

RPC—God’s House of Prayer

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REALITY PRAYER BY PASTOR STAN GALE

Prayer seems to take on an alien character to many people. I remember a guy many years ago whose whole demeanor changed when he prayed. He would morph from his man’s man persona into someone syrupy, all sunshine and sweetness. Even his voice would change, becoming almost sing-songy.

A woman at a Bible study I lead expressed her problem praying. A guy in the group responded to her, “You just talk to God like you’re talking to us.”

His plea was for her to “be real.” In that sense, he was suggesting prayer take on the roughness of a reality show over that of something staged and scripted. I think that’s one of the things that give reality shows their appeal. People are real. They go with the flow. And it’s often not a pretty sight.

Jesus warned about staged prayers in His teaching on the subject in the Sermon on the Mount. “And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words.” (Matt. 6:7)

Actually, Jesus says that our prayer should not be for show at all (Matt. 6:5-6). But our prayers are to be real—expressed in real words, by the real us, dealing with real life.

If you want a dose of reality praying, check out the psalms. There we find struggle, authenticity, trust, expectation and every other characteristic of the human condition. The psalms display for us the voice of faith in dealing with the hardships of life in a fallen world.

For example, look at Psalm 88.

O Lord, God of my salvation; I cry out day and night before you. Let my prayer come before you; incline your ear to my cry! For my soul is full of troubles, and my life draws near to Sheol. I am counted among those who go down to the

Drawing Board

Prayer Training

Pastor Gale will lead another Prayer Training Module during the CE Hour starting Sept. 15th. This 9-week training will include an orientation to God’s design for House of Prayer.

Prayer Walking

Prayer walks are praying on-site with insight. Two or more can walk through a neighborhood, taking their cue for prayer by the Spirit’s promptings and the stimuli of their surroundings. Prayer walks can happen wherever and whenever people choose. Planned walks are slated for Downingtown, West Chester and the WCU campus.

Prayer Corps

We are to be known as a “house of prayer for the nations.” That begins with our own community. Plans are to canvas the neighborhood around the church distributing calling cards. These cards will give church info and invite neighbors to contact us with prayer requests they have.

pit; I am a man who has no strength, like one set loose among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, like those whom you remember no more, for they are cut off from your hand. You have put me in the depths of the pit, in the regions dark and deep. Your wrath lies heavy upon me, and you overwhelm me with all your waves.

Nothing fake or syrupy about this prayer. The words come from the heart. We can feel the ache. We can empathize with the pain and confusion. We've been there. He is real with himself. The psalmist doesn't pull any punches. He wrestles with God. He expresses what he knows to be true about God with what he is experiencing. He is real with God.

You have caused my companions to shun me; you have made me a horror to them. I am shut in so that I cannot escape; my eye grows dim through sorrow. Every day I call upon you, O Lord; I spread out my hands to you. Do you work wonders for the dead? Do the departed rise up to praise you? Is your steadfast love declared in the grave, or your faithfulness in Abaddon? Are your wonders known in the darkness, or your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness? But I, O Lord, cry to you; in the morning my prayer comes before you. O Lord, why do you cast my soul away? Why do you hide your face from me? Afflicted and close to death from my youth up, I suffer your terrors; I am helpless. Your wrath has swept over me; your dreadful assaults destroy me. They surround me like a flood all day long; they close in on me together. You have caused my beloved and my friend to shun me; my companions have become darkness.

The psalmist attributes his troubles to the hand of God. But that does not keep him from seeking God. Where else can he turn? God is real. He is true. We trust Him. But that does not make the pain go away. We seek Him even when God seems silent, even when He seems to be avoiding us. That's how faith works.

It's interesting that Psalm 88 offers no resolution. Many psalms present a story of conflict that is resolved by prayer's end. Not Psalm 88. I suspect that's where many of us find ourselves. We press on in faith, asking God to help us in our unbelief. There is no happy ending to Psalm 88 because there was no happy ending to record. That, too, is part of keeping it real.

CONSTRUCTION NOTES

Some of what is in the works and events scheduled to grow us as a house of prayer:

- **Formation of a Prayer Response Team to receive neighborhood requests via calling cards**
- **Training our children to pray. Stay tuned for a special Covenant Keepers.**

- **Next Day of Prayer & Fasting – September 17th. As we did last time, we will close by gathering at the church. Groups will move from room to room for directed prayer.**
- **Monthly Prayer Gatherings meet the fourth Sunday of each month in the parlor.**

- **In keeping with Psalm 127:1, pray for the Lord to build us as a house of prayer.**
- **Pass along your ideas for cultivating a culture of prayer at RPC.**