



Relating Well Pt 2: Five Places of Prayer in a Healthy Church

October 11, 2020

Text: Acts 4:23-31

First, let us review the Five levels of Honor from last week. A Health Church demonstrates:

1. Honor towards Christ (our Head)
2. Honor towards Elders/Pastors (our undershepherds)
3. Honor towards the flock, God's by the leaders
4. Honoring the "House," the local church itself
5. Honor one to another (our relationships)

I'd like to use the same pattern today to discuss the Five Places of Prayer in a Healthy Church:

1. Passionate Prayers to our God
2. Protective Prayers for our Leaders
3. Pastoral Prayers for God's Flock
4. Purity, Power, and prayers for Peace over the Church
5. Penitent and Protective Prayers for one another

First, some prayer-review and thoughts on our Text:

1. What is prayer?
 - Prayer is simply communication with God. It can involve praise and adoration, intimate communing, thanksgiving, confession, reflection, vows, supplication, intercession, and prayers for healing, deliverance, and transformation.
 - Prayer is an extremely vital but often neglected part of our walk with Christ both as individuals and as a corporate body. This should not be so! Jesus said:

Matthew 21:13 (KJV) ...It is written, *My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.*

- As we said when last teaching on corporate prayer (June 25, 2017, "The Power of Corporate Supplication"), "There is an undeniable call in Scripture for the people of God to *always be praying*. We are to live prayer-filled lives, individually and corporately. Prayer should be the heartbeat of our walk with God in Christ, and empower our love for others, study of Scripture, obedience to the precepts of God, and service to His body the Church."
2. Why is prayer so important?
 - Well first, it is commanded! (Luke 18:1; 1 Tim 2:8)
 - It honors God! (Matt 6:9)
 - It cultivates a Godward focus (2 Chr 20:12)
 - It unifies our hearts (Acts 1:14)
 - The very act of prayer humbles us that our God might move among us...
3. What is a "place" of prayer? From the Greek, *topos*, a *place* is a "marked off space; a station held by one in a company or assembly." (Thayer's) It is something always present!

Acts 4:23-31

1. Now as Acts 4 opens, we find the religious leaders angry at the apostles (particularly Peter and John) for healing a lame man from his mother's womb (3:1-11), and preaching "Jesus and the resurrection of the dead" to the people. Scripture says they were "grieved." (v2)
2. As a result, they arrested ("laid hands on them" v3) Peter and John. God moved anyway!

Acts 4:4 (KJV) *Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.*

3. Not happy to simply arrest the apostles, they "set them in the midst" of the council (vv5-7) to "examine" them. They asked, "By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?" (v7)
4. Peter and John not only preached a powerful defense of the healing (vv8-12), but also delivered a strong declaration of God's authority (vv19-20). Some of the things they said, we need to say again and again today!

Acts 4:12 (KJV) *Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*

Acts 4:18-20 (KJV) *And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. 20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.*

5. After they were threatened and let go, they reported what happened to the church (v23). We then see one of the most beautifully edifying, unifying, and Spirit-drawing prayers in Acts (vv24-30). It contains much theological richness and spiritual health and strength!
 1. They immediately went to prayer instead of focusing on their own thoughts/opinions (v24)
 2. They lifted their voices "with one accord." No personal agendas! (v24)
 3. They acknowledged the authority of God over the church! (v24) The word they used for "LORD" means "absolute ruler." (Strong's)
 4. They also acknowledged the sovereignty of God over all creation! (v24)
 5. They prayed the Scriptures, quoting Psalms 2:1-2 (vv25-26)
 6. They remembered the example of Jesus and how their LORD suffered (vv27)
 7. They also reminded themselves that God works these things together for His glory! (v28)
 8. They acknowledged the reality of the situation, but nevertheless asked for the strength to keep preaching! (v29)
 9. They begged for God's power, thereby humbly confessing their deep need! (v30)
6. Verse 31 gives us more insight into the health of the prayer life of the Jerusalem Church early in Acts:
 - Again, "they" prayed. They sought the LORD together! In such a spiritually-charged environment, does anyone think many members missed that prayer meeting?

- The place was shaken! Whatever this means, we want it! At a minimum, it means the power of God was present!
 - Again, they were “assembled together.” A healthy-church prays together!
 - As a result, they were filled with the Holy Ghost. We need the same!
 - Their “filling” was not just for themselves; they went forth and spoke the Word of God to others with renewed boldness!
 - They did so even in the midst of persecution!!
7. CRC, if we are to be an even healthier church, we must pray. And we must pray:
- Despite current and future difficulties!
 - As individuals, but also assembled together!
 - In humility, that His Presence may be in the midst of us!
 - For the power of God!
 - According to the will of God!
 - With a determination to obey God rather than men! (Acts 5:29)

Five Places of Prayer in a Healthy Church:

1. A Healthy Church prays Passionate Prayers to our God (Lk 18:1; 1 Tim 2:8, Act 1:14, 2:42-47)

- **Acts 2:42-47 (KJV)** *And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. **43** And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. **44** And all that believed were together, and had all things common; **45** And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. **46** And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, **47** Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*

2. A Healthy Church prays Prayers of Perseverance for our Leaders (2 Thess 3:1-5; Eph 6:10-20; Col 4:2-3)

- **2 Thessalonians 3:1-5 (KJV)** *Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: **2** And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith. **3** But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil. **4** And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you. **5** And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.*

3. A Healthy Church prays has leaders that pray Pastoral Prayers over God's Flock (Col 1:1-14, Php 1:3-6; Eph 3:14-21)

- **Ephesians 3:14-21 (KJV)** *For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **15** Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, **16** That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; **17** That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being*

rooted and grounded in love, 18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; 19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. 20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, 21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

4. A Healthy Church prays for Purity, Power, and Peace for the Church

- **1 Thessalonians 5:12-24 (KJV)** *And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; 13 And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves. 14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. 15 See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men. 16 Rejoice evermore. 17 Pray without ceasing. 18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. 19 Quench not the Spirit. 20 Despise not prophesyings. 21 Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. 22 Abstain from all appearance of evil. 23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.*

5. A Healthy Church prays Penitent and Protective Prayers for one another (Jam 5:16)

- **James 5:13-20 (KJV)** *Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. 14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: 15 And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. 16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. 17 Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. 18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit. 19 Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; 20 Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.*

Practical Suggestions: Putting Honor and Prayer into Practice

Leveling up our Honor:

1. To God: Raise your reverence! (See March 2020 preaching). Love AND Fear God. Handle His Word with care. Practice daily obedience.
2. Towards Leaders: Submit to them and respect their authority. Do not allow gossip and slander towards them. Give them the benefit of the doubt. Repent when you are wrong. Move towards, not away.

3. Towards God's people from Leaders: Teach the truth. Lead with humility. Guard them from false teaching. Respect their homes. Do not speak ill of them. Repent when you are wrong.
4. Towards the Church: Be an honorable and passionate church member: don't miss services and sermons, come to prayer, give, serve, be punctual, help us grow.
5. Towards one another: Go out of your way to build loving relationships every Sunday and during the week. Show deference in word and deed each time you are together. Practice tangible care each week. Use proper honorifics when called for; treat one another as brothers and sisters!

Properly "Placing" Prayer:

1. To God: Develop a personal prayer schedule if you don't have one. Prayer requires intentionality. Many people find a morning devotional time to be a blessing.
2. For Leaders: Talk more with your leaders; ask, "How can my family be praying for you?" Make a note of the response.
3. For God's People: Similarly, leaders must also ask, "How can I pray for you?" and pray for the people daily. (Note: Suggestions 2 & 3 suggests real relationship and require increased communication!)
4. For the Church: Make every effort to pray for your church daily (maybe during family worship!). Also, make times of corporate prayer a priority! Prayer is not an add on; it is a vital part of our worship!
5. For one another: Pray with and for your family. Fellowship with other members and ask them about their prayer needs. Love hard!

Let it be so LORD; Amen!