

## Power

*Pursue Intimacy.*

*Intimacy will lead to Purity. Purity will lead to Unity.*

*Unity will lead to Power.*

As we have learned, pursuing *intimacy* by loving God must always be our first priority. *Jesus said... "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the first and great commandment.* (Matt 22:37-39 NKJV) Therefore we start our day with adoration of His goodness and love. We start our corporate worship with praise for His Holy Name. We make loving Him the most important goal of our life.

As we continue to pursue intimacy and loving God with all our heart, we begin to recognize those things that interfere with love. As we remove these hindrances such as sin, fear, unforgiveness and distractions from our lives we begin to reflect the character of Christ. As we conform our lives to the character of Christ and to His written Word we experience a new awareness of our identity as Sons and Daughters of the Living God and we have a deep desire to keep our lives *pure* and holy for Him. We become holy as He is holy.

*Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. 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. 3:17-18 (NKJV)

As we love God more and purify our hearts, we begin to understand His heart. Because we love Him, we care deeply about the things He cares about and to love deeply those He loves. We begin to share His deep love for His body, the church. We begin to share His longing to bring this lost world to Himself. We know His heart's desire is to bring righteousness and justice to the nations of the world and that becomes our desire, also. As we sit at His Table and commune with Him we begin to unite our heart with the Father's love. We see our family, the church and our world as the Father sees them, through the eyes of love. Our sole desire is to glorify God in all the earth by proclaiming His name and His character, with our words and through our actions. We come together in this unity of purified hearts, deep love for the Father and deep passion for bringing the kingdom of God to earth. As we draw near to God in intimacy, purity and unity, God's Holy Presence draws near to us.

*Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*

*Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.* James 4:7-8 NKJV

### **The Israelites**

Where the Presence of God is, His Power also is manifest. We see this in the book of Joshua as the people of Israel prepared to enter into the Promised Land. They purified themselves as shown by their obedience in crossing the Jordan River and observing the ritual of circumcision. They were unified in celebrating the Feast of Passover and in their obedience to follow Joshua into the Promised Land. (Joshua 3-5). Then the Lord reveals His presence in their midst by sending the Commander of the Lord's Army to appear before Joshua and give him the strategy for defeating the walled city of Jericho (Joshua 5:12-6:5). The power of God was manifest as the walls of Jericho fell before them. *Purity* and *unity* led to the manifest presence of God and His *power* was released to accomplish His will.

### **The Early Church**

We see this same pattern in the early church. After following Jesus through three years of ministry, His crucifixion and His resurrection, the early church gathered in the Upper Room for a time of prayer. This was a time of purifying and unifying the body. They knew they were in danger from those who had crucified their Lord and yet they sought to be obedient to Him by waiting to "receive power when the Holy Spirit" would come (Acts 1:8). In Acts 2 we read of that glorious day

of Pentecost when the Presence of the Lord came near and poured out the Holy Spirit. With God's Presence also came the Power of the Lord. What did the power of God look like in the early church?

- Powerful preaching and thousands became believers in a very short time.
  - *With great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Acts 4:33*
  - *Three thousand souls were added to them in one day. Acts 2:41*
  - *And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women. Acts 5:14*
- Signs and wonders including miracles of healing and deliverance
  - *And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind...Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire... And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues. Acts 2:2-4*
  - *And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people...so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them... Acts 5:12*
  - *God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them. Acts 19:12*
- Study of the Word and Prayer
  - *And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, breaking of bread, and in prayers. Acts 2:42*
  - *Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church. Acts 12:5*
  - *[We] will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word. Acts 6:4*
  - *Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. Acts 17:11*
- Unity of heart
  - *So continuing daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart. Acts 2:46*
  - *They raised their voices to God with one accord. Acts 4:24*
  - *It seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord... Acts 15:25*
- Care for the poor
  - *Nor was there anyone among them who lacked, for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds to the things that were sold. Acts 2:35*
  - *[They] sold their possessions and goods and divided them among all, as anyone had need. Acts 2:45*
  - *Choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility [the daily distribution of food] over to them Acts 6:1*
- They impacted their entire world.
  - *And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine...Acts 5:28b*
  - *These who have turned the world upside down have come here, too. Acts 17:6-7*
- Along with the miracles came persecution but the disciples faced it with boldness and joy.
  - *[After being warned by the authorities not to speak in the name of Jesus] they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God **with boldness.** Acts 16:23-25*
  - *After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. About midnight Paul and Silas were **praying and singing hymns** to God. Acts 16:23-25*

### Among Friends

This was also true among early Friends. At age 19, George Fox began his pursuit of intimacy and purity. Then three years later Fox had his encounter with the Living Christ:

*"I heard a voice which said, 'There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition,' and when I heard it my heart did leap for joy...My desire after the Lord grew stronger, and zeal in the pure knowledge of God, and of Christ alone..." (Fox's Journal)*

Fox united with other Seekers and his journal attests to many miraculous manifestations of the power of God among early Friends including miraculous healings, shaking of both individuals and buildings, and crowds being awed into silence under the power of the Holy Spirit. But God's Presence did not just impact worship, it empowered the Valiant 60, ordinary men and women, to go out into the world sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ. As a result, in less than 15 years the number of those who called themselves Friends had grown from just a few to 50,000. This gospel of the near and active presence of God in our midst inspired reformers to work for religious freedom, prison reform, the abolition of slavery and equal rights for women. And, like in the early church, along with evangelism, healings and social reform, the early Quakers suffered persecution at the hand of those who were offended by the power of God.

### **Other Outpourings of the Holy Spirit**

In the 1700s John and Charles Wesley pursued holiness and unity with their "Holy Clubs". However, after John's encounter with the Moravians, he knew that there was more that he needed. He began to seek the intimacy of the Lord Himself. He wrote in his journal of that day on May 24, 1738 when he experienced the presence of the Living Christ:

*"I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."*

Intimacy, purity and unity met the Presence of the Living God in a way that released power. Wesley and the Methodists became an incredible force for change in England. Not only did they lead the way in evangelism but also in social reform.

Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield and others had a similar impact in the Colonies as they spread the Great Awakening in America. It was reported that virtually every congregation in New England was touched by the move of God and it was not uncommon for 10-20 percent of a town to join the church in a single year.<sup>1</sup> Some say the American Revolution would never have taken place without Whitefield's message of "equality at the cross" and his preaching which united hearts and minds across colonies.

The Second Great Awakening, in the 1800s, led by men like Asbury, Finney, and the Cane Ridge Campmeetings had a similar impact. Historical reports say that at least one hundred thousand people joined the church as a result of Finney's preaching. In addition to tremendous evangelism the Awakening led to social reform. Sunday School programs, orphanages, soup kitchen, clinics, hospitals, schools, colleges, and social campaigns to reduce alcohol consumption and abolish slavery started as a result of the Second Awakening.

In another outpouring of the Holy Spirit, The Azusa Street Revival of 1906 launched virtually all of the Pentecostal denominations. It was birthed out of prayer and seeking God. When the power of God came, manifestations of the Holy Spirit included a visible cloud of glory in many of the meetings and many, many healings and salvations took place. From those meetings a great missionary movement was launched as pastors and missionaries were called to spread the Word of God throughout the world. When we pursue intimacy, purity and unity; God comes near. The Presence of God releases power that can change hearts, lives, churches, and society.

### **The Power of God for Today**

In the 1600s we had the outpouring of the Holy Spirit which launched the Quaker Movement. In the 1700s we had the Great Awakening which brought revival and evangelism to the colonies. In the 1800s we had the Second Great Awakening which was a great evangelistic

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<sup>1</sup>from *Implosion* by Joel Rosenberg, p. 249 quoting Richard L. Bushman, *The Great Awakening: Documents on the Revival of Religion 1740-1745*, pp xi-xii.

movement but also inspired social reform. In the 1900s we had the Azusa Street revival which started the Pentecostal churches and a great missionary movement. Later in that century we had the Charismatic Movement which touched the lives of many denominational churches and brought many young people back into the church. Today, once again, we need a move of God that can touch hearts, change lives and reform society. We need the power of God to strengthen the church in purity and unity and empower us to evangelize and transform our culture. We cannot do God's work without God's power. What would take for the church to operate in power as it did in the book of Acts or as it did in the days of the early Quakers? God has given us His answer:

*Pursue Intimacy*

*Intimacy will lead to Purity, Purity will lead to Unity*

*Unity will lead to Power*

When the Lord gives us a word, it is important that we honor His word by obeying it. As an act of obedience we must pursue intimacy—loving the Lord with all our heart and all our soul and all our mind and all our strength. However, we also have His promise. If we will pursue intimacy, He will lead us to purity, unity and power.

Teach us, Lord, to love you well and put You first.

Teach us to conform our hearts to Yours in love, in purity and in unity;

That we might experience Your Presence and Your Power

as it was experienced in the early church and in the days of the early Quakers.

### **ACTS Prayer**

Remember that the ACTS prayer model is an acronym:

Adoration (Intimacy)

Confession and Proclamation (Purity)

Thanksgiving and the Table of the Lord (Unity)

Supplication (Power)

After Adoration, Confession and Proclamation, we sat at the Table of the Lord and heard His heart. We learned to care about the things He cares about and to see the world from His perspective. Our heart is moved to seek His will on earth. As we go into the Holy of Holies and make our supplications for our families, our churches, our nation and our world, our supplications no longer reflect the desires of our own heart but the desires of His heart.

*“For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?”*

*But we have the mind of Christ.” 1 Cor 2:16-3:1(NIV)*

As we seek Him in unity with purified hearts, He draws near with His Holy Presence and His power and purposes are released into the world. Holy manifestations such as the early church experienced should be expected. We should not be amazed by shakings, signs and wonders, and healing miracles. But even more, we should expect to be empowered to evangelize and reform our society that we might establish the character of God--His love, His redemption, His truth, His righteousness and justice--in the earth.

### Group Meeting:

Study Acts 2:40-47 and Acts 4:29-5:16. How many signs of God's power and glory can you find in these passages? Discuss the following questions:

- 1) What manifestations of God's power have we seen in our church recently?
- 2) What aspect of God's power would you most like to see manifest more? Why?
- 3) How do you show Him your love? How has that changed over the years?
- 4) Consider God's directions. **Pursue Intimacy; Intimacy to Purity, Purity to Unity, Unity to Power?** How is your church pursuing intimacy, purity, unity and power?
- 5) What barriers are there to receiving the power of the Holy Spirit in your church? What can be done to overcome them?

Pray through the ACTS prayer model. When you come to Supplication, turn your hearts toward prayer for your church and community.

### Personal Prayer Time:

Consider Isaiah 55:8-9. Ask God questions like these:

- Where have I tried to do things my own way instead of waiting for the Lord to reveal His plans and His strategies for my life, my family, my church, my world?
- Where do I need more of the Holy Spirit manifest in my life?
- How am I doing at loving God well? Purifying my life of things that interfere with love? Walking in unity with other believers?
- Thank God for ways He is leading and guiding you and for His plans and strategies.

Pray through the ACTS prayer model. Start with Adoration and Confession. Then sit with the Lord and ask Him how to pray for your church and community. After hearing His heart, pray for your community.

### Family Time:

As a family read Acts 2:1-3, 40-47 together. Make a list of the ways God's power was demonstrated in the early church after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Share stories of times when God's power has touched your family. Ask each member of the family what aspect of the Holy Spirit's power they would most like to see more. Pray together for more of God's power and love to be manifest in your family.