

## Isaiah 56:7

*Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices Will be accepted on My altar; For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations."*

When you read today's verse in Isaiah, you may be thinking, "I know I have heard this somewhere else in the bible before" and you are one hundred percent right, because Jesus quoted this verse when He was cleansing the temple.

† **Matthew 21:13** *And He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves.' "*

But as we read that, it seems we have gotten off the mark of what the church building should be. Notice that Jesus and the Prophet Isaiah did NOT quote God as saying:

My house shall be called a house of great worship music.  
My house shall be called a house of structured time.  
My house shall be called a place for friends to gather for social events.  
My house shall be called a house of potlucks.  
My house shall be called a house of judgement towards others.  
My house shall be called a house of gossip and backbiting.  
My house shall be called a house of collecting money.  
My house shall be called a house of fun things for your kids to do.  
My house shall be called a house of events.

And if you think about it, most churches have all those things in the building (including gossip and backbiting) yet most churches do not have prayer inside the church building. Or they do pray, yet prayer is at the bottom of the list, and it takes you longer to park your car and walk into the building than the time spent in prayer in the church building.

If I may, I would like to quote from pastor Jim Cymbala's book "**Fresh wind, fresh fire**" which I would highly recommend.

*"You can tell how popular a church is by who comes on Sunday morning."*

*"You can tell how popular the pastor or evangelist is by who comes on Sunday night."*

*"But you can tell how popular Jesus is by who comes to the prayer meeting."*

But even as I was typing this, I am reminded that we have gotten away from Sunday night services, as well as mid-week (Wednesday) services. Everything is now cramped into an hour and a half show; starting out with music, then a few commercials (announcements) then a teaching, then a closing song as they roll the closing credits and usher people out of the church so the next group can come in for the next show. And the services are so structured that the church has structured the Holy Spirit out of the service, or they will pencil Him in, if time allows.

Yet how much time is given to pray in God's house, the church building?

Sure there are those who pray outside the church in their homes, which is awesome, and if you are doing that, keep at it. Yet if God's house is to be a house of prayer, don't you think it's time for us to bring prayer back into His house?

Yet, how many go to rallies to bring prayer back into the schools, but no one rallies around having prayer brought back into the church? And the argument may be, "*We don't have time for that much prayer, there is too much going on every Sunday, or even during the week.*" Then shouldn't we stop and look at what those other things are, and start prioritizing prayer in the church, then schedule everything else around prayer as the Spirit leads in prayer?

You may also think that the church building is not God's temple. So, if we ran with that thought, what does the bible say?

† **1 Corinthians 6:19-20** *Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.*

So, if our "*body is the temple of the Holy Spirit*" shouldn't these temples be about prayer instead of other things that do not benefit it, or others for God's kingdom?

They say from the pulpit to prioritize or schedule your time so that you can spend time in God's word every day. Which I agree with. So let's prioritize our times so that the church "*shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.*" And not a church of good music and events for families to be entertained, instead of growing in the Lord.

† **Ephesians 5:19-20** *speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

We love to quote this tiny, simple verse which says, "*pray without ceasing*" **1 Thessalonians 5:17** Yet we don't do it, in fact, let's just take this verse and bring it down to one word "*pray*" because as a church, how can we "*pray without ceasing*" if we are not even "*praying*" in the church?

† **Ephesians 6:18 (NLT2)** *Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.*

† **Matthew 26:41 (NLT2)** *Keep watch and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation. For the spirit is willing, but the body is weak!"*

† **Jude 1:20 (NLT2)** *But you, dear friends, must build each other up in your most holy faith, pray in the power of the Holy Spirit.*