

THE PRAYER PROJECT, PART III

New Day Church

Federal Way, WA

March 28, 2004

Note: The following is the outline of the prayer concert held on March 28.

WELCOME

PRAYER

OPEN THE EYES OF MY HEART

AWESOME GOD

HEAR OUR PRAISES

MEDITATION

Acts 2:42-47

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Those of you who have been around New Day since we were meeting over at OSBC might remember that there was a time when almost every meeting would start with me saying something like, "We're going to try something a little different tonight." It got to the point where it didn't have much meaning, because it was almost every week.

This morning really IS different though. Instead of me preaching, we're going to have what's known as a concert of prayer. This will conclude our series of services focused on prayer.

We've started with EXPLANATION, where we talked about what prayer is in light of the Lord's prayer. Then we moved to EXAMPLE where we looked at the life of Daniel and how he went about prayer. Today we move to EXPERIMENT – where we get to try out some different types of prayer for ourselves.

There's a museum in Seattle that's not like any other museum in the world. It's called EMP – The Experience Music Project. Paul Allen founded it with the idea that it wouldn't just be a place to go and learn about the history of music, but instead it would

be a place where you could go experience it, explore it, participate in it. You can pick up a guitar or bang on a drum. The goal is to try new things and be moved by music.

Their web site says this:

EMP will encourage visitors of all ages and backgrounds to experience the power and joy of music in its many forms.

This morning is our Experience Prayer Project. I didn't want to just TEACH about prayer and have us think about it. We want to experience the power and joy of prayer in its many forms. So as we go through this morning, we'll be trying several different things together.

The passage I just read from the book of Acts says that the early church was devoted to several things. The apostles' teaching, the fellowship, the breaking of bread and prayer. All of those areas are vital to the Christian life.

We need the teaching times to ground us in the essentials of the faith, to hold us to what is true so we can navigate our way through life and know where true north is. We need fellowship – the care of other Christians who can support us and walk through the good and the bad with us. We celebrate the breaking of bread, or the Lord's Supper on a regular basis to remind us of what it cost for us to be part of God's family. The cross is at the center of why we're here.

And we also need to devote time and energy to prayer – both individually and as a group. It is foundational, because it is in prayer that we talk to God and listen to what he's telling us.

So this morning we're following in an ancient tradition of dedicating the time to prayer. We're going to use the word ACTS, like the book, as an acronym and divide our time into sections.

First we have A, for ADORATION. We'll spend some focused time just praising God for who he is, with no agenda other than to honor him.

Next is C, for CONFESSION. Every one of us has something that we've done in the last week even that we can confess to God. Karin's aunt attended Seattle Pacific University, and she had a professor who told the class he hadn't sinned in 20 years. That was a man sadly out of touch with reality. We all sin on a regular basis. But sometimes we act as if we haven't sinned for 20 years. We don't take the time to apologize to God, to admit our faults and ask him for forgiveness. That's a hard one to get the courage to do. So we will take some moments for individual reflection and prayer, where you can talk to God privately about what's between you.

Third comes T – THANKSGIVING. What has God been doing in your life? The rest of us need to hear it. There will be time this morning to just remember the good ways that God has been blessing, from small things to big things.

Finally comes S – SUPPLICATION. That’s an old fashioned word for asking God to meet our needs. You can see that the word “supply” is in supplication, and I like that. It is asking God to supply what we’re lacking. We can share our hurts with each other and pray for each other.

You each should have received four slips of paper when you came in this morning. They look similar, but we’re going to be using them in four very different ways to help us symbolize each segment of our prayer experiment.

Let me say up front that there is no pressure to participate in any of the different sections this morning. We’ve designed things in such a way that you can lean heavily on the prayers of others when you need to or you can enter in for yourself. Again, it’s like a visit to the Experience Music Project. You can just walk straight through if you want to, but the more you enter in, the more you’ll get out of it.

As we begin, let’s sing the chorus of “Hear our Praises” one more time. This will be our invitation to God to listen as we pray together.

HEAR OUR PRAISES

ADORATION

Please take the piece of paper marked ADORATION. What I would like you to do is to think of a word describing God’s character. What is it about him that is on your heart this morning? I’ll give you a moment to think and write one word down. As you’re writing, listen to the words of this prayer of David for inspiration:

Psalm 111

*Hallelujah! I give thanks to GOD with everything I've got —
Wherever good people gather, and in the congregation.
GOD's works are so great, worth a lifetime of study — endless enjoyment!
Splendor and beauty mark his craft;
His generosity never gives out.
His miracles are his memorial —
This GOD of Grace, this GOD of Love.
He gave food to those who fear him,
He remembered to keep his ancient promise.
He proved to his people that he could do what he said:
Hand them the nations on a platter — a gift!
He manufactures truth and justice; All his products are guaranteed to last —
Never out-of-date, never obsolete, rust-proof.
All that he makes and does is honest and true:*

*He paid the ransom for his people,
He ordered his Covenant kept forever.
He's so personal and holy, worthy of our respect.
The good life begins in the fear of GOD —
Do that and you'll know the blessing of GOD. His Hallelujah lasts forever!*

Do you have your word? What we're going to do now is a praise exchange. Take your word to someone near you. Read them the word, and have them read you theirs. Then exchange pieces of paper. Now do the same thing again, taking their word to someone else. Do that three times, making sure you don't get your own paper back.

EXCHANGE

What good words did you hear? Let's speak out a few of them in word prayers of praise to God.

WORD PRAISES

Please read the following prayer responsively with me. :

From Psalm 104

Peter: O my soul, bless GOD!

Congregation: GOD, my God, how great you are!

Peter: Beautifully, gloriously robed,

Congregation: Dressed up in sunshine,

Peter: And all heaven stretched out for your tent.
Oh, let me sing to GOD all my life long,

Congregation: Sing hymns to my God as long as I live!

Peter: Oh, let my song please him;

Congregation: I'm so pleased to be singing to GOD.

All: O my soul, bless GOD!

PRAYER OF PRAISE (Immediately after the reading)

CONFESSION

We come now to a time for confession. This will be a time of personal reflection, where you can talk to God directly about what's going on in your heart. On your second piece of paper, I'm going to ask you to actually write down something that you want to confess

to God, some sin you know you need to admit. No one is going to read your paper – this is for your eyes only. But the act of actually writing it down can bring us to a point of having to confront the reality of stuff going on in us that is easier to dismiss if we aren't staring at it in black and white. Derek is going to come sing a song while we think and pray. As you listen to the words, let it become your prayer as you talk to God about your need for forgiveness.

LORD HAVE MERCY

We're not through with that paper yet. Take your pencil now and scribble out the word. John 1:9 says that if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Our sins are blotted out, thanks to what Jesus did for us on the cross. We confess and God forgets them, because Jesus has already suffered our punishment. We're going to play another song that is a celebration of God's forgiveness, and as we listen to this song, we're going to pass around this sack. The sack is full of rocks, like a sack you would throw into the sea that you wanted to sink to the bottom. As it passes by, wad up your confession and drop it in. It's your way of letting go of the guilt of the sin, as well as letting go of the practice of the sin, and saying "I'm through with that one. It has no hold on me anymore." Then the last person is going to walk over and drop the whole bag in the garbage.

God is through with our sins. They're on the ocean floor.

OCEAN FLOOR

Psalm 103:1-6

O my soul, bless GOD.

From head to toe, I'll bless his holy name!

O my soul, bless GOD,

don't forget a single blessing!

He forgives your sins — every one.

He heals your diseases — every one.

He redeems you from hell — saves your life!

He crowns you with love and mercy — a paradise crown.

He wraps you in goodness — beauty eternal.

He renews your youth — you're always young in his presence.

GOD makes everything come out right;

he puts victims back on their feet.

THANKSGIVING

We now move into the section on thanksgiving – celebrating how God has put us back on our feet. Take your third piece of paper, and write down on it something that you feel particularly thankful for this morning. It could be your family, your job, or something significant God has done this week – anything that comes to mind. Up front, we have a bowl. The Bible refers to the prayers of the saints as being like an offering before God. I want to invite you to take your slip of paper that you've written, read it into the microphone and then drop it in the bowl as an offering to God. Take a moment to write, or if you need to keep writing as people come up front, feel free. We'll just let as many people as want to share what they are thankful for.

PRAYER OF THANKS (After everyone is through)

SUPPLICATION

For the final segment, we turn to supplication – asking God to supply our needs. We all come into this morning with burdens and struggles, and there are other people around us who want to support us and pray with us about those hurts. Sometimes it is a big old burden and sometimes it's a small one. But we all have stuff.

We want to give you a chance to share your struggles and have someone pray with you, and to let you pray for other people as well. There are several people this morning who are designated prayer facilitators, and what we would like to do is divide the group up so that there are no more than five or six people with any given facilitator. In that small group, take a few minutes to share what you feel comfortable sharing about your life with them. Then as many as want to in the group can take turns praying. If you'd rather just listen, that's fine too. But on your final piece of paper, write down some of the needs you hear in your group. That piece of paper will go home with you this week to remind you to pray for the people you've been with today.

AWESOME GOD

CLOSING PRAYER