

LIVING IN THE HOLY SPIRIT THE PRAYING MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

It's probably a boy thing more than a girl thing.
It required scrounging for scraps of wood.
Bent nails needed to be straightened.
Vision, focus, determination, and creativity were essentials.
Long hours of mysterious absence from home.
The activity involved being sworn to secrecy.
Stealth was an asset for quietly sneaking tools out of the house.
Hammers were a necessity and maybe a saw.
The tricky part was sneaking the tools back into the house.
They had to be put back in their place at the end of each day.
If one tool went missing the gig was up.
I sure hope my dad isn't listening.
It was usually a summer long project.
Most boys have built a fort somewhere on this planet.
Forts built out of the ruins of forts.
Forts built out of wood that was cast off from other projects.
Forts that emerged from a hodge-podge of building materials.
There was no blue print.
It was just an idea that took shape on a whim, a thought.
Little rhyme or reason.
The building materials dictated the shape not vice versa.
A structure condemned before being built.

What does this have to do with the prayer ministry of the Holy Spirit?
Maybe it's just me.
And if it is I would like you to sit down with me and give me some coaching.
But maybe you will be able to identify in some way.
Prayer can often be a collection of scraps, bits of spare time.
A moment here, a minute there.
The focus of prayer can be limited to what is happening at the moment.
No blue print to give direction, just what is in crisis.
It sometimes happens when we are all bent out of shape about something.
Or maybe it is someone else's life that needs to be straightened out.
It can also be a seasonal activity.
We pray when we feel like it or if it is convenient.
And prayer might even be something we only do in secret.
Jesus tells us to pray in secret.
We aren't to flaunt our prayer life.
But it shouldn't be secretive.
We sometimes keep our faith and relationship with Jesus hidden.
And so our prayer life looks like a fort slapped together.
Not terribly effective.
Not terribly reliable.
It is not nearly what it could and should be.
It lacks maturity.
It will likely collapse under the pressures of life.
It is our attempt at fixing the problems of life.
It is prayer by animal instinct not God inspiration.

A sloppy fort erected by immature hands with no strength or plan is one thing.
That should not be the description of the believer's prayer life.

That is why we need the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence.

He is our intercessor.

We won't have all the right words, maybe no words at all.

But that doesn't matter when the Holy Spirit is directing our prayer life.

He interprets our groaning.

He inspires our longings.

He opens our eyes to the spiritual battle Satan is waging.

Jude eagerly writes to fellow believers.

He implores them to fight for the faith they received.

Don't allow grace to be perverted.

Salvation is a wonderful gift not to be trifled with.

Building God's Kingdom is not like slapping together a summer fort.

God's Kingdom is serious, intentional work.

And prayer is the pivot point of God's restoration of this world.

Prayer that is built on faith in God's supremacy.

Jude is warning about trying to go it alone.

He is warning what will happen if we reject God's authority.

Or if we revile the story of Satan and his rebellion against God.

Jude is saying that prayer is not child's play.

It is imperative that we live life in the Spirit.

That we live in our world as Enoch lived in his.

Enoch lived in the seventh generation after creation.

Adam was only 622 years old when Enoch was born.

Enoch knew Adam for 308 years.

He would know the story of creation.

He would know the story of the fall into sin.

He would know about the rebellion of Lucifer.

He was still alive when Lamech, Noah's father, was born.

Enoch walked with God.

And God took him 69 years before Noah was born.

Enoch had a clear understanding of evil.

He knew the stories of evil's beginnings.

He also saw clearly the evil of his generation.

He knew that God was going to judge the evil of the world.

Enoch heard God's warnings.

The flood was not God's surprise attack on those who were evil.

Enoch witnessed God's attempts to draw people from wickedness.

"Behold, the Lord came with His myriads, to execute judgment on all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness which they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." (Jude 14b-15)

God has always called out to the world.

Noah's generation refused to follow God's plan.

They continued to build their ramshackle lives.

And they perished in the flood.

And Jude's generation was no different from Enoch's.

And our generation is no different from Jude's.

"In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions."
(v. 18)

God has continued to warn and call sinners to repent.

People continue to set up divisions, live for the world.

People continue to live life by the flesh instead of the Spirit.

They doubt and they revile the life of faith in Almighty God.

They doubt God's word and truth.

There is only one solution.

There has always been only one solution.

Jude lays out the solution as clearly as anywhere in Scripture.

"But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith."

Don't use scraps and bent and broken fragments for building life.

Use your most holy faith.

Use the best that God has offered.

Let Jesus Christ the Savior of the world, be your Rock, your Shield, your Fortress.

Don't be devoid of the Spirit.

The Message says, carefully build yourselves up in this most holy faith.

"pray in the Holy Spirit."

We need to be in fellowship with the Spirit of Christ.

Our prayer focuses on the will of God not the problems of people.

Our prayer focuses on relationship not issues.

I can't fix people's problems.

I can't forgive their sins.

I can't annihilate rebellion against the pure and holy.

I can bring them, by praying in the Spirit, to God who is able.

He is able to do far more abundantly than I can ask or think.

Only by the Spirit can I reveal the Spirit.

Eugene Peterson says this; **"life is not something we manage to hammer together and keep in repair by our wits; it is an unfathomable gift. We are immersed in mysteries: incredible love, confounding evil, the Creation, the Cross, grace, God. The secularized mind is terrorized by mysteries. Thus it makes lists, labels people, assigns roles, and solves problems. But a solved life is a reduced life. These tightly buttoned-up people never take great faith risks or make convincing love talk ... and diminish human existence to what can be managed, controlled and fixed."** (*Leadership*, Fall 1994, page 49)

What we want to see is the Spirit of God at work in the broken places of life.

We don't try and solve people's problems for them.

We don't reduce a person's life to our level of wisdom.

We will never take great risks or see God's will be done as it is in heaven.

We could be building a beautiful dwelling like Jeff is building.

Praying in the Spirit keeps us from settling for a summer fort.

Praying in the Spirit helps me point people to God not to me.

I'm not the solution, God is.

But people will never see God if all I give Him are my scraps.

If my prayer life is haphazard God's work is obscured.

If I pray in the Spirit God reveals higher ground to me and others.

"Convince some, who doubt; save some by snatching them out of the fire; on some have mercy with fear."

That is the beauty of praying in the Spirit.

We pray in the fear—the awe of God and His mercy, and God rescues.

The other qualities of beauty are love and mercy.

"keep yourselves in the love of God; wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ."

That is how the beauty of Jesus is seen in us.

God wants to take our summer fort building to a whole new level.

And He has poured out the gift of His Spirit to equip us.

"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts."

(Zechariah 4:6)

I haven't built a summer fort in decades.

But I fear my prayer life has too often resembled one.

Jude wants that to change in the heart of every believer (v. 20).

Closing song - Your Love O Lord