

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

REGIONAL PRAYER

“And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord.” Ac.17:26-27

“Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” 2 Tim.2:22

“So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it...” Ezek.22:30

“And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the Lord for it; for in its peace you will have peace.” Jer.29:7

“Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer... For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.” Is.56:7

Primary Description of God’s House:

God ultimately defines His dwelling place not primarily in terms of a structure and a geography but in terms of a family (Is.60:1-2; 1 Pt.2:5; Eph.2:19-22). He said that His house would be called a house of prayer for all nations, that is, every people group retaining their distinct ethnicity yet relating to Him and to one another as a covenant community (Is.56:7). Because God sees His people as a house in which He dwells He calls us a temple. Because our relationship with Him is anchored in the reality that He dwells in a temple, He is to be worshipped, as such we realize that not only are we His temple, but we are also it’s priests (Ex.19:6; 1 Pt.2:9-10).

“...you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” 1 Pt.2:9

“Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone, in whom the whole building, being

fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.” Eph.2:19-22

Primary Activity in God’s House:

The primary activity in God’s heavenly house is beholding His glory (Rev.4). Out of the ministry of beholding bursts forth unceasing worship and adoration expressed in indescribable joy, glorious song and the constant eruption of “Holy!, Holy!, Holy!” This is to be the primary activity in His spiritual house as well (2 Cor.3:18).

“Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn’t. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless numbers of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity, but worship abides forever. Worship therefore is the fuel and goal of missions. It is the goal of missions because in missions we simply aim to bring the nation into the white-hot enjoyment of God’s glory.”¹

Primary Purpose of God’s House:

In 1646, at the request of the English Parliament, a detailed confession of faith and a systematic approach to discipleship were drafted and subsequently labeled as the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Westminster Catechism respectively. These documents had an historic impact not only on the Church of England but on the principle formation of the Protestant church as well. One of the crowning and most famous declarations of the catechism is this. *“Man’s chief and highest end is to glorify God, and fully to enjoy him forever.”*—AD 1647 Westminster Assembly.

In recent years theologian and Bible teacher John Piper has offered a revision of this stunning confession, “The chief end of man is to glorify God by enjoying Him forever.” - John Piper [2]. To this He adds the comment, “Glorify” does not mean make glorious. It means [to] reflect or display as glorious.”²

The Work of the Church in a City/Region:

The work of the church in a city is dynamically related to prayer. Our mission includes outreach, evangelism and discipleship fitted around the centrality of day and night worship and prayer. But not just for the sake of personal growth and experience. We are to be a corporate people who relate to God with one mind and one mouth (Rom.15:5-6). Jesus poured out His longing desire before the Father that the church would be one with each as He and the Father are One (Jn.17:21).

The Goal of the Church in a City/Region:

The goal of the church in a city includes bringing many sons to Christ. But salvation is just the door into understanding and experiencing the fullness of the revelation of who He is. God’s ultimate

desire has been and is still to dwell together with his people in unveiled, unbroken harmony (Is.66:1-2).

We are also to be a transformative people who bring the reality of God's Kingdom to bear upon every level of society (Mt.5:13-16). Transformation happens as people encounter a living God and are continually impacted by His beauty, His glory and His power. As we behold Jesus, we are transformed into His image, and as we bear His glory our response is worship. As our worship centers around His beauty, dynamic interaction with His Spirit takes place from within. Encounter that leads to interaction leads us back into encounter that gives way to greater interaction.

The Method of the Church in a City/Region:

Understanding intercession as both the catalyst and the goal is critical to methodology (Jn.15:16). "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you." -Jn 15:16

If prayer is simply utilitarian than it is not the goal. Prayer is more than the way that things get done, it is the way of the Kingdom. Deep interaction with the Spirit reveals what is in God's heart. As we realize the longings of His heart and interact with His presence we speak forth not only our desire but His desire back to Him asking Him to perform all that He longs to do (Mt.6:9-10).

"Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." -Mt.6:9-10

"Prayer is more than just an invitation to partner in requests. Prayer is the very conversation that takes place between the Father and the agonizing of a son or daughter being led down the way of the cross. Prayer is how we say yes to the processes that bring our maturity. Prayer is the safeguard we set in place on our own lives to ensure that in ten and twenty years we don't ease into complacency as ministry increases and lose our first love. Prayer is the way of the kingdom. It's the very umbilical cord that connects us to the nutrients of a God rich in love and desiring to show mercy to a thousand generations.

We are appointed not only to proclaim, but first to behold. We are a priesthood of believers. Our eternal commission will not always involve outreach and missions but will always involve ministry to the Lord through worship and intercession. Saying this, however, doesn't diminish the importance of outreach and missions. It actually greatly magnifies its significance because missions is unto worship. We preach so that all may hear, so that as many as will, as many as are called, may believe, so that those who believe may behold His glory and those that behold his glory may become like Him and magnify Him and forever experience and proclaim the endless depths of his excellencies. Therefore, as we minister to the Lord we are called to bear much fruit so that what we ask in prayer would be granted to us (Jn.15:16-17)."³

Jesus dynamically links prayer and missions in Lk.10:2, "The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." Biblically speaking, missional methodology is not merely prayer first, it is prayer central. Building prayer in a city that connects biblically to missions will result not only in church transformation but also in church growth.

¹John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, (Grand Rapids, Baker Books:2010), p 35.

² John Piper, *Desiring God*, p. 18

³Zach Dykstra, *A Call to Prayer*, p.133