

The House of Prayer

Isaiah 56:6-7

Isaiah 56:6 And the LORD says to those foreigners who become part of his people, who love him and serve him, who observe the Sabbath and faithfully keep his covenant: 7 "I will bring you to Zion, my sacred hill, give you joy in my house of prayer, and accept the sacrifices you offer on my altar. My Temple will be called a house of prayer for the people of all nations."

THE PRIVILEGE OF PRAYER

You may remember a sermon I gave at the end of last year about the way in which God has privileged us, as His people to speak to Him, not as fearful subjects even though we speak to the Creator, to the Almighty, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. But we have a Father who's Dad.

THE DWELLING PLACE OF GOD

He's made us for prayer because we have entered into a relationship with Him. I recall reading the verse I just read then because God has made us temples of the Holy Spirit. We are the house of God, the place in which God the Spirit has made His dwelling.

ISAIAH 56:7

So in a very real sense prayer is about walking with God, walking with the Spirit – literally. And what should the nature of that walk be. And here we have it in Isaiah 56:7 *"I will bring you to Zion, my sacred hill, give you joy in my house of prayer, and accept the sacrifices you offer on my altar."*

God's house is a house of joy. Prayer is equated with joy. More than anything else, our prayer lives should be characterised with joy. Not false joy, or deep joy, but real joy because we know the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. We walk with Him daily. That *should* be something joyful.

QUEEN VICTORIA

I was brought up in a generation for whom everything to do with prayer was solemn. Why? Because we equated God with British imperial majesty – where everything was done in solemn dignity and stuffily. That isn't the Bible definition of what being reverend in the House of God is all about. Look at the Psalms. Going to Zion was about rejoicing, joy, shouting, singing, waving of arms – a party in all but name. Yes, there were the solemn times when people remembered their sins and took reality checks – we do that at Communion, but the consequence of that reality check was to find forgiveness and allow mourning to be turned to joy.

THE TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

We are the temple of the Holy Spirit. We are able to go boldly into the most holy place by the blood of Jesus. It's a joyful place because Father is there

So how does that affect our prayer life? On Sunday I'll explore attitude a bit more. But for now, if we realise that this building isn't the temple, or even the house of prayer, but that we are, then we take the presence of God around with us.

Because He's always right here; in me in you, we have a God who is more intimate than any human relationship because you can't get closer than in us.

I find that the more intimately I know someone, the less formal I am. If we are the temple, prayer ceases to become something that is just the haunt of the church or the private place. Wherever we are and whatever we're doing, the Spirit is right with us. Even when we can't pray, He intercedes for us with the Father.

HOW DO WE PRAY?

Never see prayer as something you do in one place, one style or one tradition. There's no set way – we pray in a way that helps us draw closer to our Father. Rachel Hickson suggests that one thing that helps to revolutionise our prayer lives is to realise that there is no limit to how we might communicate with God. So here are a few possible ideas to give a try to.

SITTING ETC

Sitting down, Standing up, Kneeling, Prostrate, Moving around – driving, walking.

Wherever and whenever – treat Him like One of the family – because He is – or to be precise, we are in His family!

