

Practical Actions: How to Respond to Psalm 2

I. REVIEW FROM THE PSALM 2 HANDOUT

- A. David prophesied that the leaders of the nations would rise up in anger against Jesus' leadership (2:1-3), seeking to remove the influence of His Word from society (2:3). Many rulers and leaders in society—economic, educational, military, sports, media, etc.—will resist Jesus and His Word.

¹Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing? ²The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, ³“Let us break Their bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us.” (Ps. 2:1-3)

- B. These leaders will oppose the truth about Jesus and His definitions of salvation, love, purity, and justice. They will see God's Word in a negative light, as though it were *bonds* enslaving them and hindering “human potential,” and as *cords* binding them to His morality, godly ways, and truth. An unholy agenda is accelerating as many attack God's commands and seek to remove His moral boundaries from society, including the sanctity of life, marriage, and sexuality.

- C. Jesus gave more warnings about deception in the end times than about tribulation (Mt. 24:4-5, 11, 24; Mk. 13:5-6, 22; Lk. 21:8; 2 Thes. 2:3; 1 Tim. 4:1; Rev. 13:14; 18:23).

⁹“They will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations... ¹¹Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.” (Mt. 24:9-11)

II. PRACTICAL ACTIONS TO TAKE

- A. Though the following ten actions are not complicated, they must be cultivated faithfully. These commitments are not a comprehensive list covering the entire Christian life—they are a few practical, spiritual activities that position us to grow spiritually.

- B. Cultivate friendships with people who have godly values.

³³Do not be deceived: “Evil company corrupts good habits.” (1 Cor. 15:33)

- C. Be committed to a local church that boldly stands for the truths below. In this hour, some believers and ministries are drawing back from some of these truths due to the stigma related to them.

- D. In my book *7 Commitments for Spiritual Growth*, I present practical ways to walk out a relationship with Jesus.

1. ***Pray Daily:*** Connect with God in cultivating a prayer life. There is more about this below in the section on a practical plan to grow in prayer.
2. ***Fast Weekly:*** We position ourselves to receive more from God by setting our heart to fast on a weekly basis. Fasting weakens our natural strengths yet it positions us to freely receive more from the Spirit. Though some view fasting as archaic, Jesus is clear that believers are to fast. Jesus said, “*When you fast*” (Mt. 6:17), implying that fasting was to occur in the normal course of a believer's life.

3. **Do Justly:** Be zealous for good works of compassion and justice that exalt Jesus in society. This involves being intentional about doing good works on a regular basis to show God’s love and kindness in practical ways. Works of justice include feeding the poor; caring for the needy, orphans, widows, and homeless; alleviating the oppression of abortion, poverty, misogyny, and racism in the marketplace, in law enforcement, in education and employment.
4. **Give Extravagantly:** Experience the joy of God’s blessing as we give money to support and increase kingdom work and ministry. Scripture challenges us to give extravagantly (Lk. 6:38). The Lord promises to bless us in our giving. The Father beckons His children to test Him in their giving (Mal. 3:10); it is as if He is saying, “Wait and see what I will do! Watch Me open up the storehouse of heaven to bless you financially in a supernatural way.”
5. **Live Holy:** This is a call to live in the pleasure of loving and knowing God as we renounce deeds of darkness. Though many see holiness as the drudgery of self-denial, the truth is that His holiness is the most pleasurable and exhilarating quality of life in existence. It is how God lives. He wants to share His life with us, that we may enjoy this superior quality of life in the liberty of holiness. It is living with a heart that is vibrant in love for Jesus and people.
6. **Lead Diligently:** Take initiative to minister to others and make disciples by regularly leading in outreaches, prayer meetings, and Bible studies.
7. **Speak Boldly:** Be a faithful witness of the truth, with allegiance to Jesus’ Word. This is perhaps the most challenging and costly of these seven commitments, because it will take us out of our comfort zone into conflict and controversy. It will affect our relationships, our ministry reputation, and even our finances. We are to speak the *full counsel of God*, including both the positive and negative aspects of the truth (Acts 20:27). The Lord calls His people to be faithful witnesses who boldly proclaim the truths of His Word. All who boldly speak the *full counsel* of God’s Word will face resistance and even rejection. This can be painful.

III. IMPORTANT TRUTHS FROM WHICH SOME BELIEVERS ARE DRAWING BACK

Biblical truths from which believers are drawing back due to the stigma related to them include:

- A. *Jesus is the only way of salvation:* All roads and religions do not lead to God and salvation.
⁶**“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father except by Me.” (Jn. 14:6)**
- B. *The divinity of Jesus Christ*
¹⁰**“I and My Father are one.” (Jn. 10:10)**
- C. *The reality of original sin and the need for Jesus’ atonement:* Resist the “good without God” heresy, which claims that morality is linked to humanity needing only education and socialization rather than salvation and regeneration (Rom. 3:10, 23; 5:8)
²³**For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Rom. 3:23)**
¹⁰**There is none righteous, no, not one. (Rom. 3:10)**

- D. *The Bible as the final authority on all matters of faith and practice:* Once the authority of Scripture is questioned and/or rejected, people are left without “biblical absolutes” to determine what is true. The Bible is timeless; it is an eternal Word that applies to all humanity. Some say that because the Bible is to be understood within its own time frame and context, it gives them liberty to dismiss various moral commands of God as not being applicable to them. Thus, they re-interpret and change the meaning of some passages by filtering it through the so-called “advanced understanding” of our time frame and context. They argue that some of the Old Testament is not really an account of God’s perspective, but a story simply told through the lens of the ancient Israelites. They conclude, therefore, that neither God’s agenda for Israel and the nations nor His moral requirements are literal.
- ¹⁶All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” (2 Tim. 3:16)***
- E. *Jesus’ substitutionary atonement for the sins of humankind* (Jn. 1:29; 1 Jn. 2:1-2; cf. Isa. 53:5-6)
- ¹We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world. (1 Jn. 2:1-2)***
- F. *The grace of God given to empower us to live godly lives and deny ungodliness, not as license to live in compromise* (1 Cor. 10:12-13; Eph. 4:24-27; Titus 2:11-12)
- ¹¹For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, ¹²teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age. (Titus 2:11-12)***
- G. *Immorality defined as sexual activity with another person outside of marriage between one man and one woman* (Mt. 5:8; 19:4-5; Rom. 1:26-27; Eph. 5:5, 31; Heb. 12:16; 13:4; Rev. 22:15): We must refuse a wrong application of tolerance, inclusion, and equality. All human beings are equal in their significance to God; however, not all lifestyle practices are equal in pleasing to God (Rom. 1:18-32; Gal. 5:16-26; Eph. 4:17- 5:7; Col. 3:1-17; Rev. 22:15).
- H. *Eternal judgment for those who deny Christ* (Rev. 20:11-15). The Lord releases His judgments in this age to remove the things that hinder love. Some today reject the wrath of God, which leads to the elimination of the need for Jesus to receive the wrath of God on our behalf on the cross. (Rom. 1:18).
- ¹⁵And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. (Rev. 20:15)***
- ²⁸For the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice ²⁹and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation. (Jn. 5:28-29)***
- ¹⁸The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness. (Rom. 1:18)***
- I. *Biblical end-time prophecy is to be taken at face value:* It is not to be dismissed as merely symbolic.

- J. *Ethnic Israel has not been replaced by the Church in God's purposes: God has not rescinded His sovereign choice of Israel.*
²*God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew...¹¹I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall [completely]? Certainly not! But through their fall [temporary], to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles...²⁵For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery...that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.²⁶And so all Israel will be saved... (Rom. 10:2, 11, 25-26)*
- K. *The creation story is literal, with a literal Adam: Some, in seeking to make evolution fit with the biblical account, debate whether Adam was a literal man or a symbol.*
- L. *The gifts of the Holy Spirit are for the Church today (Acts 2:17-21; 1 Cor. 12:1-11)*

IV. A PRACTICAL PLAN TO GROW IN PRAYER

There is more to developing a consistent prayer life than just loving God; there are practical matters. Here is a practical plan to help you grow in prayer, a plan that has helped me for many years.

- A. ***Set a schedule for regular prayer times.*** A schedule establishes *when* you will pray.
1. If you schedule time for prayer and make a prayer list, *you will pray ten times more than you do now.* I have proved the truth of it in my own life and witnessed the results of others applying the plan in their lives.
 2. There are many demands on our time. If we do not set our schedules ourselves, others will set them for us, and the result will be very little time for prayer. We may not keep our schedule 100% of the time, but we will keep it more often than not. I do not always stay in prayer for the entire time that I intended. But I set my heart to show up to start it, and then go from there.
 3. I do not limit my prayer life to my scheduled prayer times; I pray “on the run” during the day, which is part of abiding in Christ. You will sustain an “abiding dialogue” throughout the day much more consistently if you have regular times to talk to God set into your schedule.
- B. ***Make a prayer list.*** A prayer list helps you to focus on *what* to pray.
1. I recommend that you prepare a prayer list, or several lists. A list is a simple tool that can help keep us focused during our prayer times. Often when I begin to pray, my mind is blank. I need a little “jump start” to help me focus, so I still use prayer lists, which I have found invaluable.
 2. I don't limit my prayers to the things on my lists, but use them simply as a guide. I depart from them at any time I feel led to pray in a different direction. I enjoy praying with the inspiration that comes from the leading of the Spirit, so I seek to follow His prompting.
 3. I have three prayer lists—for my personal life, for people and places, and for justice issues.
 - a. ***For my personal life:*** This includes praying for my heart, ministry, and circumstances (physical, financial, and relational). I use the acronym *FELLOWSHIP* in praying for my heart. (See *Ten Prayers to Strengthen Our Inner Man* at mikebickle.org)

- b. **For people and places:** I keep a list of individuals, ministries, and cities that I pray for regularly. I pray for individuals (family and friends), ministries (including my local church), missionaries, and mission endeavors, etc. I pray for those in authority (1 Tim. 2:2). I pray for my own city and for other cities, such as Jerusalem and Cairo, etc.
 - c. **For justice:** This is a broad topic that includes governmental and social issues, such as the ending of abortion, human trafficking, and unfair educational systems. My list sometimes includes situations related to economic injustice, civil unrest (terrorism, riots, etc.), natural disasters (hurricanes, tsunamis, tornadoes, drought), disease (AIDS, tuberculosis, etc.), social crises (for example, famine and genocide), and more.
4. Some protest that it is legalistic to schedule time for prayer or use a prayer list. It can be, but it does not have to be. We move into legalism when we seek to *earn* God’s love by praying or obeying rules. The good news of the gospel is that we don’t have to earn it; God offers His love and grace freely. Consistency in prayer—talking to the Lord regularly and with focus—*simply positions us to sit before Him more often* so that we can experience more of His grace.
 5. Setting regular times for prayer is not an attempt to earn God’s love; it is a reflection of our desire to take control of our schedules to make prayer a priority. I urge you not to fall for the age-old lie that calls all discipline “legalism.” This lie has robbed many of the blessing of a consistent prayer life. Liberty in grace is not about being aimless or passive.
¹³You...have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh. (Gal. 5:13)
 6. Scheduling time for Him is an expression of both my love for Him and my hunger for more. It is not an attempt to earn love from the One who gives His love freely and abundantly.
 7. During our prayer times it is important to turn off our phones, our email, Facebook, Twitter, and other social media. The person who is overly stimulated with information and communication will not connect with God in the same way as when he turns off his devices during times of prayer.
- C. **Cultivate a right view of God.** A right view of God causes you to *want* to pray.
1. Too many believers have a wrong view of God. They might live under the wrong assumption that God is either an angry taskmaster who forces us to pray and endure conversation with Him to prove our devotion to Him or a stoic God who has no interest in our lives.
 2. But God is a tender Father, who deeply loves His children, and Jesus is a Bridegroom King filled with desire for His people. As we believe and understand the biblical truth of God as our tender Father and Jesus as the Bridegroom King, we are energized to seek God and experience new delight in our relationship with Him. Our prayer lives become very different when we come to Him with the confidence that He enjoys us. It is enjoyable to talk to someone who really likes you!

3. We grow in our passion for God by understanding His passion for us—it awakens passion in our heart for Him. Encountering the father heart of God is foundational to growing in prayer. Jesus prayed that His people would know that the Father loves them just as He loves Jesus!
*²³“...that the world may know that You...have loved them as You have loved Me.”
(Jn. 17:23)*
4. We have “received the spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father’” (Rom. 8:15). In Hebrew, *abba* is a term of endearment for a father, much like *papa* in our culture; it indicates respect and affection. The understanding of God as *Abba* and the knowledge of our identity as His children equip us to reject Satan’s accusations that we are hopeless failures.
5. How we view God determines how we approach Him in prayer. If we view Him as aloof or angry, we will not want to pray much. When we see Him as a tender Father and passionate Bridegroom who desires for us to come to Him, then we will pray much more.