

Pastor Issues Urgent Challenge to Church for the 10 Days Leading to Pentecost

What if we would commit to a corporate focus on the Lord, as they did in Jerusalem the 10 days from ascension to Pentecost?

What if the Lord came upon us in a suddenly moment as He did then, 2,000 years ago?

Gathering at the Appointed Mountain

Whenever I read Matthew 28:16-20, I am reminded of the importance of worship without any personal agenda except simply worshipping the Lord. Verses 16-17 tell us that, after the resurrection, the 11 disciples went to the mountain that Jesus had appointed to them, and when they saw Him, they *worshipped Him*.

Jesus spoke to them in that place and said, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:18b). He then imparts that authority to them in what we call the Great Commission.

2 Chronicles 5:11-14 and Isaiah 6 are also reminders of what happens when we are in the presence of the Lord. There is something about the authenticity of worship without personal agenda or preference that equalizes us in the presence of our holy, holy, holy God. And in the place of true worship, He is able to impart to us His manifest presence, wisdom, commissioning, and authority.

It Begins With an Invitation

After the crucifixion and Resurrection, Jesus appeared to two disciples who were walking on the road to Emmaus and talking about what had just transpired. These disciples had spent over

three years with Jesus, yet they did not recognize Him when he walked by their side. The betrayal, beating and crucifixion of Him was so far from their conception and expectation that they could not see clearly. They did not have an understanding or revelation of what Jesus had told them during their communion together at the Last Supper. Disappointed, distracted and confused, they were going back to business as usual.

As they walked along, Jesus began to expound the Scriptures to them. Though they still did not know it was Him, their hearts burned within them and they begged Him to stay. "'Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent'" (Luke 24:29b, NKJV).

That is the invitation!

When we're disappointed and in despair, when we don't recognize what He's doing in our very midst, we still long for Him and seek His presence. Like the Shulamite in Song of Solomon, we may be sleeping, but our hearts are still awake. We roam the streets and tell all we see, "When you see Him, tell Him I am faint with love! Tell Him I'm lovesick!"

The disciples had been discussing the things of God and all the things that had just taken place, even how some people were saying Jesus was resurrected. Their hearts and their focus were in the right place. But we can sometimes be so busy discussing the things of God that we can miss the moments of His presence. Don't miss the moment by discussing the circumstances rather than focusing on His promises.

"Did not our hearts burn within us?" they ask themselves later (Luke 24:32b, MEV). Our hearts burn within us when God's presence abides in us. There's a longing that cannot be satisfied. *His abiding presence causes our hunger level to arise and gives us a passion that cannot be quenched.*

Do we want God's presence as an invited guest, or do we want His abiding presence? Do we want Him just for the "warm

fuzzies” or do we want Him to move in, transform the walls of our hearts and rearrange the furniture of our lives so He can prepare us to walk in the destinies He already desires for us?

God has a desire for my life and for yours, a desire for this generation, to be more than just status quo Christians. And it all begins with an invitation for Him to abide.

Invitation Leads to Revelation

In Luke 24:30-31, Jesus accepts the disciples’ invitation and breaks bread with them.

“As He sat at supper with them, He took the bread, blessed it and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him. And He vanished out of their sight.”

Once again, He had Communion with them. But this time—unlike the Last Supper—their eyes were opened! They now had a fuller revelation of who He really was, and they knew Him! They had a revelation that they did not understand before—that the only thing that mattered now was the manifest presence of God, Himself. They now understood that Jesus, Himself, is the fullness of the godhead, and He wants us to be the fullness of the godhead bodily.

That’s revelation!

Their eyes were open. No longer did they walk in confusion, discouragement or distraction. Now they walked in light and with hope.

Sometimes we have to get out of the box of our normal ways of thinking and spend intentional, intimate time in His presence so we can see from His perspective.

Revelation Leads to Expectation, Transformation and Reformation

Later, at the end of Luke 24, as Jesus prepares for His ascent to heaven, He tells the disciples, “wait in the city of Jerusalem until you are clothed with power from on high. ... They worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy” (Luke 24:49b, 52).

On the road to Emmaus, the disciples were sad. They had lost their vision of hope. But now they had a promise of God!

That's expectation!

When God gives us a promise, we walk in faith. The disciples on their way to Emmaus were distracted because of the circumstances. We cannot put our hope in circumstances or in people; we must find our hope in the Lord!

Sometimes we get caught up in the whirlwind of what God is doing—and sometimes we get the wind knocked out of us! But we get a new perspective by coming into God's presence and remembering the work of the cross and the power of the Resurrection, which remind us and direct us toward the hope and expectation of Pentecost.

“Suddenly a sound like a mighty rushing wind came from heaven, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting” (Acts 2:2).

In obedience, the disciples tarried in the upper room, praising God and worshipping, putting everything else aside. Then the outpouring of the Holy Spirit came, and the church was birthed.

That's transformation!

In Acts 6, the church appoints believers to minister their gift of service as the body goes forth in power, spreading the hope of the gospel throughout the world.

“Look among yourselves for seven men who are known to be full of the Holy Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint over

this duty" (Acts 6:3).

That's reformation!

When we become part of something bigger than ourselves and move together with a common vision, we impact nations and the world sees that God is up to something.

In review we see the following:

–Our *invitation* (Luke 24:29) leads to communion with God and the *revelation* of who He is and what He's doing (Luke 24:30-31).

–*Revelation* leads to *expectation*, as He reveals to us His promises and His plans (Luke 24:49-51).

–*Expectation* leads to *transformation*, as we place our hope in Him and worship Him (Acts 2).

–*Transformation* of individuals, churches and communities leads to an entire *reformation* of how the world sees God as His bride rises and shines, serving those in need especially during times of calamity and uncertainty (Acts 6).

Abiding Is the Key

Some scientists say that when we speak a word, the sound wave that carries it never ends. Likewise, I believe that all the words spoken by all the prophets throughout the generations and all the visions of old are culminating in the events of our lifetime. And as the church continues to rise in the midst of the darkness, the light will get lighter, and we will see an outpouring of God's Spirit like we have never seen.

But we must remember, the key to it all is abiding—abiding in His presence!

What would happen if literally millions of believers around the world grasped this, imbibed it and walked it out in their

lives? If we put aside our busy-ness and all the things that distract us; if we set aside the time to tarry in our Jerusalems, worshipping Him and praising Him and thanking Him, then following in obedience the instruction given to us by revelation; what would happen?

Our programs, events and seminars are all good things. But these man-made efforts are not working. They are miniscule in comparison to God, Himself, the one who gives those things. Our wisdom and efforts and ideas—which are wonderful gifts from God—are less effective at best, and ineffective at worst, when they are not empowered by the Holy Spirit, and when they are not blessed by and immersed in the fruitfulness of His presence.

In times of calamity and uncertainty, the only answer is attracting God's presence so that we can be empowered to be and do all that He calls us to do, for such a time as this. We need the Prince of Peace returned to His throne, and it starts with His church. His abiding presence is where His glory dwells. And where glory dwells, darkness is dispelled! Our need for and dependence on God are more evident than ever.

How do we tap into this power? How do we live our lives and minister in the power of His presence? It begins with the simple invitation: "Lord, abide with us."

We need to maintain the manifest presence of God by being intentional in our place of prayer. It's not just about praying in public venues and stadiums—those things are good, but they should be an outcome of what's already going on in our private prayer closets. We can wax eloquent in public, but if our hearts are not where they need to be in private, our prayers are powerless.

We need His presence in private so He is with us everywhere we go. We need to be in communication with God—we need to dialogue with Him, not just monologuing and telling Him what

we need and what we want Him to do. He's not our sugar daddy in the sky. In that place of intimate interaction, He gives us a new sense of purpose and expectation. He renews our passion.

The enemy might try his tactics, but we know who is on the throne. He's still the King of kings and He's still the Lord of lords.

Our Yada Moment

One day I was at my office, and I couldn't understand why every few moments I felt like weeping. The Lord reminded me that many of us are carrying a burden; like Jeremiah, we are weeping over the state of this nation. God allows us to experience these moments so that we know what's on His heart. And because we know the Lord, we are uniquely equipped to have spiritual authority when we pray.

Daniel 11:32b says, "But the people who know (*yada*) their God will be strong and take action." The New King James Version says they will "do exploits."

Our generation has lost the reverential fear of the Lord. Too often we come before Him casually and haphazardly. We need to get back to that place of an interactive, authentic knowing God—that place of intimate fellowship—so that we can experience His power.

In Philippians 3:10, Paul says he wants, "to know (*ginosko*) Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings [or passions], being conformed to His death."

How can we have the power that breaks through without knowing Him or the passions of His heart? Our own intellect, abilities and giftedness are not going to change the circumstances around us. But the power of the Resurrection in us, the hope of Glory, can!

Earlier we saw how, in Luke 24, after the disciples' eyes were

opened to Jesus, they were no longer sad. They had a sense of revelation and expectation in the midst of a world that was a mess. They knew something was up. He manifested again before He ascended, and said in Luke 24:49 (NKJV) to “tarry.”

There's a season for tarrying.

Let us shut out the outside noise and set aside time to experience the manifest presence of God through common adoration and worship, where there are no agendas of man but only the agenda of the Lord.

” When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like a mighty rushing wind came from heaven, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. There appeared to them tongues as of fire, being distributed and resting on each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to speak” (Acts 2:1-4).

Have you ever been “wowed” by God like that—those times when God does something and you feel a fresh, renewed hunger for His presence and His Word? We need those moments like never before! We need a “yada moment” that takes us back to our first love and reminds us of His promises so we can walk in the anointing and power He has granted.

Let this Pentecost season be our “yada moment” so we may walk in the authority and the power of the Holy Spirit, and with a right attitude.

Lord, we long for Your presence. Abide in our lives. Abide in our families. Abide in our churches. Abide in our cities. Give us a passion for your presence, to know You and to make you known. And as we abide, bring us fresh revelation of who You are and what You are doing. Reveal your promises where we can place our hope and our expectations. And bring lasting transformation and reformation, that we may be a light in the darkness for a world in desperate need!

Challenge

Will you commit to set aside extra time each day, now through Pentecost Sunday, May 31, to focus on and worship God alone? Invite Him to abide with you and see what He will do! *What if?*
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