

Hale Pule: Every House a House of Prayer

“Hale Pule”

January 4-5

Introduction:

Aloha everyone and hau'oli makahiki hou! I hope you are all recovering from the Holidays and are starting this new year off on the right foot! I myself am still recovering from the Holidays. Our family was doing so well! We were doing so well! Nobody was getting sick, everyone was healthy, we were counting down the days to Christmas and our family trip to Leavenworth. Then the week before Christmas my daughter coughed and it was like, in that moment, I heard that two-note motif from the *Jaws* theme song (Ba-dum). She gets sick, then Judah gets sick, (Ba-dum, ba-dum) and in the final days before Christmas I felt like Quint at the end of *Jaws* sliding up the deck of the boat as this thing is coming for me! I can't escape it, Christmas Eve I'm completely laid out, Christmas Day as well. Big shout out to the team who totally rocked Christmas Eve for Jesus — I was watching the services from home sick. And big shout out to my wife who had to handle Christmas Day with the kids as a single parent. For 48 hours I was completely laid out. Thankfully, on the day we're flying out to Washington my fever breaks and I'm masked up and medicated. The kids are still getting over colds. Jalee is the only one who never got sick! Thank God for her. She was the MVP. The kids got to play in the snow for the very first time but I wanted to change each of their names to Randal cause these Hawaii kids no can handle! We got our okoles handed to us in the cold and we were all ready to come home to sunny Hawaii.

A Year in Review

But 2024 was an amazing year! We experienced God's faithfulness like never before and I believe the best is yet to come. And this being the first service of the New Year, we want to look back on this last year and see, for whom 2024 was their last year.

David Soul - Born Aug. 28, 1943 | Died Jan. 4, 2024 (80)

“Hutch” from *Starsky and Hutch* passed away at the beginning of last year. Outside of acting, Soul was also a chart-topping singer who reached #1 on the Billboard charts with "Don't Give Up on Us" and "Silver Lady."

Carl Weathers - Born Jan. 14, 1948 | Died Feb. 2, 2024 (76)

After playing for the Oakland Raiders for two seasons, Carl Weathers retired from pro football in to pursue acting. After guest-starring in TV shows, such as "Good Times" and "S.W.A.T." his breakout role came in when he played Apollo Creed in the movie "Rocky." Recently he starred in "The Mandalorian."

O.J. Simpson - Born July 9, 1947 | Died April 10, 2024

O.J. Simpson, the former football great who was accused of and ultimately acquitted of the brutal 1994 slayings of his ex-wife and her friend, died on April 10, according to his family. He was 76.

Richard Simmons - Born 1943 | Died July 13, 2024

Richard Simmons from "Sweatin' To The Oldies." Passed at the age of 76.

Shannen Doherty - Born April 12, 1971 | Died July 13, 2024

Actress Shannen Doherty, best-known for her roles on TV's "Beverly Hills, 90210" and "Charmed" series sadly lost her battle with cancer at the age of 53.

James Earl Jones - Born Jan. 17, 1931 | Died Sept. 9, 2024

James Earl Jones debuted in the movie "Dr. Strangelove" in 1964, and went on to appear in

"Coming To America" in 1988, and "Field of Dreams" in 1989. Jones won a Tony in 1968 for his performance in "The Great White Hope," and another for "Fences" in 1987. Jones has voiced the roles of "Star Wars" character Darth Vader since 1977, and Mufasa in "The Lion King" in 1994. He was awarded a Kennedy Center honor in 1996 and a Tony for Lifetime Achievement in 2017. Jones died on Sept. 9. He was 93.

Dame Maggie Smith - Born Dec. 28, 1934 | Died Sept. 27, 2024

Having appeared in more than 50 films, Smith is known for her roles in the "Harry Potter" films and "Downton Abbey." In addition to winning two Academy Awards, Smith earned five BAFTA Awards, four Emmy Awards, three Golden Globes, five Screen Actors Guild Awards and a Tony Award. In 1990, she was appointed a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire. Smith died on Sept. 27. She was 89.

Dikembe Mutombo

Born June 25, 1966 | Died Sept. 30, 2024

Dikembe Mutombo played 18 seasons in the NBA, playing for such teams as the Denver Nuggets and the Houston Rockets. Dikembe Mutombo died on Sept. 30, at the age of 58.

Liam Payne - Born Aug. 29, 1993 | Died Oct. 16, 2024

Liam Payne rose to fame as a member of the boy band One Direction before branching off into a solo career. Payne died Oct. 16 after falling from his hotel room in Buenos Aires. He was 31.

Olivia Hussey - Born April 17, 1951 | Died Dec. 27, 2024

Olivia Hussey rose to stardom after her portrayal of Juliet in the 1968 adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* and also played Mother Mary in *Jesus of Nazareth*.

Jimmy Carter - Born October 1, 1924 | Died Dec. 29, 2024

Jimmy Carter, America's 39th U.S. president and Nobel Peace Prize recipient died on Dec. 29, 2024 at the age of 100. The son of a Georgia peanut farmer, Carter first appeared on the national political scene in 1976 with a toothy grin and the simple words that would become his trademark: "My name is Jimmy Carter, and I'm running for president."

What About Us?

Many of these individuals left a significant impact on the world and achieved notoriety and recognition for their contributions in entertainment, sports, and politics. But I wonder how many of them left a lasting spiritual legacy before their time on earth was spent. How did their lives measure up from an eternal perspective? That's not for us to determine. All we can do is think about our own lives and the time we have left. What if 2025 was our last year? How would we want to spend it? What would we want to be remembered for?

A New Beginning

This is why I appreciate the New Years. The New Year represents a chance to start fresh, recalibrate, and say "Goodbye" to that which no longer serve us. I have especially come to love and appreciate our Church's 40-day-fast in the New Year. This was something I discovered this year — Did you know that 40 days is approximately 10% of the entire year? So it's almost as if we are tithing the first 10% of the year to God. And as we know, God says when we are faithful with our first fruits He will be faithful with the rest. How many of us are enjoying the fruits of the 40-day-fast? If you haven't already, it's not too late to jump into our Church's 40-Day devotional on prayer and fasting. It has been such a rich time of being in the Word each day and gleaned from one another's revelations!

Aside from setting aside more time to be in God's Word I know that many of you are participating in a 40-day recreational media cleanse! How are you finding it? For those of you

that don't know, many in the Church are taking a break from all forms of recreational media including YouTube, Tik Tok, Social Media, movies, etc. This doesn't involve work-related media like emails and learning material but you will be blown away by how much time you free up just abstaining from a few apps every day! A helpful tool I've found is the screen time function on your phone. This shows just how much time you're saving every day and I want to encourage you to fill that time with more of God and relationships!

Aside from the YouVersion devo I've also gone back to day 1 of the yearly Bible reading plan. There's no better feeling than waking up on January first, opening to Genesis 1 and reading, "In the Beginning." It's always a great feeling to start the new year in the beginning. In fact it is from these devotional times that I want to share today. As we think about our purpose this year and what will matter most, let's go back to our original mandate in the Garden of Eden.

In the Beginning

In Genesis 1 we read the creation account. In the first five days of creation God is setting the stage for His crowned jewel — humanity. Everything so far has been leading up to this moment. I can almost see God looking at everything He's made so far and saying to Himself, "This is where the fun begins!" On Day six it says,

26 Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground."

27

So God created human beings in His own image.

*In the image of God He created them;
male and female he created them.*

28 Then God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground,"

(Genesis 1:26-28).

So God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit deliberated on the sixth day and said, "Now let's make something that will represent us on the earth. These beings will image us to the rest of creation. These beings will reign in our authority over the rest of the created order and use their creativity to unlock this world's limitless potential. We will place them here to rule and to cultivate our new world. Also, they won't do it alone. They will form deep intimate relationships and from that love new generations will come forth to help them in their work. We will also be with them sharing this beautiful new world together."

In this short passage we get the blueprint for our purpose here on earth. This is what we were placed on this planet to do. You and I were created to reflect God to creation — His creativity, His nature, and His love. We were created to rule over the earth. Not in a tyrannical dictatorship sort of way but more like gardeners who cultivate growth and unlock the hidden potential of this world. We also see that we are not meant to do this in isolation. God said it is not good for us to be alone. We foster deep relationships with one another and share in the work together. We do this with our families and our children. And the work that we do is not like a 9-5 where we clock in and clock out, but we see that everything Adam and Eve did was out of relationship with God and in Worship of Him. Everything from eating, to loving, to working was done as worship unto God. And, most importantly, we were meant to do this with God! Doesn't this sound like a perfect life? Wouldn't the world be a perfect place if everyone just did this? So what happened?

The Curse

If this is the life we were created for, what happened? Why does such a simple thing feel so complicated? What happened? Sin happened. Sin says, “Does God really know best? Does God really have my best in mind? Is God holding out on me? Does God really love me?” This is what Eve wrestled with right before she ate the fruit. Every single one of us will wrestle with the same things. God lays out this amazing life for us but we question Him every step of the way. Ultimately we take matters into our own hands and decide that we know better — Just like Eve. I found it interesting what the consequences of sin were this time reading through it. I used to think Adam and Even’s punishment was a little random — sort of arbitrary when I used to read it but this time I saw a connection I never noticed before!

16 “Then He said to the woman,

*“I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy,
and in pain you will give birth.
And you will desire to control your husband,
but he will rule over you.”*

17 And to the man he said,

*“Since you listened to your wife and ate from the tree
whose fruit I commanded you not to eat,
the ground is cursed because of you.
All your life you will struggle to scratch a living from it.*

18

*It will grow thorns and thistles for you,
though you will eat of its grains.*

19

*By the sweat of your brow
will you have food to eat
until you return to the ground
from which you were made.*

*For you were made from dust,
and to dust you will return,” (Genesis 3:16-19).*

Each of these punishments has a direct correlation to the purpose statement we read about in Genesis 1! Some of you Bible scholars out there are probably thinking, “Yea, wasn’t that obvious?” It takes me a long time to figure stuff out! Ask my wife. This is why I need to read the Bible over and over again because the thing no stick the first time!

God is showing us how sin complicates the lives we created to live! Relationships are hard now! Did you see what God said? “You’re going to want to control your husband but he’s going to try to rule over you. There’s always going to be this power struggle in the house. Also, kids are going to be super hard. Not just having them but raising them too. It’s never going to get easier. Also, remember how work was supposed to be fun and feel like worship? Not anymore, it’s going to feel like work now. It’s going to be hard. Remember how this was supposed to be a fun thing we all did together? Nope. There’s going to be disunity and division and power struggles and selfishness and I’m going to feel distant a lot of the time.” Does this feel like anybody’s life? This is what happens when we choose ourselves over God. Sin complicates the life we’ve always wanted — the life we were created for!

Hale Pule

This brings us to our theme for 2025! Hale Pule [Everyone say “Hale Pule”]. Hale Pule is a return back to the lives we’ve always wanted — the lives we were created for. Here’s the truth, sin complicates the lives we were meant to live but thank You Jesus that He overcame sin and made a way for us to experience true life and life more abundantly! This year we want to go on a journey as families, as households, and as the Ohana of God to reclaim the lives we were created to have. We want to rediscover the blessing of family, and children, and marriage where Jesus shows us how to live in harmony and oneness. We want to rediscover this redemptive work that we do for the Kingdom, not as toilsome labor but as life-giving worship that we get to do together. Jesus empowers us to be fruitful and multiply but not just to produce physical children but to multiply and create spiritual children for God’s family! We want to rediscover intimacy with our Heavenly Father like we’ve never known before! And together we will experience God’s Kingdom come and His will be done in our homes, in our communities, and in Hawaii as in Heaven as we unlock the Kingdom potential all around us and within us.

A House of Prayer

“But Mark” you say, “Doesn’t ‘Hale Pule’ just mean house of prayer? Don’t we already do that? Our family prays before meals, at bedtime, or during tough times.” And that’s wonderful! But what we’re talking about is something deeper. Not long ago me and Brother Ron Goldman decided to meet up at the new IHOP at Town Center. We saw the Kono’s there as well.

How many of you know what IHOP stands for? International House of Pancakes. When you think about it, that’s a pretty audacious claim! Not just local, not just national, we are *the* international house of pancakes! IHOP is not just a restaurant that serves pancakes. They aren’t the house with pancakes but of pancakes. Pancakes aren’t part of what they do, it’s central to all that they do. Could you imagine if you visited IHOP and they weren’t serving pancakes that day? You’d question the name!

God says, “For My house (My Hale) will be called a Hale Pule (A house of prayer) for all nations,” (Isaiah 56:7). A house with prayer includes prayer as one of the many things it does but a house of prayer makes prayer central — woven into the very identity of who they are. Prayer is not just an activity but the defining mark of our lives and homes. God wasn’t just talking about the temple in ancient Israel but for His people to be known by their communion with Him and to reflect His heart to the nations.

Likewise, in our homes, in our Church, wherever we are, let’s make prayer, not an occasional act, but the very rhythm of our lives that shapes everything we do.

Discussion Questions:

1. Reflect on Genesis 1:26-28. How does this passage influence your understanding of your God-given identity and purpose?
2. How has participating in the 40-day fast or devotional helped you at the start of this year? What fruit have you seen? What have you found to be the most challenging?
3. Think about our theme for 2025, “Hale Pule”.
 - Is prayer our first response or our last resort?
 - Is it a quick ritual or a living relationship?
 - Do our children see prayer as a cornerstone of our lives or just a checkbox on our to-do list?

What might it look like for us to shift from a people who pray to a people who are defined by prayer?