

What God Calls His House

Why the church must understand its eternal identity as a House of Prayer

The eternal destiny of all God's people is to function as a house of prayer now and in the age to come. Our greatest place of authority, honor, dignity and security is found in this reality. This wasn't man's idea but God's. His concern is not about us having more prayer meetings (as good as that might be) but about establishing a prayer culture in the body of Christ.

In one short statement, Jesus revealed the eternal identity and destiny of His people. Matthew 21:13 records His prophetic declaration: "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer.'" Isaiah also spoke this decree when he prophesied to Israel: "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations" (Is. 56:7).

When God calls us by a name, it indicates our character and how we are to function in the Holy Spirit. What, then, does it mean to be a house of prayer? It means that God speaks to us and moves our hearts; then we speak those very words back to Him and it moves His heart.

The result is that God's resources are released into the earthly realm. God's resources include His power, money, wisdom, creative ideas, unity and favor in ministry. Yes, this exchange is the foundational principle of prayer: God speaks and moves our hearts; then we speak and move His heart. That is how God's family will operate forever.

But the "house of prayer" isn't just one prayer ministry in a city; it's the whole body of Christ in that city. I always tell our new Bible school students that the house of prayer in Kansas City, Mo., isn't the ministry I give oversight to called the International House of Prayer of Kansas City (IHOP-

KC). We're just a gas station—we take a cup of gasoline and throw it on the prayer fires that burn in the real house of prayer in Kansas City, which is made up of 1,000-plus congregations in our area.

Mystery and Majesty

If God called us a house of prayer, it makes sense then that we're all called to pray. I'm often struck by the mystery and the majesty of intercession. The mystery of intercession is how *simple* it is: We just tell God what He tells us to tell Him. It's so easy that everyone can do it! We're like little children mimicking a parent.

At the same time, the majesty of intercession is that *Jesus Himself* intercedes. Jesus lives forever to make intercession for His people (see Heb. 7:25); though fully God, He rules the nations through intercession now and will do the same in the age to come (see Ps. 2:8). What humility!

In Genesis 1, the Father's plan was to bring order to the earth. The Spirit hovered over the earth, yet the chaos and darkness remained: "The earth was without form, and void. ... Then God [Jesus] said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light" (vv. 2-3).

When Jesus declared the word, "Let there be light," the Spirit released light. The Spirit wouldn't release the light until Jesus declared it. The darkness remained until Jesus "interceded" and spoke God's word over it to release the Spirit's creative power.

All three members of the Godhead work together in creation. The Father's plan was to create the heavens and earth. Jesus spoke those plans into being. He operated in the foundational principle of intercession by speaking God's word back to Him. Then the Holy Spirit released the power (see Gen. 1:3, 9, 11, 14-15, 24, 30). Jesus expressed Himself as an "intercessory oracle," as Creator, by speaking God's word back to God (see

Ps. 33:6). Just as Jesus created all that is by speaking the word to the Father, He now upholds the created order by the word of His power (see Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3).

Prayer Is Agreement

Jesus invites us to join in this exchange by agreeing with Him in intercession. Agreement with God's heart is foundational to prayer and all spiritual warfare. Worship is agreeing with who God is. For example, we may say to God, "You are worthy," "You are good," or "Holy is the Lord." Worship is expressed by declaring the truth of God; it leads to intimacy with God.

If worship is agreeing with who God is, then intercession is agreeing with what God promises to do (e.g., "Lord, release Your power"). Intercession is expressed by declaring what He will do. When we declare the truth of who God is in worship, our faith expands to agree with what He's promised to do—this is intercession. The Father ordained His "house" to rule with Jesus through intimacy-based intercession. Intimacy speaks of how our hearts connect with God; intercession relates to releasing His resources.

God governs the universe in partnership with His people through intercession. He opens doors of blessing and closes doors of oppression in response to our prayers. The Lord gives His people a dynamic role in determining a measure of the quality of life we experience, as we respond to Him in prayer, obedience, faith and meekness. God has chosen to pour out His blessings, but often only as His people rise up in the partnership of prayer. He requires that we ask because it causes us to interact with His heart (see James 4:2). Again, this is an expression of His desire for intimate partnership with us.

God jealously protects this relationship by not releasing His resources until we speak to Him. He requires us to pray because He is jealous for relationship with us and is zealous

to establish His goodness in our lives. God longs to release His grace and power but actually waits until He hears the cry of His people in intercession (see Is. 30:18-19). It's a two-sided truth: *God will not do our part and we cannot do His part*. If we don't do our part, then God withholds some of the help and blessing He would've given us.

What About Justice?

Today it's trendy to call out for social justice, yet Jesus is and has always been the ultimate social reformer. He establishes justice to reform society. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus said, "Will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night?" (Luke 18:7, NASB). Jesus is the only social reformer in history who linked cultural transformation to night-and-day prayer.

Justice is exemplified by soul-winning, healing, revival, unity and the transformation of society. Justice isn't just stopping wicked people from oppressing others; it includes empowering God's people. Jesus knew that prayer wouldn't just deal with the spiritual issues related to injustice, it would change the spiritual atmosphere of a city or region.

The only way justice can be fully manifest is to deal with the demonic powers in the supernatural realm. We move angels and demons by our words (see Dan. 10:12-13). They are involved in the release of justice—which means both the justice and missions movement can only go so far without night-and-day prayer.

The Centrality of Intercession in God's Plan

Prayer has always been at the center of God's purpose. Chapters 4 and 5 of the book of Revelation describe the worship order around God's throne, where the four living creatures agree with Him in 24/7 worship and intercession (see Rev. 4:8).

Consider these examples: Human history began in a praying meeting in the Garden of Eden as Adam walked with God each day in the cool of the morning (see Gen. 3:8). Israel as a nation began at a prayer meeting at Mount Sinai right after its people crossed the Red Sea, when God called them to be a kingdom of priests (see Ex. 19:6-20). The first mandate God gave Israel was to build a worship sanctuary, a house of prayer, in the wilderness (see Ex. 25).

God's purpose for His people to be a house of prayer is evident during the reigns of David and his son Solomon, in Israel's greatest hour in history. King David established night-and-day worship (see 1 Chr. 15-16) and financed more than 4,000 full-time paid musicians and singers (see 1 Chr. 23:5; 25:7). David commanded the kings and leaders in the generations after him to establish and maintain worship in the way that God had revealed to him (see 2 Chr. 29:25; 35:4, 15; Ezra 3:10; Neh. 12:45). Zerubbabel established full-time singers and musicians as commanded by David (see Ezra 3:10-11; Neh. 12:47). Ezra and Nehemiah did the same (see Neh. 12:24, 45). Each time this order of worship was reintroduced in Israel, spiritual breakthrough, deliverance and military victory followed.

Jesus began His public ministry in a prayer meeting in the wilderness (see Matt. 4) and ended it in a prayer meeting in the Garden of Gethsemane (see Matt. 26). The church began in a prayer meeting (see Acts 1-2). Natural history as we know it will end in the context of a global prayer movement. The conflict at the end of the age will be between two houses of prayer, two global worship movements. The Holy Spirit is raising up the most powerful worship movement in history (see Rev. 22:17; 5:8; 8:4; Luke. 18:7-8; Is. 62:6-7; 24:14-16; 25:9; 26:8-9; 30:18-19; 42:10-13), which will completely defeat the Antichrist's end-time worldwide false worship movement (see Rev. 13:8).

Before Jesus returns, the Spirit-anointed church across the

nations, established in her bridal identity and functioning in intercession and worship, will cry out with the Spirit, “Come, Lord Jesus!” (see Rev. 22:17).

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