



## **A Call To Unite In Prayer And Fasting**

### **Acts 2:1**

2 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

I feel like God is ready and waiting to give us a great outpouring of the Holy Ghost.

But I also understand that God's plans for a person or for a group of people don't just happen. But we have to prepare ourselves to receive what God wants to give us before it can take place.

I want to talk to you tonight about Preparing ourselves to Receive.

On the day of Pentecost, the Bible records a miraculous out pouring of the Holy Ghost.

We are all familiar with the story of Acts Chapter Two.

The day of Pentecost was the day the Holy Ghost rained down from Heaven to dwell in the hearts of men for the first time.

Yet, the Day of Pentecost did not just happen by chance.

- It didn't just happen on the spur of the moment.
- It didn't just happen because some people casually got together to pray.
- And it didn't even happen because God desired for it to happen.

How many know that God planned our Pentecost?

- It had been planned out in the mind of God since the beginning of time!
- The prophet Joel had prophesied that God would pour out His Spirit on all flesh 400 years before it ever happened.
- This was God's plan.

But it didn't happen just because it was God's plan.

The reason God chose to fill 120 believers and 3000 sinners with the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost was because there was a group of people who had prepared themselves for this day!

- It is still the plan of God to fill people with the Holy Ghost.
- His plan has not changed.
- He still wants people to be saved.

The Bible states;

### **2 Peter 3:9**

9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, **not**

**willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.**

I want you to know that it is God's will for every person to receive the Gift of the Holy Ghost.

- Every person in Valparaiso.
- Every person in Indiana.
- Every person in your family.

That is God's plan!

**Acts 2:39**

39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

The promise is for everybody!

God is ready and waiting to pour out His Spirit on Life Church in Valparaiso, Indiana.

If you believe that! Shout Yes!

But God does not pour out His Spirit just anywhere and anytime!

- I don't want to sound negative today.
- I don't want it to sound like we have to work to receive the Holy Ghost.
- That is not what I am saying.

There is nothing we can do that will make us worthy of receiving His Spirit.

**Titus 3:5**

**5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;**

It is only by His mercy and His grace that we are saved!

- It is not difficult for God to fill somebody with the Holy Ghost.
  - God can do it tonight!
  - God can fill every person who needs the Holy Ghost tonight.
- o All 120 that were in the upper room received It.
  - o 3000 more sinners received the Holy Ghost that same day.

They were saved because of God's Mercy and Grace!

We can't do anything to purchase our Salvation...it is the Gift of God.

Having said that, God doesn't just stand on the street corners of the world and give His Spirit to every person who passes by.

But every time we see the Holy Ghost poured out in the Bible, there were always a group of believers who had submitted their will to God's will.

- The 120 had submitted their plans to God's plans.
- They had laid aside their own plans.
- They were together praying for days.

- And as soon as they received the Holy Ghost they began to share what they had.

The reason 3000 sinners received the Holy Ghost that same day was because these 120 were prepared.

- They were ready to share what they had received.
- They immediately began telling the crowds about Jesus.
- They were ready to disciple these people.
- They were ready to lead them and care for them.

If these 120 had not been praying and ready to receive God's will....these 3000 sinners would never have received the Holy Ghost that day.

So the question for each of us tonight is, "Are we ready?"

- "Are you ready to submit your will to God's will?"
- "Do your plans line up with God's plans?"
- "Are we really ready to receive what God has planned for us in Valparaiso?"

### **How many of you remember what Bro. Massengale told us back in September?**

He said, "God is not in the business of abandoning babies."

In other words, "God is not going to birth a new Christian into our church if we won't care for that Christian and raise that new Christian up in God's Word."

### **God is not going to give us a revival that we are not prepared for.**

- God has been planning some big things for this city for a long, long time.
- But are we really ready to receive what God has planned?

The Bible says that the 120 in the upper room, " were all with one accord in one place."

- They all had the mind of Christ.
- They were all on the same page.
- They were all in agreement.

They were prepared for what God was about to do.

Beginning on April 2nd and lasting until April 22nd (Good Friday), I am challenging this church to pray, fast and hold devotions in your home for 21 days.

This is a call to deeper devotion and consecration to God.

- We are not doing this to prepare God.
- o We are doing this to prepare ourselves.
- We are not doing this to change God's plans.
- o We are doing this to change our plans.
- We are not doing this to ask God to shower our church with a Holy Ghost outpouring.
- o We are doing this to show God that we are ready for a Holy Ghost outpouring.

God has already promised to pour out His Spirit!

This is God's will.

**We are doing this to conform our minds and our bodies to God's will.**

Can I count you to be a part?

**Jesus instructed us to pray for His Will to be done;**

**Matthew 6:9-10**

9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

When we pray for the will of God to be done in this earth, we are submitting our priorities to God's priorities.

**Often when we pray, we ask God to answer our needs and desires. We pray according to our will.**

But that is not how Jesus instructed us to pray.

Jesus instructed us to pray for God's will to be done.

**Let me share a Scripture with you;**

**1 John 5:14-15**

14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, **if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:**

15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, **we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.**

This scripture demonstrates two important concepts of prayer:

1. God only hears those prayers that are asked according to His will.
2. When we ask according to His will, God will answer us. (faith)

When we understand these two things about prayer, our faith becomes strengthened.

A couple of months ago, I taught from the story in Matthew where Jesus' disciples could not cast a demon out of a boy.

The disciples came to Jesus and asked Him why they failed;

**Matthew 17:20-21**

20 And Jesus said unto them, **Because of your unbelief:** for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

21 Howbeit this kind goeth not out **but by prayer and fasting.**

- At first glance it looks as though this demon was especially difficult to handle.
- It seems as though this demon might require an extra amount of prayer and fasting.

But the real reason they could not cast this demon out was because of their unbelief...their faith was weak.

Unbelief was the reason.

Prayer and fasting was the remedy.

- Prayer and fasting strengthens our relationship with God.
- The strength of our faith depends upon the strength of our relationship with God.

In this story, the disciples had not been practicing a consistent life of prayer and fasting therefore their relationship with God was weak.

In the moment when they needed to draw great faith from their relationship with God, they could only draw a little

faith.

- The reason we are going on this extended period of prayer and fasting is so that we can strengthen our relationship with God and thereby our faith.
- Prayer and fasting changes us.
- The change does not happen overnight, but through daily and consistent prayer.

Over twenty one days we can establish more consistency in our personal devotion to God.

Can I get a witness?

**I want us all to remember two words as we go through this process.**

The two words are:

1. Momentum
2. Balance

**Momentum comes from the word Moment.**

During the course of these three weeks we will be building up Spiritual Momentum.

We are building Momentum towards a Moment... the Moment is our Holy Ghost Crusade and our Drama.

Most people live for the big moments in their life.

- Their wedding.
- Their promotion.
- Their vacation.
- In the church it might be a Special service with a record attendance.

These are all great and should be celebrated.

But when we get so focused on the moment, sometimes the before and after don't go so well.

- During the few months before a wedding there is a lot of planning and work that must get done...a lot of couples get really stressed out during this time....so stressed out that they don't enjoy each other.
- And then the big moment comes...The Wedding... it is great and exciting...the Honey moon is wonderful.
- But for many couples, that one big moment is all they have.

o After their big moment, life is a big letdown.

o When they get home, life starts, work, bills, stress and they never enjoy the moment after the moment.

Let's make our big moment as great as we possibly can, but let's enjoy the process of getting there.

Let's enjoy the 21 days of consecration toward God.

Let's enjoy 21 days of drawing closer to God.

- Let's look forward to the days after the big moment when we can celebrate our victories together.
- When we can make new friends and eat dinner with new converts.
- When we can teach bible studies to new people.

This isn't just about one beg weekend in April...but this is about eternity with with Jesus....let's keep the momentum going!

**The other word I want you to remember during this time is balance.**

Everybody say balance.

- "What good does it do to finally get the promotion you have sought if you sacrifice your marriage to achieve it?"
- "What good does it do us as a church if we win a hundred souls to the Lord, but lose our own children in the process?"
- "What good will it do the Drama team if we have a successful Drama, but the Drama members are all upset and Bro. Mike for asking them to be in the Drama?"

We must stay balanced.

Somebody say Amen!

**The Bible tells us how to be balanced in our life;**

**Matt 6:33**

33 But **seek ye first the kingdom of God**, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Notice it says, "Seek Ye."

That means, "You seek God first before anything else."

**This is the way your priorities ought to be when it comes to your walk with God!**

1. God first.
  - a. Your personal relationship with God comes first.
  - b. You cannot be an example to your family if you do not put God first.
2. Your immediate family.
  - a. Your spouse and your children.
  - b. After your relationship with God, your relationship with your family is most important.
  - c. Spend time with your family both in and out of church settings.
  - d. This would include providing for your family.
    - i. Try your best to get a job that allows you to come to church, God will help you do so.....but if you can't God understands.
  - e. This also means that you must lead your family to Christ.
  - f. Don't schedule family nights out on a church night.
3. Church
  - a. Your church is the third most important thing in your life.
  - b. As your pastor, I hesitate to say this, but I have seen too many pastor's kids backslide because their parents put church before family.
  - c. Remember though that your church life is connected to your personal relationship with God.

To stay balanced during these 21 days I encourage you to spend time with your family.

- Encourage your family to pray when you pray.
- Encourage your family to fast with you.
- Hold family devotions...teach them about prayer and fasting.

- Have at least one family night per week doing something fun with the family.

Momentum and balance! Remember those two words!

**This is how we are going to do this.**

During the course of these three weeks we are going to set up a typical 24 hour prayer chain.

- There will be 24 time slots to sign up for.
- I understand that we may not fill up all 24, that is ok.
- Sign up for whatever hour works best for you.
- Whatever hour you sign up for will be the time you set aside for prayer and devotion each day.

For the fasting we will have three types of fasts with options for each:

1. Media Fast
  - a. This is a fast from all media internet, games, movies, TV, etc.
  - b. You can choose to fast 7,14 or the entire 21 days.
  - c. Work media is permitted.
2. Daniel Fast
  - a. This is a fast from all foods except fruits and vegetables.
  - b. You can choose to fast 7,14 or the entire 21 days.
3. Total Fast
  - a. This is a fast from all foods and drinks except for water.
  - b. This will be daily.
  - c. You can sign up for one or two days per week.
  - d. I do not recommend any more than that.

You can also choose a different fasts each week.

**We will all come off of our fasts when we celebrate Good Friday together in Fellowship Groups.**

**Your host will be contacting you by Sunday!**