

Joe Smith's
What Makes Maranatha Powerful
by
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Joe's Spiritual Background

Many times we need to know what a person is thinking and what his experiences have been before we can understand what he is saying. Otherwise, we will receive his message from our own experiences and from what we are thinking.

Joe has been walking in the kingdom since 1959. One day a man witnessed to Joe and his life was touched by God. Joe acknowledged Jesus Christ as his Lord. He did not know about being saved, but something happened on the inside of him that changed him. He had the experience of salvation, which is better than having three Scriptures on salvation. It is better to know God than listen to five tapes about God.

Over the years, Joe has seen people come and go. He has been to many churches, some of which he experienced the manifested presence of God and some of which he perceived as being dead and cold. One day at a crusade in Peduka Kentucky in 1973, Joe heard the Maranatha band, "Praise", and he was amazed at the anointing and strength upon these young people. Joe had worked with young people "for years and years and years," and he never saw anything like this. Joe wished he could take what these young people had and put it in his youth at his church. After the meeting, Joe met Bob Weiner and asked if he could get together with him to learn what Bob was doing with his youth. Joe went to Bob's church all day on a Saturday and stayed for this nightly service. Songs were sung and testimonies were given and the excitement and anointing grew. Joe had gone to a Baptist church that had an activity building that had coke machines, ping pong tables, basketball goals--almost everything, but they did not have anointing in the young people. Joe then asked God where the anointing and power comes from.

Source of Power

People make a mistake in thinking that power is in the form and they will try to copy the form, hoping to produce the power. The Bible says, **power comes from God**. Power belongs to God. "Faith comes by hearing" (**Rom. 10:17**). When God speaks to you, the Word will activate faith within you. "When you begin to implement that which God has shown you, a form will begin to take place to implement that which God has spoken. But, the form is never the source of the power. God is the source of the power. Form is developed."

Joe told God that he knows "the power is not their form," but he asked "what are the principles underlying this? What is it that they are doing that is making them so successful?" God spoke some things to Joe that makes Maranatha a powerful ministry. "Maranatha is made out of people," so "Maranatha is no more powerful than the people that are in it, because the church is people." Therefore, the principles that make Maranatha powerful are also the principles that will make any man or woman powerful. We can be powerful Christians by having the following six foundations: Lordship, holiness, covenant, evangelism, world vision, prayer and fasting.

After reading **2 Tim. 3:1-4**, one might think that these Scriptures are speaking about sinners

who are just living for themselves with no thought of God:

But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. (2 Tim. 3:1-4)

However, verse 5 continues, "**holding a form of godliness, although they have denied its power,** and avoid such men as these." Many church groups meet and have a form of godliness, but they have denied the power.

Lordship (Total Commitment)

One of the foundational teachings that makes Maranatha powerful is "Lordship." **Lordship is an attitude of the heart of an individual to commit his entire life to Jesus to be his servant for life.** Lordship, or "total commitment," is committing your own will and desires to do that which pleases God. Jesus is either Lord of all or not Lord at all. However, many times we fall short of the intent of our hearts', to serve Jesus 100%. Our actions don't always measure up to the attitude of our hearts'. "If a person's attitude of the heart is not Lordship, then they will have a form of godliness, but deny the power."

Power comes from hearing the Word of God and responding to it. "If this Gospel cannot set you free from the power of sin over your life, then this Gospel cannot get you to heaven or give you eternal life." **Romans 6:23** says that "the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus." When you give your life to Jesus, the power of sin is broken over your life. **Rom 6:14** says, "sin shall not be master over you," after you have become a Christian as a result of responding to the Gospel and giving your heart to Jesus. The people in **2 Tim. 3** have a form of godliness but are denying the power because they are still living in sin. "It is one thing to live in sin; it is another thing to make a mistake." If a person's attitude is to please God and when he does not please God, then God will show him, and because He is his God and his Lord, he will repent and get it right with God. Joe was used to cursing, but after he had become a Christian and cursed, "the holy righteous one on the inside of him" said that he is not suppose to talk like that, and he stopped cursing. Something happened on the inside of Joe, showing that the nature of man can be changed.

In Maranatha Ministries, we preach Lordship and that the power of sin is broken in a Christian's life and that a person is not to **live** in sin anymore. Maranatha churches will not tolerate a person who lives in sin (who claims to be a Christian and is attending our church). Instead, they will be asked to go to a church that will allow them to **live** in sin.

With people having the attitude of their hearts' right, Maranatha then **developed a form to express Lordship.** "This form has changed over the years, and it will vary from church to church." Maranatha churches expect people to be baptized in water, be baptized in the Holy Spirit, get delivered and inner-healed, and do the Firm Foundation Bible Studies book in the Church class. If a person is going to be a part of this church, then this is the form to express their commitment and Lordship. You can go to every meeting, and do everything you are suppose to, and yet die and go to hell. People make the mistake that if they obey the form, then they must be right with God. Only the blood of Jesus makes you right with God, thereby giving you a proper attitude in your heart. If your heart is right with God, then it will be expressed in a form.

Holiness

The second foundational teaching that makes Maranatha powerful is "holiness." The Bible often talks about blessing God's **holy** name (**Ps. 145:21**). "Jesus was called the **holy** child. The Spirit of God is called the **Holy Spirit**." That is because God is a **holy** God. "Holiness is the nature of God, just as love is the nature of God." Holiness is **absolute total purity, complete, whole, and healthy**. Therefore, "God by nature, has to be opposed to anything that is unholy, anything that is corrupt, anything that is impure." Seeing sin in the universe actually magnifies God's holiness. Without holiness, no man can see God. Holiness is also defined as **that which has been separated to be used by God for His glory**. The motive and attitude of our hearts' for everything that we do should be to "give glory to God," and then we will never be frustrated.

Holiness is purity. "God has often forgiven sinners, but He has never forgiven sin. That had to be atoned for." When we realize that our sin has been atoned for and that God can and will forgive us for our acts of disobedience and impurity, worship is invoked inside of us. Whenever anyone has seen God in His holiness and purity, they have fallen on their face before the Lamb and said, "**holy, holy, holy** is the Lord God Almighty." Isaiah saw a vision of God with the train of His robe filling the temple and the angels worshipping God saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts" (**Is. 6:3**). The apostle John had a similar revelation of angels not ceasing to say "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God, the Almighty" (**Rev. 4:8**). Anytime a group of people live in purity, the worship in that group will be outstanding. Holiness will produce worship. In **2 Chron. 20:21**, singers were specifically assigned to praise God in the beauty of holiness. When we walk in holiness, our praise and worship will be outstanding and the presence of God will fill our temples' (bodies'). In many church groups, there is not a high level of praise and worship because there is immorality, lust, and impurity in the congregation.

Maranatha has a form to express holiness. We don't allow ungodly relationships in our church (**2 Cor. 6:17-18**). When you become a member of our church, a person becomes "singlely devoted to God." As you become singlely devoted to God, He will prepare you for marriage. The Bible says, "the marriage bed is holy and undefiled." God instituted the family and purposes for us to be married, unless we are a eunuch. "God knows exactly what you need. He was the one Who said Adam needed a help-mate, and He was the One Who picked the help-mate for Adam and chose the help-mate for Adam. As you are just getting character worked into your life, and as your just being singlely devoted to God, then God will begin to reveal to you who your wife is going to be or who your husband is to be, and He will give you someone who will help you. The Bible says, 'two get a better reward for their labor than one'" (**Eccl. 4:9**). "When God begins to speak to you about marriage, (let me just give you some practical things), God is not going to speak marriage to you and give you somebody that doesn't have a similar vision and understanding and calling on their life. For example, if God is calling you to the nations, He's not going to speak to you someone who does not intend to leave the city. There are some common senses and practical ways that you can check it out and say, "well, now is this what God is speaking to me? Is this really the Spirit of the Lord coming and talking to me?"

In Maranatha, we have a form that has been developed for hearing from God and how to act on the belief that He is speaking marriage to a person. There are many ways (forms) in which to handle the situation. We do not date and "mess around" in order to find a mate. There are no Scriptures in the Bible on dating because God did not institute it. "Anything that God instituted is in the Bible and there are clear cut directions and understanding for it." There are many Scriptures

about marriage because God instituted it, but God did not start dating. "God intended for you to trust Him in every area of your life," including a choice of a mate. "Someone might say, 'How is God going to give me a mate?' I don't know. Which is easier: to give you a mate or raise you from the dead? We sort of get weird when it comes to spiritual things." The reason most people never make it in the kingdom of God is because of "unholy relationships." People who associate with the same old crowd, begin to act in the same old ways.

Over the years "we have lost something in our church about holiness. I don't know where we have lost it. But, somehow this third and fourth generation is not at the same level as those who were at Peduka... In Peduka, those young people saw the glorious church without spot or wrinkle, and they wanted to be a part of that glorious church. They saw the holiness of God. There was an awe in them for the holiness of God. There was a reverence in them for the holiness of God. Yet, you never had to worry about them getting into lust and trying to sneak around and date or cop out with some rationale of the heart as to hide their secret motives of what they were doing. They walked in purity. They walked in holiness. In this third and fourth generation we are missing something because you see immorality coming in. You can be in Maranatha and sit there and not date and still be full of lust. You can sit there and have secret motives in your heart." A pastor told Joe, "my young people don't date because I won't let them, yours in Maranatha don't want to." "There is a big difference in not doing something because you are forced and having the desire." If we see a guy hustling the girls, the brothers need to "put him out the door" and protect our sisters from lust.

When a person believes that God is speaking marriage, then he/she should submit it to the pastor. "Why talk to your pastor? Because, it needs to be spiritually discerned. The Bible says that everything that is spiritual ought to be spiritually discerned (**1 Cor. 2:15?**). And we are saying God is speaking to us so it needs to be spiritually discerned. Who has God placed in the church that is spiritually discerned? The elders. So that's why you don't go to somebody else. You don't go talk to your roommate, or your best friend, or someone like that. You go talk to your pastor so that it can be spiritually discerned. **If it's of God, then it will stand the test, and God will work it out-- You don't have to get in the flesh to work it out, because "if God is for you, who can be against you" (Rom. 8:31).** Joe claims that this form is working well because of the following statistics over the past 12 years that Maranatha has practiced this form: "of the hundreds upon hundreds and hundreds of marriages that have taken place in our ministry, not one couple that has stayed in Maranatha and continued walking under the Lordship of Jesus has ever been divorced in our ministry." Joe makes no apology for our form of holiness because we have the fruit. Some churches are now copying our form. **The form is not what produces holiness. "Holiness comes out of the attitude of your heart.** They can copy the form all that they want to, and you'll walk in that group and find a lot of lust."

Covenant

The principle of covenant is the third foundation that makes Maranatha powerful. **Deut. 7:9** says that God is a covenant God. **Covenant means faithful, loyal, and steadfast. Covenant is expressed in relationships:** between you and God, and between you and others. A person will be no more faithful and loyal to others than he is to God. When a person comes into covenant with God, he is expressing Lordship saying, "everything that I have, everything that I am, everything that I ever will have, belongs to God." Likewise, God says to the person, "all that I have is yours." We get the best part of the deal. God will work with us and be faithful to us always.

Covenant is expressed in our relationship with one another. **1 Cor. 12:18** says that God places us in the body, just as he pleases. It is not the church of our choice, it's the church of His choice." God places us in the body in a specific location so that character can be formed in us and we can conform into Jesus' image. "God will place you in the body next to **sandpaper** brother or **sandpaper** sister. Sandpaper can do one or two things. It can either rub you raw or polish you. Here is what will happen. Usually, when you begin to get rubbed, you will look at that person and say, 'I was doing all right until I met you,' and think that they are your problem. They are not your problem. **Circumstances do not create problems, they only reveal problems.** They just reveal attitudes of the heart." If a problem is not in your heart, then it will not come to the surface.

"**Covenant means you give up the right to quit.** If you can't quit, then **the only option is to work it out.**" When problems occur in a relationship, there is a suggestion to terminate the relationship and **quit**; however, if you are in covenant and the relationship cannot be terminated, then you have to work it out. If you know that your friend loves you and he won't quit on you and you can't quit on him, then you are "depending on something: Because both of your hearts' are to please God and for God to get the glory, God will adjust you."

"Covenant means if I got a car, you got a car. If I have a house, you have a house... If I have bills, you have bills." Every Maranatha church in the world has the same kindred spirit, commitment, and loyalty because of covenant relationships. Maranatha has had a great impact on the world because "when God speaks, and we hear, we all move, and we all do it."

"We have a form that expresses covenant within our fellowship." It is important to be in "proper working order" with one to another. We do not tolerate back-biting and injuring one another. The Bible says that he who sows discord among the brothers is breaking covenant and is an abomination to God. **We talk about obeying authority and those who rule over you in the church.** We need to bring our tithes and offerings into the storehouse. We need to open up our houses' to our brothers who need a place to stay while traveling. We need to provide for him. All these are various forms or expressions of covenant.

Evangelism

The fourth foundational principle is evangelism. Jesus came to seek and save the lost (**Luke 19:10**). If Jesus lives inside of us, then we will want to seek and save the lost. We might not be a campus evangelist, but wherever we go (work, neighborhood) we should be sharing Jesus. **Prov. 11:30** says, "he who is wise wins souls." "The power is the desire to see people get saved." Some of the forms to express this are the Glad Tidings booklets, Two Question Test, Bible Studies, Rock-n-Roll seminar, and witnessing. A healthy church is always reproducing itself through evangelism. Out of evangelism come international students.

World Vision

The fifth thing that you need is a world vision. "**You got to have a world vision.**" We get together at MLTS to implement this world vision. "The people overseas are so excited about coming to America and coming to this MLTS. I know it is a sacrifice. I know we spend a lot of money. But let me tell you something: It is worth its weight in gold. I am convinced of that. It is the family coming together from all over the world. When they start parading those flags, and they start giving their testimonies, and they start doing their things, and showing us what they are doing in their ministries overseas, we're going to get a vision; they can see, 'hey, this thing is really big,

this thing is really impacting the world.' **You have got to have that world vision.** It blesses me, living down in Manilla of Philippines, and you walk down the stairs and there they got the big world map and you'll see people coming around and they got pins everywhere there is a Maranatha church. And they'll stand there and tell about 'I wonder why we don't have a Maranatha church there. Maybe God will let me start one here.' And they already have that world vision. You got to have a world vision because God commanded us to go and make disciples of all the nations" (**Matt. 28:19**). Out of this world vision, God told us about international students. The form will change, but the power comes from the vision to evangelize the world, not the international students. We have ministries all over the world because of international students that we reached in the United States.

Prayer and Fasting

The sixth pillar of power is prayer and fasting. In Peduka, the church would pray and fast every Saturday. They prayed from 9 to 12 in the morning. Prayer and fasting will break down strongholds over cities and release people into our churches. "**A church that prays will have a common vision and a common understanding... There is something that unites in prayer.**" Out of this desire and power came MSPN where all the churches come together via satellite every other month to pray. There are days that are called for prayer and fasting for specific reasons.

Conclusion

These six principles are the source of the power. "It's going to have various forms. **Total Commitment (Lordship)** can be expressed in a lot of ways, but it will be expressed if it's in your heart. **Holiness** can be expressed in a lot of ways, but it will be expressed if it's in your heart. **Covenant** can be expressed in a lot of ways, but it will be expressed if it's in your heart. **Evangelism** can go in many forms, but it will be expressed if it's in your heart. **World Vision** will be expressed if it is in your heart. **Prayer and Fasting** will be expressed if it's in your heart. But don't ever get deceived and think that just because you got the form you got the power, because as we started off you can have a form of godliness and deny the power. If you just got the form and you don't have the power, after a while it becomes drudgery to you. After a while it becomes boredom to you. After a while you sort of get hopeless because it doesn't seem to be working or producing. This is because you have developed a form without understanding the power, and there is no power working in you. Jesus said, 'I am the bread of life.' When you are eating of the bread of life, you will get stronger and stronger because bread gives you strength. When your source is Jesus, and that is your power, and that power from within is developing the form, then you will never get weaker, but get stronger and stronger."