

Understanding Night and Day Prayer

I. PERSPECTIVES ON THE MODERN WORSHIP MOVEMENT

A. Current Trends in the Worship Movement

1. It can be hard for us to define good or bad worship. After all, who among us has the authority to measure worship? The very thought of it seems preposterous yet it happens all the time.
2. The tendency of many in the church has been to form a set of opinions and expectations about their worship experience. Whether it needs a certain kind of music, a certain worship leader or certain environmental conditions (light levels, projector animations, etc.), we put a lot of energy into the form of our worship experience.
3. You've heard the phrase "Worship was *good* this morning." The meaning of this statement is dependent on the standard of good that we are using to measure our worship. Does that mean we sounded like a megachurch? Did we finally get the lights right? Did you like the worship leader's voice? Did we sound like your favorite band?
4. The truth is that we often judge our worship experience against our personal expectations against societal norms, even secular concerts. The underlying truth, which nobody would admit, is that we have become a culture that is only as satisfied when we feel like we benefited from our worship experience or it met our expectations.
5. It is in the context of this culture that people are being introduced to the idea of night and day prayer. Many often dismiss the idea because of how it differs from the socially normative western church model (Sunday morning). The perception is that night and day prayer inherently challenges our western church model and is therefore invalid.
6. The problem is that the western church model was never meant to be the standard.
7. Therefore, how do we measure worship; what defines "good"?

B. Establishing a Reference Point

1. In our natural order as we understand it from Scripture, there is only one absolute. Everything and everyone derives their existence from one origin. In fact it is only by one power that everything and everyone continue to exist. Therefore, in the most absolute sense, that one source holds the greatest importance.

All things were created through Him and for Him. – Colossians 1:16

2. Therefore God alone defines the highest meaning and purpose for all things. It is by him and for him that they exist. He alone gives meaning to that existence.

3. Everything/everyone is only as relevant as their relationship to the will of God. In the most absolute sense, the further we drift from the will and purpose of God, the less relevant our existence becomes. The closer we are to the center of God's will and purpose, the more absolute our relevance.
4. Think of it this way: The widow in her prayer closet is more relevant and weighty before the throne of God than the sum of the ungodly leaders of the nations of the earth.

Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, or as His counselor has taught Him? With whom did He take counsel, and who instructed Him and taught Him in the path of justice? Who taught Him knowledge and showed Him the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are as a drop in a bucket and are counted as the small dust on the scales. – Isaiah 40:13-15

5. Luckily, there is a place where the perfect will of God is uninhibited. Because we live in a fallen world we naturally make allowances for imperfection, but heaven is an entirely different example.

C. Heaven is the Reference Point

1. When Jesus prayed "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven," He was setting the standard for the uninhibited will of the Father. Thus we must take a very intentional look at what is happening in heaven's worship experience. By turning our eyes to heaven, we get a clear picture of theocentric worship.
2. In heaven, the worship experience is not based primarily on form but on a person. His glory is the center of worship. Therefore our worship experience should be defined by the extend of glory Jesus receives and not our derivative benefit.
3. Worship should evoke a flood of thoughts about a person rather than a set of opinions and expectations. We must approach worship relationally because it is ultimately about Him.

II. A VISION FOR THE GLORY AND WORTH OF JESUS

A. The Nature of Worship

1. Worship is responsive. Where there is vision for the glory of God, worship abounds. We are only as eager to worship in as much as we understand the glory of God and his unsearchable worth.

Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised. His greatness is unsearchable.
– Psalm 145:3

2. Worship is relational. Worship is not about us reciting things we have heard about God. True worship is birthed from the place of encountering the glory of God.
3. Theology is the ceiling of worship.

For God... [has given us] the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. – 2 Corinthians 4:6

4. Where people have a low revelation of the glory of God, their worship will be limited. The questions of validity that arise surrounding night and day worship and prayer are ultimately rooted in our lack of understanding of the worthy of the glory of Jesus.
 - a) We think 24/7 worship is radical.
 - b) Our need for comfort and convenience weighs heavier on our culture than the overwhelming worth of the glory of Jesus.
5. Whereas our fallen culture would hesitate at the thought of 24/7 worship, the culture of heaven demands it.

B. Jesus is Ultimately Worthy of Unceasing Worship

1. Encountering the endless worth of the glory of Jesus is what propels and motivates our worship. Suddenly 24/7 is not a high and lofty goal but is merely our limitation. We begin to understand that Jesus is worthy of 25/8 and every ounce of energy we have.

C. Validating the Call to Vocational Prayer

1. Not everyone is called to vocational prayer but it is important to make this clear for the sake of those who are.
2. For some prayer is merely a means toward other goals in ministry. For others prayer is not just a gateway or stepping stone to another ministry, it is your ministry. As long as the doors to the prayer room are open, you have an open door to your calling.

She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. – Luke 2:37

My sons, do not now be negligent, for the Lord has chosen you to stand in his presence, to minister to him and to be his ministers and make offerings to him. – 2 Chronicles 29:11

One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple. – Psalm 27:4

3. People may join a house of prayer for a variety of reasons (like me) but the foundational mandate remains preeminent. Every detail of form and function and every other ministry opportunity is secondary to this call of magnifying the glory of Jesus. Don't misunderstand, I am not disqualifying other ministry callings but I want to be bold in saying the call to night and day adoration is not only preeminent, it is the goal.

For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts. – Malachi 1:11

4. I am not saying that all of the night and day worship and prayer expressions will (or should) look like what we have built. This is our weak attempt in our context to respond to this calling.

For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. – 1 Corinthians 13:12

III. A TRANSFORMING AGENT

A. A Historical Privilege and Phenomenon

1. When a community actually comes into unity with a vision of the glory of Jesus, it transforms their culture. To be able to offer praise at every hour is a profound privilege in history.

***Praise is awaiting You, O God, in Zion; and to You the vow shall be performed.
– Psalm 65:1***

2. While night and day worship and prayer has been done before, even for hundreds of years at a time, never before in history has it been as wide spread as this.

B. Impacting the Spheres of Society

You may have heard of the Seven Spheres (or Mountains) of Society: Family, Religion, Government, Business (Marketplace), Education, Entertainment and Media. History testifies of the profound impact night and day prayer can have on these sphere in a region. Here are a few examples of what we're seeing right now in Central Arkansas.

1. Marketplace: We have committed to pray every Monday morning for Christian marketplace leaders. The Lord has led us to pray for the raising up of 500 Marketplace Messengers who would pioneer a righteous culture shift in the business sphere. Already we are hearing several testimonies of how the Lord is actively answering our prayers and moving in the lives of Christian leaders who are connected to that vision.

2. Music: Many of you here can testify of the change that has taken place in your skill since joining PrayNow. The primary focus has been taken off of how everything sounds and put on pursuing the spirit of prophesy in your choruses or musicianship.
3. Youth: Among the greatest benefits of night and day prayer is the potential impact of young people growing up in the context of an expectant prayer culture. Night and day prayer may sound radical to us, but raise a generation in it and they will define an entirely new level of radical devotion.
4. Church: We have also committed to praying regularly for our local pastors and churches. We desire that everyone involved at PrayNow would be strengthened and in turn strengthen their local churches.

C. The Promise and the Invitation

And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth? – Luke 18:7-8

1. Jesus promises speedy justice to those who cry out night and day.
2. Jesus also relates the state of the church at his return to the existence of night and day worship and prayer. This implies that night and day worship and prayer is a crucial element to finding faith on the earth.

IV. THE GOAL OF HISTORY

A. The End

1. I love to quote John Piper's book *Let The Nations Be Glad* where he describes the goal and purpose of missions: "Missions exists because worship doesn't." While missions and evangelism are vital calls to the church, their purpose is to unite the world in an unending worship service of encounter with the glory of Jesus.
2. Missions and evangelism have an end, and their end is worship. Global unceasing worship is the goal of the missions movement.

For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts. – Malachi 1:11

Even [the foreigner] 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. – Isaiah 56:7

3. 24/7 worship and prayer is not merely a means to an end but is the end in and of itself. Many think that their prayer lives and worship times are simply a step towards benefits in other areas of ministry, but the truth is that expectant prayer and encounter-driven worship are the highest goal!

B. 4K Omega Zones

1. We are living in the first generation in history where it is statistically possible to see the Bible translated into every language and every people group reached with the initial message of the gospel.

And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. – Matthew 24:14

2. This occurrence has given rise to the question of what comes after there are no more unreached people groups. For several years major missions organizations have met to discuss this eventuality.
3. Missiologists have created strategic map that breaks the earth into 4,000 Omega Zones. Their goal is to fill every Omega Zone with night and day worship and prayer for the return of Jesus.
4. Technology and demographics have made this the most unique and accelerated time period in the history of missions. Missiologists understand that the ultimate goal is the Malachi 1:11 mandate of worship.

C. Unique Historical Moment

1. Night and day prayer and worship has never grown on this scale in the history of mankind. The acceleration of night and day worship and prayer coupled with the acceleration of the missions movement makes this one of the most exciting times in history to be born.
2. You could have been born at any time, but the Lord purposed you for this hour. I want to encourage you to pray and seek the Lord about your assignment and see how it relates to this unique hour.
3. For those of you feel called vocationally to the place of prayer, don't let anything hold you back. The Lord dreamed of your assignment before you were born, and He strategically sent you in this hour of history on purpose. Many have abandoned their callings because of financial insecurity or scrutiny from those who don't understand your calling, but that does not make it any less valid or necessary.