

How to Develop a Strong Prayer Life

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Prayer has different expressions such as ***intimacy with God*** (includes pray-reading the Word and fellowshiping with the Spirit), ***interceding for revival, justice, and 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—only through a lifestyle of prayer can we receive the fullness of what God has provided for us.
- 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 changes in the Church, the nations, and society. Prayer changes the spiritual atmosphere of a city by impacting the movement of angels and demons (Dan. 10:12-21).
- E. Prayer is a place of abiding in Christ, of connecting with the Spirit who energizes us to love God (first commandment), which causes us to overflow in love for others (second commandment).
⁵He 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 a 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 on gaining more money to have more. It is wiser to downsize our lifestyle and make time to connect with God, grow in the Word, and serve others.
- H. Prayer that leads to intimacy with God protects our spirit from burnout as we minister to many people over the years. Connecting with Jesus is the lifeline that enables us to sustain our ministry of winning the lost, healing the sick, and doing works of justice and compassion for decades.
- 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, and not just think about our need with frustration and desperation.
⁶In everything by prayer...let your requests be made known to God... (Phil. 4:6)
²Yet you do not have because you do not ask. (Jas. 4:2)
- J. There are blessings that God has chosen to give, but He 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.
¹⁸The Lord will wait, that He may be gracious to you...¹⁹He 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 practices. 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 PRAYER LISTS

- A. When developing a prayer list, it is helpful to think of our three main prayer focuses.
 - 1. **Intimacy**: Focuses on giving my love and devotion to God. This type of prayer includes worship, meditation on the Word (pray-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 in 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.
- B. When developing a prayer list, it is helpful to understand that there are three main prayer themes. We ask for the gifts, fruit, and wisdom of the Spirit to be released in each prayer focus.
 - 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
- 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; *Fellowshipping with the Spirit*: T-R-U-S-T. **Free notes**: *What to Do in Our Personal Prayer Times* and *How to Meditate 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 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.
²³That 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 the 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.
¹⁵You 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. Jesus has burning desire for His people. The Bridegroom message is about Jesus’ emotions for us, His beauty, His commitments to us (to share His heart, home, throne, secrets, and beauty), and our response of wholehearted love and obedience that moves Him. The Spirit uses the message of the Bridegroom God to restore the first commandment to first place in the Church. We must refuse all sensual overtones in proclaiming Jesus as our Bridegroom God. (Jesus is not to be seen as our lover or boyfriend). (Isa. 54:4-12; 62:2-5; Jer. 2:2; 3:14; 31:32; Ezek. 16:13-15, 32; 23:1-45; Hos. 1:2; 2:7, 14-23; 3:1-5; Mt. 9:15; 22:1-14; 25:1-13; Jn. 3:29; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:25-32; Rev. 19:7-9; 21:9; 22:17)
- 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. INTIMACY WITH GOD: 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 and makes prayer more enjoyable.
⁸This 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 for searching the Scriptures without using them to develop a real relationship with God (Jn. 5:39-40).
³⁹You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have...life; these are they which testify of Me. ⁴⁰You 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, to 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 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’ lives.
- 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 ***silence*** and many ***pauses***.

VI. 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)***

F- Fear of God: Father, release the spirit of the fear of God into my heart (Ps. 86:11)

E- Endurance [perseverance]: Strengthen my spirit with endurance to do Your will (Col. 1:11)

L- Love: Father, pour out Your love into my heart (Phil. 1:9)

L- Light of glory: Father, let me see the light of Your glory (Acts 22:6-11; Ex. 33:18; Ps. 4:6)

O- One thing life focus: I choose to be a person of one thing who sits at Your feet (Ps. 27:4)

W- Count me worthy: Strengthen me to have a ***worthy response*** to God in my life (2 Thes. 1:11)

S- Speech: Father, set a guard over my lips. Free me from sinful speech (Eph. 4:29; Ps. 141:3)

H- Humility: Jesus, I want to learn from You how to walk in lowliness (Mt. 11:29).

I- Insight unto intimacy (wisdom): Give me insight into Your Word, will, and ways (Col. 1:9)

P- Peace and Joy: Strengthen my heart with peace and joy that overpowers fear (Phil. 4:7)

FREE: teaching Mike’s message on Ten Prayers to Strengthen Our Inner Man: F-E-L-L-O-W-S-H-I-P;
See www.MikeBickle.org.