples met in the upper room again (John 20:19). Now they are meeting again in their upper room immediately following the ascension (Acts 1:12-13).

For the early church it was called an upper room because it was literally on the rooftop. For the church today, however, the upper room can be on the back porch, in your office, living room, or basement.

Upper Room – anywhere you can meet privately without distractions to encounter God’s manifest presence, minister to His manifest presence, and from which you can carry His manifest presence into your daily life.

When Christ sent His disciples to their upper room on earth, He went to His upper room in heaven. His upper room, the throne room, is command central for the entire universe.

The axis of power in the universe today is not Wall Street, nor Washington D.C., nor Silicon Valley. It is not the Kremlin in Moscow, nor the Ayatollah, nor the European Union. The axis of greatest power and influence on earth is the upper room in heaven. No question. It is from the upper room in heaven through the upper room on earth that Christ fulfills His purposes. There is no higher honor than to accept God's invitation to join Him in the upper room. Rebuilding upper rooms on earth is the greatest activity we can be involved in to fulfill Christ's purposes in our world today.

THE FIVE UPPER ROOM MIRACLES

These are five distinct miracles associated with the upper room. We do not use the word "miracle" casually; each of the five miracles listed below are only accomplished by God's intervention in the lives of His people. These five miracles are being reproduced all over the world today. Christ will finish His mission on earth the same way He started – through the upper room!

1. The miracle of gathering.

The fact that the early disciples gathered back in the upper room in Jerusalem is nothing short of a miracle. Every instinct within the disciples would have been to leave Jerusalem. Most of their families and children were elsewhere. Their jobs were elsewhere. The same people who killed Jesus were still in power in Jerusalem, so it was not safe to stay there. The Scripture even says, "*Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered*" *Mark 14:27*. But they did not scatter; instead, they **gathered**. The early church gathered in the upper room because they were given a command and a promise. Christians gather today in their upper room all around the world because they too have a command and a promise. It requires a miracle for us to gather in the upper room, just as it did for the early church.

2. The miracle of praying.

The fact that these early disciples gathered for ten days of prayer is definitely a miracle. Keep in mind that only forty days prior, in the Garden

of Gethsemane, they were incapable of praying one hour. Without pre-Pentecost **prayer**, there would be no Pentecost **power**. *"All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer."* Acts 1:14 It takes just as much of a miracle to empower the church today to pray.

3. The miracle of receiving.

This third miracle, receiving, is the central miracle of the upper room. When the early church received the Holy Spirit, they received the manifest presence of Christ. *"When the day of Pentecost arrived they were all together in one place...and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit."* Acts 2:1,4 When Jesus ascended into His upper room in heaven, He received from the Father the Holy Spirit. When the disciples arrived in their upper room on earth, they received the Holy Spirit. *"This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing."* Acts 2:32-33

"And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." Acts 2:4

4. The miracle of ministering.

Once the upper room disciples received the manifest presence of Christ in the fullness of the Holy Spirit, they immediately began ministering to the presence of Christ among them. *"Telling in our own tongues the mighty works (Greek: Megaleious) of God."* Acts 2:11 "Mighty works" is the Greek word *megaleious* (used only 1 time in the entire New Testament). It means "magnificent, splendid, wonderful, perfection." The early believers were using words they had never used before to describe things they had never seen before. These early disciples were so blown away by the visitation of God's manifest presence among them, they stood in wide-eyed wonder and proclaimed the mighty works of God. Once we receive God's manifest presence, we want to linger in His presence and declare His praise in high worship.

5. The miracle of harvest.

Once they were filled with God's manifest presence and responded by ministering to His presence, it was as if God changed the spiritual atmosphere. People who had cried out for Christ's crucifixion only forty days earlier are now eagerly listening to the gospel and asking, *"What*

shall we do?" Acts 2:37. Immediately, at least 3,000 repented and were baptized (Acts 2:41). Others continued to be saved daily (Acts 2:47).

God intends every believer to have a nation-impact life.

God intends every church to have a nation-impact ministry.

Today Christ is rebuilding upper rooms all over the world. He is inviting each of us into upper room encounters continuously.

Private upper rooms with just you and Jesus

Family upper rooms

Small group upper rooms

Entire church family upper rooms

Remember: While the upper room in the early church was physically on the rooftop, today it can be any private place where believers gather for the express purpose of receiving Christ's manifest presence, ministering to His presence, and carrying His presence into our daily lives.

ACTION STEPS

Rather than talking to God first, let's talk to each other. Let's get in small groups of 2 to 3 people and answer this question, "What did you just learn about the upper room? What is the difference between the upper room and other prayer meetings?"

After talking with each other for 3 to 5 minutes, pray together. Ask God where He is inviting you to join Him in building an upper room – a private upper room just for you and Jesus, a family upper room, a small group upper room?

If you have learned something from this session about the strategic nature of upper room prayer, consider sharing it with the larger group.

LESSON FIVE

THE PRAYING FAMILY

"Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever. Amen." Ephesians 3:20, 21

God loves to manifest His presence, particularly among families.

*"To Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout **all generations.**" Ephesians 3:21*

The glory of God is the manifest presence of God. God wants to manifest His presence throughout all generations.

Everything God created, He intends to fill with His glorious presence.

He created the heavens and earth in order to fill them.

He created the church in order to fill it.

He created the family in order to fill it.

No sooner does the Apostle Paul exhort the Christians in Ephesus to be filled with the Holy Spirit, that he immediately starts exhorting every member of the family (Ephesians 5:20-6:4). *"Be filled with the Spirit...wives submit to your husbands...husbands love your wives...children obey your parents...fathers do not provoke your children..." Ephesians 5:18-6:4* God intends every family to welcome His manifest presence, minister to His manifest presence, and live out of His manifest presence.

As followers of Christ, we certainly want God's manifest presence to influence our daily lives. We can expect there to be a radical change in our family dynamics as a result of God's presence permeating our lives and our home life.

Your conversations
Your attitudes
Your investments
Your hobbies

Your spare time
Your TV viewing
Your use of handheld devices
The websites you visit

God wants His manifest presence to make a difference in our marriage.

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church." Ephesians 5:31-32

"What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." Mark 10:9

Since God joins every husband and wife together, that means He is in the middle of the relationship. The better we are able to recognize His manifest presence within our marriage, the better we will function within our marriages. Exciting things happen when husbands and wives pray together. In fact, the quality of your marriage will increase when you begin praying with your spouse (see 1 Peter 3:7).

God wants His manifest presence to make a difference in our parenting.

It is God's intention for every Christian parent to be able to show their children a demonstration of the supernatural power of God in answer to prayer in day-to-day life within the home. We do not want to raise superficial Christian children who simply know how to punch the right buttons and jump through the right hoops. We want our children to develop a hunger for God for themselves that is deep and authentic. Once our children taste the manifest presence of Christ, they will never want to settle for anything less.

"If our children do not see God dramatically answer specific prayers, we will lose them to Satan."

WEAKNESS IS A GATEWAY, NOT A HINDRANCE

When problems, crises, heartaches, and weaknesses arise, our first reaction is to think that they disqualify us from God's blessing. Don't believe it! The opposite is true. Weaknesses are a gateway, not a hindrance, to encountering the manifest presence of Christ. The key is opening up our weaknesses and inviting Christ into them. In Ephesians 3:20-21, we are reminded that the glory of Christ shines in answer to prayer, *"according to the power at work within us."*

Q. Where does God's power work within us?

A. In our weaknesses.

"His power is made perfect in our weakness." 2 Corinthians 12:9

This word “weakness” in this verse refers to all types of weakness.

Emotional	Moral
Financial	Marital
Spiritual	Physical

Sooner or later, most Christian families will realize that God is often more glorified through our weaknesses than He is through our strengths. When we recognize an area of weakness, we discover an area where God’s power can shine!

Our weaknesses lie to us, telling us, “God is not able.” Our weaknesses often tell us circumstances are greater than our God. Ephesians 3:20-21 tells us that God is greater than our circumstances. This verse tells us that God is not only able to do what we ask, He is *“able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think!”* **It is time to declare the truth, that our God is greater than our circumstances.** It is a matter of sovereignty.

How many of us have some area of weakness in our family life right now – emotional, financial, spiritual, moral, marital, physical? Raise your hand if you can recognize some area of weakness in your life or family.

ACTION STEPS

Let’s stand together. If you have identified an area in your life or in your family where you feel weakness, would you slip out from where you’re standing and come and stand at the front and present your weakness to God. We want to pray – to open the door and invite Christ to come into this area of weakness.

Sing an appropriate song as people come to the front for prayer.

As you pray, open up areas of heartache and personal weakness to God. Invite God to come and work miracles—for His power to be made perfect in our weaknesses.

After personal prayer, gather in groups of 2-3 people and pray with each other.

Declare Ephesians 3:20-21 over your life, *“Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever. Amen.”* Ephesians 3:20-21.

LESSON SIX

THE MISSIONAL CHURCH

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Acts 1:8

The final unreached people on earth will not be reached through a lukewarm, prayerless church. The final unreached people on earth will be reached the same way the first unreached people were reached, from the upper room to the nations.

The reason God is rebuilding upper rooms all over the world today is because He is systematically finishing His mission on earth the way He started – through the upper room.

Every local church is intended by God to be a world-impact congregation. This is the Acts 1:8 promise!

THE FULLNESS-FULFILLMENT PRINCIPLE

Everything in the Kingdom of God flows from fullness to fulfillment.

"Follow Me (fullness), and I will make you fishers of men (fulfillment)." Mark 1:17

"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit is come upon you (fullness) and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth (fulfillment)." Acts 1:8

"They were all filled with the Holy Spirit (fullness) and continued to speak the word of God with boldness (fulfillment)." Acts 4:31

God expects us to live out of the fullness-fulfillment principle.

God expects all pastors and leaders to lead their people in the fullness-fulfillment principle.

Emphasizing only fullness to the exclusion of fulfillment will never fulfill our mission.

Emphasizing fulfillment to the exclusion of fullness will leave people exhausted and barren.

Experiencing both fullness and fulfillment is the key to a healthy Christian life and a vibrant church community.

CONCENTRIC CIRCLES OF INFLUENCE

Notice the ever-expanding concentric circles of Kingdom expansion in Acts 1:8:

Jerusalem - Those who live near you who are like you.

All Judea - Those in your country who are like you.

Samaria - Those near you from a different culture or language.

Ends of the earth - Other nations.

The promise contained in Acts 1:8 is for every one of us and for our local church. This means that every Christian and every local church is intended to have a nation-impact ministry.

God wants to birth in you and in your church an ever-increasing love for lost people. He wants to use you to communicate the gospel of Christ, beginning with your unsaved family members, neighbors, and even the nations of the world. He wants to use us as a church family to impact the nations, and that always begins in prayer.

ACTION STEPS

Get in small prayer groups. Ask God to fill you with His Holy Spirit. Then ask God to make you an Acts 1:8 Christian.

As a larger group, pray brief prayers for specific unsaved family, friends, neighbors, and workplace associates.

After 5-10 minutes, take some time to pray for God to make for God to make your church an Acts 1:8 church that will have a significant Kingdom impact in your neighborhood and among the nations.

After 5-10 minutes, take some time to pray for specific nations, cities, and people groups.

Sing a closing missional song.

Encountering God is designed as an entry-level prayer infusion for you and your church family. To build a dynamic, encountering God church, we encourage you to use some of our small group curriculum found in Appendix A.

APPENDIX A:
NEXT STEPS – OTHER GOD-
ENCOUNTERING RESOURCES

Now that you have enjoyed your *Encountering God* gathering, and have received a prayer infusion, there are many other God-encountering resources at your fingertips. The College of Prayer International exists to serve you and your local church. The following resources, and many others, are available for your ongoing encouragement.

- » Download our *Revival Now Media* app and get access to great teaching, an interactive prayer wall, and more.
- » There are a host of free resources available to you through our media website, www.revivalnow.media, including several free small group video series on prayer. *Revival Now Media* is also available on Roku, Apple TV, and all major app platforms.
- » Subscribe to the College of Prayer's *The Kingdom Leadership Podcast* in your favorite Podcast app.
- » Books by Fred Hartley (available on our website):
Prayer on Fire: What Happens When the Holy Spirit Ignites Your Prayers
God on Fire: Encountering the Manifest Presence of Christ
Church on Fire: A 31-Day Adventure to Welcome the Manifest Presence of Christ
God's Word on Fire (e-version only, available on Amazon.com)
Ignite: Carrying the Flame from the Upper Room to the Nations Everything by Prayer: Armin Gesswein's Keys to Spirit-Filled Living
The Seven Wounds of Christ: Where Skeptics, Cynics and Seekers Find Unexpected Healing

If you have enjoyed your *Encountering God* gathering, consider hosting a College of Prayer campus at your church. God may be raising up your church as a pacesetter for other churches in your area or in your church network. If interested, email contact@collegeofprayer.org or call us at (770) 829-0122. We also invite you to join the College of Prayer family at one of our equipping conferences:

Ignite – the first Thursday-Saturday in February every year.

Building a Praying Church Conference - scheduled throughout the year.

Check our website for details: www.CollegeOfPrayer.org

APPENDIX B:
WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF
THE COLLEGE OF PRAYER

The College of Prayer International exists to serve Christ and His church. We lead local churches and church leaders to encounter the manifest presence of Christ and we help congregations become houses of prayer for all nations. The entire College of Prayer ministry is modeled after the way Christ made disciples and the way He built the Upper Room. Just as Jesus spent three years training His disciples to pray, so do we (Luke 11:1). Just as Jesus led His followers into the Upper Room to have a fresh encounter with His manifest presence (Acts 1:13), to fill them with His Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4) and then send them out to make disciples of all nations (Acts 1:8), so we are re-establishing this New Testament pattern all over the world.

The College of Prayer is a highly transferable paradigm of discipleship and evangelism designed to revive the Church and advance the kingdom of God by the power of the Spirit of God. We are convinced that prayer is not the latest church growth program; rather, it is a way of life. The College of Prayer intentionally enables students to grow in their own spiritual formation. We are seeing God pour out His reviving Spirit on His Church all over the world. He is calling His Church back to the Upper Room to be a house of prayer for all nations (Mark 11:17).

Our desire is to see every local church revived as a house of prayer for all nations so that through the church Christ might reach the final unreached people on earth. We are convinced that the lost will never be reached through a lukewarm church. It is through a revived church that the final unreached people on earth will be reached.

The College of Prayer International was officially founded in 1997 by Fred Hartley and three other pastors who had a hunger for Christ and a desire and burden to advance His kingdom. Each of these leaders were mentored by Armin Gesswein. The previous year, Fred Hartley had extended an invitation to 50 pastor-friends throughout North America and 79 came to the first gathering. Each of them encountered God in a profound way and agreed to meet three times a year for three years.

Seven of the original group said that they were ready to drop out of the ministry, but when they encountered the reviving presence of Christ, they reaffirmed their calling.

Currently, we have over 300,000 campuses around the world. Our curriculum has now been translated into 32 different languages.

The College of Prayer is of benefit to pastors and leaders within a local church fellowship because it gives them an opportunity to slow down, encounter the manifest presence of Christ, listen to what God is saying, meet with people of similar passion, and learn life-transforming, biblical principles that are reproducible.

FOUR LEVELS OF BENEFIT

1. Personal growth in Christ. Since every two-day module is Christ-encountering and empowering, the College of Prayer gives pastors and leaders an opportunity to receive replenishment twice a year for three years.
2. Leadership development. The College of Prayer provides a perfect environment for pastors and leaders to invite their leadership team into three years of biblical, life-transformational, Kingdom training.
3. Praying churches. As members of local congregations participate in the College of Prayer, they become prayer pacesetters for others throughout their church family.
4. Revival in your region. Many College of Prayer campuses have 20 or more different churches from varying denominations and backgrounds all meeting together in one place at one time. This unity is catalytic towards a sustained move of God in the area.

WHAT IS A CAMPUS

The College of Prayer owns no buildings; we train leaders. A campus of the College of Prayer is made up of 3-5 pastors and leaders in a region who are committed to the mission and curriculum of the College of Prayer and have the influence to gather 50-plus students for three years. Some campuses are as large as 2,000 students and some as small as 50. The campus meets for 2 days, twice a year, for three years, and the impact is far-reaching on the students. They utilize our curriculum (Course 1: *Lord, Teach us to Pray*; Course 2: *Lord, As Families, Teach Us to Pray*; Course 3: *Lord, As Churches, Teach Us to Pray*).

This continuity of training allows for deep relationships to be fostered and life-changing principles to be embraced in a community setting. Students enjoy extended times of prayer, worship, repentance, cleansing, and renewal in addition to life-giving teaching. Best of all, they encounter the manifest presence of Christ together.

The College of Prayer leads leaders to a fresh encounter with Christ. We have discovered that when we encounter God, it normally includes five elements.

- » High worship
- » Deep repentance
- » Receiving forgiveness and freedom
- » Being filled with the Holy Spirit
- » Being empowered for ministry

The revival we are praying for is not parochial, shallow, or short-lived. We don't need a flash in the pan revival. The move of God we are praying for is Christ-exalting, pride-crushing, sin-exposing, Satan-evicting, repentance-welcoming, life-transforming, and nation discipling.

If you are interested in learning more about the College of Prayer, or if you are motivated to plant a campus of the College of Prayer, please reach out to us at contact@collegeofprayer.org. For further information or to access useful prayer mobilizing materials, visit www.collegeofprayer.org.

As God works in your life through this curriculum, please share your story with us.



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