

The Servant



Newsletter for Under-Shepherds and other Servants of God /5523 Newberry Drive/Raleigh, NC 27609

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The purpose of this newsletter is to pass along information and ideas to help the Lord's servants as they minister to others. Feel free to use any of it in your ministry.

House Calls

God still makes house calls. "My House shall be called the house of prayer..." Jesus quotes Isaiah 56 as he flails his scourge, and turns the tables over in the court of the Gentiles. I am afraid it is too easy to turn faith into a franchise. It seems the church does very little praying these days. The church should be a prayer chamber, a house of prayer. It is often lost on the reader of this "cleansing of the temple" incident that Jesus drove out those who "sold" and those who "bought." What are our churches "selling" these days? Tetzal sold indulgences until Luther became indignant. Tetzal led people to believe that a papal pardon, bought for a price, could deflect God's wrath and provide them with forgiveness of sins. We are in danger of "selling" people a bill of goods when we preach a forgiveness that needs no repentance, and a grace that shows not trace of transformation. We too often become indulgent to sin when we should become indignant.

Jesus drove out those who were "selling." He also drove out those who were "buying." People are buying cheap jacks these days. Satan has somehow manufactured "knock off" products that imitate genuine articles. Tetzal, at least, gave his customers an actual written document- worthless as it was- it could be held, or mounted or framed. He sold them something. Today some churches assure people that a simple "profession" is as good as "possession" and many think they have something when in fact they have nothing. Where is Luther when we need him?

The court of the Gentiles was filled with animals. It was filled with merchandise. It should have been filled with souls. The Temple was filled with livestock. It was turned into a stockyard and a stock market. Religion became big business. Although it was God's house, it seems He was not at home. The courtyard was filled with "religious" people

who were very busy carrying on "business as usual." Even the best churches need to be careful not to stray from the original mission and mandate of the ministry. How much real praying rises up from our assemblies? I believe that God still makes "house calls," especially when those calls are coming from a house of prayer. ☹

Avoid Vain Repetition.

We all do well to keep our prayer life and our prayers fresh and current. I would no more read prayers from the Common Book of Prayer as to pray so many Our Fathers or a single Hail Mary in order to have my way with God. Yet it seems that Jabez has become very popular these days and millions are launching mimeograph copies of this magnificent prayer toward heaven. This famous "Son of Sorrow" knew God was listening, but had no idea that so many would not only eaves drop, but borrow his exact words (1Chron. 4:10). Now, I am for anything that will get us on our knees. If this gets more men into their prayer closets, I am all for it, but let's be careful of vain repetition. While real prayer is a mystery, it is not magic. There is no "Open Sesame" for the prayer warrior. A stolen prayer can easily become stale. Remember, praying by rote is wrong, not right and rites are wrong, alright? Watch out, vain repetition can make our prayers dull and void. ☹

OFF TRACK BETTING

Often times, when I failed to pray
I then chose instead to fret
And found myself soon forced to pay
When I placed some losing bet

Now in prayer I seek to know
What--His will, His truth, His grace
As to win, to place, to show
Triple crown when God's First Place

Closet Christians

Prayer is lifting up our soul to God. Sometimes we lift it as a broken thing, (like a child) asking our Father to fix it. Sometimes, we bring a wounded spirit, like a skinned knee, crying “spirit-tears,” desiring God to make the pain go away. Sometimes our spirit seems to be an empty cup and we implore God’s grace to fill it. Sometimes our cup is overflowing with gratitude for some gift or some discovery we have made, and we must thank God for it. Sometimes in prayer our spirits sing as if in some angelic choir, and at other times we groan when words won’t come. And yet to God, in those times we are the most eloquent. Prayer is lifting up our soul to God like a mariner lifts a canvas hoping to catch a breeze from heaven’s wind as we are about launch out into the deep. Sometimes we lift our soul, and sometimes we set it down like a spoil of war at the conqueror’s feet. Sometimes we stoop to demonstrate our meek submission, and sometimes, in prayer, we stand amazed in His presence. Sometimes our soul seeks like a suppliant and speaks of what we think to be a need. Sometimes we are in a valley, and sometimes on the top of a mountain. Sometimes we barely whisper and at other times we roar. Sometimes we move our lips and none but God can hear the sound of our prayers.

No man is larger than his prayer-life. And if prayer is the measure of our spiritual selves, it explains why men can be so “small.” No one prayed more than Jesus, and no one seemed to need it less than he. But this is at the heart of the happy and holy life: Prayer. When Jesus began his public ministry he was praying. In the midst of that prayer the heaven’s opened, the Holy Spirit came down, and the Voice of God was heard saying “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Before he broke bread or raised the dead, he prayed. And when he took his last breath in the earthly body,

the Savior prayed, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.”

Somehow prayer is used of God to fuse us to himself. Somehow prayer enables God to use us for himself. Somehow the prayers we exhale enables us to inhale the breath of God without which the spiritual life cannot live. May we learn to pray. May we learn to breathe. ☞

Public Prayers

I offer some unsolicited advice about public praying. Public prayers:

Should be directed to God. Watch those pronouns to see if someone is aiming too low. There have been times I was not sure if a brother was trying to speak to God or trying to speak to me. Some have a tendency to start praying and end preaching. Prayers should not be directed to the congregation.

Should be short. Some pray from Genesis to Revelation. Save the long ones for when you are alone with God.

Should be specific. “Dear Lord, bless the missionaries” is short on particulars. It seems to demonstrate a lack of interest as well as a lack of luster.

Should be sensitive to the situation. Think of why we are gathered and why are we praying.

Should be Spiritual. That is they should be prayed in the Spirit as well as in the right spirit. Some prayers are little more than gossip about who has gallstones, and who’s on their way to Hawaii for vacation. Although touching many practical, common and ordinary things, the real intent of real prayer should be a spiritual one. ☞

Lord, I Am Thy Kingdom

Lord, I am thy Kingdom!
Into Thy kingdom come.
I bow before the Father,
the Spirit and the Son

I bend my knee and neck to Thee,
and surrender all from see to see
And things unseen by all but Thee
I yield to Thy great sovereignty.

Where self once dared to take Thy throne
I beg that Thou mightest sit alone
For only Thou dost have the right
to wear the Crown of glory bright.

Let it be known, God’s Word is Law;
And against all wrong He will wage war
And evil He will drive away
As I yield to Him, and as I pray.

I am Thy Kingdom, and Thou the King!
Thou hast conquered and a Peace doth bring.
Not by legions or with men of war
But with gentle knock on my heart’s door

Thou waitest for my will to open
And unbaricade the way
My once crucified Lord has spoken
It is mine but to obey. ☞

(I am not "the" Kingdom, only "a" kingdom, and a little kingdom at that.. Until he sets up his eternal throne, may our hearts be his welcome home. That Israel shall in God's future hold a special place should not preclude us now from his rule of grace. He is the rightful King of my body, soul, and everything. And may every surrendered life fall in line and pay him homage --this Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ Divine.)



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