



The Flame

Issue 2 – November 12, 2014

from GCCN Prayer Ministries

The Centered Heart

The young man entered the pulpit to deliver his first sermon. As is the case with most of us when we started, within the first five minutes he had exhausted what probably seemed to him during the week as a masterful 30-minute sermon. The look on his face was pretty revealing, and for a moment he seemed uncertain. But he quickly recovered and what followed was a rather disjointed albeit sincere series of disconnected thoughts that skillfully covered the mysteries of the Book of Revelation and the meaning of Christmas interwoven with some practical theology of church unity and spiritual gifts in a record 10 minutes flat.

Those of us who are veterans in the ministry, and who on occasion recall our own painful early sermons, refer to such rambling messages as “beginning with a text and then going everywhere preaching the gospel.”

Oddly enough, with some modification, that might be a good description of what prayer is for many people: beginning with a “Dear Lord” and rambling almost aimlessly through a list of requests with the obligatory expressions about faith and confidence thrown in for good measure.

Somehow, like the young minister and his sermon, our attempts to pray are often awkward and not entirely fulfilling.

The problem with prayer is our failure to know what it really is, and prayer is defined most clearly by its purpose. The sole purpose for prayer is worship.

Michael W. Smith’s word get right to the heart of the matter:

*I'm coming back to the heart of worship
And it's all about You, It's all about You, Jesus
I'm sorry, Lord, for the thing I've made it
When it's all about You, It's all about You, Jesus*

Prayer is nothing at all if it is not worship centered. When worship is missing, we become mired down in self-absorption. *Our* list of requests, seen through *our* anemic human perspectives, are subject at best to the whim of mistaking positive thinking for faith.

Taking Our Next Step

As we pray, let our focus shift away from our tendency to rush to Him with our list of pressing needs. Let us pause instead to allow His presence to crowd out everything that would distract us from hearing His voice.

He is the God whose grace invites us to bring our cares to Him, but our hearts need to seek Him first and be filled with a longing for His peace and His presence and peace that reveals His perspective and redefines our requests with the spotlight of His own heart.