

How to Develop a Strong Prayer Life

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Prayer has different expressions such as ***intimacy with God*** (includes prayer-reading the Word and fellowshiping with the Spirit), ***interceding for revival, justice, or social transformation*** (also referred to as contending prayer), providing ***prayer covering for individuals***, and ***praying for the sick***. In this way, we encounter God, do the works of the kingdom, and change the world.
- B. A consistent prayer life is essential to the forerunner ministry—only through a lifestyle of prayer can we receive the fullness of what God has provided for us. The forerunner commitment is to seek to spend at least two hours of prayer a day in any of these four expressions. I also encourage forerunners to pray-read through the book of Revelation once a week.
- C. What is prayer? It is talking to God. It is at the same time a great privilege, a fierce struggle, and a powerful miracle of the Spirit who helps us in our weakness in prayer.
- D. Prayer is so necessary because it causes our spirit to be energized, releases God’s blessing on our circumstances, and results in real changes in the Church, the nations, and society.
- E. Prayer is a place of abiding in Christ or connecting with the Spirit that energizes us to love God (first commandment) which causes us to overflow in love for others (second commandment).
⁵ He who abides in Me...bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. (Jn. 15:5)
- F. Prayer was never meant to be duty-based or merely results-oriented. Rather, it is the place of encounter with God where our spirit is energized as we grow to love Him more. It positions us to be energized to love God and people by receiving God’s love as a Father and Bridegroom.
- G. We love others better as we encounter God’s heart. We do not have to give up our prayer time to make time to minister to people. We can do both. Most of us can seize time for the kingdom from the time we spend on entertainment or in gaining extra money that we may not really need.
- H. Prayer that leads to intimacy with God protects our spirit from burnout as we minister to many people over the years. Our prayer life serves as a buffer against spiritual burnout. Maintaining a heart connect with Jesus is the lifeline that enables us for decades to sustain our ministry of winning the lost, healing the sick, and doing works of justice and compassion.
- I. Why does God want us to pray? He wants us to connect with His heart in deep partnership. Therefore, asking God for everything is a foundational principle of the kingdom. We must specifically ask, not just think about our need with frustration and desperation.
⁶ In everything by prayer...let your requests be made known to God... (Phil. 4:6)
- J. There are blessings that God has chosen to give, but withholds them until we ask Him. In this way, He protects His relationship with us by not answering until we connect with Him by asking.
¹⁸ The Lord will wait, that He may be gracious to you...¹⁹ He will be very gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when He hears it, He will answer you. (Isa. 30:18-19)

II. PRACTICAL ISSUES IN DEVELOPING A CONSISTENT PRAYER LIFE

- A. Three ways to strengthen our prayer life are to set a **schedule** for regular prayer times, make a **prayer list**, and have a **right view** of God. A schedule establishes “***when***” we will pray. A prayer list gives us focus on “***what***” to pray. A right view of God causes us to “***want***” to pray.
- B. While I was attending college, a leader encouraged me to put two simple practices in place that have helped me to sustain my prayer life since that time. The first suggestion he gave me was that I should schedule a time to pray. The second was to create and utilize a prayer list.
- C. Most people will pray ten times more with the simplicity of developing a schedule and prayer lists. Many who love God never develop a consistent prayer life because they lack these. Over the years I have talked with many who refuse to do these two things, considering them to be legalistic, though they confess with pain their inability to sustain their prayer life.
- D. Once our prayer time has been scheduled, we must consider some of that time as “sacred time,” treating it as a ***real appointment with the King***. I committed to the Lord to treat certain scheduled prayer times as sacred appointments that I would not miss except in an emergency.
- E. Using a prayer list is an essential tool that helps me focus as I pray. I take liberty to deviate from my prayer list or ***omit parts*** of it as the “winds of inspiration” touch me.

III. DEVELOPING A PRAYER LIST

- A. When developing a prayer list, it is helpful to understand that there are three main **prayer themes**.
 - 1). **Gifts** of the Spirit: God’s power and favor being released
 - 2). **Fruit** of the Spirit: God’s character formed in us or others
 - 3). **Wisdom** of the Spirit: God’s mind or the spirit of revelation imparted
- B. We ask for the gifts, fruit, and wisdom of the Spirit to be released in each **prayer focus**: intimacy, petition, and intercession. We connect with God, receive blessing, and change the world.
 - 1. **Intimacy**: Focuses on giving my love and devotion to God. This type of prayer includes worship, meditation on the Word (prayer-reading it), and fellowshiping with the Spirit.
 - 2. **Petition**: Asks for God’s blessing on my **personal life and ministry**. We pray for a breakthrough on our **inner man** (heart), **circumstances** (physical, financial, relational), and **ministry** that God’s power would be released through our hands, words, and deeds.
 - 3. **Intercession**: Asks for God’s power or justice **for others** (people, places, strategic issues).
 - a). **Prayer for people and places**: Individuals in ministries, marketplace and government, and for the destiny of ministries, cities, or nations (YWAM, Jerusalem, Egypt, etc.)
 - b). **Prayer for strategic issues in society**: Government (elections, abortion), oppression (human trafficking, abortion), natural disasters (hurricanes, droughts), diseases, etc.
- C. I use several prayer lists. ***Obtain these free prayer lists: Ten Prayers to Strengthen Our Inner Man: F-E-L-L-O-W-S-H-I-P; Fellowshiping with the Spirit: T-R-U-S-T. For free notes: What to do in our Personal Prayer Times and How to Mediate on the Word. See www.mikebickle.org.***

IV. RIGHT VIEW OF GOD: TENDER FATHER AND PASSIONATE BRIDEGROOM

- A. Foundational to our life of prayer is cultivating a right view of God. Many have a wrong view of God that sees Him as an angry taskmaster forcing us to endure conversation (prayer) with Him to prove our devotion to Him. As we perceive God as our tender Father and Jesus as our passionate Bridegroom king, we will be energized in our spirit to confidently seek Him with all of our heart.
- B. Encountering the father heart of God is foundational to growing in prayer. Jesus prayed for us that we might know that the Father loves us as He loves Jesus, thus giving us great worth.
²³ That the world may know that You...have loved them as You have loved Me. (Jn. 17:23)
- C. We can have the assurance that we are enjoyed by God the Father, even in our weakness (Ps. 18:19, 35; 130:3-4). We pray very differently when our spirit is confident before God with assurance that He enjoys us. The Father is filled with tender mercy. He is gentle with our weakness after we repent. We have “received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’” In Hebrew, *abba* is a term of endearment, much like *papa* in our culture.
¹⁵ You received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." (Rom. 8:15)
- D. Understanding Jesus as our Bridegroom and ourselves as His cherished Bride equips us to have a vibrant prayer life (Eph. 5:29-32). Many view Jesus as mostly mad or mostly sad, but He has a heart filled with gladness (Heb. 1:9) and fiery affections in His jealous love for us.
- E. As sons of God, we are in the position to experience God's throne as heirs of His power (Rev. 3:21; Rom. 8:17). As the Bride, we are in the position to experience God's heart (affections).

V. HOW TO MEDITATE ON THE WORD: PRAY-READING THE WORD

- A. The most substantial way in which we can bolster our prayer lives is by feeding on the Word of God. This includes engaging in active conversation with God as we read His Word. Scripture gives us the “conversational material” in our prayer life. This way makes prayer more enjoyable.
⁸ This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night...then you will make your way prosperous, and...will have good success. (Josh. 1:8)
- B. Bible study must lead to dialogue with God. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees, saying, “You search the Scriptures without using them to develop a real relationship with God (Jn. 5:39-40).
³⁹ You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have...life; these are they which testify of Me. ⁴⁰ You are not willing to come to Me (dialogue) that you may have life. (Jn. 5:39-40)
- C. Two broad categories of truth related to pray-reading the Word (meditating on Scripture) are: Scriptures that focus on promises “to believe” and Scriptures that exhort us “to obey.”
- D. We actively dialogue with God by praying promises that we are “to believe” from His Word. First, *we thank God* for a particular truth. We turn that truth into declarations of thanksgiving or trust. For example, we say, “Thank you that You love, forgive, lead, and provide for me.” Second, *we ask God to reveal* particular truths to us (Eph. 1:17). For example, pray, “Father, reveal to me more of Your love, forgiveness, direction, and provision for me.”

- E. We actively dialogue with God by praying truths back to Him that exhort us “to obey” His Word. First, we commit ourselves to obey God in the specific way set forth in a passage. We make declarations of our resolve to obey, saying, “I set my heart to obey in speech, time, and money.” Second, we ask God to empower us to obey a particular truth. We ask God for help to give us wisdom, motivation, and power to obey in specific areas. For example pray: “Father help me to love You, to bridle my speech, or use my time and money in full obedience.”
- F. We must articulate our love, gratitude, and requests to Jesus in simple phrases. Take time to journal or record your thoughts and prayers as you “pray-read” through Scripture. This helps us capture the truths that the Spirit gives us and to develop language to talk with God.
- ² Take words with you, and return to the LORD. Say to Him, "Take away all iniquity; receive us graciously, for we will offer the sacrifices of our lips. (Hos. 14:2)
- G. In prayer and meditation, we speak to God on His throne and to God the Spirit, who dwells in our spirit. If we will talk to the Spirit, then we will walk in the Spirit and receive His work in us. Ask the Spirit to let you “see what He sees and feel what He feels” about your life and others.
- ¹⁴ ...The love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. (2 Cor. 13:14, NAS)
- H. Take time to linger in His presence. Speak affectionately by intermittently saying, “I love You.” Speak slowly and softly (not shouting or preaching at the indwelling Spirit), briefly (short phrases not paragraphs), and minimally (listen more than talk) with many pauses and silence.

VI. THE FOUNDATION OF JUSTICE: NIGHT AND DAY PRAYER

- A. Mystery of intercession: Intercession involves speaking God’s Word back to Him concerning a person, city, or nation. We tell God what He tells us to tell Him as the means of releasing His power. The mystery is that intercession is so simple and weak and thus, accessible to every all.
- ²⁷ God has chosen the [so called] weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty...²⁹ that no flesh should glory... (1 Cor. 1:27-29)
- B. The majesty of intercession: Its majesty is seen in that Jesus rules through intercession (Ps. 2:9).
- ²⁵ He always (forever) lives to make intercession for them. (Heb. 7:25)
- C. In Genesis 1, Jesus spoke forth the plans of the Father’s heart to release the power of the Spirit. The Father had many plans for the earth, and the Spirit was present, yet the earth remained dark, formless, and void until Jesus spoke the word to release the Spirit’s power (Gen. 1:2-11; Ps. 33:6, 9; Jn. 1:3; Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:16). Jesus functioned in a form of intercession in Genesis 1. Jesus upholds or sustains the created order by speaking the Word (a type of intercession).
- ³ Who (Jesus)...upholding all things by the word of His power... (Heb. 1:3)
- D. Each time we say what God says, it marks us and changes us. This process progressively renews us. I compare it to a computer programmer who rewrites thousands of lines of code when developing a computer program. God’s words are spirit and life and they impart life to us. When we say what God says, we receive impartation that illuminates our mind and tenderizes our heart.
- ⁶³ The words that I [Jesus] speak to you are spirit, and they are life. (Jn. 6:63)

VII. TEN PRAYERS TO RECEIVE STRENGTH IN THE INNER MAN: F-E-L-L-O-W-S-H-I-P

¹⁶ *To be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man... (Eph. 3:16)*

A. **F- Fear of God:** Father, release the spirit of the fear of God into my heart. Release the lightning and thunder from Your Throne (Rev. 4:5) to strike my heart with Your majesty. Release holy dread on my heart that makes me tremble before You. Unite my heart to Your heart and Word.

¹¹ *Unite my heart (to Your heart and Word) to fear Your name. (Ps. 86:11)*

B. **E- Endurance** (perseverance, patience): Father, strengthen my spirit with endurance that I may do Your will with zeal (diligence) and that I not quit in my fervent pursuit of You and Your will.

¹¹ *Being strengthened with all power...may have great endurance and patience... (Col. 1:11 NIV)*

C. **L- Love:** Father, pour out Your love into my heart by releasing the influences of the Spirit to give me revelation of Your love for me, that it may overflow in love back to Jesus and to others. (The anointing to love God is our greatest goal, possession, and reward in this age).

⁹ *I pray, that your love may abound still more...in knowledge and all discernment. (Phil. 1:9)*

D. **L- Light of glory:** Father, let me see the light of Your glory (or encounter the glory realm). Give me Holy Spirit encounters (dreams, visions, angelic visitations, manifestations of light, fire, wind) as You gave to Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and John (Ex. 33-34:29-30; Isa. 6; Ezek. 1; Rev. 1).

⁶ *A great light from heaven shone around me...⁸ He said to me, "I am Jesus of Nazareth..."¹¹ I could not see for the glory of that light...I came to Damascus. (Acts 22:6-11)*

¹⁸ *And he (Moses) said, "Please, show me Your glory." (Ex. 33:18)*

⁶ *Lord, lift up the light of Your countenance upon us. (Ps. 4:6)*

E. **O- One thing life focus:** Father, I choose to be a person of one thing who often sits at Your feet. I set my heart to spend quality time with You and to cultivate an inward gaze toward You. Alert me when I lose this focus, align my life circumstances so I can walk this out and anoint my times with You that I may feel Your love and feel desire for You and Your Word.

⁴ *One thing I have desired...all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord. (Ps. 27:4)*

⁴² *But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part... (Lk. 10:42)*

1. The Word is to create a living active dialogue in our heart with God. We pray-read the Word or converse with Jesus as we read it. To love God with all our mind involves taking time to fill our heart with God's word. We gain revelation of God by meditating on it.

2. We gain the "fuel of intimacy" in times of prayer by connecting and relating to God as a person. This empowers us to love God and man. This is the key to not burning out. David set his heart to consistently set the Lord before him as a lifestyle.

⁸ *I have set the Lord always before me... (Ps. 16:8)*

- F. **W- Count me worthy** (*faithfulness unto fullness*): Strengthen me to walk in such faithfulness that You consider me worthy to walk in my highest calling in this age and the age to come. We need God's help to see and gain victory over the blind spots in our life that we are not focused on.

¹¹ ***We pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power...*** (2 Thes. 1:11)

No one is "worthy" to receive forgiveness. It is a free gift because of Jesus' worthiness. Rather, we are to have a **worthy response** to God by living free of compromise, thus we are prepared or are found worthy to walk in the fullness of our calling.

²³ ***May the God of peace sanctify you completely; may your spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless (without compromise) at the coming of our Lord...*** (1 Thes. 5:23)

¹³ ***That He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before God...*** (1 Thes. 3:13)

¹ ***I have made a covenant with my eyes; why should I look on a woman?*** (Job 31:1)

- G. **S- Speech**: Father, set a guard over my lips. Free me from defensive, angry, and foolish speech (Eph. 4:29; 5:4). Sustained communion with God requires restrained conversation with man. The Spirit is quenched in us by unwholesome speech: filthy, foolish, coarse jesting (Eph. 4:29-5:4)

³ ***Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips.*** (Ps. 141:3)

¹⁴ ***Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable...*** (Ps. 19:14)

- H. **H- Humility**: Jesus, I want to learn from You how to walk in lowliness. I commit to take Your yoke of humility (lowliness of heart) on my life in my attitudes, speech, and actions.

²⁹ ***Take My yoke...and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart...*** (Mt. 11:29)

- I. **I- Insight unto intimacy** (*wisdom*): Father give me insight into Your Word, will, and ways. Give me wisdom that I may walk with You in intimacy under the Spirit's creative leadership. I want to partner together with You in every issue in my life including my finances, schedule, emotions, fears, addictions, circumstances, physical body (diet, health), relationships (in the home, office, ministry), my future, etc. Give me new ideas in each area of my life.

¹⁷ ***May give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him...*** (Eph. 1:17)

⁹ ***Ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; ¹⁰ that you may have a walk worthy of the Lord...*** (Col. 1:9-10)

²⁶ ***The Holy Spirit...will teach you all things...*** (Jn. 14:26)

- J. **P- Peace and Joy**: Father, strengthen my heart with supernatural peace and joy that overpowers fear, anxiety, phobias and addictions. Sin grows fastest when fear and anxiety are present in us.

⁷ ***The peace of God...will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*** (Phil. 4:7)

¹³ ***Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope (confidence) by the power of the Holy Spirit.*** (Rom. 15:13)