

*“No man is greater than his prayer life. The pastor who is not praying is playing; the people who are not praying are straying. We have many organizers, but few agonizers; many players and payers, few pray-ers; many singers, few clingers; lots of pastors, few wrestlers; many fears, few tears; much fashion, little passion; many interferers, few intercessors; many writers, but few fighters. Failing here, we fail everywhere.” – Leonard Ravenhill*

*“How do you learn to pray? (Well), how do you learn to swim? Do you sit in a chair with your feet up drinking coke learning to swim? (No), you get down and you struggle. That's how you learn to pray. Prayer is our strength; Prayer generates strength; it generates vision; it generates power; and the devil will drive you away from the prayer closet more than anything.” – Leonard Ravenhill*

*“The man who can get believers to praying would, under God, usher in the greatest revival that the world has ever known.” – Leonard Ravenhill*

*“I would rather teach one man to pray than ten men to preach.” – Charles Spurgeon*

*\*You go deeper when you go together.*

- I. The Narrative of God's Desire for a Dwelling Place Among His People.
  - A. **Genesis 2:15** *“Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.”*
    - 1. Those two Hebrew words “**tend**” and “**keep**;” (**abad** [H5647](#) and **shamar** [H8104](#)) are sometimes translated elsewhere as “minister and serve.” In all the Hebrew scriptures, whenever these two words are used within 15 spaces of each other they are always used in context either to worship or to the priests ministering to the Lord in the tabernacle. This is profound! From the beginning God created Man as a priest! He made man for communion with Himself! But it doesn't stop there, He created woman and said to them “be fruitful and multiply!” Here we see an eternal desire within

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God the Father to be enjoyed by a family (**Eph 3:14-15**) and that this family would enjoy Him “together” (**Eph 3:18**).

- B. In **2 Samuel 7**, King David tells the prophet Nathan that He wants to build for the Lord a house to dwell in and rest in permanently. In all of scripture I’ve never seen God respond so lavishly to a man’s extravagant devotion.
  - 1. The Lord tells David in **V. 5** “*would you build a house for Me to dwell in?*” As if to say, would you really do that for Me?
  - 2. In **V. 7** The Lord says to David “*when have I ever told anyone to do that for Me?*” I believe that David got caught up into the eternal desire of God to dwell in the midst of His people.
    - a. Corey Russell says “David learned God’s love language!” In the passage God goes on to tell David that he, himself would not build this house but that the Messiah would come through David’s lineage and that Jesus would be the one to ultimately build this house in a permanent sense. But think about how David so moved the heart of God that the Lord would tell David, in essence, “My Son will become your son!”
    - b. And Jesus will forever be called “the Son of David” and He will come and rule from the City of David, sit on the throne of David, and build the Tabernacle of David. God has written David’s name into eternity in a unique way because he got ahold of God’s longing to dwell in the midst of His people!
- C. In **John 17**, we see the son praying the eternal longing of His heart to the Father. In **Verse 24** he prays:

*“Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. (John 17:24)*

  - 1. That His people would be near Him, behold His glory, and share the same love between the Father and the Son (**V. 26**)

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- D. The story began with God's desire for communion with His people and that is how it ends (**Revelation 21:2-3**)

*"Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God."* (**Revelation 21:2-3**)

- 1. What is the dream of God's heart? **Isaiah 40:5**, that we would enjoy Him as we enjoy each other forever.
- E. As believers throughout history have prayed and continue praying the prayer that Jesus taught us to pray "*Your kingdom come Your will be done ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN*," redemptive history moves forward to the day when God will answer this prayer fully (**Eph 1:9-10**)!

## II. In Prayer, our Hearts Turn Toward One Another!

- A. **Matt 6:9:** "*Our Father*" – He is not just my Father, He is our Father! The purpose of prayer is to connect with the Father, but as we do we also bring the family before Him in prayer. When we do this, our hearts become tender to have real affection for one another in a culture of honor as we rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. (**Rom 12:10, 15**)
  - 1. This is why Jesus teaches us to "pray for those who persecute you" (**Matt 5:44**), because when we pray for someone our heart turns toward them in a dynamic way!
- B. This is why true spiritual community cannot be produced merely by doing things together, it must be produced in the furnace of prayer! A spiritual community is a praying community!

## III. The Prayer Meeting

- A. **Matt 18:18-20:** God, in His wisdom and in His eternal desire for community "*knit together in love*", reserved a measure of authority and power in prayer for the place of corporate prayer where we pull on heaven together and faith is built! Prayer meetings are not a

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spectator sport. Prayers both short and long are released out loud so that we can all own it, making it our own prayer. This is real agreement in faith!

1. *“Our prayers leave our mouths in weakness, but ascend before the throne in power because of the blood of Jesus” – Mike Bickle*

2. All prayer (whether we feel the weight of it or not and regardless of length or eloquence) is filling the bowels of heaven waiting to accumulate and be poured out as God realizes His sovereign purposes in the earth. (**Rev 5:8-10, Rev 8:3-5**)

B. Corporate prayer meetings were a regular, even daily practice of the early Church: **Acts 1:14, 2:1, 2:42, 2:46, 3:14:23-31, 5:12, 6:4, 12:5, 12:12, 13:1-3, 16:13, 16:16, 16:25**

1. *“Sunday morning attendance shows how popular the church is, Sunday night or midweek service shows how popular the pastor is, but attendance at the prayer meeting shows how popular God is.” – Leonard Ravenhill*

2. *“I want to see something that God builds. I want to find some people so hungry for God that every night they want to pray; (and find) where there's intercession! We're not going to move America any other way” – Leonard Ravenhill*

3. *“No church is going to have a revival with (only) one prayer meeting a week.” – Leonard Ravenhill*

#### IV. Shaping History

A. Corporate prayer and fasting and “the hinge of history”

1. **Joel 2:12-17:** When there is no human remedy left for the ailment of a nation, there is one holy prescription! That the people of God would no longer be content with business as usual. . . Consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly, gather the people to minister to the Lord and weep before Him in prayer. To rend our hearts and turn to God with fasting and weeping.

2. There are moments where everything hangs in the balance and like in the days of Esther a corporate fast turns out for the deliverance of a nation! This is the hinge of History.

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B. When God is on the verge of dramatically breaking into history, He precedes that breaking in by a movement of corporate prayer and fasting.

1. Consider this: What did God do before the most defining season thus far of all redemptive history (the First Advent of Christ)?
  - a. He raised up Simeon, a man of prophetic insight who waited on the Lord as the Holy Spirit was upon Him until he saw the promised Messiah of Israel (**Luke 2:25-35**).
  - b. He Raised up Anna, a prophetess and the “first evangelist in the New Testament,” who embodied day and night prayer with a lifestyle of fasting as she ministered to the Lord (**Luke 2:36-38**).
  - c. He raised up John the Baptist as a forerunner to pave the way for the ministry of Jesus through prayer and fasting as John also taught his disciples to pray and fast (**Luke 1:17**).
2. When God is on the move He sets his people to the work of prayer and I believe that nothing less than the greatest and widest movement of prayer will span the globe before the second coming of Christ.

### C. The Dignity of Corporate Prayer

1. Within the relational dynamics of the Trinity, at the risk of over-simplifying, The Father wills or initiates (**John 5:30**), The Son speaks (**John 1:1-3, Genesis 1:3**) and the Holy Spirit moves (**John 15:26, Genesis 1:2**).
2. The privilege and dignity of prayer is that you get to speak and the Holy Spirit moves! You’ve been invited into the family dynamics of the Trinity. You’ve been joined to Christ (**1 Cor 6:17**) and you get to relate to the Father and the Holy Spirit the way that Jesus does!
3. In corporate prayer and in sharing burdens of prayer with each other, you get to share the dignity of prayer with each other.