

Acid Test Series 3 of 8 - Learning to Pray Like Jesus

by Al Whittinghill

Jesus' prayer life was characterized by intimacy with God, and we can learn to pray like him by prioritizing prayer and seeking to be transformed by beholding God's glory.

Duration: 1:01:31

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Luke 3:21, Luke 5:15-16, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, Hebrews 1:9

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of prayer in the life of a believer. He highlights how Jesus' prayer life was the secret to his ministry and encourages his listeners to make prayer their first choice, not their last chance. The speaker also discusses the relationship between prayer and temptation, stating that a praying life is less prone to straying. He further emphasizes the need to enter into God's presence with thanksgiving and praise, and to have a regular place and time for prayer. The sermon references Luke 11:1 and Luke 23:34 to support these teachings.

Transcript

We magnify you, we adore you, we honor you, we exalt you. We laud you, you are the one whom the angels lay prostrate before, we praise your holy name. You're our rock, you're our fortress, you're our deliverer, you're the amen, you're the advocate of your people, you're almighty God.

Thank you, prince of life, you're the great physician. Thank you, the morning star, you're the most high, you're messiah, you're the day spring, you're the living bread, you're the living stone, you're the living waters, you're the light of the world. We praise you, lamb of God, you're the king of glory, you're the lord of lords, you're our high priest, you're the perfect, perfect sacrifice, the lamb of God.

You're a friend of sinners, faithful, true, first and last, author and finisher, bishop of our souls, you're our bridegroom, you're the anointed of God, the bishop of our soul, lord, the chief shepherd, Emmanuel, God with us, Jesus, holy one of God, the root, the offspring of David, the resurrection, the life, the light of the world, the rock of our salvation, you're the sure foundation, our redeemer, the word of God, the surety, you're the true vine, lord Jesus, the son of righteousness, the way, the life, the truth, the desire of all nations, the lord of glory. You're a consuming fire, fall on us, consume us, you're the light, illuminate, you're the love, fill us with who you are, take your word and hide it in our heart that we might learn not to

sin against thee and also, even more so, to walk pleasing to you. We thank you tonight that you are sovereign God, the lord omnipotent reigneth and tonight he will exalt his son as we draw near to him and lift him up.

We pray in Jesus' name, amen. Tonight is prayer a duty or is prayer a delight? Which is it? Last night, after we had our time together, we had a glorious time, we prayed and many people left a lot of chains up here. We probably could have started our own logging camp if we had so desired, if we could have gotten to them.

Chains of all kinds, that's what prayer does. But is prayer a duty or is it a delight? Is it something that you long for but just can't seem to grasp tonight? Is it a shopping list that you give to a cosmic errand boy? Do you see him as a policeman? When you call upon him in the morning or whatever you do, do you feel you're trying to get his attention? But he's not really paying attention. You see, the truth is he's laying hold on us and trying to get our attention.

Why does God ask me to pray? Well, that's an intricate question and it's not easily answered. In fact, it's not easily put in the test tube. But perhaps one of the best ways to answer a question like that, to see what prayer is meant to be like in a life, is to take the perfect life of prayer and look at it.

That's what we're going to do this next moment. We're going to look at the place that prayer played in the man of God, the Lord Jesus. The Son of God was preeminently, above everything else, a person of prayer.

Consider this. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit. He didn't wrestle with doubt.

He was the eternal word incarnate, Emmanuel, God with us, and that big, long, glorious doxology we listed to him at the beginning when we prayed. He's all of those things, and he never had any shadow of turning. He was the same throughout all the ages when he came and lived in a body suit that the Father had prepared.

He was not God masquerading. He was God in the flesh. He never needed any perfection.

He was perfection. He was in perfect harmony, perfect fellowship with God the Father. He was totally free from sin, totally free from failure, totally free from unbelief, and the Holy Ghost was given to him without measure.

Well, why did he need to pray? Because prayer is not just to take care of those things. Prayer is a whole lot more than that. He felt the repeated need to withdraw from the busyness of his ministry, and probably there's never been anyone that had to manage his time more carefully than the Lord Jesus.

We read about him ministering through the day until they said he's gone crazy. They looked at him. He was ministering like a man that had gone mad.

He was in a frenzy as the multitudes came to him, and he ministered and ministered and ministered. But he felt the need to draw apart repeatedly with continual and oftentimes of renewal and prayer. He had no sin to confess.

He had no doubt to overcome, no unbelief to subdue, no lack of love to have filled up in his life, no shortcomings to deplore. He was the Son of God, every whit the delight of the Father's heart. There are 17

references in the Gospels to his prayer life, and those references are enough to put us on our face if we really saw what they meant.

I want us to look at Hebrews chapter 5 verse 7, and in that one reference there we'll see that there's a reference outside of the gospel that gives light as to the prayer life of the Lord Jesus. Hebrews chapter 5 verse 7, our high priest walked among us. Hebrews 5 verse 7, our high priest who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him out of death, he was heard because he feared, or he revered.

And though he were a son, yet he learned obedience by the things he suffered. He had to learn obedience experientially by suffering and being made perfect. You see, he was perfect, but he was made perfect.

He became the author of eternal salvation to all of them that obey him. This is a gem that shows us what prayer was in the life of the Lord Jesus. It says, in the days of his flesh, he offered up strong crying and tears as he wept, as he prayed, as he interceded, as he offered supplications for those he loved before the heavenly father.

Remember his words that he said in John chapter 15 verse 15, we touched them last night. He said, all that I have heard from my father, I've made known unto you. He's a living revelation of what it means to be in communion with God, the father in John chapter five, verse 19.

It says the son can do nothing independently, but only what he sees the father doing. If there ever was a life that was completely dependent upon the heavenly father, it was the son of God. The only life that really never had to be dependent upon the father because his life was perfect, but he came as a perfect illustration of a man under the control of the spirit of God.

John chapter 12, verse 49, he says, I have not spoken of my own initiative. What's the meaning when he says, I haven't done these things of my own self, the works that you see me doing, they're my father doing the works, the words you hear me say, they're not really my words. I've heard them from my father.

And the things that you see me involved in, when you've seen me, you've seen the father, what's he trying to illustrate before us? Well, as he prayed, he was showing us that prayer was priority. You see, divine communion, refreshment, fellowship, instruction, strength was the great priority of his life. Nothing is more conspicuous, I believe in the life of the Lord Jesus than his prayer life.

As you see it now, there are four gospels, actually one gospel by four different men, but each one of those accounts set forth a different aspect of the Lord Jesus. Matthew shows the King and it shows his legal right to the throne. Consequently, it takes his genealogy back to David and Abraham.

Mark shows the servant. Consequently, there is no genealogy because the servant doesn't need one. And the key word there is Jesus doing things straightway, straightway.

He's the servant of Jehovah. Skipping on to John, John shows the one who came down from above. His genealogy is the word was made flesh.

And you see here the eagle coming and making his dwelling place among those that were vultures for a while. But Luke is different. Luke was written by a man, a doctor.

Why is Luke different? Because Luke shows us the perfect man. It shows us his genealogy going back all the way to Adam, because that's what the perfect man has to have as credentials. He has to be a man, but he has to be also God in the flesh.

The white, pure, unblemished Lamb of God. Here he is in Luke and Luke shows the humanity of Jesus as woven without seam. Consequently, Luke will show what a human God in the flesh would be doing when he became a man.

That's why in the gospel of Luke, it shows him in man's activity. If you wanted to see in various gospels, the account of when Jesus was doing that which pertained to the human, you would probably look in Luke. For example, Luke's gospel in chapter three, let's just run through Luke.

Let me show you Luke's gospel. Chapter three, verse twenty one. Luke's gospel.

Chapter three, verse twenty one. The scene is at Bethabara. It's at his baptism.

The other gospels tell you that Jesus came as a lamb, that he came and multitudes came out to watch, to hear John the Baptist. But it's in Luke's gospel that show him as a man, that it says these words, two little words that are different from the other gospel accounts. Luke three, twenty one, it says, now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also being baptized, here's those two words, and praying.

The heaven was open. You see, Luke's gospel shows it was while he was doing these things, he was praying. You don't see that in the other gospels, but Luke says it was while the master was praying that the heavens opened and the God, the Father, ripped it open and said, I can't stand it any longer.

This is my son. I'm so delighted in him. He'd never done a miracle.

He'd never preached a sermon. He'd never been public. He'd just walk before God, his Father, in a life of prayer.

That ought to encourage us tonight. If you don't think you have much of a ministry, God might even want to rend open the heavens for you one day when you're in a situation when you want to say, this is my son. I'm well pleased in you.

You haven't preached the sermon. You haven't gone and all these things, but you have been in a life of communion with me. You're without spot in my sight, but Luke's gospel, I don't want to get off on that.

Luke's gospel says it's while he was praying, the Holy Spirit descended going on to Luke chapter five, verse 15 and 16. The setting is during the acclamation of the Lord Jesus Christ, the year of popularity when he's just come to the very, well, he's getting to where he's starting to draw big crowds and, and all the people come, look at Luke chapter five, verse 15, and it says, so much the more went there a fame abroad of him and great multitudes came together to hear and to be healed by him of their infirmities. That's what we are trying to do.

But what did he do? And he withdrew himself to the wilderness and prayed. You see, he realized this, that to go higher meant to go lower. He withdrew himself.

You see, whenever you become famous in the eyes of the world, it means more time is needed alone with God that you may not lift it up. There's a story about a Swiss guide that was leading someone up to the top

of the Weisshorn in Switzerland. And they got up to the top after a, after a frantic climb of days and days.

And the professor who was with him, who was so enraptured with the view, jumped up to the top of the peak and looked like this. And the guide grabbed him by the knees and said, down on your knees, sir, down on your knees at these Heights. If you stand full, you'll fall.

What a parable of what we are to be like, shouldn't the mountaintop attitude be that of Elijah back in the book of Kings after he slayed the prophets of Baal. And he went up to the top of Mount Carmel and he has an attitude. What's his attitude that the man who's just conquered mightily and become famous in Israel.

What's his attitude after he's killed all those priests. If you ever turned back there, you'd see Elijah went up to the top of Carmel and he got up and he got down and he put his head between his knees. That's a mountaintop attitude head between the knees and Jesus withdrew himself to pray.

And in the strength of the original, the word withdrew to pray means more than once and more than once in praying. He did it a lot. He went away from the crowds.

He got alone with his father. He was to commune with him in Luke chapter six, Luke chapter six. You see also teaches us about prayer.

Luke is the gospel of prayer. Luke chapter six, verse 12. You see, and it came to pass in those days, plural that he went out into a mountain to pray and he continued all night in prayer to God more than once.

He went out before choosing his 12 disciples. He had a night of prayer. Wouldn't it be nice if we did that before we chose deacons or elders in Luke chapter nine, verse 28.

If Jesus needed to spend the night in prayer, ought we not Luke chapter nine, verse 28, the famous passage on the man of transfiguration. It came to pass about eight days after these things that he took Peter and John and James. And he went up to a mountain to pray.

And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered and his clothing was white and glycerin. The other gospels don't have that little word as he prayed. It just says while he was there.

But Luke tells us the secret. It was while he was praying that he became so irradiated with the communion of his father. And in this, there came a great fear of God on those that were with him.

You see, prayer changes us. That word there that the fashion of his countenance was altered. That word in the other account in the gospel, when it says he was transfigured on the man of transfiguration, it's the word metamorphosis, metamorphosis.

And it means to totally change while he was praying. This word is only used two other times in the whole New Testament. One of them is in second Corinthians chapter three, verse 18, and the other is in Romans chapter 12, verse two.

It's the word talking about the change of a caterpillar into a butterfly. Let me read you second Corinthians chapter three, verse 18, because this is what happens in the place of prayer. It's trying to give us an understanding of what it means to be transfigured, to be transformed from these two passages.

What happened to Jesus on the man of transfiguration while he prayed is available to us. Second Corinthians chapter three, verse 18, we all with an unveiled faith. That means honest beholding as in a

mirror, the glory of the Lord are metamorphosis into the same image from glory to glory by the spirit of the Lord.

When we get alone with him and behold his reflected glory in the word of God, we are changed by a greater power, like a power upon a caterpillar. We are changed and we're able to fly in the sense of spiritual wings and we wait upon him and we renew our strength and we mount up and we are literally transformed on the inside. And the other verse is in Romans chapter 12, and I'm sure that you could quote this if I was to ask you, don't be conformed to this world, but be transformed, transfigured, change this word right here, be totally altered, glycerin by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is good and acceptable and perfect the will of God.

The only way to do this is to get alone with him and to pray like Jesus was changed on the man of transfiguration. Are you being conformed or are you being transformed? Because if you're not praying, you're being conformed to the world. You're being pressed into the mold.

No matter how sincere your human desires may be, you need to get in that reflected glory and be changed. Now moving on in Luke to Luke chapter 11, in verse 1, Luke chapter 11, verse 1, the setting is this, that they've just left the crowd, they've just left Martha's house from a big feast, and apparently they've seen this happen over and over again in Jesus. And they recognize that the secret to his life is what he's doing here.

Luke 11, 1, it came to pass that as he was praying in a certain place, when he stopped, one of his disciples came unto him and I can see him now, he comes up, Lord, teach us to pray. We recognize that this is the power of your great ministry. This is where you get this tremendous words and all the rest.

And as John taught his disciples, teach us to pray. And then the Lord gives them the disciples' prayer. We call it the Lord's Prayer, but I would say it's the disciples' prayer.

The Lord's Prayer is in John 17. This is what the disciples of God are supposed to pray. Our Father which art in heaven, holy is your name.

That's where it starts. That's where it ends. Teach us to pray.

Teach us to pray. It's the only thing, as we said night before last, that they ever asked him to do. They didn't say, teach us to preach.

They didn't say, teach us to heal the sick. Teach us to pray. They saw that that was the key and they knew the secret and they asked him.

And in Luke chapter 22, in verse 31, we learn there something about the Lord Jesus's prayer life. In Luke chapter 22, verse 31, the Lord said to Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you that your faith fail not.

You see, Jesus prayed for his own specifically. He prayed for Peter by name. Peter, the devil, wants to have you, but don't you fret.

I've prayed for you by name. That's what he's saying. And you know something? He's prayed for you by name tonight.

Read John 17 sometimes. I don't just pray for these, but to all of those that will believe on the word, all of those that you've given to me. Jesus Christ has prayed for me.

That's the greatest consolation. And not only has he prayed, but we'll see in a moment, he's praying tonight as a high priest for those that are his. And that ought to be a sweet balm for a failing heart, a soft pillow for a tired heart.

He prayed for his own by name, and he's still doing it as he did in Luke's gospel. But in Luke chapter 22, going on to verse 39, you see that he came out and he went as he was used to, to the Mount of Olives. And his disciples also followed him.

And when he was at the place, he said unto them, pray that you enter not into temptation. He's saying this pray so that you will not enter into temptation. You see, it's like an either or if you're not praying, you're going to be entering into great temptation.

Pray that you enter not into temptation. And when he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast and kneeled down, he prayed saying, father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.

And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven and strengthened him. And he being in an agony, prayed more earnestly, more stretched outedly. And his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

And he rose up from prayer and he came to his disciples and he found them sleeping because they were in emotional frenzy. They were sorrowful. And he said to them, why do you sleep? Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation.

They could have tiptoed into the garden and seen the greatest prayer meeting by the greatest man in all of history praying, but they were sleeping. That makes you feel better about sleeping through your quiet time, doesn't it? But he says, listen, listen, you need to understand that prayer and temptation are antagonists toward one another. And of the praying life will be the life that will not be prone to be the straying life.

But if you are not praying, no matter how much you're involved in, you will be faced with manifold temptation. So tune in toward heaven so that the signals of this world don't pull your receiver. Tune in toward heaven is what he's saying.

But then it also in Luke chapter 23, we see another precious, precious verse, verse 34, the other, the other gospels tell us they nailed him to the tree. They took Jesus, they crucified him. But in Luke chapter 23, verse 34, it says, and then said, Jesus, father, forgive them for they know not what they do.

He was praying while he was being crucified in the mortal agony of his soul. He was praying. You see, Jesus Christ was a man of prayer above all things else.

In fact, in Matthew chapter 19, verse 13, we see him praying for little children. He wasn't stiff. He wasn't starchy.

He prayed for the little children. When did he pray? When did he pray? Well, we've covered that partially, but look in Mark chapter one, verse 35, look at Mark chapter one, verse 35. And you'll see one example of when he prayed Mark one 35 and in the morning rising up a great while before day, he went out and

departed to a lonely place.

And there he prayed. So this is a great while before day, but he wasn't locked into that a great while before day, because you know, when else he prayed, he prayed morning as Mark one 35 shows us, but he also prayed. If you'll look at Luke, as we just looked at, you don't need to look at it again.

I'll just tell you what it says. He prayed nights. He went out in those days nights to have nights of prayer.

So he had mornings of prayer before day. He would go out and spend nights in prayer. And then look at Matthew chapter 14, verse 23, Matthew chapter 14, verse 23, look at this precious scripture.

It says, and when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray. How long did he stay when evening was calm? He was there alone. So he went up probably noon or afternoon and stayed all afternoon.

So when did he pray morning, noon, and night, morning, noon, and night all the time? He prayed without ceasing. He was a man of prayer above all things above all things else. He prayed while he was standing, looking up toward heaven.

How did he pray? He prayed while he was kneeling. He prayed while he was on his face. He wept before the multitude praying for Jerusalem before them in agony of soul.

Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem. He prayed for them. He prayed at the last supper, laying down, reclining with his disciples.

He prayed for his father's glory in John 17, verse one, and in John 12, he's praying that he might be glorified above all. He prayed privately, which is alone. He prayed before his disciples.

That's semi-privately. He prayed in front of his disciples. And then he also prayed publicly.

He prayed publicly before thousands. When he was feeding the 5,000, he prayed and gave thanks before all the 5,000. When he was raising of Lazarus in John chapter 11, he lifts his eyes up with just an upward look and says, Father, I thank you that you've heard me.

You always hear me. And he prayed it, it says, for the sake of those that were by there. You know why he did? Because he wanted them to get the idea.

He wanted us to get the idea, and he's still praying today. Look at Hebrews chapter 7, verse 25. He was crucified, dead, buried, and raised, but he hasn't stopped praying.

He's still praying. In Hebrews chapter 7, verse 25, wherefore, he is also able to save them to the uttermost. I like to say from the guttermost to the uttermost.

He's able to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him for this reason. He ever lives to make intercession for them. It's one thing to say you have a Savior.

It's another thing to say you have a high priest. Your life will change when you see that Jesus Christ is living today, as it says in Romans, Romans 8, 34, that he intercedes for us at the right hand of God. He is interceding.

I'm going to read that back to Romans chapter 8, verse 34. I want you to see it. You're having to practically rip your Bibles to keep up, I know, but do it.

Rip it. You can buy another one. We have plenty in this country.

Romans 8, 34. Who is he that condemneth? The answer? Christ, because it says it's Christ that died. But no, he's not condemning.

Rather, it is he that has risen again and who is even at the right hand of God who also now, what's he doing? Making intercession for us. He ever lives, Hebrews 7, 25 says, he ever lives to bring us to the uttermost perfect will of God. He's praying for you and he's making intercession for you.

That's what Jesus Christ is doing today. Are you in fellowship with him? He's praying. If I'm walking with him in my day-to-day living, how can I be fellowshiping with him? How can two walk together except they be agreed? He is praying, you see.

He wanted us to get the idea that prayer was our life privilege. Let me ask you this question tonight. If Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as we've described him, placed such a priority and worth on prayer, what ought we do? What ought we do? We are mere worms.

We are a mere bubble on the wave of a tumultuous sea of time, just one little bubble on a hurricane of a sea, just for a moment, a fleeting vapor. What ought we place on prayer? If Jesus Christ took you by the hand and walked you through a day, literally, physically, do you think you could make it very far without a praise meeting, a prayer meeting? Then how did you do it today if you're walking with him? The Scriptures say Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever. You see, we are not just called to be like Jesus imitation-wise.

We are called to participate in his life, and he is praying today. We today are indwelt by a Christ who lives and who's praying. If Christ is the very life of a Christian, and he's the same today, yesterday, and forever, then he is going to live, is this not logical, the same life that he lived before us in the gospel.

If he's not going to live that same life in me, it may manifest differently, but the motivation and the communion will be there. You see, if my body is now his temple, and if it's true, for to me to live is Christ, and I'm his house, and he said that you've taken my house and made it a den of thieves. You've robbed me of what? Well, he said you've made it a den of thieves.

My house is a house of prayer. The place that I will dwell is a house of prayer. Who's his house? I'm a house.

You're a house. We're the temple of God. We're bought with a price.

Therefore, glorify God in your body, which is the Lord, and in your spirit. You see, so give yourself to prayer. Don't rob God.

You can rob him because his house is a house of prayer. You know, it says in Romans chapter 8, verse 36. I'll read this to you because it's so vital.

It says, excuse me, verse 26, it says, um, we, we, likewise the spirit helps our infirmity. We don't know how we should pray as we ought, but the spirit itself makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered. He that searches the heart knows what is the mind of the spirit, because he, the spirit, makes

intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

Did you know that we're indwelled by a praying Christ, and the spirit of God who is to indwell is a praying spirit? How can you say a man or a woman is filled with the Holy Spirit and not be praying? How is it possible that he could have changed so much? You see, I'm not just called to, uh, just have some kind of prayer life. All the world has some kind of prayer life. They're all saying prayers all over the world tonight, but you know something? I'm called to his kind of prayer life, because he is my life, and he wants to live his life in me, and he wants to call me into that same type of thing, and Christ in me who's indwelling me, and you, if you're his, is my hope of glory.

Who is sufficient for these things? Our sufficiency is of God. It says in Corinthians, you see, I'm called not to emulate his life, but to participate in his very life of the high priest, and I don't just try to say the same things he says. I participate in the very prayer breath from his heart through the Holy Spirit by him, and I'll tell you that is an awesome, holy privilege.

The Holy Spirit here prodding me with groanings that cannot be uttered, saying, this is the will of God, and I pray in faith, and the Son takes that prayer and takes it and presents it before the Heavenly Father, and you know, somewhere in there, I have the privilege of uniting the Holy Spirit and Christ in prayer. They're both praying somewhere in all of that. You see, if you aren't praying, may I say this? Jesus Christ isn't comfortable in you.

It says that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith. The word dwell means to feel at home. If you're not praying, he doesn't feel at home, because his house is a house of prayer.

So if that's true, that I can expect his kind of prayer life coming out of me as I am moved into his image and moving all on that path of life, more and more prayer coming that's spontaneous from a life, not just trying to be like him, then if that's also true, then I can also expect something else, his kind of answers, his kind of answers, and that's a glorious thing, because he said, thou always hearest me, and his ears today are open to our cry. There's not one tear, not one petition that goes unnoticed by our Heavenly Father. He knows.

Now, he may not answer the way you think. He may not do it when you think or how you want, but he knows and he hears. You see, the New Testament command is this.

In 1 Thessalonians 5, 17, I've heard someone say that Jesus wept is the shortest verse in the Bible. Well, there's another verse in Hebrews in 1 Thessalonians 5, this rejoice evermore, because he wept. We can rejoice evermore, but it also says another short verse, pray without ceasing.

Well, and people say, now how in the world can I pray without ceasing? I can't pray without ceasing. I've got to go to work. I've got to go to work and I've got to calculate figures and all these.

I cannot pray without ceasing. Well, is it impossible? May I ask you, would God give you a command that's impossible? Would he? Is he capricious? Is he wanting to demand of you more than he's willing to give? He says, pray without ceasing. Well, the key is to understand what he means.

You see, because you're surrounded by the cares of life, you have family responsibility. But let me ask you this, you mothers, can you love your children without ceasing? Every person here who's alive tonight, can you breathe without ceasing? I certainly hope so. Because if you can't breathe without ceasing, then you won't be here long tonight.

You see, because prayer is the breath of the new nature within us and we can pray without ceasing. We can walk in day-to-day communion, you see, because the word without ceasing is a Greek word that means a persistent call, an incessant call. It's almost like when you have a tickling in your throat and you're going to work and you're sitting there and you've got it under control and all of a sudden, and you cough and you get under control and another moment later, and you try so hard to get it out, but you can't.

It's there. That's the same word, pray without ceasing. That incessant, repeated reminder to where you're going along and you're at a stoplight and up from your spirit, who's his spirit, you're joined to him, your one spirit, there drifts your son, your son.

Oh, Father, bless my son today who's having a test. Or your husband or your wife. Oh, bless them at home.

Or that meeting that's coming up. Or that thing that you ask him to do. Lord, keep me from this.

Don't let my eyes look at that. Or just praise, just coming up because, you see, just being open to that and just yielding to that like a cough continually. Pray without ceasing.

Well, may I say this, that under the full power of the Holy Spirit, as you yield to him, the Holy Spirit will produce in me, Lord, let it be so, and in you a life of power and purity in prayer. It will be a supernaturally natural life of prayer. Oh, that's the glory of it.

That it won't be so obviously like somebody you'd go to watch in the circus, come see this Christian pray day and night. It'll be something more like supernaturally natural. Your father, who's in secret, will see you in secret.

And you won't have to prove anything to anyone about big prayer notebooks that everyone knows about and all the rest. It'll be in secret. And someone may even wonder if you pray.

But your father, which is in secret, will see you. You see, this is an axiom for the kingdom, that if Christ is in you and the Holy Spirit is in you, if you're filled with them, you will be praying. And if you're not, that's the measure of your true spiritual state, your life of prayer.

You see, this will include a walk in his presence moment by moment, and times not only of just this ejaculatory prayer that comes up moment by moment, but appointed seasons of prayer also, where you come apart or you will come apart. Without set times of prayer, the times in the day without ceasing prayer will grow dull and feeble. If you don't have a set time of prayer to just adore him, then your prayer as you're going will become dull and out of touch.

On the other hand, if you don't continue in prayer moment by moment, then your times of appointed prayer will be times of no avail and dull. He wants you to walk in the spirit of prayer. I want to go to Philippians chapter 4. Philippians chapter 4. I sense the Holy Spirit is saying some things to some people in here, and I hope before this night is over, you'll obey him.

He's already told some of you what to do. Philippians chapter 4, verse 5, let your moderation, the word means yieldedness, let your yieldedness, Philippians 4, verse 5, let your yieldedness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.

I always thought that meant the Lord is coming. He's coming to take me home. I don't think it means that there.

You know what it's saying? It's saying, listen, let your yieldedness be known and obvious to all men because of this reason, the Lord's available. He's there, and so don't worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with glorious thanksgiving, I had to put that glorious in there, let your requests be made known unto God, and the God of peace which passes all understanding will garrison, buttress your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. You see, he's available in everything, not only in season, but out of season, and the real test of prayer is out of season, out of season.

Not when fruit is coming forth gloriously, but when the winds are blowing and it's cold, you know, that's when like a tree only grows for like one or two months, I hear, of a year, maybe less. I think it's three weeks actual growth when those buds come out, and the rest of the time God sends wind and adversity and rain to firm up that new growth, to fiber those things and make them solid and good. You see, nothing tonight, nothing is too great for his power, and nothing is too small for his love.

What a God we have. Nothing's too great for his power. I'm the God of all flesh.

Is there anything too hard for me? Nothing is too small for his love. Every hair of your head is numbered. You see, everything to him is different than it is to you or me.

In adversity, that's where I'm to pray. You know why? Why do I pray in adversity? Because we pray that we won't become faithless and unbelieving. That's how we pray, in adversity.

And we give him thanks. And we pray not only in adversity, but we pray in prosperity. Why? So that I won't become lifted up and proud and independent and spoiled.

And I don't only pray in adversity and prosperity, but you pray in danger. Why do you pray in danger? Lest you become fearful and doubting. You pray in days of security.

You see, because it's the same life as a life of prayer, security, so that you won't become self-sufficient and think you can run your own life because things are going well. You pray to keep in touch. You pray in everything, everything, giving thanks.

This is the will of God in Christ Jesus in everything at all times. How in the world is this possible? I started to call this thing tonight, how in the world can I pray without ceasing? Because that's what he told us to do, pray in the world without ceasing. How can I do it? By his grace.

By his grace when I'm willing. When I am willing to learn, he will teach me. You see, he won't just throw out these pearls because I'm responsible for what I get.

And if I want to get this truth tonight, I'm going to have to come to a place of yieldedness and willingness with him, and then he will give it. He will give it as I'm willing. So prayer should be the main business of our life.

Much to my own condemnation, even our prayers themselves condemn us because they're so weak and lacking in the light of who he is. But it's time to call upon the name of the Lord in power at work, at play, at home, a heart continually in his presence. Lift it up.

You know, prayer is not content until it makes the whole universe a prayer room. That's what we're to do. Make every part of this universe a prayer room.

Prayer is the ascension of the soul into the holy of holies of the true kingdom of God. It's the great secret of spiritual vitality. Ask him for a spirit of prayer.

Look at Zechariah chapter 12. Zechariah, go to Malachi and turn left. Zechariah chapter 12.

And you will see a precious promise that I believe is to the children of Abraham, but it proves something. Zechariah 12, verse 10. Let's read verse nine.

First, it shall come to pass in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. It's talking about the day coming in the future, many feel, and I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace, and they will look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourns for his only son. Did you notice that little thing I read right over? We read right over it.

And I will pour upon them the spirit of grace and of supplications. There's a spirit of prayer. There's a spirit of grace, a spirit of supplications that God can pour out.

He poured out some of it last night here where there were 50 people praying for an hour. God poured out that spirit. There was honesty here.

And you see, he wants to pour it out individually as well as in a group. In your prayer closet, when you're just alone with him, ask him to do this, to do this in your life and give you that prayer that he's longing to give you. How can I cultivate the spirit of prayer? Number one, begin.

Begin. The best way to learn a thing is to do it. It's the only way to learn to pray, and that is to pray.

Cultivate prayer. Redeem your time. Billy Graham's wife has a sign over her sink that says, Worship service conducted three times daily here.

As she's washing dishes, she's worshiping. You see, when you wake up in the night, you slip off your bed and in the moonlight have a praise session with the son who's there. Make prayer your first choice, not your last chance.

I heard about a lady that was on an airline in trouble, and they were having trouble with the landing gear, and there was a pastor on board, and finally he stood and said, Let us pray. And the lady says, Oh dear, has it come to that? Make prayer your first choice and not your last chance. Isn't that how we look at prayer? Oh no, quick, somebody pray.

Something's happening. Make it your first choice, and it won't have to be your last chance. Last chance praying is a tricky thing.

It's a tricky thing because our hearts have us in a judo hold, if that's the case. Secondly, after begin, learn to pray by doing it. Secondly, ask God, ask God to teach you to pray like the disciples did.

Teach me to pray. This is what the Holy Spirit tonight, tonight, tonight wants to do more than anything else in your life, more than anything else. He wants to teach you to pray.

Just think of that for a moment. More than anything else, God, the Holy Spirit, wants to teach you how to pray, not just to use pat phrases or to use some beads or anything. He wants to teach you to become dependent upon the Spirit of God, the living Christ in you, and pray.

Length is not always so important. Intensity and quality is what He looks at. He wants that in my life, and to learn to get before Him and wait until He puts upon me His burden.

Have you ever been praying at night alone with God, and all of a sudden there comes upon you a groaning and a weeping and a groaning like a woman in travail, praying for something that until that moment you haven't even cared about as you're praying for a nation? That's a spirit of prayer that God pours out. Ask God to teach you to pray, to put you in a position of prayer. Thirdly, since it is impossible with you, realize His grace is sufficient.

Don't ask Him to make it sufficient. It is sufficient. You don't have to make His grace sufficient for you.

His grace is sufficient for you. It's enough. Give yourself as a sacrifice unto Him.

You see, that's the thing we've lost sight of when it comes to prayer. Prayer is sacrifice. It was sacrifice for Christ.

There are two altars in the tabernacle. The first one is the place where the lamb dies. It's a place of bloodshed.

It stands for calvary. The second altar is inside. There's no blood there.

Why is it an altar? Because it's a sacrifice of prayer. It takes time. It takes me from things that are precious to me, and there's a realized necessity of realizing His grace and giving yourself like He did, not with blood necessarily.

That took place at the cross. But at the other altar, that's the place, the golden altar of prayer. That's where He wants you, a living sacrifice, not a dead one, a living sacrifice, presenting your body members, beseeching Him, praying for Him as He would have you pray.

Fourthly, I would say this. Don't get under bondage, but it's very helpful. Cultivate a prayer list, and I would say to be selective.

Ask the Lord what He wants you to pray for, because you cannot pray for everything that comes your way. The need is not necessarily the call. The Holy Spirit's nudge, His leading is the call.

And there's a lot of suggestions, but you could have a notebook where you have a section for daily prayer where you pray for those that are in your family and special needs. Several men of God have theirs set up this way. I like this way myself.

Monday, you could pray for missionaries. You see, have it in order where you can come, and don't be under bondage to it, but get before Him and say, Today's Monday. I want to make sure I cover everything.

I want to pray for missionaries. M is for missionaries, Monday. And Tuesday, you could give thanksgiving.

You could just thank Him for all the blessings in your life, and you could pray for the nations. You could have a map and you could get on your knees and you could pray for the nations of the world that His work

would go on. Wednesday, you could pray for workers.

I pray for workers in the ministry, dear men of God that are laboring in His vineyard, people that are on the mission, or people that are here at home that are teaching a Sunday school class, or people that I've told I'll pray for. That's the day, Wednesday. And then Thursday, tasks of ministry.

Maybe you'd want to put something else here for you, but tasks of ministry is like for, in my case, upcoming meetings, things that God has asked me to do, the ministry, that it'll be pure, that it'll be right. And then Friday, families, so many friends, so many families, so many needs, people you've met over the years, and you have a little list with their names there. And then Saturday is for sinners and backslidden, sinners and the backslidden on Saturday, because it's the day that the devil loves to use more than any other day, to flaunt sin, Saturday.

And then on Sunday for the saints, the worship services, going on around and things like that, to pray along those lines. You don't have to get in bondage to it, but it helps you because you cover the gamut. Find what works for you and use it.

Fourthly, let me give you, excuse me, fifthly, enter into his gates with thanksgiving and praise and let your prayer be mostly occupied with him. Do as much listening as you do talking. Don't just present him with a shopping list.

This will lift your perspective as you worship him. He's not changed. Is there ever a time that he's not worthy of being praised? No matter what your situation is, is there a time that you couldn't praise him for who he is? And I would say under this being occupied with him, learn to use a hymn book.

If you can't even stand the sound of your own voice, then just read the words to him and maybe just hum it the best you can because that really lifts the soul to him. Then sixthly, have a regular place. Have a regular place and a regular time.

That may be impossible, but if your priorities are right, it won't be so impossible. Really, it's pretty impossible sometimes at reach out to have a regular time because of our schedule that always is changing so much of the time. But I'll tell you something, you can have a time every day and you can have a regular place for it.

A place that's set aside and sanctified where he wants to meet you. You see, Jesus said in Matthew 6 verse 6, when you enter into your closet, the place where you put your clothes and your shoes to get down there with your shoes and lay on the floor, get quiet, and they hear this moaning coming out of the closet and they'll wonder what's going on. Seventh, be specific.

Be specific with God. Be specific and our then specific answers will come. And I would say to you to pray retail, not wholesale.

Like the famous prayer that I've heard so many times, Lord, forgive us of our many, many sins. Leave God and direct us and bless those who aren't here. Forgive us whom we fail you.

That's praying wholesale, but praying retail is God forgive me today because I had a bad attitude. Lord, I frowned at that sweet sister who was not sincere when she really tried to offend me or whatever. But be honest, be specific.

Lord, would you please send Mrs. Smith forty dollars? The the be specific and God will be specific with you. He'll be specific. Keep records.

Keep records. I remember before my wife and I were married that I was praying as to whether to give her an engagement ring or not. I didn't think diamonds were right for me to splurge on.

And the main reason why they didn't have any money. And I got on my knees. I knew I was to marry.

And I said, Lord, if you want me to give her a diamond ring, you've got to let me know without a shadow of a prayer. But you know, next morning, 10 o'clock, the phone rings and a woman in the church, she didn't know this. She called up.

She says, Al, you're going to think I'm crazy, but the Lord woke me up at five o'clock this morning. And I just want to ask you this. Don't hang up.

Do you need three diamonds that I have? And I started to say, Lady, I have a whole closet full of diamonds. I don't need any diamonds. But I just said, thank you very much, because you be specific with God.

He'll be specific with you. Seven, eight, excuse me, learn to plead the promises of God. Use the scriptures.

Take the word of God, tarry at a promise, and God will meet you there. Mull it over and lift it to him. We pray from the answer, not to the answer.

You've got the answer book here, like those old arithmetic books in third grade. You go back to the back and find the answer and then work toward it. You know, remember I did it? Did you? Yes, you did.

And you work from the answer. Listen, we've got the answer and we're praying from the answer, not to it. We stand in victory.

Victories aren't won. They're received in prayer. We learn to live by every word of God.

The Bible is our answer book. And then ninthly, I'm going to have to hurry. We have to learn to pray through, pray through, stay with it until you get a release in your spirit.

Like Hannah did when she was mourning before God, the priest said, your prayers are heard. She said, that's good enough for me. She got up and changed her clothes or took a shower or whatever they took back then and began to praise God because she'd heard she prayed through.

This is so important. Tenthly, come to the Bible to be loved by God. As well as to love him.

Don't just come to learn something. Come to love him and to let him love you back. Not just to receive instruction, but let him write to you his heart.

Eleventh, be honest. Don't come and say, oh thee, thou, this, that, and all the other. Come to him and say, Lord, I was ashamed of you today.

Oh God, correct this in me. Weed me from this, Lord. You see, most of the time when you feel like praying the least, it's when you need to the most.

And then twelfth, pray in faith. Faith sees the invisible. It chooses the imperishable and then and then only can it do the impossible.

Pray worthy of who he is, worthy of the price that he paid. You see, Jesus, all through the Gospels, it says he did not many mighty deeds there because of their unbelief. Unbelief doesn't mean you don't believe anything.

It means you believe the wrong things. Unbelief. Jesus marveled in the Gospels because of their unbelief.

One of the few things he marveled at at Nazareth. Unbelief, like no other power in heaven, limits God. It limits him.

And it's sobering to think that if I allow unbelief to stay in me, he cannot work in power and prayer in me. When God is not working, I'm praying in doubt. And let me say this.

I've cut him off if I'm praying in unbelief, because without faith, it's impossible to please him. You may have doubt when you pray, but may I say it's not from him. It's from somewhere else.

Get rid of it. You can afford to. Rather, we're to reign in life by one Christ Jesus.

And then lastly, is to persist like that precious Syrophenician woman that came to Jesus and said, My daughter's sick. I came not but for the children of Israel. But even the dogs lick crumbs from the table when they're spilled.

He says, Oh, woman, it's almost he looked at a great as your faith. She didn't have a Bible. She wasn't a Jew, but she confessed him.

She sought him diligently. She persisted. God cannot resist persistent humility.

He cannot do it. So claim your blood bought high calling. Turn to First John with me.

Chapter two, verse six, and we're through with this. First John, chapter two, verse six. I want you to see this verse, and I want you to evaluate your prayer life in the light of the Lord Jesus, his prayer life and this verse.

First John, chapter two, verse six. He that sayeth, he that sayeth that he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk even as he walked. That's Jesus.

How did he walk in prayer? Every thought, word, deed, action dependent upon God. If you say tonight that you abide in him, they needed to walk the same way. I think with that, we've said enough.

Father, may we tonight receive from you the bounty and the spoil of your suffering and your glory. May these precious things that are that are above that which the world can offer these precious things, this spirit of grace and supplications, the spirit of prayer. May it be ours.

May some people in here tonight lay hold of this. Lord, may I lay hold of this. May we walk in truth in such a way that those around us recognize the lordship of Christ and your presence.

The same yesterday, today, and forever. May we see tonight that if our Lord, our blessed perfect master, placed such a preeminent position on prayer, then what ought we if he's living in us? And if this is not the case, then how our hearts should be broken up from the inner parts as we come before you in repentance

and brokenness, and ask you to do that which we cannot do, and ask you to produce that which we cannot work up, but yet believe you because that's the thing you want to do the most in our life tonight. That's teach us to pray.

Get it through our heads, but most of all get it into our hearts. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. And we pray these things in Jesus name. I just want to pray this too, Lord.

I don't know what this is supposed to happen tonight, but I pray that that you will speak to every heart and that we won't miss you tonight, that we'll act on what we've heard, whether in this room or back in the other room, that we'll act on what we've heard. I pray for those that have a pull in their heart from the Holy Spirit to pray that corporately, that they will tarry here, and that we'll have another night of prayer here tonight, and that the others will go and pray without ceasing. We want to obey you, so allow us that privilege now in Jesus name.

Amen.

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