



*Cross  
Roads  
Messages*

*This is what the LORD says, “Stand at the crossroads and look, ask where the good way is and walk in it... and you will find rest for your souls”.*

– Jeremiah 6:16

*“Girding Up The Local Church Series”*



## CrossRoads Message Series Girding Up the Local Church

“Where there is no vision, the people are unrestrained, but blessed is he who keeps the law.” (Proverbs 29: 18 NAS)

To many churches in America today find herself overseen by hirelings and CEOs, thus leaving the Body of Christ to feed on messages that are leaving them anemic in the Lord’s work. What the church needs are servants who exercise the grace gifts of Jesus who are able *“to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”* (Ephesians 4:12-13)

Proverbs 29:18 is the heartbeat of all who desire to be obedient to the charge given to a soldier of Christ. 2 Timothy 4:1-2, *“In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of His appearing and His kingdom, I give you this charge: ‘Preach the Word...’* To “preach” is to proclaim or herald the Word of God by publishing or announcing religious truth, the gospel with its attendant privileges and obligations in this gospel dispensation. It is to proclaim publicly after the manner of a herald, always with authority, such as to beckon people to listen and to obey what is proclaimed. (The Complete Word Study Dictionary; Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament; Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon: Wuest Word Studies in the Greek New Testament)

From these Biblical convictions a message series, **“Girding Up the Local Church”** came forth and has been placed in this compilation. Six, Word-filled, Christ-Centered, Holy Spirit anointed messages in this series are:

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**Title: Reasons We Congregate**  
**Theme: Reasons for Congregational Worship Services**  
**Series: Girding up the Local Church**

*Our key text today is written by King David (The Treasury of David; The Pulpit Commentary; Matthew Henry Commentary) and is part of a song that was to be sung as the people of God were going to Jerusalem to enjoy the holy feast. David is reflecting on the many times that he had heard the call to go to the house of the Lord. The language we are about to read expresses the happiness that is found in the heart of the child of God who loves the Lord. This child of God loves to be with other Christians for the purpose of publicly worshiping God in Christ's name under the influence of the Holy Spirit.*

Listen as I read Psalm 122:1, "I rejoiced with those who said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the LORD.'" We are told that this verse can be translated as, "I rejoice whenever they say to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord.'" (The Expositors Bible Commentary) Pray!

David expresses joy that is in the heart of the child of God who is offered a personal invitation to go to the house of public worship. This announcement meets the desire of the heart that is in the child of God who is in love with Christ and the invitation is to be responded to cheerfully and joyfully.

*I would propose to you that even though Christians are the temple of God in this dispensation, they are still to congregate in public worship for the purpose of enjoying fellowship in the Holy Spirit.*

The Holy Ghost has given many different gifts to the Body of Christ for the purpose of meeting the common good for all. (1 Corinthians 12:7) Each Christian has different gifts. One way of enjoying all that the Lord has for His children is to congregate and exercise those gifts as a corporate Body of Christ. Corporate worship takes many forms such as congregational services, Bible studies, fellowship dinners, group preparation for ministry, and prayer meetings. These are just a few of the ways the Lord has made for us to enjoy service to Him and to one another.

The Holy Spirit moved the writer of Hebrews 10:25 to write, "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing," because when one or more Christians choose to do their own thing and not fulfill their part of corporate worship the Body of Christ becomes anemic in the ability to publicly proclaim all the works of Christ on this earth. (1 Corinthians 12:12-31)

It is the will of God that we should worship in public ordinances that are in line with the Word of God. It should be our desire to stir up one another to go and worship the Lord in public worship. The New Testament writer of the Book of Hebrews reminds us of our need to quicken and sharpen one another to do what is good and right.

However, we as Christians must offer some Biblical explanation for what can be enjoyed in public worship services, whether it being a Sunday morning worship service, Bible study, fellowship meeting or in prayer ministry.

*Just what can Christians enjoy as they sacrifice time and energy to offer heartfelt praise to God and Christ in corporate worship services?*

### **Christians are not their own**

*The first step to enjoying public worship services is to understand that Christians are not their own. They were purchased at the highest price that could be paid. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 says, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price."*

Everyone who has received Jesus Christ as personal Savior and Lord plays a key role in worship to God in Christ's Name. Christians who enjoy all the benefits of congregational worship have the heart of the Apostle Paul who wrote, "...a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God." (Romans 1:1)

"Servant" (doulos) here means "a bond-servant" or "slave," one who is in a permanent relation of servitude to the one who paid the highest price possible to set someone free. The practical application is the person who accepts the purchase price paid for him sets his will to the will of Jesus Christ. Jesus teaches that a faithful servant does the master's will. (Matthew 24:45-46) Jesus is God in the flesh and He sets the example by making '...Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant...'" (Philippians 2:7)

Jesus lived the life of a bond-slave, one completely surrendered to the will of His Father. At least three times the Apostle Paul describes himself as a bond-slave. (Romans 1:1; Galatians 1:10; Philippians 1:1) The authors of James, 2 Peter and Jude also described themselves as bond-slaves. According to 1 Peter 2:16, 1 Corinthians 7:22 and Ephesians 6:6 Christians are to consider themselves as bond-slaves of God and Christ. According to the New Testament bond-slaves are the true followers and worshipers of God. (Revelation 15:3; 7:3; 19:5)

In what condition does the Holy Spirit find your spiritual heart? Is yours the attitude of bond-servant or that of coming to the worship service with the attitude that the Lord is a bell-boy? Jesus says, “No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other...” (Matthew 6:24)

## **Joy of greeting**

*Bond-servants get the most out of congregational meeting because they have chosen to live a life surrendered to the will of Christ.* Christians who get the most out of congregational worship have learned the joy of greeting their brothers and sisters in Christ. At least four times in the New Testament Christians are told to “Greet one another.” (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Peter 5:14)

Corporate worship opens the door of opportunity for Christians to find true satisfaction, joy, and fellowship walking in step with the Holy Spirit as they make time to “Greet One Another.”

Just like choosing to be a bond-servant of the Lord all Christians can participate in congregational greeting.

Peggy Noon, speech writer for Ronald Reagan, relates a story about Frances Green, an eighty-three-year old woman who lived by herself on Social Security in a town just outside of San Francisco, California. Peggy was very poor, but for eight years she had been sending one dollar a year to the Republic National Convention. One day Frances got an RNC fund raising letter inviting the recipient to come to the White house to meet President Ronald Reagan. She never noticed the little RSVP card that suggested a positive reply that needed to be accompanied by a generous donation. She thought she had been invited because they appreciated her dollar-a-year support.

Frances scraped up every extra cent she had and took a four day train ride across America. Unable to afford a sleeper, she slept sitting up in the coach. Finally, this little elderly woman with white hair, white stockings, an old hat with white netting and an all white dress arrived at the White House.

When she walked up to the entrance of where the grand event was to be held she gave her name to the guard. He informed Frances that her name was not on the list. She could not go in.

A Ford Motor company executive who was standing in line behind Frances watched and listened to the little scenario. Realizing something was wrong, he pulled Frances aside and got her story. He asked her to return the next day at 9:00 A.M.. Frances agreed. This executive of Ford Motor Company made contact with Anne Higgins, a presidential aide, and got clearance to give Frances a tour of the White House and if possible introduce her to the president.

The next day was anything but calm and easy at the White House. Ed Meese had just resigned and there had been a military uprising abroad. President Reagan was in and out of high-level secret sessions.

Never-the-less, Frances Green showed up right on time with full expectation and enthusiasm. An executive met her and gave her a personal tour of the White House, then quietly led her to the Oval Office. Members of the National Security Council came in and out while high-ranking generals were coming and going.

President Ronald Reagan glanced out of his office and saw Frances, patiently waiting. With a smile President Ronald Reagan motioned for her to come into the office. As Frances entered, President Reagan rose from his desk, invited her to sit down. They talked about her town and family and California. The president of the United States and the White House staff took time out of a very busy day to properly greet Frances Green.

The Apostle Paul proclaims a powerful truth about his work with the Lord that the Body of Christ should take note of. In 2 Corinthians 5:20 he says, “We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf...”

All Christians are “Commissioned” to the work of the gospel of Christ in some way. They are to make disciples by “teaching [others] to obey everything [the Lord has] commanded [them to do]. William Barclay writes, “Here is the Christian’s proud privilege and almost terrifying responsibility. The honor of Christ and His church are in the hands of Christians. By their every word and action they make mankind think more or less of the Body of Christ and of Jesus.”

Congregational worship is a wonderful opportunity to greet each other on behalf of Christ, thus letting Jesus live through us as people congregate for whatever reason in the Lord’s name.

Considering the truth of being Christ’s ambassador, Christians say “I rejoice in the opportunity to fulfill God’s Word in regard to greeting one another.” Every church that walks in obedience to the Written Word makes time for greeting one another and Christian fellowship.

### **Publicly sing the praises of God**

*Congregational worship opens a door of opportunity for Christians to greet one another and corporate worship offers Christians the opportunity to publicly sing the praises of God. Colossians 3:16 says, Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.” (Colossians 3:16)*

Ephesians 5:19 says, “Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord,..” (Ephesians 5:19) Barnes Notes tells us Ephesians 5:19 is a passage of Scripture that has the force of a command. It is a matter of obligation on Christians to have corporate singing. Jesus sets the example and the importance in singing at the Lord’s Supper. (Matthew 26:30)

The next order of business for corporate worship after greeting each other is communicating and proclaiming through Christian songs. Congregational singing is acceptable and pleasing to God and it is a wonderful opportunity to publicly proclaim all the works of the Lord. Congregational singing provides the way for us as a Body of Christ to take control of our minds and begin to meditate upon the Lord.

Steve Camp, in his written reformation to the contemporary Christian music industry wrote; “Music is a powerful tool from the Lord Jesus to His church intended for worship, praise, encouragement, edification, evangelism, teaching, admonishing and exhorting God’s people to holiness. Its chief aim is always to glorify God and worship Him.”

The Word of God tells us some powerful truths concerning Christian music. It brings refreshment, and drives away evil spirits. Whenever the anointed singer and song writer David would play his harp, “...relief would come to King Saul; he would feel better, and the evil spirit would leave him.” (1 Samuel 16:23) Corporate singing enables true worshipers to enjoy the presence of the Lord. 2 Chronicles 5:13-14 says, “The trumpets and singers joined in unison, as with one voice, to give praise and thanks to the Lord. ...they raised their voices in praise to the Lord and sang: “He is good; His love endures forever,” ...The glory of the Lord filled the temple of God.” King Jehoshaphat discovered that corporate singing and praising God leads to victory over enemies. (2 Chronicles 20:21-22) For the director of music David wrote this, “He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord.” (Psalm 40:3) Music can provide an atmosphere for the preaching of God’s Word. In 2 Kings 3:15 we read, “While the harpist was playing, the hand of the Lord came upon Elisha...”

Corporate worship also allows us to enjoy those who have the gift of music for the house of the Lord. In 1 Chronicles 25 we read that there are blessed children of God who are “trained and skilled in music for the Lord.” (1 Chronicles 25:6-7) Verse one says that it is the ministry of “prophesying.” “Prophesying” (*naba*) here is to sing songs as led by the Spirit of God. This singing uses the voice of the child of God’s in a sacred service unto the Lord under Divine impulse.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says, “It is called a ministry of prophesy which no doubt means a sort of musical proclamation of divine revelation and expressions of hymnic praise and worship.”

In early theological teaching those who were anointed for music in the house of God were referred to as “chief musicians.” Today the Biblically mature would refer to these very gifted Christians as music ministers of the Lord. What the Holy Spirit wants you to grasp in regard to the song service is Christians who have divine leading are leading corporate services to sing songs that are pleasing to the Lord.

Where does the Holy Spirit find your heart in regard to the song service? Corporate song services present to everyone the opportunity to participate in singing praise to God and about the Lord through songs He has chosen.

### **Holy Spirit gift for proclaiming God’s Word**

*Those illuminated by the Holy Spirit want to enjoy as much of the corporate song service as possible. Congregational services open the door to our enjoyment of the Holy Spirit gift for proclaiming God’s Word. Jesus said, “Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.” (Matthew 4:4)*

Knowing exactly what the Bride of Christ needs to be all that she can be, Jesus apportioned grace gifts. The Apostle Paul wrote, “It was [Jesus] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:11-13)

Any Christian exercising one or all of these support gifts has the Holy Spirit given gift of “prophecy.” Romans 12:6 says, “We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith.” The exercising of the gift of prophesying” (*propheteia*) is “...not primarily prediction but the communication of revealed truth that will both convict and build up the hearers.” This enables the child of God to communicate to other Christians truths born of prayerful reading and study of the Word of God. This gift is divine speaking of God’s Word to bring edification, exhortation, and comfort.

Fitzmyer defines “prophecy” as “Inspired Christian preaching” and he says that “It denotes not one who predicts the future, but one who speaks in God’s name and probes the secrets of the heart.”

Respectability of the preaching of the Word of God must begin with those who possess this Holy Spirit gift of prophesying. Before the messenger can have authority in his preaching and teaching, he must first know just what the authoritative Word of God says and means, and there must be life application. Regardless of what the world’s view is on the local preacher, God’s spokesman must make it priority one to be in the Word of God.

Robert Wilson writes, "Many of the great preachers of the past had the practice of spending extended time in preparation. Dr. G. Campbell Morgan, for example, closeted himself with the Bible and his study aids all morning long. He did not permit anything to interfere unless it was a genuine emergency. And when this well known British preacher arose to preach he had something valuable to say to his listeners."

The Apostle Paul has this exhortation for those who truly want to be workman approved by God, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15)

James Braga wrote, "But the man who is to preach the message of the Book must also be a man of the Book. He must study the Scriptures not to just get a message for his congregation. He must live in the Book. The Word of God must become his meat and drink. This is only accomplished as the preacher spends much time in secret with Jesus, holding daily, uninterrupted, unhurried communion with the Lord and His Word."

The man or woman who possesses the gift of "prophesying" must have the heart of Habakkuk who wrote, "I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts; I will look to see what He will say to me, and what answer I am to give to this complaint. Then the LORD replied: "Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it." (Habakkuk 2:1-2)

Congregational worship opens the door for the children of God to enjoy the gift of "prophesying" because the one possessing the gift has stood his watch in prayerful study of the Word of God as well as in intercession for the people to whom he is to proclaim God's message. He gets revelation (*hazon*) meaning the collection of messages and he writes them down. The Lord was telling His prophet Habakkuk just as he tells those who possess the gift of prophesying today, "Write My message down that it may hang in public display so others may read and spread the message on."

One of my favorite commentaries is the Matthew Henry Commentary. Matthew was in his study at 4:00 a.m. and remained until 8:00 a.m. After breakfast and family prayer, he would return to his place of prayer and study until 12:00 noon. After dinner he resumed to his books and pen until 4:00 p.m. Most days Matthew spent ten and half to eleven hours per day diligently writing down the message the Lord had for him, thus, leaving us with one of our greatest Bible Commentaries.

When preachers and teachers properly prepare for their part of the corporate worship service, the Body of Christ has the great privilege of hearing a fresh message from the Lord.

Where does the Holy Spirit find your heart regarding the spoken message or the teaching of God's Word? Is there joyful expectation to get to that place where the Word of God will be proclaimed? Where is your heart in making sure the messenger has time to spend uninterrupted time with the Lord?

*Corporate worship is enjoyed by those who say in their hearts, "I rejoice whenever they say, 'Let us go to that place of public worship.'" It all begins with a surrendered heart to God's will. It is enjoyed when the Body of Christ is faithful to greet one another, sing the praises of God and hunger for the Word of the Lord to be proclaimed.*

The Body of Christ needs every Holy Spirit gifted child of God in corporate worship fulfilling their place so the Body of Christ can enjoy all the benefits ordained by the Lord. Christians are the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit of Christ who is the light of the world. (John 8:12) Jesus said that Christians are a light of the world. (Matthew 5:14)

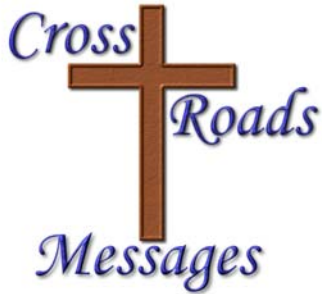
When one of us is gone from the congregational worship service that light is gone and no matter what place our light is, when it is gone, our city upon the hill becomes dimmer.

Whenever a root of bitterness is growing and a wrong perspective is allowed to remain, it makes the city of Christ hard to see for those who are in this dark world.

A Biblical perspective of the congregational worship service along with a joyful response to your place in the corporate worship service here at CrossRoads Church can make Christ's light shine drawing many to Him and enabling others to worship Him in spirit and truth.

Let your epistle say, "I rejoice with those who say, 'Let us go unto the house of the Lord.'"

Let us pray!!!



**Title: Spiritual Health Checks**  
**Theme: Four Signs of a Healthy Christian**

**Introduction:** *Rick Warren wrote, "The key for churches in the 21st Century will be church health, not growth."* When a congregation is healthy, it will grow spiritually and enjoy the benefits of a live, vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ. A healthy

Christian will not find his strength or determine his weakness in the size of the church he attends.

*What are four signs that the child of God lives a life that is nourished by the Word of God and illuminated by the Holy Spirit?*

Acts 2:42, "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." These Holy Spirit filled believers devoted themselves to these four things.

### **Life expressions of a Holy Spirit led child of God**

Today's text gives the first look at the early church and gives us a look at the results of a Holy Spirit revived heart. These Scriptures should prick at the heart of the modern day church and serve as a key guide for examining ourselves. All healthy things show signs of life. If the child of God is not growing spiritually in any or all of these four areas, that Christian is dying. A church will only be as healthy as those who attend her. Therefore it is a necessity that those who are part of the Body of Christ get a fair evaluation of their spiritual condition.

*I would propose to you that a healthy church begins with a consuming passion for the Lord Jesus Christ. The early church at Pentecost received the Word gladly, continued steadfastly, enjoyed Christian fellowship and was a praying church.* These are the life expressions of a Holy Spirit led child of God.

*It must be noted that today's text does not hold the complete list to everything a born again Christian does.* However, it contains seeds that determine how much spiritual life is birthed forth in all the other activities the child of God applies himself to.

### **Devotes himself to the apostle's teachings**

A key sign of a healthy Christian is that he devotes himself to the apostle's teachings. The New American Standard Bible says, "...they were continually devoting themselves to the apostle's teachings." (Acts 2:42) Devoted (*proskarteroutes*) means to continue, persevere, stick to and persist.

The Christian surrendered to the Holy Spirit will not quit, back off from truth, fade away or slip back. He steadfastly stays in true Biblical teaching. He is diligent and constant in attendance to the proclaiming and teaching of the Word of God. The on fire child of God makes a conscious hearing of the Word of God and he surrenders to the Holy Spirit's prompting to obey it.

The mark of a true church is not the size and beauty of her buildings. It is not the number who attend or how modern the sanctuary looks. The important issue is whether it holds to the apostle's doctrine. Born again Christians have a teachable spirit and a hunger to learn more and more of God's will for them by pain staking study and listening to the Word of God.

Albert Barnes wrote, "One of the evidences of conversion is a desire to be instructed in the doctrines and duties of [Christianity] and a willingness to attend the preaching and teaching of [God's Word]. Christians are hungry for Holy Spirit inspired teachings and they will make time to be exposed to it."

The Christian who is devoted to the teaching of the Word of God goes to church and Bible studies, prayerfully reads his Bible, watches quality Christian programs, listens to Christian music and takes every opportunity possible to fill his eyes, mind and heart with things of God. There is an eagerness of mind and openness of heart to seek and hear what God's will is for him. The child of God who is devoted to the teachings of God's Word will place himself in the position where He can be lead by the Holy Spirit. He walks into church with anticipation and expectancy that the Lord has something specifically for him. These Christians are far apart from church attendees who walk out of church unmoved, critical and unfed because they refuse to eat from the table prepared for them.

Christians who are devoted to the teaching of the Word of God are like the Bereans that you read about in Acts 17:11. They were of more noble character than the Thessalonians for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true."

Luke gave the Jews at Berea undying fame by characterizing them as being "more noble" than the Thessalonians. They tested what Paul said to the truths of what we call the Old Testament. Rather than judge what he said by political and cultural consideration, they were captivated by what he said as it agreed with the Word of the law.

Once again the New American Standard Bible has the best translation with; "more noble minded," (*eguenes*) meaning to be generous in giving attention.

In his research on the Berean church, Dr. J. Vernon McGee discovered that the Berean church was a persecuted church. He also notes that even though the Bible says very little about the Berean church, Scripture presents her as of

having noble character. In others words very pleasing to God.

I have discovered that Christians and ministries that become the most beneficial to me are those who are daily, prayerful readers and studiers of the Word of God. They have withstood the test of time and they grow spiritually in the test of trials.

The Bereans “...received the message with great eagerness...” (*prothumia*) The King James Bible says, “readiness of mind,” meaning to listen attentively and respectfully...” They were willing to hear it, they could comprehend it, and they had hearts hungry to know God’s will for them.

Solomon in writing to those who would listen wrote, “Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong.” (Ecclesiastes 5:1)

There are some real questions that need to be answered as the Holy Spirit brings you through the first spiritual health check today. Can those who see your life say, “There goes a Berean? There goes a man or woman of God that has high regard for the truth and one who lives out a life of devotion to the Lord.”

### **A healthy Christian has true fellowship**

*Another sign of a healthy Christian is fellowship with other Christians.* “Fellowship” (*koingnia*) means to share in something which involves participation. Mel Lawrenz gives this definition, “It has various translations such as “fellowship,” “participation,” “sharing,” “partnership,” and “communion.” The practical application is sharing material goods, sharing ministry, and being partners in the gospel. All these are rooted in the spiritual reality of a connection between believers that is based on their connection to Christ. This fellowship is literally brought forth by the Holy Spirit of God.

Christians not only devoted themselves to the apostle’s teachings, but united in the work of spreading the gospel. Christians in true service are united in feelings, interest, in dangers, in conflicts, in opinions and in the hopes of blessedness that comes in serving Jesus Christ. They have a joined life in sharing blessings and gifts bearing each others burdens, sharing in the conflicts that come and the victories that are won in fulfilling the Great Commission.

The Sunday School Times ran the story about Christians bearing each others burdens in their living to the Lord Jesus. In one section of China, there were several missionaries working together. When they held services one man would attend regularly, showing much evidence that the Holy Spirit of Christ was doing a great work in his life. One day he confessed that he was a Christian and that he no longer worshiped his ancestors in the usual manner.

This occurred at the New Year time when he was supposed to perform the usual rites of burning paper and incense to his ancestors. When he refused he was given fifteen days to recant or be beaten with 1,000 stripes. As the fifteen days drew near, a Christian from a different Chinese clan went to talk to the head of the clan of the sentenced man whom was about to receive the 1,000 stripes. The Christian explained, "When a person becomes a believer and worshiper of Jesus Christ, they become a part of the family of God. We cannot stand by and watch our brother in Christ beaten, so we propose that if you insist in carrying out this sentence, we will all join in with him and take our share of those stripes."

The head of the clan knew that there would be great trouble if a member of one clan would beat a member of another clan. He said, "If we would have understood the sharing of the burdens of Christians, such a verdict would never have been passed." Thus, the Christian man nor his Christian brothers or sister had to take one stripe.

A healthy Christian has true fellowship because he shares Spiritual experiences with other soldiers of Christ. This builds faith and trust. Through their Christian service they have shared material possessions together. (Acts 2:45) They worship together. (Act 2:46-47) The church is not to become a social club where people are just nice to one another. 1 Peter 2:4-5 says, "As you come to Him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to Him— you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

The Lord knows to be a healthy Christian you need Biblical fellowship. The fact is, going to church does not make you a Christian, and you can be a Christian and not attend a church. However, it is impossible for you to grow mature in the faith without Christian fellowship.

A young fellow who was fed up with church went to see this wise old Christian in his cabin to get some advice. He told him all the things that were bothering him about church, and how he felt that he would be better off without the company of other Christians. As he was speaking, the old man silently took the fire tongs and removed a red-hot glowing coal from the middle of the fire and set it on the hearth. The coal glowed for a while, but eventually dimmed and turned black. He let it sit there a while and then took the tongs and places the coal back in the middle of the fire. Within seconds the coal was glowing red hot once again. The young man took the wordless lesson and left determined to stay with church and become an active member.

Just as coals soon burn out when they are removed from the company of other coals, we will not last long in the faith unless we are working closely with what other Christians are doing in the local church. A healthy Christian exercises his Spiritual gift to help make a special outreach, project or ministry become successful. It may be prayer, giving, encouraging, administrating or applying hands on work. The fact is he will be doing something. It must be noted, that he will not be a part of everything going on in the church.

Listen to what the Bible says: “Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.” (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12) Proverbs 27:17 says, “As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.

Vance Havner pointed out, “Snowflakes are frail, but if enough of them get together they can stop traffic, shut down airports and cites, and take lives.” You get enough Christians who are devoted to the Word of God and living in Biblical fellowship, there is nothing God cannot do with them in accordance with His will.

### **Observes the “breaking of bread”**

*A healthy Christian will have fellowship with his Christian family and with the body of Christ. He also observes the “breaking of bread.”*

A healthy Christian steadfastly remembers the Cross of Calvary with other believers in obedience to the ordinance given by Jesus Christ. Psalm 77:11-12 says, “I will remember the deeds of the LORD, yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. I will meditate on all your works and consider all your mighty deeds.” The greatest deed ever done for sinners was when Jesus Christ allowed all the sins of the world to be laid upon Him and when He gave His life on the Cross.

Communion is to be observed very often in remembrance of Jesus Christ. The bread is in remembrance that His Body was given for us and the cup is for remembering that His blood was shed for us. Because of what Christ has done, Christians have been reconciled to God and can have fellowship with Him.

When the child of God meditates upon all that Jesus has done, can and will do for them, there is nothing that can rob his heart of wanting to observe communion so he makes effort to be were communion is being served. He also continually asks God to search his heart so that nothing will keep him from enjoying the breaking of bread with his brothers and sisters in Christ.

1 Corinthians 11:28 says; “A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.” He remembers what he was before Christ came into His heart and life and he rejoices over what the cleansing blood of Jesus has purchased for him right now.

A powerful ruler built a great palace. Among the rooms was one that was always locked. He called it the Chamber of Memories. Every day he visited that room, but no one else was permitted inside. Finally one day the servants got a peep inside the locked room. There was no silver, no gold, no precious jewels. All they saw was a humble shepherd’s robe; the one the king had worn before he came to the throne.

The Lord’s Supper reminds a healthy Christian what he was and that it was his sin that put Jesus on the Cross. A healthy Christian is like the Apostle Paul who wrote, “For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. (1 Corinthians 2:2)

A healthy Christian will strive to make decisions and live a life that revolves around the fact that he is not his own, he was purchased with the highest price that can be paid for the redemption of sinful man. Because of that price paid, the child of God will choose to attend a Bible believing church that spreads the gospel message, avoids watered down theology and false doctrines. That is why we make time for the Holy Spirit to examine hearts before we serve Communion in this church.

### **Devotes himself to prayer**

*A healthy Christian partakes regularly in the Lord’s Supper and devotes himself to prayer.*

Without the power of God there can be no lasting work done for Christ. A healthy Christian knows that if the church is too busy to pray there will be a great amount of activity with little accomplished, many services but few conversions, many programs with little life changing results. This is why the apostle Paul wrote, “I urge you brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me ...” (Romans 15:30) The child of God faces many trials, many obstacles and even spiritual perils as he walks with the Lord down here.

Watchman Nee wrote, "Our prayers lay the track on which God's power can come. Like a mighty locomotive, his power is irresistible, but it cannot reach us without rails." Prayer is like art or music. It can only be enjoyed by and through those who have disciplined themselves to actually spend time in prayer. An artist or musicians cannot fully reach his full potential unless he learns about and spends time developing his gift. Most people enjoy the benefits of looking upon art work that has had much time and hard work put into it. All mature adults appreciate the benefits of listening to a musician that has put a great deal of time and energy into their music. So it is with prayer. It is those who spend time in prayer individually, corporately and continually who bless those for whom they have been praying.

Corrie Ten Boon expressed the life of being a vibrant Christian and she asks, "Is prayer a steering wheel or your spare tire?"

Christians are to use prayer for seeking God's will, grace and empowerment. It is not to be used as a spare tire or as a tool to order the Lord around. The prayer that blesses God is the one offered according to His will and purposes.

The Bible says, "Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful." (Colossians 4:2) (James 5:16b) "...be faithful in prayer..." (Romans 12:12) "...Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and request..." (Ephesians 6:18) And there is God's promise about prayer, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."

What does it mean to be devoted to prayer? If it means anything else it means to be regular and often in prayer. It means to have a lifestyle in which prayer is an integral part. When I say that he is a devoted father or she is a devoted student what do we mean? It means that you can expect the man who is head of his family to get done what ever needs to be done. It is in his power to be a father to his kids. It means a devoted student is going to do what needs to be done in order to be seen as a student worth investing time and money on.

A healthy Christian's life is not limited to prayer, but is devoted to prayer. Saying that someone is devoted to their family does not mean that family is all they have or all they do. It does mean that their life, their habits, their attitudes gives evidence of a life devoted to their family. They provide a home, they are together at important family gatherings, and support one another in family tragedies. A praying Christian may be busy with life situations, but as the Holy Spirit moves him, he takes a moment to pray, he makes time to pray in one accord with other believers for important church issues, and he his most certainly seeking the Lord' grace, peace and comfort in times of tragedy.

The Christian Index ran the story of a black man who was in service to General Stonewall Jackson. Many noticed that he was able to discern whenever the General was about to start another expedition. When asked how he knew, the

black man said. "Mr. Jackson prays every night and every morning. But when he prays two to three or four hours during the night, that is when I pack his baggage, I know we are going on an expedition."

A healthy Christian prays regularly, faithfully and wholeheartedly. But when his church is about to go out on another expedition for the Lord, he arranges extra time to be in prayer.

For a heart check, do people expect to see you in prayer? What do you fast from to spend more time in prayer as the Lord leads the leadership of your church out in expeditions? Can those who are closest to you see that you are about to go out with the Lord to do His work by the amount of time you spend in prayer?

Today's text is recorded history of when the Holy Spirit was doing a work in the lives of those who have surrendered their hearts over to Jesus Christ. The same Holy Spirit is at work today in lives of those who understand that Jesus is much more than just Savior, He is Lord. Where there is a surrendered heart to the Lordship of Christ there are healthy Christians exhibiting these four signs. A life devoted to the teachings of God's Word, Christian fellowship, observance of Communion, and Prayer.

Let us Pray!



**Title: Prolonging the Days of Christ**  
**Theme: The Lord's Messengers to the Next Generation**

*Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22 give us the most vivid account of the crucifixion of Christ that can be found in the Word of God. Isaiah, seven hundred years before Christ was born, lets us see something of Jesus' suffering, the sacrifice He*

made upon the Cross of Calvary. He also reveals to us a very special promise made from God to His Son.

If we allow the Holy Spirit to do a work in our hearts and remind us how it was our sin that put the perfect Son of God through such shame and misery, we would easily lay down those sins at the foot of the Cross, sins that so easily entangle us and hinder the work of Christ in our community. The New Testament holds at least two truths that must be grasped if we want to enjoy the presence of Christ in our lives and Holy Spirit empowerment in all we put our hands to. 1 John 1:8-10 says, "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make Him out to be a liar and His word has no place in our lives."

Hebrews 12:1-3 says, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart." (Hebrews 12:1-3)

Let the Holy Spirit remind you of what was laid upon our Savior and Lord as I read Isaiah 53: 1-12, "Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to Him, nothing in His appearance that we should desire Him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. Surely He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered Him stricken by God, smitten by Him, and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth, He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so He did not open His mouth. By oppression and judgment He was taken away. And who can speak of His descendants? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my

people He was stricken. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death, though He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it was the LORD's will to crush Him and cause Him to suffer, and though the LORD makes His life a guilt offering, He will see His offspring and prolong His days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in His hand. After the suffering of His soul, He will see the light of life and be satisfied; by His knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and He will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give Him a portion among the great, and He will divide the spoils with the strong, because He poured out His life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.” (Isaiah 53:1-12) Pray!

*I would like to propose to you that the church that gets used of God to carry the message of Christ on to the next generation has Christians who grasp the powerful truths found in this message.*

*Just what are those truths?* Many understand that an undefiled mouth does not misuse the name of God or use filthy language. Many agree that undefiled ears do not find joy in gossip or unclean talk. Many agree that undefiled eyes do not feed upon pornography or the pleasures of this world. However, the Holy Spirit illuminated grasp the Biblical truths to what is really means to have a “Undefiled Mouth, Undefiled Ears and Undefiled Eyes.

### **Prolong His days**

*There are many truths to grasp in Isaiah 53.* A truth worth grasping today is found in Isaiah 53:10. I love the way the New American Standard Bible translates it, “But Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief. If He would render Himself as a guilt offering. He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, and the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand.” (Isaiah 53:10)

Our Lord Jesus Christ submitted to the curse of God for the sins of mankind. Christ did not sin, but the results of our sins were laid upon Him. This was all decided among the eternal Counsel made up of God the Father, God the Son and the Holy Spirit and Jesus accommodated Himself to this dispensation. A dispensation is a way determined by God for which someone may prove their love to Him. Christ was obedient unto death (Philippians 2:8) because He loved God His Father.

The death and burial of Christ was not the end but the beginning of the honor and joy that was to be given Him for His obedience. The promise was that He would see God raise up a people who would come to Jesus Christ and love Him as their Savior and Lord. They would not only trust in Him to save them from eternal death and hell, but to save them from their sins. Jesus would see a seed, children that have the faith of Abraham. (Romans 4:16)

These Christians experience the same kind of life that the Apostle Paul lived. Paul wrote, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." (Galatians 2:20) Christians who grasp the truth of what Isaiah wrote about in Jesus having a seed that brings glory to His name have full "[confidence] that [Christ] who began a good work in [them] will carry it on to completion..." (Philippians 1:6)

King David foresaw of a time when "...future generations will be told about the Lord." (Psalm 22:30) A time when a people of God would "...proclaim His righteousness to a people yet unborn..." (Psalm 22:31) The Apostle Peter wrote about the work of Jesus' offspring in 1 Peter 2:9, "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." (1 Peter 2:9-10)

Because the children of God have received mercy, they want to make the sacrifice that is pleasing to the Lord and live a life of worship to Jesus Christ. Romans 12:1-2 gives clear instructions on how to be a living sacrifice unto the Lord.

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--His good, pleasing and perfect will." (Romans 12:1-2)

There are three truths found in the heart of the child of God that will be used to take the Gospel message on to the next generation. A positive response to these truths opens the door for us to be able to find God's perfect will for us as individuals and as a church Body.

## **Undefined mouth**

*The first heart desire is to have an undefined mouth.* Listen to what Isaiah wrote about Jesus Christ, "...He had done no violence nor was any deceit in His mouth." (Isaiah 53:9) Jesus never spoke a word that could be referred to as a falsehood. Therefore what He taught on the matters of what comes from the mouth should be taken note of.

I am fully convinced that Jesus taught that speech as a whole is a reflection of who a man really is, Jesus taught, "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. You brood

of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned." (Matthew 12:33-37)

At the time of this powerful teaching, Jesus' healing ministry and miracles were spoken of by the Pharisees as being done by and through the power of Beelzebub. Our Lord was affirming that what they said was a reflection from what they truly believed in their hearts.

If our speech is predominately true, proper, chaste, instructive, and righteous, then it proves that the heart is aright before God. If it is often false, envious, malignant and unrighteous, then it proves that the heart is wrong. The words that we speak as a whole show forth the fruit that is inside our heart, just as we can know the tree by the fruit it bears. A sinful heart produces sinful speech. Those in the medical field will tell you that certain sicknesses produce terrible breath odors. So it is with sin being expelled out through speech.

Joseph Stowell spouted off to his teacher at school and told her to shut up and then he stood up and walked out of the class room. As he walked down the block to his house he noticed that his mother was working in the yard. He stopped dead in his tracks. He thought "What am I going to tell her?" He consider his options. He could tell his mom the truth or just lie. From past experiences he knew she would most likely find out the truth eventually. He could spend the rest of the day out in the world, though where he lived that would not necessarily be the safest thing to do, or he could go back to school and face the teacher.

He chose the lesser of the three and went back to school. Upon his arrival the teacher took him by the arm and they walked into the bathroom and he got his mouth washed out with soap. Joseph said, "I needed more than a mouthwash, I needed a heart washing."

The human heart is like dandelions, the key to its survival is its roots. Children pick their pretty little flowers, but as long as the roots remain they'll keep growing back. People who have the responsibility to get rid of the dandelions must make sure they get the roots.

Anyone who tries to overcome a speech issue that is ugly or unpleasing to the Lord by their own efforts is facing a losing battle. Only the Holy Spirit of Christ can go down deep into the spiritual heart and clean it up and make it aright with the Lord Jesus Christ and God. Our speech is simply a revealer of what is in the heart.

The Christian church that is going to be used of God to take the gospel message to the next generation has Christians who have the heart of David who prayed, "I have resolved that my mouth will not sin." (Psalm 17:3) "Set a guard over my mouth, O LORD; keep watch over the door of my lips." (Psalm 141:3) They sing the same song as David who sang, "...I will watch my ways and keep my tongue from sin; I will put a muzzle on my mouth as long as the wicked are in my presence." (Psalm 39:1)

Christians who have these truths in their heart are not in the public tearing down church leadership, but rather presenting the truths of Scripture with a mouth that has applied Holy Spirit breath mints. It is imperative that immature Christians not make the mistake of being critical of those who have the gifts from Jesus Christ (Ephesians 4:7-16) as they fulfill their Biblical obligation of protecting against false doctrines and false prophets. (Acts 20:28-31) The safeguard for the mouth is this: if what you are about to say has not come from prayerful study of God's word, then what you are about to say is from the flesh, the world's view or from the devil. This is the key truth to being involved in spreading the gospel effectively.

### **Undefined Ears**

*The church that prolongs the proclaiming of the gospel of Jesus Christ strives in their heart to have an undefiled mouth and longs to have "Undefined Ears."* Isaiah 50:4-5 says, "The Sovereign LORD has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught. The Sovereign LORD has opened my ears, and I have not been rebellious, I have not drawn back." (Isaiah 50:4-5)

The Holy Spirit of Christ wants you to grasp this truth, "He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught" or "to listen as a disciple" (NAS). "The Lord God has opened My ear." Many have convinced themselves that defiled ears are ears that listen to all that is displeasing to God. The real problem is that those who let their ears listen to the call of the flesh, the world and the lies of the devil are those who have no desire to have their spiritual ears tuned to the Holy Spirit of Christ.

Isaiah 50:4-5 is a passage about Jesus Christ and His relationship with the God the Father.

Christians who are used of God live as the Apostle Paul who proclaimed, I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." (Galatians 2:20) With Jesus Christ dwelling in the spiritual hearts of born again Christians they can enjoy God wakening their spiritual ears with an attitude of listening. They can have ears of a learned disciple of Christ. They can have ears that not only hear the call of God but have understanding.

Each and every one of us falls into a mode of spiritual sleepiness and needs to be wakened daily so we can have a desire to meditate upon God's commands and precepts. We all need the Lord God to waken us with a desire to be in the Word of God and meditate upon it as we make daily choices in this world. In the book of Luke 21:37-38 we read that Jesus taught every day in the temple and the people got up in the morning to hear Him teach.

Christians have the Word of God and they can ask the Lord to give them a listening heart and be like the disciples of Jesus day, have daily teaching of the things of God and of Christ. Here in America Christians can chose to watch and listen to worldly programming or chose to meditate upon the Word of God through Christian music, books and movies at any time they want. We are a nation that has an abundance of Christian music, DVD's and Biblical teachings. Today's messenger listens to the Word of God attentively, submissively and gladly because it is God who has wakened his spiritual heart.

On the road to Emmus two disciples had their hearts burning within them as Jesus talked with them about the Holy Scriptures. (Luke 24:32) When he appeared to His disciples Luke 24:45 says, "Then He opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." (Luke 24:32) It is Holy Spirit enlightened Christians whom God will use to get the message of Christ around the world.

Can you be seen as a child of God who is hungry for the proclaiming and teachings of the Word of God? Is there an eagerness to listen?

In the Bible (Nehemiah 8) we read of a time after Nehemiah had made the adequate preparations to guard the city. He appointed singers so Jerusalem could have joy in the Lord and then he made provision for a great reading of the Word of God. The Bible says on the first day of the seventh month the people assembled as one man and Ezra the priest read aloud from the law from daybreak until 12:00 noon. The Bible says the people listened attentively to the Book of the law. (Nehemiah 8:1-3) On the second day of the seventh month the head of families, the priests and the Levites gathered to give attention to the words of the law. (Nehemiah 8:13)

The Bible says at that time those who read from the law taught in a way to make clear the teachings so people could understand what was being proclaimed through the law of God. (Nehemiah 8:8) Before the month was over there was a great revival among God's people, by the twenty-fourth day the Israelites gathered, confessed their sins and the sins of their fathers. We read that the people stood and listened to the Book of the law for a quarter of the day.

In the book of Acts we read on the first day of the week the people of God met all night to hear the preaching of God's Word. (Acts 20:7-12) It must be noted that the length of the sermon, short or long is not the focus, it is the content. Is it the preaching of God's Word and are the people who gathered together hungry or attentive to the Word of God?

Christians who will be used to carry the gospel to the next generations are a people of God who are noble minded (*eguenes*), a people who give generous attention and who have a great eagerness to receive the message, (*prothumia*) they listen to it respectfully. They enter into the place of public worship to listen. (Ecclesiastes 5:1) They long to become disciples of Christ and they imitate His life by being listeners of God.

### Undeclared Eyes

*An undeclared ear is listening for God and the church that carries the gospel message to the next generation has Christians who have "Undeclared Eyes."* Listen to these powerful words about Christ from the prophecy of Isaiah, "A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him-- the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD--and He will delight in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what He sees with His eyes, or decide by what He hears with His ears; but with righteousness He will judge the needy, with justice He will give decisions for the poor of the earth." (Isaiah 11:1-4)

Jesus Christ being fully God and being fully man came to walk and live upon this guilty sod and He shows how to live a truly righteous life under the complete will of God. Jesus lived in the counsel and power of the Holy Spirit and in reverent fear of God the Father. Our Lord Jesus chose to be connected to His Father. The church which carries the gospel of Christ to the next generation will have only Christ as the head of the church, not traditionalism, not denominationalism, nor legalism or faddism. The church the Lord uses has Christians who make their life convictions from the whole counsel of God's Word.

Romans 14:1-22 holds a powerful life changing truth for the church hungry and willing to submit to God's will as Christ did. The truth the Holy Spirit wants us to grasp is that we are not to be living in a judgmental attitude to other ministries or others in ministry. I did not say that we are not to speak against or reject false teachings which are out there. However, there are disputable matters that are fought over to the point of causing a judgmental attitude in the mind and this is grieving to the Work of Christ.

In Romans 14 there is a verse that should waken our ears and put a bit on our tongues. It says, “Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.” (Romans 14:4)

The church that God uses has Christians who have the prayer of David who wrote, “May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.” (Psalm 19:14) These Christians overcome the temptation of judging in the flesh. They do not spend their time arguing over how many hymns to sing or how many choruses to sing or how long the song service is, they just sing in their hearts to God and they desire the Holy Spirit's presence. These Christians do not spend their time criticizing other churches, they spend their time prayerfully studying the whole counsel of God's Word. These Christians do not spend time judging new Christians, but spend their time presenting God's truths in a way that challenges and builds up new converts. They make the way for the backslider to return home to Christ instead of putting obstacles in their way that keep them away from the family of God. They make provision for the poor in spirit on the earth to grow in their knowledge of and their relationship with Christ.

The church that is going to be used by God to take the gospel message to the next generation has Christians who grasp the truth of the Proverb 4:23, “Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.” (Proverbs 4:23)

When they sing “Jesus be Jesus in me” it is a prayer song meaning “Lord make me like you.” They have understanding of what it means to have and live with an undefiled mouth, undefiled ears and undefiled eyes.

A man of God whom the Lord has used to minister to me through the preaching of God's Word is Pastor David Wilkerson. He now has a ministry that God is using to minister to pastors all over the world. While he was making the final arrangements to really excel this new work the Lord did a work in his heart. Like most great men of God and all quality ministries, David invited the Lord to prepare him for the powerful ministry that was about to take a greater world wide outreach to pastors than David ever knew before.

He asked the Lord to keep a tight rein on his mouth, purify his speech so as to fulfill the exhortation from the Apostle Paul, “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” (Ephesians 4:29-30)

The Lord spoke to him about His own heart and how he was unwilling to listen, how he so often wanted to share what was going on in his own ministry and not hear what God was doing in someone else's ministry. He did not truly have a listening heart.

Then the Holy Spirit did a work in his heart about how to have undefiled eyes. There was a minister David knew and judged by what he saw. David thought in his mind that this man was only boastful and a show off. The Lord got after him about his mentally judging others. Then the Lord showed him what undefiled eyes were by letting God be the Judge of what is His work.

The church that lets God purify the mouth, ears and eyes will be used to prolong the spreading of the Gospel of Christ.

Let us pray!!!!



**Title: Petitions for the Next Generation**  
**Theme: Praying With Authority for Our Children**  
**Series: Girding up the Church**

### **Prayer for our next generation**

*There is a battle for the minds, hearts and souls of our kids.* Anyone who enters this battle seriously spends many hours thinking up ways to have the greatest influence possible on their children and grandchildren. These influences take many forms. A couple of those influences are athletic gyms are open at 6:00 a.m. and close 9:30 p.m. at night most days of the school year. Also, there is a great deal of money spent offering our generation the highest quality of education possible around the world.

*I would propose to you that prayer for our next generation is needed more today than ever before as we live in the last days of the return of Jesus Christ.* The Bible says, "The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds." (2 Corinthians 10:4)

*Just how can we pray with true authority for our children and grandchildren?* The church is always exhorting the Body of Christ to pray, but too often the leadership of the church fails to equip the people of God for the most powerful ministry in the world. That is a ministry led of the sword of the Spirit that will have the greatest influence regarding the eternal future of children, the ministry of prayer.

The ministry of prayer could enable parents, grandparents and the true church to rejoice as the apostle John did when he wrote 2 John 1:1-4, "The elder. To the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in the truth--and not I only, but also all who know the truth--because of the truth, which lives in us and will be with us forever: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father's Son, will be with us in truth and love. It has given me great joy..." catch that, great joy, "...to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as the Father commanded us." (2 John 1:1-4)

It is my conviction that this passage of Scripture has a dual application covering individuals and the whole Body of Christ who love the truth and serve the Lord in sacrificial love. Those to whom it is written were ordinary people, such as any church is made up of ordinary people today and generations to come. Therefore, there is great assurance in this passage of Scripture for all Christians who will show true love by sacrificing time and energy to pray according to Biblical truth for their children and grandchildren, because we will see some of them living according to God's Word.

**We must enter His presence with praise**

*Petitions for the next generation begin with faith that God loves us and He will take care of us. We must enter His presence with praise. Psalm 100:3-5 says, “Know that the LORD is God. It is He who made us, and we are His; we are His people, the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His name. For the LORD is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations.” (Psalm 100:3-5)*

Take time to thank God for every child by name, then ask for forgiveness for anything the Holy Spirit brings to mind about your attitude or treatment to His children. As we enter the presence of God in Christ’s name we are to be thankful for the work He has already done in the lives of our children and the blessings He has bestowed upon them.

### **Holy Spirit revelation**

*After you have enjoyed the Holy Spirit’s bringing to remembrance of all the Lord has done for your children you can then pray for Holy Spirit revelation for them.*

*Ephesians 3:16-19 says, “I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.” (Ephesians 3:16-19)*

The most important prayer that you can pray for your children and grandchildren is that God would send His Holy Spirit into their spiritual hearts to reveal Christ. That they be truly born again and live in the fullness and the abundant life promised in Christ.

Christian parents and grandparents can pray as the Apostle Paul prayed, that Jesus Christ would be made so real in the lives of their children and grandchildren and His love for them made so real that Christ would be allowed to be Savior and Lord, not treated as a tolerated authority in their lives. We can ask God to make it known to our children and grandchildren what it really means to have Christ dwell in their hearts.

The word “dwell” (*katoikeo*) here means to allow Christ to take up full residence by His Spirit in their spiritual hearts so that He might have full control over their lives. So Jesus Christ might use them fully as He wishes for His Father’s purposes. The application is that our children and grandchildren will truly be full of the Holy Ghost responding joyfully to His promptings as He makes God’s Word so real to them.

### **Hungry to live according to God’s good purposes**

*The church that is girded up for the future has offspring with Divine revelation of Christ and they are hungry to live according to God's good purposes. Philippians 2:12-13 says, "Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed--not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence--continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose." (Philippians 2:12-13)*

**Pray that** our children and grandchildren will have hearts to obey the Lord and be involved in the things of God even when they are not in our presence. Pray also that they will walk in a true fear of the Lord and that they will have hearts that will ask the Lord to do His work in their lives. Pray that God would bring them to a condition in their spiritual heart that says, "Make me hungry to do your will."

The church needs Christians who understand that it is God who is at work in them and only He can enable them to want and do His will. The word "works" (*energeo*) means that the Lord is the one who energizes us to have the desire to seek His will and He provides enablement for Christians to do the Lord's will. Our children must be partners with God in the work of the gospel of Christ.

### **Lives in confidence before the Lord and the world**

*The church that is girded up has Christians who are partners with the Lord and she is a Body of Christ that lives in confidence before the Lord and the world. 2 Timothy 3:14-15 says, "But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." (2 Timothy 3:14-15)*

Pray that our children and grand-children will become convinced that what they have learned is true because they have seen the lives of those they have learned it from. The Christian life they have been exposed to will produce fruit that is pleasing to God. They will be made wise and live a life that expresses the salvation of Christ within them.

### **Powerful thirst and hunger for the Word of God**

*The church that is girded up has Christians who are convinced of Biblical truth and are made wise in the living out their faith in Christ. She also has Christians who have a powerful thirst and hunger for the Word of God. Psalm 119:1 says, "Blessed are they whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the LORD. Blessed are they who keep His statutes and seek Him with all their heart." (Psalm 119:1)*

Christians can literally ask the Lord to give their offspring a hunger and thirst for the Word of God and that they will seek Him with all their mind, heart and strength. That they will seek to learn the Word of God and will desire in their hearts to obey and live what the Bible tells them to do. Jesus said, "...It is written: `Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' " (Matthew 4:4)

### **Christians who hate evil**

*The church that is girded up has Christians who are joyfully into the Word of God and she has Christians who hate evil.* Psalm 97:10 says, "Let those who love the LORD hate evil, for He guards the lives of His faithful ones and delivers them from the hand of the wicked." (Psalm 97:10)

Christians can ask the Lord to fill their children and grand-children with the Holy Spirit so they will not find delight in any kind of evil. The word "hate" (*sane*) can mean to be unwilling to be exposed to or apart of something. They will have the heart of the Psalmist who wrote, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psalm 139:23-24) They would look at the Word of God as a mirror and the key source to determine what He calls sin.

Just a few months ago I had the privilege to visit with a young man who had parents who prayed often for the Lord to do this very thing. This young man told me that he was exposed to a situation that was not holy and pleasing to God and he said, "All I wanted to do was just get away from that place and go home."

### **Get victory over their anger**

*The church that is girded up has Christians who find no delight is that which would break the heart of God and she has Christians who trust in the Lord to help them get victory in their anger.* Ephesians 4:26 says, "In your anger do not sin" (Ephesians 4:26) Pray and ask the Lord to enable our children and grand-children not to sin when they become angry and they will surrender everything over to the Lord, literally letting Him fight all battles they face.

### **Christians that express Holy Spirit fruit**

*The church that is girded up has Christians who let the Lord fight their battles and she has Christians that express Holy Spirit fruit.* Galatians 5:22-23 says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law." (Galatians 5:22-23) It is imperative that our children and grandchildren will feed their spiritual hearts the Word of God and be led of the Holy Spirit so they may produce the fruit that should be seen in a Christian's life.

My boys know that there are certain boys they are not to run with and others they can because of the fruit those boys express in their lives. It is not I but God's Word that says, "Even a child is known by his actions, by whether his conduct is pure and right." (Proverbs 20:11) The greatest hindrance or help to a youth ministry is the fruit that is expressed from the lives of the youth who are leaders in the youth group.

### **Walk in a life of obedience**

*The church that is girded up has Christians that produce the fruit of the Holy Spirit and she has children and grandchildren who walk in a life of obedience.* Colossians 3:20 says, "Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord." (Colossians 3:20) God's wisdom offers this advice, "Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching. They will be a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck." (Proverbs 1:8-9) Pray that our children and grand-children will obey their parents in the Lord and they will be eager to get direction from their godly parents so that it will go well for them and their children.

### **Christians who do not despise the Lord's discipline**

*The church that is girded up has obedient children and she has Christians who do not despise the Lord's discipline.* Proverbs 3:11-12 says, "My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline and do not resent His rebuke, because the LORD disciplines those He loves, as a father the son he delights in." (Proverbs 3:11-12) "Do not withhold discipline from a child, if you punish him with the rod, he will not die." (Proverbs 23:13) Pray that our children and grandchildren will accept the Lord's disciplines and they will not be blind to His correction. That we as Christian parents will have the courage to apply disciplines that are guided by the Lord and will cause our children to look to Jesus Christ for help to overcome all sin that longs to destroy their relationship with Him.

### **Parents and grandparents who live in a way that encourages their offspring to trust in Christ**

*The church that is properly girded up has children and grandchildren who do not despise the Lord's disciplines and she needs parents and grandparents who live in a way that encourages their offspring to trust in Christ.* Jesus said, "Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:15-16)

**Pray That:** We as parents and grandparents may live in such a way that causes our children and grandchildren to praise God for the work He has done in our lives. That our lives would give our children and grand-children a hope that inspires them to look to and put their trust in Jesus Christ as they face the temptations of the flesh and the world and combat the lies of the devil.

### **Christian friends who will build them in the Lord**

*The church that is girded up has parents who live out their Christian beliefs and she needs children and grandchildren who have Christian friends who will build them in the Lord.* Ecclesiastes 4:10 says, “If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!” (Ecclesiastes 4:10) **Pray That:** The Lord would raise up good solid Christian friends that will build and challenge our children and grand-children in the Lord Jesus Christ and that they will mature in the Lord so they can be true Godly friends to their friends.”

### **Christians who are not influenced by people who have ungodly character**

*The church that is girded up has children and grandchildren who have Christian friends and she needs Christians who are not influenced by people who have ungodly character.* Proverbs 1:10 says, “My son, if sinners entice you, do not give in to them.” (Proverbs 1:10) All of our children need Holy Spirit illumination of what is written in 1 Corinthians 15:33, “Do not be misled: ‘Bad company corrupts good character.’” (1 Corinthians 15:33) **Pray That:** The Lord would send the Holy Spirit to remind our children and grand-children of these two passages of Scripture so they can be successful in living for Christ. Our children and grand-children will not be influenced by anyone who could cause them to fall into sin and hurt the Lord.

### **Christians who have Biblical convictions**

*The church that is girded up has Christian offspring who avoid the influence of bad company and she has Christians who have Biblical convictions.* Jesus said, “Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.” (Matthew 24:12-13) The Apostle Paul gave this exhortation, “Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong.” (1 Corinthians 16:13) **Pray That:** Our children and grand-children will be able to stand firm in their Biblical convictions so they will be able to live forever with Christ and be true salt and light in a sin cursed world.

### **Proper stewardship on their Holy Spirit given gifts**

*The church that is girded up has Christians with Biblical convictions and she has Christians who put proper stewardship on their Holy Spirit given gifts so as to be a blessing to others. Philipians 2:4 says "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." (Philipians 2:4) According to the Apostle Paul the church that is girded up has Christians who exercise their Spiritual gifts out of sacrificial love. (1 Corinthians 12-14)*

**Pray That:** Our children and grand-children will exercise their Spiritual gifts for the good of others, not only for their own good and they would do nothing out of selfish ambition and consider others better than themselves.

### **Avoid addictions and they know the dangers of abuse of alcohol and drugs**

*Christians who gird up the local church exercise their Spiritual gifts out of sacrificial love, their people avoid addictions and they know the dangers of abuse of alcohol and drugs. Proverbs 20:1 says, "Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise." (Proverbs 20:1) **Pray That:** Our children and grand-children will fear the dangers that can come with partaking in alcohol and drugs and other addictions that would cause them to find pleasure and delight in anything but accomplishing God's will for them.*

### **Christians with marriages that honor God**

*The church that is girded up has Christians who avoid possible addiction that could put their relationship with Christ in danger and she has Christians with marriages that honor God. Colossians 3:19 says, "Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them." (Colossians 3:19) Ephesians 5:25 says, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church." (Ephesians 5:25) The Holy Spirit inspired writers of the New Testament say a lot about how husbands act in their marriages because it affects the effectiveness of their prayers for the church and family. 1 Peter 3:7 says, "Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers." (1 Peter 3:7) Christian wives are told to "...submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord." (Colossians 3:18) **Pray That:** Our children and grand-children will have spouses that were raised in true Christian homes and they will bring great joy to each other. They will have marriages that bring glory and honor to the Lord.*

### **Children who consider the Lord's ways over their own way of thinking**

*Healthy Christian marriages gird up the Lord's church and so do children who consider the Lord's ways over their own way of thinking. Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight." (Proverbs 3:5-6)*  
**Pray That:** Our children and grandchildren will overcome the world's view on living and have an understanding of what it really means to trust in the Lord. That they will acknowledge Him as they live down here on this earth so they can enjoy the path of life that He has chosen for them and they will be able to discern what doors He has opened for them.

### **Christians who prove faithful**

*The Church that is girded up has Christians who have a Christ disciplined life that lives according to God's direction and she has Christians who prove faithful. The Bible says, "Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful." (1 Corinthians 4:2) It also says, "He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God." (1 Corinthians 4:5)*  
**Pray That:** Our children and grand-children will prove faithful to everything the Lord has entrusted to them.

### **The Holy Spirit of Christ call is for conversions of spiritual hearts**

*The church that is girded up for the Lord's work has God's vision for their children and grandchildren. It is much greater than counting numbers in the youth group, having fun and games, sending out pictures of group hugs. The Holy Spirit of Christ call is for conversions of spiritual hearts. Conversion is the great work of God where repentant sinners pledge loving loyalty and undivided allegiance to the Christ who died for their sins. The church that has girded up their children by prayer has children who are used mightily by God.*

More than anyone else Christian parents can have the most influence on their children, because when Christ died upon the Cross the veil was ripped open so they could enter into the presence of God who sits on the Throne of Grace. The call to pray is from God's Word and we are given a sure promise, "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." (James 5:16b)

One mother who knew this truth was Monica Augustine, the mother of St. Augustine who after a long struggle was converted to Christianity. St. Augustine was born in North Africa (Tagaste, Numidia) to a Christian mother and his father was a pagan until very late in life.

Augustine's childhood was marred by stealing pears and his ability to learn led him to one humanistic philosophy after another. He even had an obsession with the occult for a season in his life. During his period of exploration he lived a life of excessive fleshly desires causing him to become the father of a child by a mistress.

After his conversion to Christ Augustine became the author of many great works writing about the "...City of God," "On the Trinity," "On Faith," "Hope," "Love" and "Christian Doctrine." Augustine's most widely read book is "The Confessions" which are several books that record how he felt about the Lord and his prayers to God.

Studying Augustine's life during that period of living in selfish sin shows that the Christian living he saw in his mother and the Christian teaching he received was not a waste of time. Thirteen years before his conversion he was moved in his prayers to return to God (Confessions #3:4) but he could not make himself do so.

One year before his conversion Augustine was influenced by a man (Ambrose) who he knew was presenting "healthy teaching on salvation," yet he could not return to the teaching and lifestyle he saw in his mother because of self-living.

Listen to these confessions of Augustine while he struggled with sin and surrendering to Christ. "I was storm tossed and you [God] held the tiller." "I was swept away by your beauty [Lord] and then I was torn away from you by my own weight [of sin] and fell back groaning toward these [lesser] thing [in life]." While being exposed for nearly a year to "healthy teachings of salvation" he wrote, "But salvation is far from sinners of the kind that I was then." When Augustine was being moved to prayer to return to God he writes, "[I was] on fire to leave earthly things behind and fly back" [to God].

But there was an obstacle that kept Augustine from reaching God, he writes, "The Name of Christ was not there..." Augustine writes about how the Name of Jesus Christ was his mother's milk and His Name touched his heart tenderly, but the fruit of his life was surrendered to self-will and not God's will.

Finally in early August 386 Augustine abandoned his teaching career and his proposed marriage and went off with some friends to live a life of contemplation. One day he heard how some men had moved to give their whole heart and life to serve the Lord. Augustine was suddenly confronted with his sin of self-living. He rushed out into the garden and flung himself under the fig tree and wept bitterly, crying out to God, "How long, how long, why should not this hour be an end to my baseness?"

From a neighboring yard he heard the voice of a child say, "Take and read!" Augustine went over to a bench where laid a copy of the Apostle Paul's Epistle and he read Romans 13:13-14, "Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature." (Romans 13:13-14) At that moment Augustine put on Christ, took on the Name that was missing, the only key person missing in his life that would enable him to live for God.

Long before we even came into this world the grace of God confronted Augustine as dramatically as God's grace did the Apostle Paul. At age 31 Augustine's struggle came to an end and through him came teachings and service that laid the foundation of Western theology. Augustine has often been call "Bishop of Hippo" and "Doctor of the Church." The opening prayer of Augustine's "Confessions" sums up his whole experience in life. He writes, "Our hearts are restless until they can find peace with you [Lord Jesus]."

Augustine and one of his friends put on Christ and they went and told Monica his mother. Fredrick S. Leahy wrote about this time in Christian history, "Over the years she had prayed for her wayward son with tears. Now her prayers were answered yes to and her heart's wishes granted."

The Holy Spirits call us to pray! Be a powerful influence on the next generation. The Altar is open!!!!



**Title: Send Forth**

**Theme: Petitioning for Laborers for God's Work**

**Series: Girding up the Church**

Listen as I read Matthew 9:35-38, "Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field.'" (Matthew 9:35-38)

### **Jesus Christ is compassionate for souls**

*Jesus Christ is compassionate for souls and the greatest compassion that can be expressed by the Body of Christ is for the souls of mankind to know Jesus as Savior and Lord.* People are apt to go astray much like sheep without a shepherd. Souls who do not walk closely in step with the Holy Spirit of Christ are very likely to fall prey to the flesh, the lures of the world and the lies of the devil. Without true shepherds, pastors to feed the people the Word of God and the help of Christians exercising their Spiritual gifts, those in this world and even the flock of God will be harassed and helpless against everything that sets itself against God, Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit.

It takes more than just one pastor in the church to maintain a spiritual hospital where lost souls can be born again, receive a powerful thirst for the Word of God and learn to say "Jesus teach me to pray." Jesus knew this and that is why in today's Scripture He exhorts us to pray for laborers for the work of God. No child of God is able to do this work on his own. He must have the help of other Christians.

I recently read the story of Martin Luther, the great reformer of the church, and about his friend who agreed to pray for Martin as he went out to do battle for the souls of the people of his day. Much like in the times of Christ when Jewish people were without true shepherds, the people of God in Luther's time were helpless to overcome the sins that were destroying the reputation of the church. There was only a form of godliness in the priest, thus the church was denying the true power of God to save a man from the bondage of sin. Much like today where there is a false grace being taught by CEO's, where only a form of godliness is loved over the true message of repentance.

Martin Luther and his friend established an agreement. Luther would go down into the dust and heat of battle for the Reformation of the church while his friend would stay in the monastery and uphold Luther in prayer. One night Luther's friend had a dream. He saw a vast field of corn as big as the world with one solitary man seeking to reap it – an impossible and a heartbreaking task. Then he caught the face of the reaper. It was Martin Luther. Luther's friend caught the message, not one man can do the job alone.

Two sad things happen in all churches that find themselves not properly girding up in prayer. One, people in the church expect the preacher of the gospel to come up with that vision that will intrigue great numbers to come into the church. Two, the pastor of the church expects people in the church to do what God has not gifted them to do. These two wrong perspectives rob heartfelt time for prayer, petitioning the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers, thus leaving the church shorthanded. God's Word has the answer, pray with the authority of God's Word.

*I would propose to you that the harvest of souls and the amount of discipleship done in the Body of Christ is up to God.* The church of Jesus Christ may be a part of making disciples of Christ if she has the same compassion for the lost that Christ had. She must be committed to Jesus' call to go and make disciples. (Matthew 28:20) She must stay dedicated to expressing a genuine faith in God's Word and walk in faithful obedience to the Lord's call to pray for laborers for the whole work of God. The Great Commission is to make disciples of Christ. (Matthew 28:20)

The church that is girded up for the true work of God has a heart to make "disciples" (*mathetes*) who believe in the teachings of Jesus Christ and His apostles. A church that is girded up has disciples of Christ who rest in the sacrifice Jesus made for them on the Cross of Calvary, disciples who have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit of Christ and who imitate Jesus' life.

*Just what laborers do we need to make true disciples of Christ?* The truths found in today's text can equip the child of God to meet Jesus' supreme Christian challenge, to pray for laborers for the church.

### **Enter the "Throne of Grace" with praise**

*It is a sad thing when the work of God is at a standstill in any local church. A work can go slowly because of a lack of committed workmen or when keys workers are overworked.* The first thing in girding up the church is to enter the "Throne of Grace" with praise.

Psalm 100:3 says, “Know that the LORD is God. It is He who made us, and we are His; we are His people, the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His name. For the LORD is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations.” (Psalm 100:3-5) Thank the Lord for His Holy Spirit empowered gifts to the church of Christ given for the purpose of edifying the Body of Christ. (Prayerfully Read 1 Corinthians 12-14; 12:8-10, 28-30; Romans 12:6-8; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 4:11; 1 Corinthians 12:7)

In writing about the Holy Spirit given gifts to the Body of Christ the Apostle Paul writes, “Now to each one the manifestation of the [Holy] Spirit is given for the common good.” (1 Corinthians 12:7) We express praise to the Lord by making time to learn what the Bible says about the Holy Spirit given gifts and seeking Him for understanding on how to exercise those gifts through sacrificial love. (1 Corinthians 12-14) We express praise to God by appreciating those who exercise their gifts in this Body of Christ for the good of others, by thanking God for them by name, and thanking them with a true and right heart. When someone does a good job, tell him. When someone is feeling like their laborers for the Lord are going nowhere, remind them that as long they are serving sacrificially, the Bible says there will be fruit from their labors in His time if they do not give up and if they serve Him wholeheartedly. (Hebrews 6:9; 1 Corinthians 15:58) The Holy Spirit’s presence will be among those who express true appreciation for what the Lord has done and is doing through His servants who experience the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

### **Trust only in God for the raising up laborers for the church**

*The church that is girded up has Christians who express true appreciation for the work of the Holy Spirit of Christ working through the servants of God and she has Christians who trust only in God for the raising up laborers for the church.*

Jesus said, “Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field.” (Matthew 9:38) The Apostle Paul tells us, “There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.” (1 Corinthians 12:4-6) The New American Standard Bible tells us, “But one and the same Spirit works all these [gifts], distributing to each one individually.” (1 Corinthians 12:11)

Christians are to trust in God alone for Holy Spirit gifted laborers because the gifts are not selected by individuals or personally solicited or handed out by anyone. Christ sets the example, He prayed all night getting direction from God His Father before calling forth the original 12 apostles of the New Testament Church. (Luke 6:12-16) If Jesus sought God in prayer then Christians can be real disciples of Christ and pray to God for Holy Spirit filled and empowered workers.

### **Anointed leaders to lead the Body of Christ in Spirit and truth**

*The Lord wants Christians to depend upon Him alone and the church that is girded up in prayer has anointed leaders to lead the Body of Christ in Spirit and truth.* In regard to congregational worship the Body of Christ is to sing the praises of her glorious Lord. Ephesians 5:19 says, “Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 5:19) Colossians 3:16 says, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.” (Colossians 3:16)

The church that is girded up with laborers for the work of the Lord has workers who are hungry for the whole counsel of God’s Word. Not much is said in the New Testament about the congregational singing service, however, clear directions are found in the Old Testament. In 2 Chronicles 29 we read of a king by the name of Hezekiah. The Bible says that he “...trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel. There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before him or after him.” (2 Kings 18:5) His first official act was to cleanse the Lord’s temple of its pollutions. (The Expositors Bible Commentary) After the purification process, the Bible says, “He stationed the Levites in the temple of the Lord with cymbals, harps and lyres in the way prescribed by David and Gad the king’s seer and Nathan the prophet; this was commanded by the Lord through His prophets.” (2 Chronicles 29:25) Hezekiah was putting together a gathering of the city officials, they were having a public worship service in the temple and Hezekiah was following the directions given by God through King David in order to have a service that was pleasing to the Lord.

King David, the man after God’s heart, (Acts 13:22) had a powerful desire in his heart to build the temple of God. (2 Samuel 7:2) However, he was not permitted to undertake the construction of God’s house. (2 Samuel 7:5-7; 1 Chronicles 22:8) Although he was not involved in the actual building of the temple of God, he did prepare for it in plans and material. (1 Chronicles 22:1-19; 28:1-29:9) He was also God’s agent in setting in order the method of temple service. We read all about that in 1 Chronicles chapters 23-26. All this was the leading of God, through David to set in order corporate worship.

In 1 Chronicles 25 we see that music is to be considered and approached as being ministry in the house of God. Therefore, the preparation of the song service should be approached and received with the same approach and reception as the proclaiming of God’s Word. Music is ministry to the Lord and to the Body of Christ and it must be blanketed in prayer and guided by the truths of God’s Word.

Listen to what the Bible says about music for the house of the Lord for public worship. “David, together with the commanders of the army, set apart some of the sons of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun for the ministry of prophesying, accompanied by harps, lyres and cymbals...” (1 Chronicles 25:1) “All these men were under the supervision of their fathers for the music of the temple of the LORD, with cymbals, lyres and harps, for the ministry at the house of God. Asaph, Jeduthun and Heman were under the supervision of the king. Along with their relatives--all of them trained and skilled in music for the LORD... Young and old alike, teacher as well as student, cast lots for their duties.” (1 Chronicles 25:6-8)

The church that is as hungry as Hezekiah was about having public worship services which are pleasing to the Lord will look to God’s Word and see what His instructions are. In regard to the song service for the house of God Christians ask God for music ministers who are “trained and skilled in music” (*lamad*). (1 Chronicles 25:7) The church is to be praying for music ministers who have studied, are able to be taught and able to teach others about music for the house of God to oversee the music ministry. The music ministry team is to be made up of Christians who are teachers and students prepared for the song services in the house of God. Both the music minister and student are to be able to exercise the ministry under supervision of a higher authority.

The truths presented in 2 Chronicles 25 are still the guide for us today. One of the best ways of getting practical application from a passage of Scripture is to take a brief look into the life of a person who is mentioned in a certain passage of Scripture.

Let us consider just one of the music ministers mentioned in 2 Chronicles 25. Asaph was placed in charge of the music ministry and he was under the authority of the king. The music ministers mentioned in 2 Chronicles 25:2-5 were under the supervision of their fathers for music in the temple of the Lord. Paul D. Gardner, writer of “Who’s Who in the Bible” tells us according to other Scriptures in the Bible, Asaph was one of the keys singers overseeing the music that was played and sung when the Ark was brought into Jerusalem as well as at other national rejoicings. (1 Chronicles 15:17-19; 16:5,7,37; 2 Chronicles 35:15) He joined in with the other Levites in leading the praise of God when the temple was consecrated. (2 Chronicles 5:12) His musical influence extended far beyond the temple and into Jewish hymn books for all time. During the revival under King Hezekiah songs were sung that were written by David and Asaph. (2 Chronicles 29:30)

God still raises up music ministers who not only lead music that proclaim the great works of God but also write music. I think of Bill Gaither whom God has and is using to write music for the House of God today. No one in our lifetime has trained more music ministers to write, lead and enable others to lead song services in public worship around the world than Bill Gaither. Bill and those he has trained have been used often by Dr. Billy Graham who has preached the gospel to more people around the world than anyone else ever has.

Over the last few years I have the privilege to visit with the “Music Ministry Team at Times Square Church.” The person who oversees that ministry is Gregory L. Thomas. He writes a lot of the music sung at Times Square Church and works with several overseers. They have trained hundreds of teachers and students for the music ministry. I know the members of Times Square Church spend hours each week prayerfully preparing for the song services and they enjoy the presence of the Holy Spirit of Christ in their worship services. Christ glorified, lives change, ministry growing.

### **Praying for ministers of music for the house of the Lord**

*The church that is girded up for vibrant public worship services has children of God praying for ministers of music for the house of the Lord. She also has Christians praying for Holy Spirit appointed overseers to lead the Body of Christ. Acts 20:28 says, “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which He bought with His own blood.” (Acts 20:28)*

Church attendees often have heard the term “The New Testament Church,” yet very few have been taught just what that means. Here in Acts we read of the Apostle Paul talking about who is to oversee the New Testament Church. The term “elder” has been so misunderstood and so watered down by a world view that we have lost the value of this ministry in nearly all our churches in America.

Alexander Strauch was visiting a large church and as he walked into the foyer he saw a big display on the wall with pictures and names of the Senior Pastor and his staff. The pictures were arranged in a pyramid with the senior pastor at the top, his three associate pastors below, and the rest of the staff completing the base of the pyramid.

As Mr. Strauch walked further into the building and down a side hall he saw another glass encasement with pictures and names of the church elders in it. That is a perfect illustration of how the modern church views eldership in the local church. Most elders are selected by age or popularity rather than by Biblical maturity in life and knowledge of God’s Word. All New Testament accounts tell of appointing Biblical elders who were overseen by those who had apostolic authority. The appointment process involved a real investigation of the man’s life to see if there was a desire to be an overseer for the Lord’s church placed with

him by the Holy Ghost. New Testament elders are to be examined to see if they meet the Biblical qualifications, then a selection process is done by those who are found faithful in their calling as overseers. Finally is the public installation and the laying on of hands for prayer.

The Pastor of New Spring Community Church in Anderson, South Carolina wrote about a burden that was upon his heart in regard to the unbiblical way churches function today. He wrote, "If you operated an airplane like most churches operate today, you would have a pilot and his crew in the cockpit, knowing how to fly that plane. They know every instrument – that is their job. But if it was run like most churches, these pilots, or this crew, before they needed to make a life protecting decision, would have to come out of the cockpit, go into first class to meet with the plumber whose cousin was once a pilot, an electrician, a housewife, and a doctor. After they have met with those people, they would take it back to the coach section for a business meeting and have a vote. After they voted they could go implement what the coach section had told them to do. Now, my question is, 'How many would want to fly on that plane as it carried it's passengers through possible storms?'"

Pastor Noble continues with, "But that is the way people want to have church. That is why so many churches are crashing and burning as their people are facing the storms of life on this earth."

The Greek Word for "overseers" (*episkopos*) is synonymous to elders, bishops and pastors. The call and appointment is the special function of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, men who take on this responsibility are to keep a close watch over themselves, prayerfully studying the Word of God so they correctly handle the Word of truth. They are to be as skillful with the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God and in living it out as a skilled pilot and his crew are at flying a 747 carrying precious souls.

### **Prayer for Biblically qualified overseers**

*The church that is girded up has a congregation that is often in prayer for Biblically qualified overseers because they are put in charge by the Holy Spirit to oversee the guiding and protecting of the precious souls purchased by Christ's own blood. She also has Christians who are serious about her teachers. James 3:1 says, "Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly." (James 3:1)*

The Apostle Paul admonishes the church to limit the number of teachers in their midst. He urges those who want to be teachers to just not assume they are teachers (*didaskaloi*). A teacher in the local church must be able to correctly handle the Word of God and there must be an application of Christian living expressed by all who would be called a teacher in the local church. Paul knew the damage that could be done by one holding the position of teacher as well as the benefits of a Christian possessing the gift of teacher appointed by Christ. (Ephesians 4:11)

People who do not attend church are constantly watching and taking mental notes. People who hold the position of teaching in the church can either help or hinder the work of God, especially in a small community. The church that is girded up to do the work of God has Christians who take the position of teacher seriously because God's Word does.

*The church that is girded up has Christians who regularly petition the Lord for laborers to work in this world. All it takes to have qualified workers is for the Body of Christ to take time to be obedient in prayer.*

One of the men of God who the Lord raised up out of this church to go out and do a work in this world is Floyd Nickelson. God called him to Christ and enabled him to grow in Christ in this church. The Lord through this church laid the foundation for his education. After moving on from this church he eventually found a place of ministry in "The Brooklyn Tabernacle Church."

The Brooklyn Tabernacle church was once a dwindling congregation. However, the Lord called Pastor Jim Cymbala and his wife Carol to oversee a work that He was about to do there. They went even though they struggled with knowing that Jim never had received any formal seminary training and Carol could not read a sheet of music. Yet through steadfast prayer--notice I said *steadfast* prayer, they put total reliance upon the Lord. Through huge trials and seeking the Lord He allowed them to learn what He wanted them to learn and brought them the help they needed. The Lord Jesus has strengthened their ministry unto Him, and raised up the needed workers so they could enjoy spiritual growth.

One ministry that has come about in The Brooklyn Tabernacle Church is the ministry of praying everything through to a completion. This is not a one time, give it a shot and see what happens, but a *steadfast* prayer time that intercedes for the needs of the Lord's work and the people who attend the church. Every Tuesday night they have a prayer service in which now two thousand Christians attend. They have all night prayer service as well.

This ministry is the power source to Carol Cymbala, a music minister now trained by the Holy Spirit to be very skilled to oversee the Grammy Award winning Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir. This is why Jim Cymbala is overseeing a church in the inner-city of New York that plants new churches in various parts of the world.

One of those churches has Floyd Nickelson serving as a Biblically qualified overseer. I know the church he serves has Christians working diligently, praying for, and training Christians in their church to teach others so they can enjoy powerful ministries overseen by Holy Spirit filled servants of the Lord.

I have had the privilege to be in several services at Times Square Church, to speak with some of their music ministries and their Biblically qualified overseers. They too are experiencing the powerful move of the Holy Spirit doing awesome things in the Body of Christ. Their church is also girded up by Christians who spend hours each week committed to prayer, praying for everything the Lord has called them to do.

Brooklyn Tabernacle and Times Square Church do not hold the keys that keep the Holy Spirit in their churches, they have prayer warriors who obey Christ, petitioning, "Send Forth" laborers for the harvest field!!!! Let us pray!!



**Title: Hungering for His Presence**  
**Theme: Praying for the Sunday Morning Service**  
**Series: Girding up the Church**

*I love the heart of the psalmist who wrote "I rejoice with those who said unto me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord.'" (Psalm 122:1) This is the heart expression of Christians who share the Apostle Paul's revelations*

of Christ and His work in the children of God.

We read about his heart and of his prayer in Ephesians 3:14-20, "For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom His whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us..." (Ephesians 3:14-20) Pray!

*I would propose to you that the Sunday morning service is meant to be a time when the children of God can see the Lord do a powerful work among His people. It should be the desire of all who attend the Sunday morning worship service to see God do a great work among those who live in Norton County Kansas because Jesus Christ was obedient unto death and gave His life for the lost in our area as well as sinners all over the world.*

I am fully convinced just as the Lord God looked upon the Israelites in Egypt and saw their misery because of their slave drivers, (Exodus 3:7) He can look down from heaven and see those who are in this world now and their misery as they are in slavery to the bondage of the flesh, the world, and the lies of the devil. Just as God sent Moses to do a great work in Egypt, in His mercy He can do a work in Norton to cause sinners to cry out to God, that He might send the Great Deliverer, the Holy Spirit of Christ to set them free from the bondage of sin.

It is my constant prayer that God would do a work in Norton and make CrossRoads Church a literal spiritual hospital. That is, a place where God is doing the powerful work of spiritual heart surgery, taking away hearts of stone and putting in hearts of flesh, where He is putting His Spirit in them moving born again Christians to keep His decrees and follow His laws. (Ezekiel 36:26,27) I pray we are church where believers in Christ are crying out "Jesus teach me to pray" and exercising Spiritual gifts out of sacrificial love.

*Just how can this come about? Just how can we be like the Apostle Paul who was in constant prayer for the Church of Christ? We read one of his intercessory prayers for the Body of Christ in Colossians 1:9-12, "For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of His will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please Him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to His glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light." (Colossians 1:9-12)*

### **"The Lord among us"**

*The Sunday morning service that is going to touch lives and cause people to say, "The Lord was among us" has Christians who are hungry for the presence of God. There is a phrase in the Old Testament that shares God's heart. We read that phrase in several passages, one of them being Exodus 25:8, "Then have them make a sanctuary for Me, and I will dwell among them." (Exodus 25:8) At least two other times the Lord God expresses His desire to dwell among His people. (Exodus 29:46; Numbers 5:3)*

The term "I will dwell among them" gives a truth that God longs to be so present with His children to receive petitions and give them His response. He longs to anoint all that is being done to enable worshipers to be aware of His presence. All through Biblical history the Lord God has granted different dispensations so mankind can prove their love for Him as they congregate to seek His presence and enjoy His work alongside others who love Him and are hungry to witness Him manifesting Himself in very revealing ways.

There is a truth of Scripture presented in what theologians call "The Shekinah Glory of God." This doctrine found throughout the Word of God is like the doctrine of the Trinity. The Trinity is God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit being the key source for attaining the perfect will of God, yet the word "Trinity" is not found in Scripture.

The word "Shekinah" (*skina*) although not occurring in the Bible is a transliteration of a Hebrew (*skn*) active verb meaning "The One who dwells" or "that which dwells." In noun form (*miskan*) it means dwelling place. In rabbinic literature this word signifies God's presence. (The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia)

In Exodus 40:34 we read that, "...the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." "Glory" (*kabod*) is a masculine singular noun meaning surrounded with which [God] appears. (Genenius Hebrew-Chaldee) Throughout the Old Testament the glory of God is the transcendent God making His presence and nearness visible to His people. The Aramaic Targum translates "Yahweh" (Lord) or "God" as Shekinah (*skina*) giving us this translation of our key text for this division of today's message, "And they shall make before Me a sanctuary and I shall cause My Shekinah to dwell among them."

The term "The Shekinah Glory of God" is described in other phrases such as "Presence of God" or "The Glory of God" or "Glory of the Lord" or "The Dwelling Place." In the Old Testament we read of spiritual leaders who did as commanded of the Lord. Then God made His presence known to everyone there. In Exodus 40:1-38 we read that so familiar truth that is throughout the Word of God, "as the Lord commanded." After the obedience of Moses, Aaron and Aaron's sons, "the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." (Exodus 40:10) The symbol of the Lord's presence was a cloud. This cloud contained fire at night. The Bible says this was "in the sight of all the house of Israel during all their travels." (Exodus 40:38)

In 1 Kings chapters 7 and 8 we read of Solomon and the priest making all the proper preparation. After the ark of the Lord's covenant was put in the "Most Holy Place" the "priest withdrew," the "glory of the Lord filled His temple." (1 Kings 8:11) The Bible says "the whole assembly of Israel was standing there..." (1 Kings 8:14) The response to God's presence was a message delivered by King Solomon. A prayer of dedication and a full consecration of the temple was made. (1 Kings 8:15-66) One of the key purposes of worship in spirit and truth is that God will do a work in us.

In the closing of Solomon's message just before the Dedication of the Temple we read what our hearts should be like and to whom we are to look to accomplish a great work in us. 1 Kings 8:57-61 says, "May the LORD our God be with us as He was with our fathers; may He never leave us nor forsake us. May He turn our hearts to Him, to walk in all His ways and to keep the commands, decrees and regulations He gave our fathers. And may these words of mine, which I have prayed before the LORD, be near to the LORD our God day and night, that He may uphold the cause of His servant and the cause of His people Israel according to each day's need, so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God and that there is no other. But your hearts must be fully committed to the LORD our God, to live by His decrees and obey His commands..." (1 Kings 8:57-61)

After King Solomon had finished dedicating the Temple of the Lord, he had his own special “Shekinah” or presence of the Lord to enjoy. In this second appearance the Lord told Solomon, “I have heard the prayer and plea you have made before Me; I have consecrated this temple, which you have built, by putting My Name there forever. My eyes and my heart will always be there. (1 Kings 9:3) “Consecrated” (*qudas*) is an active verb giving us the application that God by the anointing of His Holy Spirit sets things and people apart for Himself and for His purposes.

In this second visit, God is giving His response to the prayer of dedication of Solomon for the temple. God gives Solomon a powerful truth, Solomon and his sons may enjoy or lose God’s anointing, which is determined by their willingness to observe the decrees and commandments of the Lord. (1 Kings 9:4-9)

The radiance of the Shekinah is most revealed where there is and hunger for the Word of God and a desire to do the will of the Lord. T.B. Berakoth writes, “The Shekinah resists the proud, rebellious, sinful and the lazy.” It took hard work and planning for Moses, Solomon, the Priests, Aaron and his sons to make the proper preparation so they could enjoy the presence of the Lord in their corporate services. Although worship is set in a different (is this the right word? dispensation) today, it is those who allow the Holy Spirit of Christ to destroy rebellion, cleanse out sin and overcome laziness who will enjoy the presence of God in their corporate worship services.

It must be understood that the temple, like our places of corporate worship, are only symbols of God’s presence, only He can make His presence known “so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God and that there is no other.” (1 Kings 8:60)

### **Submitted to the Word of God**

*Church services that have the presence of God among them in a way that has life changing experiences has Christians who work hard in preparation and have submitted to the Word of God. This Body of Christ also knows in whom God has made His presence known today. John 1:1 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.” John 1:14 tells us, “The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” The word “dwelling” (*skenoo*) means to dwell as in tents so as to be transient. Another form of this word “dwelling” (*skenoma*) gives the application of literally an encampment, the temple as God’s residence, the body as the dwelling place of the soul...*

The blessing we have in Jesus Christ being God in the flesh is God making His presence known among mankind. The Holy Spirit gave Paul this revelation and it is passed on to us, "For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him," (Colossians 1:19) He also writes, "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form..." (Colossians 2:9) The word "Deity" (*theotetos*) is a strong word used only here in the New Testament calling Christ the essence of God.

Paul affirms that Christ is fully God and truly man. Under the law, the presence of God dwelt between the cherubim, in a cloud which covered the mercy-seat; but now God's presence dwells in the person of Christ, who is made up of flesh and bone so that He may declare the fullness of God. Christians are not to look to anyone or anything else to enjoy God's presence in their lives and in their corporate worship services. They need to only seek Jesus Christ with all their heart, soul, and strength and they will enjoy the presence of God.

Mark Lowry was given a wonderful truth worth grasping concerning the presence of God being among us in Christ. This revelation is powerfully presented in the song, "Mary Did You Know." In that wonderful song we read this stanza, "Mary did you know when you kissed your baby, you kissed the face of God."

### **Enjoy God's presence by true worship**

*Christians are to seek God's presence through Jesus Christ only and not demand a certain performance from Him.* They are to enjoy God's presence by true worship. John 4:23-24 says, "Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and His worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." (John 4:23)

This powerful teaching of Christ came about as He spoke with a Samaritan woman who was concerned about where she was to worship the One True God. Jesus had informed her of the type of worshipers God was looking for.

Therefore, as we desire to be aware of God's presence in our Sunday morning worship service, our focus must be on Jesus Christ and not on the style of worship or the beauty of the facilities in which we have the opportunity to congregate. Just as Jesus was articulating to the Samaritan woman that her worship must not focus on external rituals alone, but must be connected with God's Spirit, so Christians must be connected by seeking worship in spirit and truth.

Jesus, the manifestation of God in the flesh teaches Christians that it is through the Holy Spirit they can have true life. Jesus said, "...If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." (John 7:37-38) John wrote with regard to this teaching, "By this [Jesus] meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were later to receive." (John 7:39)

Jesus said, "But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you." (John 16:7) After the Holy Spirit's raising Christ from the dead, the next greatest work that God can for His children is to send the Holy Ghost into their spiritual hearts.

Listen to Jesus' promise, "If you love Me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever--the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see Me anymore, but you will see Me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in My Father, and you are in Me, and I am in you. Whoever has My commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves Me. He who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I too will love him and show Myself to him." (John 14:15-21)

Just as God in the Old Testament had revealed His presence to those who sought Him in accordance to His will, and God revealed His fullness in Christ being God in the flesh, Christians can enjoy the presence of God and Christ within them, working within their spiritual hearts through the person of the Holy Spirit of Christ. Romans 8:11 tells us, "And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit, who lives in you." (Romans 8:11) Jesus called the Holy Spirit "Counselor" (*parakletos*) meaning He is the representative of Christ. Jesus uses the word "another" (*allos*) meaning another of equal quality.

Just as Christ was God's presence in the flesh, the Holy Spirit of God, in Christ's name has His presence indwelling Christians. The Holy Spirit wrote through the Apostle Paul giving us this revelation, "In Him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in Him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit." (Ephesians 2:21)

After looking at all God's Word has to say about enjoying God's presence in the Old and New Testament, the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia gives this description of the Holy Spirit, "The presence of the Holy Spirit is also a representation of the Shekinah."

During this dispensation the Lord has chosen to bless us with His presence through the power of the Holy Spirit bringing revelation and illumination of the Word of God, so Christians may be a dwelling place for the Holy Spirit of Christ. The Holy Spirit enables Christians to live in a way that allows the peoples of the earth to know that the Lord is God and that there is no other.

*Psalm 89:15 says, "Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you, who walk in the light of your presence, O Lord."*

T.B. Sanhedrin wrote, "The Shekinah, like the rays of the sun, is at many places at the same time and more present at some places than others." God is with His children "always." However, there are times and seasons when He chooses to make His children more aware of His presence. The presence of the Lord is usually experienced where there is a hunger for God and for His will as well as full surrender in obedience to the whole counsel of the written Word of God.

The first step to enjoying Holy Spirit revelation of God's presence is to take that step of obedience in prayer. At this time I am going to give powerful prayer pointers supported with Scripture for enabling us to enjoy times of God's presence in our Sunday morning services so people can say, "God is doing a work among us."

**Begin with praise:** Psalm 100:4-5 says, "Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His name. For the LORD is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations."

Thank the Lord for blessing us with the opportunity to congregate as the Body of Christ in such a beautiful facility and walk in obedience to His Word. "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching." (Hebrews 10:25)

**Invite the Holy Spirit:** To enable you to pray according to God's Word and with a disciplined mind. Ephesians 6:18 says, "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."

**Pray For:** The Holy Spirit's anointing on the teachers and in the hearts of the Sunday school students, "God has revealed it to us by His Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. (1 Corinthians 2:10)

**Pray That:** Those who attend the song service will die to their own thoughts and grasp the Lord's will and be responsive to the Holy Spirit's enabling to sing in spirit and truth. Ephesians 5:19 says, "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord."

**Pray That:** The bulletins and announcements will reflect the Lord's will with regard to providing opportunities for all to become involved in a local Body of Christ.

**Pray That:** the Body of Christ will take time to enjoy the Bible studies, the services and the Christian fellowship times offered through CrossRoads Church. The Bible says, "Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; but blessed is he who keeps the law." (Proverbs 29:18)

**Pray That:** Through the people who attend this church, God will provide for the needs of this church Body and that He will prove Himself faithful to those who are obedient to His will. "Jehovah-Jireh," the Lord will Provide found in Genesis 22:14. "Jireh" meaning to see or to provide or see as prophet, God always providing, adequate when the time comes. Malachi 3:10 says, "Bring in the whole tithe... 'Test me in this,' says the Lord Almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.'"

**Pray That:** God would consecrate our sound system and everything in this church for His glory. "Consecration" is the separation of persons, utensils, buildings, or places from that of secular uses to be used for the worship of the Lord. The Bible says, "Then Moses took the anointing oil and anointed the tabernacle and everything in it, and so consecrated them. He sprinkled some of the oil on the altar seven times, anointing the altar and all its utensils and the basin with its stand, to consecrate them." (Leviticus 8:10-11) As the vessels were being devoted, symbolically Moses was presenting a picture of the Holy Spirit's anointing, using the vessels for blessing and grace.

**Pray That:** The message of the Lord through the spoken and written Word will spread and people will respond to it with a right heart. 2 Thessalonians 3:1 says, "Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you."

**Pray That:** The prayer time would be ministry to the Lord Jesus, to the Body of Christ and pleasing to God. Jesus said, "My [Father's] house will be called a house of prayer." (Matthew 21:13) Psalm 116:1-2 says, "I love the Lord, for He heard my voice, He heard my cry for mercy. Because He turned His ear to me, I will call on Him as long as I live."

**Pray That:** God will do a work in Norton and make us a part of it. Plead for His mercy and that He would deliver people from the bondage of the flesh, the lures of the world, and the lies of the devil; that He would make CrossRoads Church a spiritual hospital, where the Holy Spirit is doing spiritual heart surgery, taking away hearts of stone and giving repentant sinners a heart of flesh so they may be able to love the Lord and have an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ; where the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ is giving Christians a powerful thirst and hunger for the Word of God, Where Christians are saying, “Lord Jesus teach me to pray,” where we are seeing Holy Spirit fruit being manifested in the lives of born again Christians and Holy Spirit gifts being exercised through sacrificial love.

**Close with Praise:** The call to pray is from God’s Word and we are given a sure promise, “The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.” (James 5:16b) Our righteousness is accomplished by having Jesus Christ as personal Savior and Lord. By His sacrificial death and victory over sin we are found to be righteous in God’s sight. For this be sure to thank God and Jesus Christ.

Hungering for the presence of God in the Sunday morning service begins with obedience in prayer and diligence in what He calls us to do with a life that says, *“I rejoice with those who said unto me, ‘Let us go to the house of the Lord.’”*

Let us Pray!!!!

**Closing Summary:** These messages came to me as I prayerfully served the Lord and the Body of Christ while exercising the gift of pastor at CrossRoads Church in Norton, Kansas. When I began to oversee this church it was known as “Community Full Gospel Church.” It was a small dying church with no vision for the future, suffering from the effects of the cancer of traditionalism. We set our focus on prayer, fasting, praise and deep study of the Word of God. In eight years the Lord enabled us to unite two dying churches (Baptist and Pentecostal), have a pastor on full time salary, remodel the building and church grounds (\$30,000.00), have eight powerful evangelistic outreaches, and become number one in effectively getting the Word of God out of the church walls into every single home in Norton County, Kansas on a weekly basis. For this we do praise the Lord!!!! Notes for each message (for passing out to students) are available on our website, [www.standatthecrossroads.com](http://www.standatthecrossroads.com) Click on “*Messages*,” scroll down to “**Series, Girding Up the Local Church**” and click on the desired “**CrossRoads Notes**.”

Praying that you will apply the truths of these messages to gird up the church you attend, thus overcoming the cancers of faddism, traditionalism, legalism, and denominationalism.