

# Bridal Partnership through Prayer

## I Intro:

I realized as I was preparing for this message that in 4 years I've never taught on prayer before. We have a lot of ground to cover so I'm going to move fast, I'm going to explain some scriptures and parables and leave us with a bunch to chew on. That's why I provided notes for you to look over later if parts of this message perk your interest.

## II. Bridal Partnership:

- A. Laying the foundations of the Bridal Paradigm. Prayer is about Bridal Partnership –Intimacy with the Lord. We see the Forerunner, John the Baptist, declare this new thought process identifying the Church as the Bride of Christ and Jesus as the beloved Bridegroom. This would forever mark the soon to be birthed Church with a powerful identity.

*"You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Christ but am sent ahead of him.' The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. He must become greater; I must become less (Jn. 3:28-30)."*

- B. This new concept, the Bridal role exhorts the Bride into intimate fellowship even over service, which is very important but second as the Church is the wife of the Lamb. Prayer is about a relationship, and so it has many different aspects and heart positions. Prayer is primarily about Him, not lists, not revival, nor transformation, it is the believer's primary connection to the heart and desires of God.

*"As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her (Lk. 10:38-42)."*

## III. Our Corporate Identity:

- A. In order to rightly live out our position as the Bride of Christ, we need to have a proper understanding of our Corporate Identity before the Lord. At the birthing of the Church there came a renewed focus in that we would relate to the Lord together.

*"Then John's disciples came and asked him, "How is it that we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast. "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch*

*will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved (Mt. 9:14-17)."*

*"The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life... He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus (Re. 17, 20)."*

#### **IV. The Corporate Bride of Christ, getting the work of the Kingdom done through prayer:**

- A. In the Old Testament the call frequently went out to the corporate people of God to gather in prayer:

*"...if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land (2Ch. 7:14)."*

*"Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him! O people of Zion, who live in Jerusalem, you will weep no more. How gracious he will be when you cry for help! As soon as he hears, he will answer you (Is. 30:18-19)."*

*"Rend your heart...Return to the LORD...Who knows? He may turn and have pity and leave behind a blessing...declare a holy fast, call a sacred assembly. Gather the people, consecrate the assembly; bring together the elders, gather the children, those nursing at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room and the bride her chamber. Let the priests, who minister before the LORD, weep between the temple porch and the altar. Let them say, "Spare your people, O LORD (Jo. 2:13-17)."*

*"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May those who love you be secure. May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels (Ps. 122:6-7)."*

*"The Lord, the LORD Almighty, called you on that day to weep and to wail, to tear out your hair and put on sackcloth (He called the people to pray). But see, there is joy and revelry, slaughtering of cattle and killing of sheep, eating of meat and drinking of wine! "Let us eat and drink," you say, "for tomorrow we die (Instead they threw off restraint and rejoiced and just celebrated life)!" The LORD Almighty has revealed this in my hearing: "Till your dying day this sin will not be atoned for," says the Lord, the LORD Almighty (God's response is judgment because the people refused to pray) (Is. 22:12-14)."*

- B. The New Testament letters were all written to corporate peoples, and so the exhortations were to be corporately embraced. Look how often, and with what measure the Church is called into prayer.

*“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful (Co. 4:2).”*

*“The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray (1Pe. 4:17).”*

*“Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus (1Th. 5:16-18).”*

*“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints (Eph. 6:18).”*

C. Additionally Jesus spoke to His Disciples with the same language:

*“Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray (for the break in of justice) and not give up (Lk. 18:1).”*

*“Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man (Lk. 21:36).”*

*“Be on guard! Be alert!...”Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch (Mk. 13:33-37!’”*

*“This, then, is how you should pray: " 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one (Mt. 6:9-13).”*

D. The Lifestyle and Power of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Church flowed out of Prayer. The Church of Acts was started with a prayer meeting (Ac. 1:14) and then continued centered around corporate prayer (Ac. 1:14, 24, 2:42, 3:1, 4:24, 31, 6:4-6, 8:15, 12:5, 12, 13:3, 14:23, 16:13, 16, 25, 20:36, 21:5):

*“They all joined together constantly in prayer...(Ac. 1:14)”*

*“They devoted themselves to...prayer (Ac. 2:42).”*

*“We will...give our attention to prayer...(Ac. 6:3-4).”*

E. Prayer was always the foundation of the early Church from which all the other ministries flowed out from. This was God's divine plan to knot His family together and get them leaning heavy on His understanding and strength instead of their own abilities. As they leaned heavy into God together in prayer, He burst forth power, instruction, protection, provision, and much fruitful ministry.

- F. We have a responsibility to our Bridegroom to partner with Him in prayer as the corporate Bride of Christ. He has no plan “b.” The Church is the corporate instrument that He uses to accomplish His plans by prayer. Ministry is to flow out of prayer, not the other way around. Prayer is our position before the Lord to wait on Him and know Him, from there He will also tell us what tasks He desires get accomplished.
- G. We often have this backwards. We are the wife that works 3 jobs to support the family but because of our busy work on their behalf we have no intimacy with our husband and really no idea what He wants. We are busy serving Him and doing many things in His name, but all He wants is us, us to know Him...and again, from that place He will instruct us on how to partner with Him.
- H. And it is painful that we are called not only to position ourselves in this manner, and to stay there, but that we are called to do it together as His one Bride. All the individualism in our personal walks with God is but a fraction of what He is trying to accomplish; a family, a corporate Bride that first of all knows Him and then works for Him.
- I. Prayer is God’s beautiful way to get the work of the Kingdom done through His Bride partnering with Him in asking for the things He desires. I want to propose that the Church’s lack of prayer is much of the reason for Her lack of power, unity and purpose.
- J. This is the place of corporate prayer. And it is at first very uncomfortable.

**V. Reasons for Our Modern Rejection of this Age Old Plan:**

- A. Cost: It’s very impractical to get together and pray all the time. It’s time consuming and costs us a lot of time and strength. It means we can’t get as much done in our lives. It really comes down to we’re too busy “doing” to even attempt such a plan.
- B. Conflicts: Sometimes it can be very humbling to bear your heart in prayer to the Lord before your brothers and sisters. They may not see things the same way you do. They may even annoy you.
- C. Emotions: Sometimes it’s boring, redundant, soul wrenching, seems useless, and it’s difficult to really engage our hearts in this way on any sort of frequent basis.

**VI. Actually Praying Together:**

- A. Painful as these above realities are, and believe me I know they can be painful, none of them address that we’ve been called to be a corporate people of prayer, remember all those verses we read a few minutes ago about being called into the place of prayer as a corporate people? Our arguments merely explain to God why it’s difficult to do what He has called His Church to, which of course He already knew beforehand how

hard/awkward it would be for us.

- B. Praying together consistently isn't anything new, this is just getting back to New Testament Christianity. It's an intentional turning back to the model of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Church. This isn't about some people are "prayer people" and some aren't, this is our identity before Him. Prayer is where the Bride finds Him and where she finds out what He wants. And that Bride, whether we like the idea or not, whether we understand how it's supposed to look or not, is a corporate Bride called to be devoted to prayer (Co. 4:2).
- C. So what do we do? All of us need to learn how to pray. And specifically we need to go on a journey of figuring out how to do that together. There are certainly some good places that we have close access to that can help us in this journey; GLHOP on CFNI's campus, The Prayer Room in Arlington, Go Deep in Downtown Dallas, but this can go on just as real and just as strong is Josiah's living room.
- D. Let's just take one step in this direction and ask the Lord to be our guide for the next. Figure out 1 time per week that you can set yourself in a corporate prayer meeting, whether a prayer meeting that already exists or one you're going to start. This is a big step, but this is too important and central of a point of our faith and identity to remain unaware of and uninvolved in. We are the Bride of Christ, and according to our New Testament prayer is the primary way we partner with Him, works come second.