



Deeper In Prayer And Further In Communion & Anointing – June 6th, 2018

Obstacle # 1 – Lay down Pride – and Take up Humility

Pride. It's not enough to be fearfully and wonderfully made in the image of God, loved and cherished by God, to be called his beloved child. We want to be like God. But our ideas of what it means to be like God are sinfully perverted, rooted in pride.

We want to be like God, who is all-powerful, so we make sure everyone around us knows we are capable and competent.

We want to be like God, who is all-glorious, so we glory in our own accomplishments, our missionary efforts, our no-Sabbath-necessary busy schedules, our status, our stature before others, we especially care about what people say about us. We turn churches into our own empires so we can speak of the size of our church or the number of times we have been invited to speak before people.

We want to be like God, who is sovereign and in control, so we subtly manipulate everything to our desired outcome, or to preserve status quo because we fear change.

We want to be like God, who is all-knowing, so we use our theological education or insights as a hammer to pound on others who see things differently. And when we are rebuked or corrected, we defend ourselves at any cost, because we cannot be wrong! And when we are wounded by others, we don't offer the very forgiveness and grace that we preach about week after week – because the one who did the wrong must beg for forgiveness before we will offer it. This is sinful pride.

It is true that God is indeed all-powerful, all-glorious, all-knowing, sovereign, in control, forgiving and gracious. But God expresses his power in earthly (creaturely) weakness. He displays his glory on a shameful cross. He uses his knowledge to love us, and exercises his



sovereignty by defeating sin, death, and hell, thus lavishing his forgiveness and grace upon us. Humility is God's character, and Jesus Christ is the embodiment of that! Therefore to be truly like God in the holiest, biblical sense, is to be like Jesus.

Response

In groups of three, I now call upon us to confess our sin of pride to one another.

If you feel you have in some way contributed to our corporate sin of pride, we would ask you to stand and together we will pray a prayer of repentance, asking God to forgive, cleanse and heal us and make us more like His dear Son. Would you please stand and join me as we pray this prayer, adapted from A. W. Tozer's *The Pursuit of God*:

O God, loving Father, forgive us for our pride. As members of our family of churches, we ask you to be Lord over our possessions, our titles, our achievements, our reputation, our ambitions, our knowledge, our skills, our health, our relationships – our all. Be glorified in our lives, above all the things or people we treasure on earth. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, we crucify our pride and arrogance. By the power of the Holy Spirit who lives in us, we will pick up the cross and follow you. Make us ambitious to please you even if it means we must sink into obscurity and our names be forgotten as a dream.

Rise, O Lord, into your proper place of honor in our Canadian C&MA family of churches. Be the center of our lives. Let us sink that you may rise above. Ride forth upon us as you once rode into Jerusalem, mounted upon the humble little beast, a colt, a donkey, and let us hear the children cry to Thee, "Hosanna in the highest." Amen.

Obstacle # 2 – Lay Down Fear & Ungodly Control and Take up Trust and Greater Dependence on God

Fear & Ungodly Control Vs. Love And Dependence

Where fear resides in our hearts, we have rejected the fullness of our Father's love. *1 John 4:18* says "There is no fear in love! But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment."



Our fear has filled us with the expectation of judgement or condemnation from the very God who waits longingly for deep relationship with us: he waits for us to cry out Abba Father. *Rom 8:15* “*You did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you have received The Spirit of Sonship, and by Him we cry Abba Father.*”

Where we have walked in fear, we have grieved His heart, because we have misjudged Him. He came to save not to condemn. He longs for deep, intimate relationship with each one of us individually and as a family of churches.

Instead of depending on our God, we have allowed our fears to lead us into forms of ungodly control, which have manifest in the following ways:

1. At times out of fear of what others think, we have been ashamed of the Gospel and not shared the full message of the Gospel with love and boldness.
2. At times our fear of losing congregants or their donations has resulted in us catering to them, and not walking in full obedience to our Lord.
3. Rather than trust the Holy Spirit’s leading, we have found ourselves clinging to our old wineskins. We would rather stay safe and powerless, than wait for the power of the Spirit as Jesus instructed us to.
4. Our fear of suffering and paying the price has caused us to withdraw from the mission in self-preservation.
5. In our fear we have at times sought to control one another, ministry outcomes, and “the agenda” rather than depending on God to lead us forward.

Time in personal repentance and laying down of fears as the Holy Spirit directs

Corporate Response

Father forgive us for running away from your love because of fear.



Father forgive us for avoiding intimacy with you because of our misguided fears – expecting you to condemn and punish, when in reality you long to forgive, cleanse and heal. We lay this down and pick up intimacy in your embrace.

Father we lay down our fear of what others think and ask for a fresh encounter with you that will enable us to proclaim your gospel boldly.

Father we lay down our fears of the Holy Spirit and His work in our midst. We choose to surrender fully to the Holy Spirit's anointing for powerful life and ministry as proclaimed by your Word and evidenced by your presence.

Father we lay down the need and our tendency to control each other, our ministries, and our circumstances. We choose to step out in faith and rest in your ability to work in the lives of those around us, just as you are at work in us.

Obstacle # 3 - Lay Down Busyness – Pick Up Prayerful Obedience

Mark 4:19 (NASB) but the worries of the [a]world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

Lord, we repent for the times when we have let busyness take the place of your stillness in our lives. We sometimes feel a sense of accomplishment when we can share with others how full our schedules are even though we feel over engaged and overwhelmed. Where we have given over to peer pressure, job demands and a sense of guilt when we aren't doing 'something' to fill our days, we repent. Where we have entertained thoughts that we need to look busy to look Godly, subtly suggesting that spending time "abiding" is time doing "nothing." We repent.

Have we put the cares of this world ahead of our first love – Jesus, which has kept us from intimacy with Him? Have we acted out of driven-ness, prayer-less living or self-focus instead of looking for God's priorities and His agenda?



Lord forgive us when the results of our busyness has caused our family relationships to suffer; when we have nothing left for them at the end of the day.

Has our lack of confidence in our identity led to anxiety and a sense of inadequacy which motivates us to feel we need to control ministry outcomes? Are there times when we refuse to let go and let others take the lead? Do we live in fatigue from lack of rest and overwork and push aside attention to our personal health and wellness?

Prayer

Jesus, forgive us for giving into the pressures of life. Holy Spirit help us to faithfully observe Sabbath, to read and meditate on your word and to spend time in your presence.

Lord help us to prioritize our time to include our families. Help us structure our days in your design and not our own. Forgive us for letting the raised voices of urgency and demand take the place of your still small voice. Father help us remember that our days and times are in your hand. Thank you Lord, for the grace and mercy you offer us as we re-set our values to include more of you. We trust you to help us navigate through our days with your purposes and plans for us; not our own or that of others. Amen.

Obstacle # 4 – Embracing Worldly Culture vs Christ-Like Kingdom Culture

What culture drives us?

There is no question that God loves the cultural and ethnic diversity of this world. It is reflective of his creativity and beauty.

But where do we receive our value from – our culture of origin or our Kingdom culture? What influences how we act, what we do, what is important to us, our behaviour and interactions with others, our understanding of the world around us?

Living in western culture, we are highly influenced by values such as comfort, materialism, enjoyment, protecting our perceived rights. Have these replaced a Kingdom culture of holiness, sacrifice and even suffering?



Could Jesus be asking us – do you love me more than these? More than technology, more than entertainment, more than being comfortable, more than the many material blessings I have given you, more even than your rights?

And what about cultural differences between language and social groupings? Have we allowed these to divide us in any way, preferring what is familiar to us, protecting our cultural identity over Kingdom connection and the family of God? Is our definition of ourselves as a member of a specific group more important than how he sees and defines us as his children first and foremost? Have we been contemptuous or rejecting of those outside our cultural grouping?

We have not received a spirit that makes us slaves, but we have received God's Spirit himself, causing us to cry Abba Father, for his Spirit joins with our spirit, testifying that we are his children. What a cultural identity – children of the King. May we lay those things aside of our culture of origin that distort or cloud that identity, and walk with the honour and authority and security that belonging to the King's family and culture brings.

Prayer

Father, we confess that our culture can be so engrained that we do not fully recognize its influence and power in our lives. Open our eyes to the ways that we adopt the values, and even our own personal value, from being citizens of earth instead of from being citizens of heaven.

We confess what we know Lord - the sin of comfort, unholy habits in our entertainment, materialism, and the misplaced energy of fighting for our rights.

We confess to treating those who are from different language and social groupings with fear, misunderstanding and even with disdain.

Today, we lay hold of our identity as sons and daughters of the King. We remember that we belong first and foremost to your family, and we want everything we do, eat, wear, and think to be from the perspective of your Kingdom culture. For it is truly our desire to see your Kingdom



come and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven, and we know that we are the instruments you use to make this happen.

Obstacle # 5. Lay Down Disunity and Take Up Unity

Unity is at the heart of God. John 17 says, “May they be one as we are one...then the world will know that you sent me.” Unity is one of our greatest witnesses. However, disunity in the body of Christ injures from the inside and breaks down our witness on the outside.

1. We create disunity when we wound one another within the body of Christ. In particular wounding with words, attitudes, motives, misuse of authority, unrealistic expectations of others, control, and the desire to have things go our own way. Each of these creates hurt and division which inhibits relationship, fuels discord, and hinders our witness of Christ. In order to move forward into what God has waiting in the wings we will need to commit to reconciling these offenses, putting things right as much as it depends on us, and moving forward with the attitude of Christ towards one another.
2. At times the way that we have expressed and carried our differing theological views has wounded Christ’s body. We have not always followed the Biblical exhortation to be completely humble and gentle; to be patient and bear with one another in love. While we may see things differently, will we allow the Spirit to move us into places where trust and unity can be restored in the midst of diversity?
3. Disunity also occurs when we undervalue each other’s contributions and gifts. When the wisdom of seasoned leaders or the creativity of young leaders is not valued it can create another kind of hurt that leads to division and disunity. This kind of division blocks the ability to disciple, mentor, and create new innovations together. We can tend to like safety and comfort which impedes us from trying new things or embracing some tried and true ways that are timeless.



Take some time in your groups to pray repenting of involvement in fostering disunity.

Father God, where we have wounded the body of Christ with our words, attitudes, and motives, we repent and ask for your forgiveness. Where we have not reconciled with those we have offended we commit to do what we can to make it right, and to partner with you to restore unity to these relationships and ultimately to the body of Christ.

We confess we have also participated in hurting the body when we have judged one another in our differences instead of choosing to trust the Spirit of God in His church. We repent and ask for your forgiveness. We ask for your Holy Spirit to be our guide and counselor as we navigate our way through sensitive issues. We commit to being humble, gentle, patient, bearing with one another in love, and valuing the diversity you have created in each of us as we move forward.

We repent and ask forgiveness for not seeing the gift in each other. Forgive us and help us broaden our outlook to how we can creatively and wisely serve in tandem. Give us courage to try new things, partner with new people, and believe for things never seen before as we embrace the full spectrum of the new thing you want to do in our day. Help us constantly realize that we need each other and that your very plan to reach the world, depends on us walking in unity. Father let us not allow anything to stand in the way but may we make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. Amen

Obstacle # 6 – Poverty/ Materialism vs. Generosity and Abundance

The book of Acts records that one of the biggest evidences of the Spirit-empowered church was sacrificial generosity. Churches and individuals gave generously so others could hear the gospel message, regardless of their ability, understanding the Kingdom abundance of God. The rich willingly downsized to help the poor. Their goal was that everyone would hear the Gospel and no one would be in need.

Concerning finances, in our churches we have at times found ourselves slipping into one of two extremes: We either are infected by a materialistic mindset rooted in selfishness and greed or we live with a poverty mindset rooted in fear and doubt.



In a materialistic mindset, we see our money as our hard earned right, to be used for our needs and pleasure. Our financial decisions are easily motivated by self-interest, rather than selfless love and sacrifice. Living in the western world, surrounded by bounty and greed, this mindset can be difficult to identify and own because there is always someone who has more than we do. We may practice gratitude and thankfulness for what we have, but may secretly be harbouring jealousies, comparisons and resentment towards those that have more than we do. We give but somewhat reluctantly, and perhaps not always as first fruits, but rather the left over fruits.

In a poverty mindset we find ourselves living with a spirit of lack, at times manifested as stinginess. We believe God's promise of provision for others, but doubt it for ourselves. While we would never admit this doctrinally, we live it out practically. We find ourselves operating as if what we have will never meet our needs, and we hold on to it tightly. Instead of modelling an outrageous faith, worthy of our God, we too often move forward depending solely on our own resources. In our fear, as leaders, we limit others from having the opportunity to step out in faith, trusting God to provide out of His abundant supply.

While some of us complain of not being paid what we are entitled to, others in our churches are severely under paid and suffering. Some of us have believed the lie that because we work for the Lord we should be poor. For these things we need to repent. We are guilty of not believing God's Word that speaks of His generous heart and unlimited storehouse of resources. We have not taken up His Malachi challenge to test Him with our generous giving.

Jesus came into this world as the poorest of the poor, yet modeled trust in His Father to provide for His personal and ministry needs. This same Jesus promises to provide for us today.

Response Prayer

Father, we acknowledge today that we need your Spirit to transform this area of our lives. Forgive us for the ways that we have loved money more than you. We confess our complaining, our jealousies, our judgements and our comparisons towards others and their possessions. We lay these all down at the foot of your cross.



Father, we lay down our greed and self-interest as it pertains to our spending, recognizing that our decisions impact your body and the world around us. We confess our tendency to always want more, and our apathy towards the myriad of needs in our world. We choose to take up love and sacrifice, to be generous and cheerful givers and faithful stewards.

Father we lay down our fear of lack and we repent of a poverty mindset that limits you to what we can accomplish financially on our own. Forgive us for not trusting you to provide for us your children and for the work you have called us to. We humbly ask you to renew our minds and lead us into Your Kingdom ways of operating, trusting, giving, paying, releasing and living. Give us courage to follow your Spirit's promptings into audacious goals, believing that you will do exceedingly abundantly more than we could even ask for or imagine.

