

What Is the True Meaning of ‘Presence-Centered’ Worship?

Leaders of houses of prayer—like the Lord Jesus called His Father’s—use the words “presence-centered” to describe worship, children’s ministry, praise, thanksgiving, tithing, preaching, small-groups, really all activities including intercession in their meeting spaces.

But not all those activities are presence-centered.

The term “presence-centered,” as it relates to modern houses of prayer, has been around for about a decade.

But God’s presence with man and woman, created in His image, begins in the Garden of Eden, moves to the wilderness, fills the tabernacle of David and indwells New Testament believers.

Today, the International House of Prayer Kansas City, founded by Pastor Mike Bickle, is widely known among Spirit-led believers, including people aligned with similar, smaller groups worldwide.

Three leaders of houses of prayer—R.A. Martinez of MAPS Global, Billy Humphrey of GateCity, and Michael and Lorisa Miller of UPPERRROOM—answered questions and explained the term presence centered during a week-long gathering of missionaries, intercessors and worshippers in Richmond, Virginia.

“The way we say it here at MAPS is that the family talks to God more than to each other, and we sing to Him more than we say anything else,” Martinez said at AG23. “Centered for us means that there’s a rhythm of life that orbits around the person of Jesus Christ.”

MAPS Global describes itself as missional family that exists

to pray, preach and sing in unreached regions until the nations see the worth of Jesus Christ and the Great Commission fulfilled.

“Presence-centered, prayer-based” is how Humphrey described worship-based prayer meetings at GateCity Church and House of Prayer in Atlanta.

“The centerpiece is a prayer meeting that’s worship-led and irreplaceable. You don’t move it for the Christmas cantata or the Easter special,” he said.

Whatever the activity—ministering to children or singing songs at UPPERRROOM in Dallas—one thing matters:

“For us I’d say that the presence of God is the goal,” said Lorisa Miller. “His manifest presence.”

The leaders, asked where in the Bible the idea “presence-centered” is revealed, pointed to Old and New Testaments, beginning with Genesis.

“Eden was designed to give Adam and Eve a home. Anytime a deity would have begun designing or something in that Near-Middle-East context, it was building something its own,” Michael Miller said.

Whether a garden, wilderness or tabernacle or church, God desires to meet with His people.

“I think we’ve gotten the center of what we do in church really off,” Humphrey said. “We’ve made church a building, with focus on what’s going on a platform.

“But church, we understand, is people gathered around God,” he added. “That’s what it was in the wilderness and in the New Testament. I believe we’re in a reformation now.”

He said Michael and Lorisa Millier pioneered UPPERRROOM in a challenging area of Dallas, where they sold out to engaging

the heart of God in worship.

Thanksgiving and praise are central to any conversation about God's presence, which attracted some of UPPERROOM's neighbors.

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"We launched in the homosexual district of our city, and we started to gain headway with that community," Miller said.

"In the evangelical world I was getting a lot of phone calls like, 'Hey, what's the key here? You've cracked the code, more or less.'"

He read Romans 1, which speaks of people who have exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshipped the created instead of the creator; and men who exchanged natural relations with women for men. Romans 1:21 says even though they knew God, they did not honor Him or give thanks.

✘ "But the Lord said if you come back and do what they didn't do—which was to honor and give me thanks—your thanksgiving will break the curse," Miller said.

In Revelation 4:8, the four living creatures are before the Lord giving Him worship, honor and thanks. What they didn't do in Romans 1, they're doing in Revelation 4, Miller pointed out.

"God said, 'If you'll establish this culture, it will reverse the curse.'"

"I've seen more homosexuals transformed, not by a sermon or an argument, but by walking into an atmosphere where thanksgiving and praise is central," Miller said.

Honor, glorify and love God by learning to dwell in His presence, as R.T. Kendall writes in his book, The Presence of

God. {eoa}

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