

# BEGINNING MY PERSONAL PRAYER JOURNEY

---

[THE FOLLOWING PAGES WERE ADAPTED FROM OUR STUDYGUIDE, A CALL TO PRAYER: A PRACTICAL STUDY GUIDE FOR JOEL 2:11-17](#)

## How Do I Get Started?

You may have a real desire to pray but be asking yourself, "How? I mean how do I pray, for how long? I'm not a spiritual leader or an intercessor, actually I think I might be an evangelist, I might even have the gift of healing but I definitely wouldn't call myself a prayer warrior." That's ok, whether you're a seasoned intercessor and leader or your prayer life consists of groanings immediately preceding exams and job interviews God is able to make all grace abound to you (that should make you smile!).

Let's take a look at how to get started. First, it's helpful to realize that a healthy prayer life has two broad categories; the first is personal prayer and the second is corporate prayer. Our personal prayer lives are essential to our personal growth and spiritual vitality. We are required to "get oil" ahead of time (Mt.25:1-13). This getting oil is directly related to dynamic interaction with the Holy Spirit.

Now, I realize that for many folks, rules are essential. I mean, if we don't set parameters then we may as well head for the hills and avoid the chaos which is surely on its way, right? Seriously, imagine the carnage...(cold shudder)... For another group, I just said "rules". Could there be a greater sacrilege? Probably not. Rules? Hey man, I'm not livin' in your box, and neither is God... Ok, I get it, but let me explain it this way.

When the hole is dug and the foundation for a house is ready to be laid, forms are built. Large double-walls are constructed outlining the shape of the entire house. They're fastened in place and then concrete is poured in and then left to harden. Once the concrete is firmly set and cured the forms are removed leaving strong, solid, perfectly shaped walls on which to build the decks and structure of the home. Well, our "rules" function a bit like those forms. We set parameters in place to help guide and govern our time and focus. This helps us to set a routine of sorts, you know, to get the current moving a bit. Kind of like heading to the gym for the first time in a long time, it takes a minute to settle in and see results. As any qualified trainer will tell you, day by day consistency is a lot healthier all around than seasons of overeating followed by seasons of crash dieting.

So what kind of parameters are we talking about? Glad you asked.

### **Time in Prayer**

Time is a currency. We spend it on what we value most. And like currency, time is either wasted or invested to produce a return. So this is where we start. We simply make time to pray. But we don't stop there. We get a bit more intentional. We set a schedule, an appointment of sorts. We pick a time and commit to showing up. Ok, so you've set a time. Now find a place. Preferably a quiet, out of the way place. This might be at home, your favorite coffee spot or even the local library. I laugh as I write this because I can think of many occasions where my prayer time involved me in a broken recliner with no less than three of my children perched upon my head and shoulders. I guess the lesson in that is something we begin to learn sooner rather than later; there is no perfect time and there is no perfect place. I can confidently assert to you however, that commitment, not circumstance, is the key.

My wife and I use the term intercessory missionaries, or prayer

missionaries to describe our lifestyle. We do the work of missions from the place of prayer. This means that for us, we commit a certain amount of our time to prayer as part of our job. Sometimes, when I tell this to people, they stare at me wide eyed, imagining that for hours at a time I sit, eyes closed, hands lifted, in silence, rapturous or not, immovable and unshakeable. My prayer time is pretty real, as they say. It involves music, Bible study and intercession, oh yeah, and we home-school all four of our children, so my office door works overtime!

I do not believe that time in prayer is like those terrible snap-backed hats I remember as a kid, where one size fits all. I believe that there are common elements to effective prayer but as far as what you do when, it's a custom fit. There are times when certain songs or certain albums really help to guide my time in prayer, other times, silence is golden. There are seasons when I rely on my prayer lists to help me focus for consistency' sake, other times prayer flows like a natural spring from my spirit, spontaneous and full.

### **Scripture in Prayer**

Scripture is central to prayer because it wonderfully articulates eternal truths about God and gives us language to speak back to Him. We want to incorporate Bible-reading time into a life of prayer. There are many good read-the-Bible-in-a-year type plans available for free on the internet to help you get started if this is new for you. I might just recommend something simple. I like to read a book at a time. Pick one from the New Testament and when you've finished pick one from the Old Testament. This is a great way to familiarize yourself with textual truths as well as to encounter God related to these truths.

As I'm sure you've realized, the Bible is a book like no other, whose words are living and active, able to convict, encourage, empower and free us just by reading them and paying attention to what God is

saying as we do. But we want to dive deep into the scriptures as well, so planning for times of study is essential.

Many folks imagine that they cannot understand the scripture, much less commentaries and scholarly articles. And while, admittedly, there are some difficult texts and commentaries to work through, you do not need to be a Greek scholar to study your Bible. Get a notepad and grab a pencil. Take notes as you read. Underline or write down what really stands out to you. Write down your questions and your own comments as you go. To aid you, there are lots of free Bible-study sites, commentaries and study resources accessible on-line. Remember though, that the point of Bible study is to aid in encounter. What I mean is that we don't primarily study the scripture so that we can teach it to someone else. We primarily study the scripture so that we can better understand and walk with its Author. Jesus had these difficult words to say to certain Jewish scholars of His day,

*"You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life." Jn.5:39-40*

### **Transformation in Prayer**

Time spent with the Holy Spirit ought to end up with a pretty good time to fruit ratio. It's possible to spend hours at length studying scripture and making requests in prayer without seeing a dynamic overflow in the rest of our lives. Throughout the Biblical narrative, those that spent time in the presence of the Lord were transformed. They didn't remain the same.

Meditating on the scripture and making requests are not necessarily the same as encountering the Living One. Remember our text from earlier in the study,

*"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to*

*glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Cor.3:18*

There should be an inward transformation as we pray and study.

Jesus said,

*"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. These things I command you, that you love one another." Jn.15:16-17*

Jesus didn't just appoint us to the Great Commission,

*"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Mt.28:19-20*

He appointed us to the Great Commandment,

*"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." Mt.22:37*

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 experiencing and proclaiming 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).

### **Reward in Prayer**

Jesus taught His disciples to pray because,

*"...your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly." Mt.6:6*

God seeks to motivate us to personal prayer by promising open reward. When we pray to the Father in secret, our Father sees what we are doing and greatly values it. He rewards us for those little moments and acts of obedience. Remember, Jesus didn't teach us "if we pray", He taught us "when we pray" (Mt.6:7). And just like any good father, we seek to teach our children primarily through encouragement and reward, especially when the task is difficult. The promise of open reward isn't necessarily that men would be notified of our achievements and laud us for our commitments. Actually, it would seem that Jesus taught the opposite, *"And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward."* Mt.6:5

In truth, the openness of our reward won't primarily be in this age. *"Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints."* Rev.19:7-8

There will be a day when our righteous deeds will be on display and we will be fully rewarded for every act of obedience, whether small or great. But there is another dimension to the openness of our reward in this age as well.

One of the uses for the Greek word, φανερός [phaneros]; translated in Mt.6:6 as "openly" in the NKJV, is "obvious".[1] In other words, the Lord's reward, or blessing, on the life of one faithful in prayer will be obvious to others.

Jesus warned the church at Ephesus to repent of their backslidden condition or He would remove their lampstand. Now this is not talking about their salvation or their eternal reward, rather it speaks to their prominence in public ministry (Rev.1:12; 2:4-5). As darkness increases, the need for light increases. In the day of deepest

darkness and the most intense pressure, believers and ministries with established prayer lives will shine like brightness. It will be obvious to those around them that God's glory is resident.

*"For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; But the Lord will arise over you, And His glory will be seen upon you." Is.60:2*

*"Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament." Dan.12:3*

In His Olivet Discourse, Jesus is questioned by His disciples about the signs of His return and the end of the age. He speaks to them about tremendous social, political and religious fluctuations and bringing world-wide difficulty and says to them, "See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet." (Mt.24:6) In Luke's version, he records Jesus describing this same time frame this way, "...men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken." (Lk.21:26) In that day the open reward for prayer will be ministry that flows from a heart that is confident in love, unoffended at Jesus' leadership and bold in its proclamation of the truth.

Right now much of the church in the West is expecting more money, better circumstances and less discomfort. But we know from the scriptures that all things will be shaken (Hag.2:6-7; Heb.12:27) and tested and we want to go deep ahead of time understanding that in no way, shape or form do we have the strength to endure till the end apart from the effective working of the Holy Spirit within us and through us. Prayer releases the grace necessary for God to cut channels in us through which His river can powerfully flow.

*"He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive..." Jn.7:38-39*

## **Resistance in Prayer**

Because of the way that God has established His kingdom, we are called to pray. But for different reasons, we can be tempted to give up. This is precisely why Jesus told the story of the widow and the unjust judge in Lk.18:1-8.

*"Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart..." Lk.18:1*

Jesus understands our weakness perfectly (Heb.4:15). He also understands the leadership of God perfectly. He knows that we are prone to wander. He knows that we have little faith and little courage. This is why one of the things I admire most about His leadership style is the complete lack of apologetics He provides when requiring difficult things from his followers. He never seems intimidated by the reality that He may lose some folks if He doesn't soften the blow. This is so unlike how we do things today! We're professional softeners.

We do it with our children, we do it with our friends and we do it with our congregations. But not Jesus. He assured his followers of His love, gave them a command and promised them that He would help them to finish strong. He didn't make excuses for His delay, He didn't make excuses for His directives and He doesn't make excuses for His discipline.

There will be resistance to prayer. Sometimes the resistance comes from our own discouragement, sometimes it comes from our adversary, the devil (Dan.10:12-14), sometimes it comes from wicked human beings (2 Thess.3:1-2) and sometimes it comes because God's leadership requires something from us that we would rather not embrace on our journey to answered prayer.

God is interested in our maturity more than He is interested in our comfort. This might be difficult to imagine until you consider a parent requiring that a child does his or her best in school, persevering through challenges, exercising diligence on projects and

homework and choosing to cooperate with classmates, teachers and school policies all in the name of future successes. Why should it seem strange to us that the journey is long and replete with difficulty. Didn't Jesus speak clearly when He said,

*"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Jn.16:33*

*"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it."*  
*Lk.9:23-25*

*"And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple." Lk.14:27*

And this also relates to prayer.

*"And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business. When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. And He said to those who sold doves, 'Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!"*  
*Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up." Jn.2:14-17*

*I have become a stranger to my brothers, and an alien to my mother's children; because zeal for Your house has eaten me up, and the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me. When I wept and chastened my soul with fasting, that became my reproach. I also made sackcloth my garment; I became a byword to them. Those who sit in the gate speak against me, and I am the song of the drunkards. But as for me, my prayer is to You, O Lord, in the acceptable time; O God, in the multitude of Your mercy, hear me in the truth of Your salvation." Ps.69:8-13*

Jesus, the greater David, carried on His shoulders what we might call

today a burden for prayer. It brought tremendous resistance in his life. There was no portion of His existence that wasn't radically prodded and altered by such an immense pressure. As intercessors, we too, must share in this burden. And this is why Jesus told the story, so that when we pray we too wouldn't give up...

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.

## **Review**

Let the ideas we've just discussed create a context for why we pray and let's review how we get started:

1. SET A TIME
2. FIND A PLACE
3. INCLUDE YOUR BIBLE AND A NOTEBOOK
4. WRITE A PRAYER LIST
5. DON'T GIVE UP...

*[1] Thomas, R. L. (1998). New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek dictionaries: updated edition. Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc.*

## **What About Corporate Prayer, How Do I Do That?**

### **Start One by Joining One**

I once sat in a meeting where I told a pastor friend of mine that the the easiest way to grow prayer in your city is to join an ongoing,

healthy prayer meeting. I still hold to that. If you have a vision to pray for your city, region or nation find like-minded people that are already praying and join them. As I mentioned earlier, my wife and I are prayer missionaries. Our job description includes mobilizing and catalyzing prayer in our region and one of the ways that we do this is by regularly attending and serving at other leader's prayer meetings.

### **The Importance of Relationship**

The body of Christ is more than just an idealistic concept. It's a people learning to relate to one another in love. As such, healthy relationships are essential for church growth. This rings true for growing prayer together. Consistent, long-termed corporate prayer requires vision, partnership and trust. Building trust takes time. We need to see one another's character in action in order for deep roots of partnership grow.

I believe one of the biggest detriments to the viability of prayer in any region are previous prayer efforts by churches and leaders which have failed due to division. There are other reasons why prayer efforts fail and these should be addressed and if necessary corrected, in such a way that healing is promoted and life restored into intercessors, leaders and ministries. But war in the camp, so to speak, is disastrous because it demonstrates from the top down an unwillingness to apply the outworking of grace in order that God's highest ideal for that group or movement would be realized.

Now, I am sensitive to many of the unseens that take place behind the scenes. Every time leaders chose to separate doesn't mean that factions and division have won the day. I have personally been involved in situations where separation in prayer effort was due to the need for one group to grow on their own. And they did, and we did! Remember, God sometimes initiates separation.

*"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to*

*his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” Gen.2:24*

But when separation exists because we are unwilling to work together, or unwilling to work through differences according to the way in which the scripture requires, then we affect, often long-term, damage to the progress of prayer.

Because corporate prayer, Biblically speaking, concerns the culture of the church more than simply praying about success in ministry, impact in message or galvanizing the infrastructure of an organization, we need to develop a long-term perspective for working together with others, even those with whom we don't necessarily see eye to eye.

Give special attention to relationships with those who have a similar desire to pray corporately. Let them see your good example, your speech, conduct, love, faith and purity (1 Tim.4:12). Don't just lead by principle. Remember that you are working with people that in many ways are just as weak as you are. It takes time to grow in revelation. Don't expect that something that has taken you years to understand is going to be learned in moments by those around you. Lead with humility and patience. Remember, your character and leadership style will be for many your most valid testimony concerning the importance of gathering for prayer.

### **Plan for Success**

Think long-term. Don't seek to measure the success of your prayer meetings by the number of people that attend or even the number hours that you meet. Success in prayer has more to do with consistency than anything else. Brick upon brick builds the wall. Thinking long-term will cause you to have to ask critical questions regarding what values will govern your meeting and what your central focus will be. It is good to ask these types of questions. Jesus said, "For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it — lest,

after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'" Lk.14:28-30

Often people start a prayer meeting with unrealistic expectations, especially those with a burden to see day and night prayer become a reality in their cities. It can be easy to put the proverbial cart before the horse. Start slow. Try meeting in your home once a week or once every other week for an hour or so. Add some music to your time. Maybe you know a friend who plays the keyboard and sings. If not, grab a CD, plug in the iPod or go online and connect to any number of archived worship sets. Remember that worship and prayer are one reality before God's throne (Rev.4-5).

Make prayer a priority. Don't let every little event upset your prayer schedule. Be just as faithful in prayer together when it's the two of you as when it's the fifteen of you. You might be surprised to know that people are longing to pray together but are often hesitant to commit because they are waiting to see if you're really going to show up when you say you are. Give folks some time to realize that you're serious and let them come as their able. Don't despise the day of small beginnings (Zech.4:10), especially if you feel called to be a builder and an ambassador for prayer in your church, on your campus or in your region.

Don't go crazy with a website and an organizational chart just yet. Build a history in prayer with a few faithful friends. Start with a one-year commitment on the front-end and reassess your meeting after that. Look for creative and practical ways to connect folks with what you're doing without overwhelming them. Let others know when and where you meet and consider drawing up an informational page to help those new to your meetings connect with the why's and what's of what you're doing.

## **Starting Your own Prayer Meeting**

Don't get overwhelmed with the "corporateness" of prayer. Remember, corporate prayer is not necessarily the same thing as city-wide prayer. You don't have to get every leader and every believer to pray together. You simply need to start praying. Get a friend or two and go for it. Many of us would have no second thoughts about getting together once a week with friends for dinner or a movie or a brisk walk around the park. We just make a phone call, set a time and go. No planning meeting necessary. Keep it simple.

You're not an island. You can't do it all yourself. And, as I'm sure I don't need to remind you, you don't have all the answers. Include other people and, for the love of Pete (whatever that means), don't stop attending church. If you need to withdraw from something, try caffeine or TV or trans-fat, but not healthy body life and fellowship. Don't be afraid to lead. Is ok to set guidelines for your meetings. You're not the enforcer, but gently feel the need to lead the room into a place of engagement as the situation requires. Be sensitive to what the Holy spirit is saying and how He is directing. You may be surprised to find out that He is not as easily quenched as you might think. Making a mistake in leadership will not chase Him off. Remember, the call to prayer was His idea.

Be clear about the purpose of your meeting. Why are you meeting, what does it accomplish and where is it all going? You will need to be able to answer questions like this and more in order to help others along the way. One of the great blessings in my own journey has come from realizing my own lack of understanding through trying to explain something to someone else. Let those around you drive you to the place of study.

## **Stand in Faith**

I really, really like this part. Standing in faith can be incredibly simple

and everyone can do it. As a matter of fact, without faith, our prayer meetings will certainly fail. In encouraging the Ephesian congregations, the apostle Paul wrote, "and having done all...stand." (Eph.6:13). There comes a time when the preparation is done and the due diligence accounted for. Now it's time to pray. And so we pray, and we do so with confidence. We come confidently to the throne of grace, give ourselves in worship, and make bold requests...and then we put the microphone down, or walk back to our seat, or simply quiet our voice and let the next person pray. I love that about prayer. I don't have to yell in the mic, I don't have to pray perfectly articulated prayers and I don't have to feel anointed when I begin or when I end. None of those things have any bearing whatsoever on God either hearing or answering my prayers. I simply stand in faith knowing that, "the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are open to their cry." (Ps.34:15). And, usually, as a note, much of the drama that accompanies intercessors during a corporate prayer meeting serves as both a distraction and a detractor to prayer.

### **Calling Solemn Assemblies**

I know an increasing number of men and women who are zealous to trumpet the message of prayer rooted in repentance and the necessity of contending spiritually for revival. In my own city and surrounding region I have seen a growing number of intercessors take leadership roles in regional prayer and really begin to press these issues to those around them. And while I love prayer for all of its God ordained reasons, I rejoice to see this specifically. I believe it is the wisdom of God for our generation. Maybe you too, have a stirring to be such a voice. Maybe you're asking yourself, "What can I do, how should I get started?" I'd like to make a few suggestions that I think can be a great help to you in a number of different areas.

First of all, it is right and wise to call prayer meetings focused specifically on healing, family restoration, financial provision, and blessing on outreach. But to call a prayer meeting presupposing repentance requires a bit of preparation. You will need to develop a basic understanding of the message of repentance; what it is, why it's important, how it applies to the church etc.

## **I. Preaching Repentance**

You might be surprised by how many are fundamentally challenged by a biblical doctrine of repentance. As we mentioned earlier, we live in an age where the current of postmodernism is slowly eroding the bedrock of a number of the cardinal doctrines of the historical Christian faith. One of the gross off-springs of this movement is the spawning of a culture that refuses to accept ownership for its behavior and incurred consequences. As admittance of guilt is one of the basic ingredients for turning to the Lord we as a church have much work to do in the reintroduction of a doctrine of repentance as well as in many of the other foundational tenets of our faith.

Preaching repentance is in essence preaching reform. We aren't simply saying that we need to turn from something, we are primarily saying that we need to turn to something. And what is that something? That's a question that you will need to be able to answer. What is it exactly that we should be doing? What does Christianity look like? How do we impact our culture? Does the church need to be reformed? If so, how do we do this? All of these require sound, biblical answers. In other words, it's not just where have we been, but where are we going?

## **II. Internalize the Word**

I recommend that you begin to familiarize yourself with the message of the old testament prophets who were tasked with preaching this very same gospel. Begin to understand the cultural and spiritual

backdrop for their message, ask the Lord to help you understand how it applies today. Be ready to give an answer to all that ask about the legitimacy of what you're saying. Stand equally prepared to admit when you're uncertain about a particular nuance.

Again, don't put pressure on yourself to be the next John the Baptist or Elijah. Just be faithful with the message that you have and committed to growing in grace and understanding. It takes time to internalize a prophetic disclosure, far more time than it does to grasp the working of a few principles and communicate those to others. Let the fullness of the message consume your life.

In Jeremiah's day the prophetic ministry was being actively sought by major leaders looking for some sort of direction or word from the Lord concerning His intent. Delusional dreamers and visionaries were everywhere vainly flaunting not only their giftings but their high flying idealism as well. With these ministers in mind, God poses this question to Jeremiah,

*Adonai-Tzva'ot says: "Don't listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you. They are making you act foolishly, telling you visions from your own minds and not from the mouth of Adonai. They keep reassuring those who despise me, 'Adonai says you will be safe and secure,' and saying to all living by their own stubborn hearts, 'Nothing bad will happen to you.' But which of them has been present at the council of Adonai to see and hear his word? Who has paid attention to his word enough to hear it?" Jer. 23:16-18 (CJB).*

Make it a priority to understand the broad strokes of what God is emphasizing in the earth today. Major on developing a history in prayer and devotion to the word as you think to lead others to do the same.

### **III. Calling Others**

Be clear about what you are calling others to. It will probably require a bit of instruction and education on the front end for folks to

connect to the reasons for a Solemn Assembly. Consider printing out a one-page handout or making a bit of easy-to-understand material available for reading. Perhaps you feel confident enough to gather a willing group together for a few sessions on the urgency and necessity of prayer related to national crisis. And of course, present the glorious gospel of the grace of God as the context for for all that you are doing. Remember, God isn't an angry, threatening judge, rather, His judgments come from a place of mercy. He's a tender Father who speaks the truth because He so zealously longs for fellowship with human beings.

#### **IV. Don't Alienate the Church**

Always remember that God dearly loves His church. She is His bride. We are not to criticize her and make rash judgments with a condemning spirit. Many times leaders with a bit of a prophetic anointing and a degree of revelation get off-track as they try interpret how God can hate sin and releases judgment and yet still remain loyal to His people. Paul taught that knowledge puffs us up (1 Cor.8:1). New information, specifically new revelation (that is, new to us) tends to make us proud. We get poofy.

The winter time in Buffalo, NY gets pretty cold. People here start layering their clothes in November and by January we look two sizes bigger than we really are. Not because we've grown any, but because our clothes are puffy. This is the same thing that knowledge does to us. It puffs us up, not because we've grown spiritually, but because it makes us look like we have. We know some things, have some facts, a bit of new insight and suddenly we're spiritual giants ready to enlighten and correct the church. We must be careful not to alienate the church from our message and not to alienate ourselves from the local church.

Look for ways to include other leaders in what you're doing. As relationships are built, let them speak into your life and ministry.

Allow them to work together with you as you call others to your Solemn Assembly. By doing this you create an on-ramp people to receive your message, and test it, and seek legitimate expressions of God's call to prayer that effectively reach numerous social, ethnic and religious groups.