

# ACTIVATE School of Prayer

## Session 1: The Power of Prayer & Fasting—*Joseph Smucker*

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### I. What is Fasting and Prayer

- A. Fasting is simply giving up something that one normally does (eating, social media, entertainment, certain kinds of foods) to be able to create space to pursue God.
- B. Prayer is simply telling God what He tells us to tell Him. It is talking to God.

### II. Purposeful Positioning

#### A. Seated with Christ

- **Ephesians 2:4-10**
- Fasting and Prayer are two of the core disciplines of the kingdom that are many times glossed over. They are very powerful tools to use in our walk with the Lord, but because they are so simple, many forget to do them or think that they aren't really as powerful as what they actually are.
- As we do these things, we are to be positioning our hearts in the place God has for us with Him in heaven.
- We are NOT earning God's favor or "buying" answers to anything when we participate in these disciplines.
- We have been given the position of privilege in the universe. We are God's prize possession, the apple of His eye. We have been adopted into His family based on the work of Christ, not on our own merit!
- We were given all these positions before we did anything for Him. All we did was surrender to Him, and we received full inheritance in Christ.
- We cannot possibly buy God's favor on our lives. He gives it freely! We simply have to receive.

#### B. The God Who Sees in Secret

- **Matthew 6:5-6, 16-18**
- God sees!! He sees us and every movement of our hearts!
- Hungering and Thirsting for Him
- **Matthew 5:6**
- God has made us in such a way that we work best when we are seeking Him whole-heartedly.
- Fasting and prayer don't earn us His presence, but they line us up to be able to walk in the grace and presence that He offers freely to us.

### III. Fasting

#### A. Fasting for the Bridegroom's return

- **Matthew 9:14-17**
- One of the main reasons we fast is to align our hearts with the Bridegroom's heart. He longs to come back and set up His kingdom here on earth, establish righteousness, and rule and reign with us, His Bride.
- If we have a proper view of who He is and the kingdom that He wants to establish here on the earth, this is the natural response in our hearts.
- Jesus went into heaven, and the apostles spent the rest of their lives trying to take the gospel to the ends of the earth so that He would come back!
- This is the heart of what many call the "Bridegroom Fast"

#### B. Personal Fasting

- **Matthew 5:3-4**
- Personal fasting is simply us seeing that we need to walk in more of God's grace for our lives, so we fast to position ourselves to do that.
- As we force ourselves to deny something that we want, it reminds us of what we are pursuing, and we can properly align our hearts back to where they should be.
- This is why fasting on a regular basis is such a gift from God.

#### C. Corporate Fasting

- **Joel 2:12-14**
- **Isaiah 58**
- Fasting corporately happens when we repent as a group before the Lord and invite Him to come and take first place again.
- Sabbath and link to fasting.
- The Lord established the Sabbath day as a day for us to refocus and line up with His grace. I believe that if we actually do this, the blessings that Isaiah talks about will begin to flow.
- I am not promoting legalism!

### IV. Prayer

#### A. Crying Out "*Come, Lord Jesus!*"

- **Matthew 6:10; Revelation 22:20**

- Just like with fasting, the bible talks about one of the main reasons that we pray is inviting the return of the Lord.
- As we see His will and heart, we begin to desire that here on earth.
- It is out of this place, many times, that evangelistic and missional movements are born. The two go together in a dynamic way.

#### B. Personal Prayer

- **Ephesians 1:17-19**
- Prayer is not something we do because we “should” do it. Prayer is meant to be something that we do because we want to.
- In this prayer, Paul invites the “Father of Glory” to give us more of the knowledge of who He is. This is the heart of prayer...growing in relationship with Him. If we don’t grow in relationship with Jesus, our prayer life will not move forward.

#### C. Corporate Prayer

- **Acts 2:1**
- The church as we know it today was birthed out of a corporate prayer meeting. They were together in one place waiting for what Christ had promised them.
- Throughout the rest of the book, we see they were constantly getting together to study the Word and pray. These two things are the backbone of the church.
- Christ has promised that where there are two or more gathered together in His name, He is with them.
- There is something dynamic that happens in the spiritual realm when you have people praying together in unity with the Lord’s heart.

#### D. Desperate Cries

- **Exodus 34:17**
- After all that Moses saw, like the parting of the Red Sea and the plagues on Egypt, he was still crying out to see God’s glory!
- In the same way, the Lord is Inviting us to seek him wholeheartedly.
- There needs to be an Intentional setting aside of time (prayer) and resources (fasting) to get our hearts in the position to receive from God.
- God honors hungry hearts. If we can position ourselves in a place of hunger, we are positioning to hear from God!
- We have an opportunity in His Spirit right now. There is an Invitation to dive into the knowledge of who He is. The question is, “*Who will cry out?!*”

#### E. Contending for the Spirit of Revelation

- If you want to grow in your life of prayer, the most important thing to do is ask God to reveal Himself to you.
- If you don't see who God is, you won't even desire for His plans and purposes to be fulfilled on the earth.
- The more you see Him, the more you will want him to fill your every moment and every circumstance.
- One of the best ways to grow in the grace of the Spirit of Revelation is meditation on who God is.

### Revelation 1. Read the descriptions of Jesus

- a. Faithful Witness
- b. Firstborn from the Dead
- c. Ruler of the Kings on Earth
- d. Him Who loves us and washed us from our sins by His own blood

#### F. Prayer Tips

- Follow Jesus' example of prayer. Keep it simple. God wants to hear what you have to say.
- The more you set aside time to pray (scheduled time), the more you will find yourself praying throughout the rest of the day.
- If you want to have a deep passion for something or someone, simply start praying regularly for them. Watch what happens.

#### G. Fasting Tips

- Fast regularly, but also feast (celebrate) regularly. This is a powerful combination.
- Figure out a way to keep your eyes focused on His grace and not your works.
- If you are fasting food, ease into your fast, especially if you are fasting for more than one day at a time.
- When you fast food, your body starts detoxing. Normally after day three, your body is done detoxing, your stomach shuts down, at which point it becomes a lot easier to keep going.
- Prayer is the fuel for a life of godliness. Mixed with a living knowledge of the Word, prayer has been and is still the catalyst for every great move of God in the world.

## Revelation 1-3: Jesus' Beauty

**Introduction:** As we enter into this series on the book of Revelation, I would like to do a couple things. **1.** I would like to fascinate your hearts with the beauty of Jesus so that it becomes your life-goal to simply find more of Him. **2.** I want to de-mystify the book of Revelation so that all of you can understand it and grow from it. **3.** I would like to remove the unhealthy fear of the end-times and have that replaced with the fear of the Lord.

### I. Purpose of the Vision

#### A. Revelation of Jesus Christ

1. The main purpose of this vision is the Revelation of Jesus Christ.
2. Jesus wants us to clearly understand who He is, specifically in the context of the end-times.
3. There is much that will happen in the end that could shake our faith, so Jesus wanted it to be absolutely clear to us how we can remain faithful: Love and devotion to Him.
4. We must see Him rightly if we want to remain in Him to the end.
5. It is very important, as we study this book, to not lose sight of Jesus in it. There are a lot of details about things that will happen, and we can easily lose sight of the Lord in the intensity of the book. If we do this, that is when stuff gets weird. If we keep our eyes focussed on Him (Heb. 12:2), however, we can see things much more clearly.
6. This vision is filled with the revelation of who Jesus really is. He is the same Jesus in Revelation as He is in the Gospels.
7. We must let the Word of God speak to us, not the other way around. If we try to insert our opinions of what God can and can't do into scripture, we fall into great danger.
8. As we look at this vision, there are many things that seem exaggerated to our little human minds, but we must remember that Jesus spoke the world into existence and it is upheld by the word of His power (Heb. 1:1-3). Don't let what you think can and can't happen get in the way of what God says will happen.
9. **We also must be seeing Jesus as beautiful and wonderful.** We have far too low of a picture of who He is, but if we let Him work in us, He will reveal Himself to us. He wants to fascinate our hearts with His beauty and glory, but He will not cast His pearls before swine (Matt. 7:6). We must seek for Him as

silver and search for Him as hidden treasure (Prov. 2:4-5; Matt. 7:7-12; 12:44-46)

## B. Revelation of Events that will happen before and during Jesus' Return

1. Much of this vision (chapters 6-19) deals<sup>10</sup> with what will happen before and during Jesus return to the earth.
2. Jesus did this for a reason. We are called, as His Bride, to partner with Him in what He is doing. One of the main way we are called into this is through prayer.
3. In this vision, Jesus tells the church what will happen in sequential order. In doing this, he gives us a prayer guide for the end-times. This way all Christians around the world, when they see these events happening, can unite in prayer.
4. For example, when the third seal (Rev. 6:5-6(famine)) is happening, we can begin to pray for the fourth seal. In this way, Jesus is partnering with His church in His work.
5. However, I don't believe we are there yet, so for now we should pray for God's mercy on the earth until we, as the church (not just you personally) hear different from God.
6. One thing to remember as we look at the events that will happen is that Jesus gave this vision to John and us that we would be able to make sense of the craziness of the end-times. Jesus did not give these things to us symbolically, unless it is stated in the vision (i.e. Rev. 1:20). We are to take these events literally unless stated otherwise. This will remove much of the confusion that many have had about this book and what is described in it.

## C. Revelation to Purify His Bride

1. Jesus is not coming back to receive a half-hearted bride to Himself.
2. There are many things in this vision that are meant for the purification of His bride (especially chapters 2-3). They were valid for those they were written to, but I believe they are still very valid today.
3. The glory of the Gospel (and this is true for Revelation, too) is that we are not only told what to do, but we are given the grace to do it through the Lord our Righteousness. We must understand that we are not simply conforming to a set of rules, but are submitting ourselves to the Lord and letting Him be our

righteousness. As we pursue relationship with Him, Jesus purifies us so that we can experience more of His glory and beauty.

## II. Revelation 1-3 -- Jealous for His Bride

### A. Revelation 1 -- Introduction to Jesus

1. Rev. 1:1-3 Introduction into the vision
2. Rev. 1:4-20 Jesus is Glorious!
  - a) In this section, there are so many different revelations of Jesus beauty. In verses 5-8, there are **nine** different descriptions of Him. Then from verses 13-19, there are **thirteen** more.
  - b) Jesus Christ **the faithful witness**: Jesus was and is faithful to tell us all the things the Father is saying to us, in word and deed (Jn 14:9-11; 17:4-8). There is not one time where He doesn't tell us something because He thinks it will hurt our feelings. He is the image of God (Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3), meaning that He does not deviate at all from God's emotions, words, actions, thoughts, or anything else. As John wrote, "If you have seen (Jesus), you have seen the Father."
  - c) Jesus Christ **the firstborn from the dead**: 1 Cor 15:20 gives a little more definition to this. It says that because Adam brought death, Jesus brought life and resurrection. Because He is the firstborn from the dead, this gives us hope that we will rise again with Him when He comes for us (1 Thess. 4:15-18; 1 Cor. 15:50-52).
  - d) Jesus Christ **the ruler over the kings of the earth**: Jesus is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords (Rev. 19:16; 1 Tim. 6:15). This title is very self-explanatory. Jesus is the king over all the kings of the earth (ex. Is. 44 and 45 about Cyrus) and Lord over every ruler of the earth. All the rich and powerful people, whether they know it or not, are subject to Him and He will use them in His plan.
  - e) Him **who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood**: John 13:1 makes it very clear the type of love that Jesus has for His followers. It says that "He loved them to the end." This includes Judas who was already set on betraying Him. Jesus love for us is much more intense than we can realize. He is not being over-dramatic when He associates Himself with things like being the "**Lion** of the tribe of Judah" (Rev. 5:5), or saying in James that the "Spirit...yearns jealously" (James 4:5). God's judgment on sin is more severe than we understand, but He loved us so much that He was willing to take that punishment on Himself so that we could have the right to be with Him.
  - f) He has **made us kings and priests to His God and Father**: This shows us more of the depth of His love for us. Not only did he forgive us from our sin against Him, He cleanses us and gives us an indescribable position

in His kingdom! This kind of love is remarkable! Nobody else loves like this! He alone is worthy of praise and honor, glory and power! He alone deserves our attention and affection! There is no one like our God!!!!

- g) Jesus is the **Alpha and Omega**: Alpha and Omega are respectively the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. By this, Jesus is saying that He is the **First and the Last**. He was before all, and He is the reason we will all be living forever. We certainly won't out-live Him!
- h) He is the **Beginning and the End**: Not only is He the first and the last, He is the beginning and the end. Without Him, there would have been no beginning for us, and if He was no longer, there would be no end for us.
- i) Him **who is and who was and who is to come**: This is even further clarification of His eternity. Not only is He in the beginning and the end, but He is all the way through the middle of everything. He is in the midst of our lives, intricately involved in all that happens on the earth. He rejoices with the good things and grieves over the bad, but in no way does He violate our free will. He wants us to worship Him, not robotically tell Him that He is good.
- j) Jesus is **the Almighty**: Jesus is fully God. He is not the same being as the Father, but He is just as much God as the Father is. Jesus Himself said that the Father is greater than He is, but that doesn't take away from the fact that He is fully God. He is one with God, not the same as God, but is still fully God. He is also fully man. Being fully God and fully man, Jesus possesses all power. No created being or thing has any power unless it is given to him or it by the Lord Jesus. In the end, everything will be Christ's so that He can present all things to the Father that God would be glorified in everything (1 Cor. 15:28).
- k) The **Loud voice as of a trumpet**: Signifies Jesus authority and parallels with God's voice when He gave the Israelites the ten commandments (Ex. 20:18).
- l) Jesus continues to emphasize His eternity by calling Himself the **First and the Last**. Don't think you already know this just because He said it before. We (including myself) know so little about Him, but there is so much to know and we could spend far more time on each of these and still just be scratching the surface.
- m) Jesus is the **One like the Son of Man**. This parallels Daniel 7, and is a term which Jesus used much of Himself in the gospels. It speaks of Jesus kingdom and throne on which He will reign forever and ever. It also speaks of the reach of His kingdom, which Daniel 7:14 says will include "all peoples, nations and languages".
- n) He **walks in the midst of the seven lampstands**: Jesus is right in the middle of the Church. He knows what is happening in our services. He



knows the areas that we do well in, and is grateful for them. He also knows the areas in which we lack and is zealous to lead us in His ways.

- o) He was **clothed in a garment down to the feet**: Many scholars say that this is talking about Jesus as our High Priest. He is not distant from us, but is sympathetic and knows our situations, our weaknesses, and will give us the strength to be strong.
- p) He is **girded about the chest with a golden band**: The golden band was also worn by the High Priest (Ex. 28; Lev. 8). Jesus is our intercessor before the Father. He is our atonement and our righteousness before God! When we deserve the worst, He takes that punishment for us and gives us the best that we don't deserve!! How awesome is our God!!!
- q) Jesus' **head and hair were white like wool**: Compare to Daniel 7:9-10, Jesus is described just like the Father is there. This emphasizes Jesus unity with the Father (Deut. 6:4), His eternity, His wisdom, power and authority.
- r) Jesus' **eyes (are) like a flame of fire**: I think this continues the parallel from Daniel 7:9-10, and speaks of His zeal. His gaze is fixed on us being His people in purity and righteousness, devoted to Him in whole-heartedness.
- s) Jesus' **feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace**: This speaks of His authority to judge the nations and the purity and righteousness in which He will do that. Jesus will judge the nations severely (Psalm 2:9; Psalm 110:5-7), but will do it in purity of heart and mind, seeking to honor the Father through it.
- t) Jesus; **voice (is) as the sound of many waters**: He speaks in a beautiful and powerful way, with very much authority. He commands the armies of heaven by His voice (Joel 2:11).
- u) Jesus **had in His right hand seven stars**: Rev. 1:20 says that the seven stars means the seven angels (greek word for messengers) of the seven churches. This could be an angel or it could be a human messenger. I tend to believe its a human messenger.
- v) Out of Jesus' **mouth went a sharp two-edged sword**: This speaks of His judgment over all peoples and nations. 2 Thess. 2:8 speaks of Jesus destroying the Anti-christ with the breath of His mouth. Again, in His judgment, He does not change who He is. He judges with perfect purity and righteousness.
- w) Jesus' **countenance was like the sun shining in its strength**: 2 Thess. 2:8 also speaks of Jesus destroying the Anti-christ with the brightness of His coming. Isaiah 30:26 says that the moon will shine like the sun and the sun will be seven times stronger, but then in 60:19 it says that the Lord will be our light. This is how bright Jesus is in His coming. The sun will

be seven times brighter, but Jesus will out-shine it and He will be our light.

### 3. John's commissioning from Jesus (1:17-20)

- a) Jesus' Tenderness: I think the thing that strikes my heart the most is Jesus' tenderness with John. This One who has glory beyond measure, when John falls at His feet because of lack of strength to even stand, He tenderly puts His hand on John and speaks to Him with kindness! Our God is so tender and kind, but at the same time so glorious and just! Judgment burns in His heart, but mercy triumphs over judgment in Him (James 2:13).
- b) Jesus reveals even more about Himself in this section. He says, **I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore**: This is an obvious reference to His resurrection and His eternity. Jesus is not dead, but fully alive and living right now. He is not simply some fairy tale, He is a real man and is alive right now at the right hand of the Father.
- c) Jesus also has **the keys of Hades and of death**: Nothing holds Him down from doing what He wants to do. Death can't even hold Him down. We can fully trust His leadership because nothing can stop His plan.
- d) Verse 19 is John's commissioning to write down what He sees, what he's already seen and the things that he will see in the rest of the vision.
- e) Jesus explains the symbolism of the lampstands and the stars.

## B. The Letters to the Seven Churches (Rev. 2-3)

- 1. In Revelation 2 and 3, Jesus dictates seven letters, one to each of the seven churches.
- 2. These letters each have a general pattern.
  - a) First Jesus would begin with a Greeting to the specific church and introduce Himself by one or more of the descriptions of Himself from earlier in the letter. These descriptions are specific to each church for a reason that He would describe in the rest of the letter to that church, not just randomly.
  - b) He would then talk about the Good things they were doing, letting them know that He is deeply touched by their faithfulness in those things.
  - c) He then talks about something Bad He has against that church (in five of the seven letters) and gives an Exhortation on how to repent and correct the issue.
  - d) Finally, He promises each church a Reward for overcoming. Each church is offered a different reward, and I believe that they are a specific incentive to overcome what Jesus told them to. However, Jesus addresses

each reward to “the churches”, so I believe that all who overcome with receive all the rewards.

### 3. Church of Ephesus

- a) Greeting: He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands.
- b) Good: Works, labor, patience, cannot bear those who are evil, have tested false apostles and proven them liars, perseverance, labored for Christ’s sake and have not become weary.
- c) Bad: They left their first love.
- d) Exhortation: Remember from where you have fallen, Repent and do the things you used to do
- e) Reward: They will eat from the tree of life.
- f) The church of Ephesus has a lot going for them, and at this time was the major church. Jerusalem was destroyed, so the Ephesian Church was now the head. They were doing a lot of good, but they were missing on the one thing that God really desires from us, which is love. Jesus warned them severely because He knew the effect that works-based religion can have on humans. He wanted their hearts, not just their works. The reward for overcoming by walking in Love is that you get to enjoy the beauty of God forever (Gen. 3:22-23).

### 4. Church of Smyrna

- a) Greeting: The First and the Last, who was dead and came to life.
- b) Good: Works, tribulation, poverty (but rich in God’s kingdom). Jesus also saw the trouble they were getting from the local Jews (or so they called themselves).
- c) Bad: None
- d) Encouragement: Do not fear suffering, be faithful until death and you will receive the crown of life
- e) Reward: Will not be hurt by the second death.
- f) Smyrna was much smaller than Ephesus, and wasn’t in the limelight as much, but Jesus had nothing bad to say about them. He only spoke encouragement to them. We can learn from this. Just because a church is big and seems to have much impact doesn’t mean they aren’t doing

anything wrong. A church's size doesn't mean that it is doing well or poorly. Jesus looks at everything, but especially the heart.

#### 5. Church of Pergamos

- a) Greeting: He who has the sharp two-edged sword.
- b) Good: Works, even though they live where Satan's throne is. They hold fast to Jesus' name and didn't deny the faith.
- c) Bad: Doctrine of Balaam, Doctrine of the Nicolaitans. If they would not repent of these, Jesus would come and fight against them.
- d) Exhortation: Repent
- e) Reward: They will partake of the hidden manna, they will get a white stone with a new name that only the recipient and Jesus would know.
- f) Pergamos was a city in which a few different gods were worshipped. Zeus was believed to be worshipped there, which may be why Satan's throne was there. There were faithful people in this church, but many were deceived in false doctrines. These doctrines were so serious that Jesus would actually come and fight against them if they didn't repent.

#### 6. Church of Thyatira

- a) Greeting: The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass
- b) Good: Works (Doing more for the Lord as time progresses), love, service, faith and patience.
- c) Bad: Allowing Jezebel to teach and seduce people into committing sexual immorality and eating food sacrificed to idols (i.e. participating in idol worship).
- d) Exhortation: Repent
- e) Reward: Power over nations (ruling with Christ), the morning star [Jesus Himself (Numbers 24:17; Rev. 22:16)].
- f) This shows us the zeal of God for His people. This woman, Jezebel, was a self-acclaimed prophetess and was teaching people that it is okay to be immoral and to participate in idol worship. The Lord wanted none of that, but notice that He was even fair to her. He gave her time to repent, but she didn't.
- g) We also have to deal with this jealous side of the Lord in our hearts. He said that he was going to cast her into a sickbed (make her really sick),

bring tribulation for those committing adultery with her (if they don't repent), and He will kill her children with death.

- h) Jesus is the One who searches the minds and hearts of His people. He knows all that is going on in our hearts at all times. He knows our motives, and He isn't about to let secret sin ruin our relationship with Him. He wants everything in our lives; heart, soul, mind and strength.

#### 7. Church of Sardis

- a) Greeting: He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars (in his right hand).
- b) Good: A few people have not defiled their garments (they're living in righteousness).
- c) Bad: Had a name that they were alive, but were really dead on the inside.
- d) Encouragement: Be watchful, strengthen the things which remain. Remember how you have received and heard, hold fast and repent.
- e) Reward: Clothed in white garments and his name will not be blotted out of the Book of Life, but Christ will confess his name before all of heaven.
- f) The Church of Sardis didn't have much good going on, but notice that Jesus loves them enough to warn them and give them time to repent!

Even when we aren't doing much right, God still loves His children and will lead us back to Himself with His chastening.

8. Church of Philadelphia

- a) Greeting: He who is holy, He who is true, He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens
- b) Good: Works, still have a little strength, kept God's Word and haven't denied Christ's name
- c) Bad: None
- d) Encouragement: Open Door, Hold fast to what you have, don't let anyone steal your crown (reward)
- e) Reward: He will be a pillar in the temple of God, who will never have to leave, will receive the name of God, Jesus Christ's new name and the name of the New Jerusalem written on them.

9. Church of Laodicea

- a) Greeting: The Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God (The One who spoke it into existence (Heb. 1:2-3; John 1:1-3))
- b) Good: None
- c) Bad: Lukewarm faith and love, rich in material things but poor in heavenly things
- d) Exhortation: Buy heavenly riches from Christ, and get healing for your spiritual eyes. Jesus rebukes and chastens those that He loves. Be zealous and repent. Anyone who opens to Christ will have fellowship with Him.
- e) Reward: Sitting with Christ on His throne.

### III. Conclusion

- A. Jesus is the most unique and beautiful Man (who happens to be God) that there ever was, is and will be.
- B. This Beautiful Jesus is intensely zealous for His Church (us) and will go to great lengths to have a pure and spotless Bride.
- C. Ministry Time: Anyone who is wanting to know Jesus more in the ways that Scripture describes Him, and anyone who has not believed in Jesus as the Lord of their life and their Savior.