

Maclellan

Prioritizing Prayer at Maclellan

A spiritual strategy for spiritual solutions.



Introduction

Heeding Jesus' call in Matthew 28:18, the Maclellan Foundation's strategic intent is to *accelerate and multiply Great Commission activities among all the nations*. We believe that spiritual issues are at the root of the world's problems, and spiritual strategies are required to promote spiritual solutions to address them. Paul, in his second letter to the Corinthian Church, described our "weapons of warfare" as being spiritual rather than natural. Jesus Himself taught this paradigm in Mark 9:29 when He said some results can *only* come about through prayer.

Precedent and Strategy

Since the Foundation is primarily interested in spiritual solutions, how should we passionately invest in the one tool God specifically gave us to secure spiritual victories? The answer is, in two ways: People and a Place.

We affirm the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:5), and that everyone is called to offer prayers for all kinds of reasons (1 Thessalonians 5:17). All the believers on Maclellan's staff should pray some of the time to advance our mission; some of the believers on our staff should pray all the time. Below is the statement of intent published in the job description for this latter group, the Maclellan Prayer Room Intercessors:

"The over-arching purpose and strategy of the Maclellan Prayer Room is to provide the people and a place for intentional praise, prayer, and worship to be rising from the Maclellan office every hour that we are at work."

One of the leadership premises learned in business school is, *"that which an organization deems to be of value is evidenced by where it applies its resources."* This organizational conviction is not limited to modern business gurus like Peter Drucker and Jim Collins. No reader of Scripture can miss the fact that the apostles placed a high value on intercessory prayer and worship, and applied resources accordingly, with Paul being the most explicit (see Ephesians 6:18-20, Colossians 4:2, and 1 Timothy 2:1).

From their inspired writings, we can see that dedication to "the prayers" (Acts 2:42) was part of a regular rhythm of worship, but the apostles did not offer any direct instruction on how communities of believers are to go about organizing or entering this rhythm.

Since the Old Testament is ripe with examples of how God instructed Israel to worship Him, the temptation is very great to pick some of these stories to support a modern institutional practice and then call it "biblical."

We are clear that modern Christians are not required to imitate the priestly and worship structures from ancient Israel as described in the Old Testament. However, since God described King David as *a man after my own heart*, it is our belief that David's actions in establishing structured "professional" worship on behalf of Israel can inform and inspire our steps as we also corporately pursue the heart of God in the implementation of our mission.

To begin with, it is important to know that David received detailed inspiration from God for his entire plan to organize and compensate professional intercessors (in this case, the Levites). **"All this he made clear to me in writing from the hand of the Lord, all the work to be done according to the plan."**¹ This was an idea from the heart of God and not merely a human construct. Throughout 1 Chronicles, we get a detailed glimpse of how the Lord instructed King David regarding the service of these Levites.

David specified 8,288 professionals be employed as musicians, gatekeepers (administrators), and singers. There were 4,000 musicians, and the same number of gatekeepers (1 Chronicles 23:5). The remaining 288 were singers that had God-given talent. **The number of them along with their brothers, who were trained in singing to the Lord, all who were skillful, was 288.** (1 Chronicles 25:7)

Significantly, they were to be employed full-time: **Now these, the singers, the heads of fathers' houses of the Levites, lived in the chambers of the temple, and were freed from other duties, for they were on duty day and night** (1 Chronicles 9:33). David "bought" their time, so they could be free from other duties like farming, blacksmithing, carpentry, or tent-making.

David gave further clarity for how the Levites were to occupy their purchased time. Spoiler alert: it sounds a lot like our prayer room intercessor job description. **Then he appointed some of the Levites as ministers before the ark of the Lord, to invoke, to thank, and to praise the Lord, the God of Israel** (1 Chronicles 16:4). David instructed Solomon to follow this precedent when David transitioned the kingship at the end of his life. **And they were to**

¹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (1 Chronicles 28:19). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society. NOTE that all Scripture references are ESV, unless otherwise listed in a footnote. The **bold** font is the author's attempt to delineate quoted Scripture.

stand every morning, thanking and praising the Lord, and likewise at evening (1 Chronicles 23:30).

The results and influence of this God-inspired Davidic Plan for corporate intercessory worship are astounding. In Old Testament times, Israel experienced at least six “revivals” or national reforms: under Jehoshaphat (870 BC), Jehoiada (835 BC), Hezekiah (725 BC), Josiah (625 BC), Zerubbabel (536 BC), and Ezra and Nehemiah (445 BC). Each one was characterized by reinstating, or reviving, the Davidic Plan for worship on behalf of the Nation. Here’s one example:

Josiah – And he said to the Levites who taught all Israel and who were holy to the Lord, “Put the holy ark in the house that Solomon the son of David, king of Israel, built. You need not carry it on your shoulders. Now serve the Lord your God and his people Israel. Prepare yourselves according to your fathers’ houses by your divisions, as prescribed in the writing of David king of Israel and the document of Solomon his son. (2 Chronicles 35:3-4).

After the exile, during a time of nationwide spiritual renewal, Nehemiah and Ezra made sure to also re-establish the discipline of paying the intercessors/worshippers their daily wages. **And all Israel in the days of Zerubbabel and in the days of Nehemiah gave the daily portions for the singers and the gatekeepers; and they set apart that which was for the Levites; and the Levites set apart that which was for the sons of Aaron (Nehemiah 12:47).**

Therefore, it is clear in Scripture that the heart of God is comfortable with the practice of paying individuals to use their talents for intercessory prayer, praise, and worship, on behalf of a third party.

Part of the reason the Lord’s strategy for Kingdom Advancement includes this organized, corporate prayer and praise is because it functions as the “tip of the spear” in battle. God wants his people to lead with Praise as they claim territory from the enemy.

In Genesis 29:35, we learn that Leah and Jacob named their fourth son Judah, because it meant “to praise the Lord.” When Israel broke camp in the Wilderness, Judah (Praise) led the way (Numbers 2:9). When Israel went to war, Judah-Praise led the charge (Judges 1:1-2, 20:18). But one doesn’t have to rely on etymology to understand God’s chronological perspective on worship and warfare.

In 870 B.C., King Jehoshaphat was besieged by three neighboring armies, and he was in a panic. He inquired of the Lord, who downloaded the battle plan through the prophet-priest Jahaziel.

And when the King had taken counsel with the people, he appointed those who were to sing to the LORD and praise him in holy attire, as they went before the army, and say, “Give thanks to the LORD, for his steadfast love endures forever.” And when they began to sing and praise, the LORD



set an ambush against the men of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah, so that they were routed (2 Chronicles 20:21-22).

Israel's participation in God's victory was to lead with corporate Praise. The enemy was defeated so thoroughly it took Israel three days to collect the plunder from the battlefield.

But if the Old Testament is clear that prayer is a precursor to spiritual breakthrough, the New Testament is just as emphatic.

In Acts, Paul and Silas were bound in an inner prison with their feet locked in the stocks. About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, ²⁶ and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened (Acts 16:25-26).

Also in Acts 12:5-24, we are told that, "**Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him,**" and he was then supernaturally released, the church was strengthened by this testimony, and the work of the Church continued to flourish.

If we want to plunder the enemy camp, and see the captives set free, then we should follow the Biblical pattern and commit resources to lead our Kingdom-advancing strategies with intentional prayer, praise, and worship.

Conclusion

It is our conviction that strategic prayer and consistent praise is as critical to fulfilling our mission as is executive leadership, accounting, investment management, and field due-diligence. It would never occur to any of us not to pay for people's time to apply their accounting, management, or financial talents to implement the Foundation's objectives. Similarly, we are not paying for prayer, *per se*. We are paying for people's time to use their God-given talent for intercession to further our mission. They are to "invoke, thank, and praise the Lord" on behalf of the Foundation for every hour our office doors are open.

Finally, we have also set aside a *place* for this intercession to occur. Of course, we believe that Prayer can occur anywhere at any time. But Jesus Himself suggested "a closet" for prayer (Matt 6:6), and often went away to mountains and "lonely places to pray", to get away from distractions. To encourage and implement the focused prayer described above, we believe a place was needed, free from the distractions of texts, emails, and telephones.

At MacLellan, we are happy to apply our resources toward the people and a place to praise the praiseworthy. In so doing, we believe that we will be applying spiritual strategies that underpin our natural efforts to participate in the advancement of Christ's Kingdom.