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**Presentation Transcript**  
**Prayer and Passionate Spirituality**  
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The title of this presentation is *Prayer and Passionate Spirituality*. This is the second in a series on *Passionate Spirituality*. And that topic is the fourth topic in the larger series on *Congregational Health*. There's four sermons on *Passionate Spirituality*. One was the introduction. There's this one today on prayer. There's another on enthusiasm. And the fourth one, I believe, is on boldness. Because those four attributes – or those three attributes – are the qualities that Natural Church Development says are important in the congregation. There are other aspects to spirituality, of course, but these are the ones that they have found, through their research, affects congregational health.

Now I have to tell you that I've been told that some people think this *Church Health* series is boring. And I will confess that if it's boring to you, I'll take the blame for making it a boring presentation. But I myself would never admit to anybody that I was bored about this topic. That would be like saying, "I'm not interested in my calling," or "I'm bored by the sacrifice of Christ." The health of our congregation directly impacts our abilities to fulfill our calling. It affects our spiritual growth.

We were all called to the church for a purpose, and we were each equipped with some of the attributes of Jesus Christ so that we could be successful in that calling. And those gifts are to be used in the context of the congregation in most cases. So, our calling is to make disciples for Jesus Christ and the health of the congregation is what draws people to it. So, if we work at being a spiritually healthy group of people, the drawing is going to take care of itself. We don't have to go out and stand on a street corner with a sign that says, "Repent! The world ends tomorrow!" If our congregation is healthy, it's a good place for God to send people.

I think about this topic and I think to be bored by it is kind of like a child sitting in a classroom doodling with paper and pencil, or texting friends in secret, bored with their education and more interested in social stuff and distracted about the task at hand – not aware that education is critical to success in life. And that would be spiritual immaturity, wouldn't it? Because that's what immature people do. They don't realize how important education is for them.

So we might ask ourselves, “What’s interesting to me? Am I interested in the important, spiritual things?” And that has always been a problem for people. You know, it’s kind of normal that we’re that way, in one sense.

Let’s go to Matthew 16, and verse 23, and take a look at something that happened when Jesus was with the disciples.

**Mt. 16:23** – *Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumblingblock to me!” Then He said, “You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.” Then He said something else. You know, a lot of times people stop reading right there at that rather incendiary comment that Jesus made. But then He went on to say, “If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me will find it. What good will it be if a man gains the whole world and yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?”* You know, when we made the agreement with Jesus Christ, we agreed to become His slaves. Our business is to take care of the things of Christ.

**Col. 3:1** – *Since then you have been raised with Christ. Set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on earthly things. For you died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.*

So I think about this – for me – as a matter of life and death. It’s about spiritual gracefulness as opposed to spiritual ugliness. It’s about spiritual maturity instead of immaturity. It’s about thinking that we were good when we haven’t yet even understood what “good” is. It reminds me of the situation when Judah went back to Canaan after captivity. God sent them back there to do a job. It was the job of rebuilding the temple and the wall. And once those people arrived, they began building houses for themselves and they forgot about the work they were sent to do. And they neglected their calling. And, in my opinion, those of us in the Church of God are very *weak* in this area. We’re bored with church health and growth.

So the topic is *Prayer and Passionate Spirituality*. Let’s start out by asking this question: What interests you? What are you passionate about? What kind of gets you going?

Well, I attended a training yesterday, presented by a husband and wife team, about attachment theory as you apply it to helping children who have severe attachment problems – kids that can’t function at home or at school – can’t be with other kids. They usually have *affect dysregulation* – that’s psycho-babble for the inability to control their emotions. These people have proven, by the results that they get in the treatment center that they co-founded, that attachment theory is the best way we have to look at children who have anger problems. Do you know anybody – even adults – that can’t control their anger? That just blow? Yeah, they’re all over the place. Kids have those problems, too. They’re starting to understand that the ability to control oneself begins in infancy. It’s fostered by the mother and the father as they take care of and soothe the child.

So, these people have taken this theory and they say that the theory is the best way to explain why kids have anger issues. They say the theory explains *how* you ought to treat those kinds of problems.

You know, I would see children who were out of control at school – when I worked as a school counselor – and always wondered what was going on there. Just to say that they were angry was kind of...well, yeah, good, they're angry. But why? What's going on? Why do these same kids keep having problems with anger over and over – angry about other things that other people could easily tolerate?

Then when I did my schooling, I learned about the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*. And in it were a number of disorders that all contained elements of what they call *affect dysregulation*. But there was no connection made between these different disorders – they call them. Actually, they're just constellations of symptoms. They're not medical disorders actually, in most cases. But they didn't make any connection between them. There are things like anti-social personality disorder, borderline personality disorder, intermittent-explosive disorder, bipolar disorder, oppositional-defiant disorder, and we could just keep going on. No causes are stated for any of these in the *Diagnostic Manual*.

So attachment theory contrarily says that when a baby is not soothed and cared for, if it doesn't feel safe and secure, then it is going to have trouble regulating moods and controlling rage and anger as it grows older. That understanding – if we overlay that – would tell us that all these disorders that are in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* stem from the same cause – that they're kind of a spectrum of problems that develop from not learning how to soothe oneself and control one's own emotions when one is small. If you look at that, then it makes sense if a child didn't get something at birth, the best way to help that child is to begin providing it immediately – as soon as you can – in a developmentally appropriate way.

So this model gives me a way to think about behaviors that I see in kids and adults that help me to understand *why* they're acting angrily all the time. And it points out what I need to do as a clinician to help them move forward. It also helps me understand spiritual things because I know that the attachment model that has been discovered – first through observation and now, lately, through brain research – has been built into us by God. The way people attach to caregivers – to parents – is something that is common to all human beings. It's built in. God put it there. It works the same way in our relationship with Him, too, interestingly enough. So I'm *really* excited about that.

How does it make me feel when I'm passionate about something? Well, it's exciting. It's empowering. It makes me encouraged that I have tools that I can work with in my work. There's something else that's a little bit more subtle there, but it makes me feel purposeful and alive. You know, there's something I can do to contribute. And it's very good to feel that way. Feeling passionate about something is something we would all like to feel. And people who can't complain about being depressed, and how bad their life is, and how they wish they could find something to get excited about. Those people, too, know that it would feel *good* to be passionate about something.

I mentioned last time that I had a experience with God once while I went backpacking. Beside that, I've actually learned *so* much from that sport. Most of the time when you go backpacking, it's just fun, but every now and then, emergencies come up. And when they do, there is no 911 out there. Everything that's easy down here is hard up there. And everything that is easy up there is hard down here, it seems like. You know, taking a bath is an easy thing down here – mainly because of hot water. Up there, the water is sometimes below fifty-five degrees. So that makes it difficult. Keeping clean, then – which is important – if you're going to be out in the woods for weeks, you need to be able to keep clean – but you have to do that with very cold water. All the things that are problematic down here, like your boss, traffic...cake up there. You could care less about that stuff when you're up there. It just turns everything upside down and it sets all your meters back to zero again. And it's just great. And you get in these situations where you have to rely on God and also your own wits and resources. You have to learn how to take aggressive action on behalf of yourself and your friends sometimes. Being put in those situations is incredibly helpful to one's spiritual growth. You do things that you didn't know you could do.

One of those things I learned was that I could walk thirty miles in a day and four hours carrying a heavy pack over two high mountain passes. I had to do that once. And I'm usually a ten-mile-a-day guy. So that was pushing it. I like to do that. It's been good for me.

Some friends asked me one time to show them my gear. This happened a few years ago. So I brought my gear to work and I laid it out for them on the lawn at lunchtime. I was explaining all the attributes about my equipment – you know, my tent, my sleeping bag, my little half-ounce beer can stove that I use – all that stuff. And one of the guys commented after we were done, "I can tell you love this, because you came alive while you were talking about it." Well, I really like to backpack. I like to talk gear. I'm a gear-head. And I'm having a blast while I'm hiking and while I'm talking about that. I'll just talk about it with anybody. I'm passionate about it. Passion is good. Passion is fun. And not being passionate is a drag. It's no fun at all.

So, what we're really talking about here is not something that we need to feel guilty about because we don't have it. It's something that we want to have because it's so much *fun* when we're passionate about our Christianity! I know, I know. Fun and church aren't supposed to go together in the same sentence, but they *can*!

So let's talk about how God can produce passion in us. Let's go to Romans 8, and verse 25, and look at something. Paul says:

**Rom. 8:25** – *But we hope for what we do not yet have. We wait patiently for it. In the same way the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit itself intercedes for us with groanings that words cannot express. And He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.*

The point of this scripture that I want to make is, it isn't that God needs to hear our prayers because He doesn't know what we need, or it's good for Him to hear that stuff. He wants us to pray because it's good for *us*. Praying does something for *us*. And passion is one of the byproducts of prayer.

How does prayer produce passion? I want you to read with me Nehemiah 1 and following. I looked in *Nave's Topical Bible* about this thing and I came up with...oh, there must have been fifteen or twenty examples of prayers in the Bible – you know, the patriarchs, and the prophets, and the apostles and other people made. The one that stood out to me – that seemed to strike my fancy was in Nehemiah 1. It says:

**Neh. 1:1** – *The words of Nehemiah, in the month of Chisleu, in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa. Then Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that survived the exile and also about Jerusalem.* So he was interested. He was a slave back in the Middle East and he was asking about the remnant of Judah that went to the holy land to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. *And they said to me, "Those who survived the exile are back in the province in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates have been burned with fire.* So that's bad news, right? Things are going backwards, not forwards, in that calling that has been made to get that rebuilt. And Nehemiah said, *"When I heard these things I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the LORD God of heaven. Then I said, 'Oh, LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant of love with those who love Him and obeys His commands, let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes opened to hear the prayer of Your servant who is praying before You day and night for Your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's house, have committed against You. We have acted very wickedly towards You. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws that You gave Your servant Moses.'"* Isn't this boring? There are some people that are very bored with this – you know, turn the machine off and go have fun – do something else. But if it's not boring to you, there's something good for you here. *"Remember the instruction You gave Your servant Moses, saying, "If you are unfaithful I will scatter you among the nations."'"* See, that's a reason to keep the machine going. *"But if you return to Me and obey My commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place that I have chosen as a dwelling for My name."'"* Do you think the Church of God is scattered today? That its power is diffused?

**V-10** – *"They are Your people"* - it says in verse 10 – *"whom You redeemed by Your great strength and Your mighty hand. O LORD, let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of this Your servant and to the prayer of Your servants who delight and revere in Your name. Give Your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man."* He was the king's cupbearer. So he's going to go talk to the king about it. He's going to put his life on the line.

Then you read the rest of the book of Nehemiah and you see that this guy is like a *dynamo* for God. He is *passionate*! Well, this prayer did not make him passionate. He was already passionate, wasn't he? I mean, this is the result of passion. But, like all the

things of God, it's cyclical. Passionate people pray. But praying causes people to become spiritually passionate. It's a cycle. It doesn't matter where you start. If you're passionate and you pray, you'll become more passionate. If you pray you'll become passionate and then you'll pray more. It just goes that way.

Let's see how this works in real time. Let's say that you suspect someone you know is depressed. You can see that they're having a bad time. Some of the things they said...they've been giving things away. That's one of the signs that somebody might be suicidal. So you decide to pray for them. You decide to become a prayer warrior. And every day you pray for this person. It's hard to do that, but you've just committed yourself to do it, and every day you pray. And *gradually* – ever so slowly – you begin to notice just the slightest of changes in them. And then more. And after several months you talk to them and ask them how they're feeling, and they confess to you that six months ago they *were* depressed, but for some unexplained reason, it seems like the depression has just been lifting like a curtain. How would you feel? Would you be excited? That's one of the ways that passion is produced by prayer. “God listened to *me*. I got to make a difference.” We know *God* did it. We couldn't do it. That's why we were praying to Him. But we got to *participate* in it, right? You know, our commitment, which is nothing compared to God's power, still makes a difference. That's what we're told. “The fervent prayer of the righteous man avails *much*” – and that would also be righteous women, right? Absolutely.

So we have some things like that happen to us and we say, “Let's see, who else needs help?” Right? We kind of become believers, don't we? And so the passion produces more prayer. And the prayer produces more passion.

What is the spiritual dynamic here? What's going on? You know, it's not just enough to say that happens. To me, it helps to understand why. Let's go back to 2 Kings 5, and verse 1. It says:

**2 Kings 5:1** – *Now Naaman was commander of the army of the king of Aram. He was a great man in the sight of his master, and highly regarded, because through him the LORD had given victory to Aram. He was a valiant soldier, but he had leprosy. Bands now from Aram had gone out, and had taken captive a young girl from Israel. And she served Naaman's wife. So there's this thing that we have – that God only listens to people in the church – and back then it was only His people Israel – but here's a guy that's captured Israelite slaves. Right? And this is a story about *him* and what happened to him. This young slave girl said to her mistress, “If only my master would see the prophet, who was in Samaria, he would cure him of his leprosy.” So Naaman went to his master, and told him what the girl from Israel said. And the king of Aram said, “By all means, go. I will send a letter to the king of Israel.” So Naaman left, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold and ten sets of clothing. The letter that he took to the king of Israel read, “With this letter I am sending my servant, Naaman, so that you may cure him of his leprosy.” And as soon as the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his robes, and said, “Am I God? Can I kill and bring back to life? Why does this fellow send someone to me to be cured of leprosy? See how he's trying to pick a quarrel with me?” See, paranoia is not a modern phenomenon. When Elisha, the man of God, heard that the*

*king of Israel had torn his robes, he sent him this message: "Why have you torn your robes? Have the man come to me and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel." So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at Elisha's house. Horses and chariots, in modern parlance, translates to half a dozen Abram's tanks. Right? And maybe some armored vehicles of other sorts. I mean, this is a man of war. So he shows up at Elisha's house and Elisha sends a messenger out to him., and says, "Go wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored, and you'll be cleansed." But Naaman went away angry, and said, "I thought that he would surely come out to me" – you know, "Don't I even deserve to talk to the prophet?" – "and stand, and call on the name of the LORD His God? Wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy." He wanted a show! And then he said, "Aren't Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than any of the waters in Israel? Couldn't I wash in them and be clean?" It was a long way from where he lived to here. So he turned and went off in a rage. Naaman's servants went to him later, and said, "My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he tells you, 'Wash and be clean?'" So he listened to them and reconsidered his position. And he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times – in, out, in out, in out, right? I mean, it did take some effort to do that. And as the man of God had told him, his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy. The lesson there for us: if we just do what God tells us to do – simple things that God tells us to do – He's going to do what He says He'll do for us!*

Why is that passion producing? What's going on here? I'm going to go back to the training I went to, to explain it. At this attachment training I attended yesterday, there was a man and his wife team teaching it. And they had cofounded an attachment clinic here in town. They've had phenomenal results that have kind of reverberated all around the world, actually. And they travel all around the world presenting their material and working with people who have severely wounded children. The woman is slender. I would say, normal build – maybe about 5'4", 5'5" – not a big person – not tiny, but slender. They were talking about dealing with reactive children. These are children who have never developed normal attachment to their parents – usually because of neglect or abuse – in their case in the clinic they worked in. Thereafter, then, taken away and passed from foster home to foster home. So all of their relationships have been severed or hurtful. To defend against that psychologically from happening more – from being hurt more – they deliberately do things to push people away. If a normal child does something that's not socially appropriate – say, maybe, picks his nose – and all the kids laugh at him, he's going to go like this...because he's shamed by it and he won't do that anymore, because he wants to connect to the kids. But a kid that has reactive attachment disorder will say, "Oh, let me remember that." And he'll file that away for later use, because that's a tool he can use to gross people out and keep them away from him. That's how they function.

So can you imagine what that would be like – to live a life like that? – where you are constantly going toward people because you want a relationship, but as you get close to them, it becomes frightening, and you do things to sever the bonds. How do you treat that? Well, the only really effective way that we've found to do that is to provide them safe relationships. Even though they didn't get it when they were little, you start where

they are and go forward. You don't wrap them in a blanket when they're fifteen years old because that's not developmentally appropriate, but you do engage them in an intense interpersonal relationship so that they can learn that not all adults will abandon them. Of course, they're afraid of the relationship, so they do things to repel those working with them, right? You can just predict it. They rage. They break the rules. They try to run away. So how do they deal with that? Well, there are a number of non-punitive consequences that they use. Probably the most dramatic one is what they call *therapeutic holding*, where they actually restrain them physically without hurting them.

This woman – when it was her turn to talk – was telling us about this fourteen-year-old girl that was deliberately resisting her for this reason – raging and the possibility of hurting people. So she was putting this pretty large girl in a therapeutic hold – she's holding her from behind and has her wrapped up so she can't hurt anybody, including herself or the one holding her, and just started talking softly to her. And the girl is yelling, and screaming, and crying, "No, you're not going to hold me!" and she was fighting and resisting that. The lady – Rosella – who is about the same size as this girl – she's got her down on the floor, and she's saying to her, "Well, I'm holding you and I know you don't like it, but what you were going to do was not good for you or for other people. And I care too much about you to let you hurt yourself or other people. So I'm always going to be here to take care of you. I can't let you do things that are going to hurt yourself, because I care too much for you. By the way, if you think about this, it feels pretty good, doesn't it?" So when she does that kind of thing with her, she's really talking right to that part of that child's heart that is wounded the most. And she's offering exactly what that child needs and unconsciously wants deep in her heart.

You know, I was thinking that when we say things like, "All this church stuff is boring," or "I don't like to keep the Sabbath," or "Why do I need to pray?" I think that's kind of our attachment disordered way of resisting God, just like that child was resisting help. We really *do* need what God has for us, don't we? And when we do what we're told, and we see that God is there – we see that He's involved and He does respond with care – then that encourages us, doesn't it? That we can connect to God. God listened to *my* prayer when I asked Him to take care of my depressed friend. He listened to me. I'm connected to God now. That's how it works. And so it's not just a rush or an upper. It's a way that we can make a connection with God. You know the story of Adam and Eve, and how they got separated, and that's been the story of humankind ever since? That's what this is about really. It's about healing the breach between us and God.

When we do what we're told – simple things – even simpler than dipping ourselves seven times in the Jordan River – and we see the good results, we wonder why it was so hard to do these simple things that God tells us.

It's interesting to know that Rosella held this child at fourteen eight years ago. She's now twenty-two. She still calls Rosella on a regular basis, even though she hasn't been in therapy for seven years. She's living a normal life. She doesn't have disordered relationships any longer. She learned that she could connect to people and that not all people would let her down. It kind of reminds me of the velvetine rabbit who came back

to visit the one who helped him become real. She keeps going back to check that – to me, quite touching.

We talked earlier about the things that make us feel alive. Deep connection with the One who gives life and creates it creates liveliness and passion within us. How are you doing in that department? Is life just ho-hum for you? There's a way to get past that. You can be excited about your spiritual life and about the things that you are learning.

Let's talk about how we can apply this to our congregation. The picture in the New Testament – of the church – is not one of a paid ministry doing all the work while the members sit back and watch, come to church and are spoon-fed every week. The picture in the New Testament is the picture of a volunteer ministry, partially and sporadically supported by the church – a church which was themselves busy doing the work of God. Paul repeatedly asked the members to pray for the apostles as they travelled around building up the congregation. But I think most of us have missed the point that he also asked us to pray for the church itself to do its work.

When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray, He told them to pray, “Thy kingdom come...,” then after that for what they needed that day. Right? So when is the kingdom going to come? Well, it's after the work that God wants to do is done. And who's doing that work? Well, His church is. When we pray, “Thy kingdom come,” to do that effectively, you actually have to pray for the work that your congregation is to do. Paul didn't just ask the members to pray for him and the other disciples. He asked them to pray for each other and for their work. Did you know that?

Stop to think about the passages that you remember from the New Testament – from the writings of the apostle Paul. What about eighty percent of the content is about? Well, it's about how the church was to function, wasn't it? Just think about it. It's all about how to be in relationships in the congregation. It's about how the church worked and did its work – be honest, be kindly affectioned to each other, pray for one another, don't be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good, don't gossip, people that don't work shouldn't eat, how to handle marriage and divorce, lots of talk about spiritual gifts. That has to do with the congregation, doesn't it? It's all about how to regulate that and use that. Lots of talk about ministering to other people in the New Testament. Lots of talk about putting what's important first. Can you think of passages that talk about that? Sure you can.

So what are all those things? Well, those are all various qualities of congregational health that are identified by the Natural Church Development group. They went out and they found out that what people want is already in the Bible and what the New Testament church was working on. And he told the church to do and to pray about those things. The promise is that if we simply *do* what we're told – like Naaman the leper – then everything is all going to start working for us. And our congregations are going to be healthy and people *are* going to be attracted to them.

So a few thoughts about how to go about this kind of change.... I think each of us should pray in private every day in our daily prayers and become a prayer warrior for our

congregation. That's what I think we should do. Then I think we should watch and see what happens.

And I think that when we plan – this is the second thing I think we should do – when we plan congregational initiatives, have meetings, work in committees, we, as an integral part of our operation as a group, or a committee within the congregation, should pray *together* about the work that our group or committee is going to do. I think we should pray privately about the outcome of our efforts and the good relationships of those people working together.

Then I think we should also, as a congregation, from time to time, pray as a group – just like they did in the New Testament – when Peter was in jail and they prayed for him as a group. We don't know whether one person stood up and prayed for everybody or they all prayed around the room. I don't know how big the group was. But we know that it says they all prayed. So it's okay to do that. That's not violating the command that Jesus said, "You shouldn't be like the Pharisees who prayed out loud to be noticed." There's a way to pray in a group that is good. Then I think that after that we should watch and see what happens.

At that point we will have stopped resisting God and stop putting our own will ahead of His, and we've gone out of our comfort zone. You know, dipping yourself seven times in the River Jordan – "somebody might see me" – it was definitely out of Naaman's comfort zone to do that. And some of us are not comfortable praying in groups and we've been in groups where people used the prayer to grandstand and correct other people and all that – and you know, all they're doing is showing how immature spiritually they are. That's not the purpose for prayer. It's to pull people together, not pull them apart. So you work through that stuff when you're learning something new. And sometimes that causes the spiritually immature to leave, but once they're not around to cause problems, then the group can go forward. We can watch what happens then. We will have stopped resisting God at that point and we will be going toward relationship with God because we're just doing what He told us to do. And it will feel *good*. It will feel good to do that. It will feel like a connection on a deeper level, because it *is*. And we will *all* see that God answers prayers – not just for us personally, not just for our friends, but for our congregation. When that happens, it's inspiring, it's encouraging and it is passion-producing.

Now we all know that passion comes from God, don't we? And I think it comes from knowing that God has passion for us and compassion for us and for the work that we have to do. With that in mind, I want to close with a scripture from the book of Revelation. It's in Revelation 8, actually. In Israel of old God gave them a number of comforting ceremonies. People could take incense and they could offer it. They could light it and offer it to God. And as the incense wafted skyward, that was a metaphor for drawing close to God. They could know that they were using a prescribed method that God told them to do to draw close to Him – a way to make contact with Him, to be unified with Him, to be in sync with God. It had to feel good. Well, notice what it says here in Revelation 8:1.

**Rev. 8:1** – *And when He had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. And I saw the seven angels which stood before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. And another came and stood at the altar, having a golden censor. And there was given to him much incense that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.*

Isn't that amazing? I mean, that's the picture of the future. And it's a picture, also, I think of what's going on now. God, apparently, keeps all our prayers. They're valuable to Him. We like to keep photos of our children, our grandchildren, our friends, and our vacations and all stuff. And God keeps our prayers. When we pray, He loves it. He's right there savoring the moment – attuning to us and to our intentions to please Him and do His will. Now when you think about that, when you think about the times when you've prayed for other people, or if you've prayed for your congregation, and you saw something happen, and you think about your prayers going up to God, and Him *saving* them, how does that make you feel?