

Rising Early To Pray

by Keith Malcomson

This sermon emphasizes the importance of rising early to pray, highlighting the discipline of seeking God first thing in the morning before any other distractions. It stresses the significance of daily devotion and the foundational role it plays in a Christian's life, urging listeners to prioritize prayer and time with God above all else.

Scripture: Proverbs 27:14, Psalms 127:2, Matthew 6:6, Proverbs 6:9, Ephesians 5:16, Proverbs 27:1, Psalms 127:2, Proverbs 6:9, Matthew 6:6

Topics: "Morning Prayer", "Daily Devotion"

Description

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Transcript

Let's go to our message here this morning, having warmed up your hearts slightly. I want you to turn to the New Testament, Mark chapter 1 verse 35, Mark chapter 1 verse 35, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, Mark chapter 1 verse 35. And we're just doing a three part short series here at the beginning of the year that I think is very important, which I have called Daily Devotions.

You know, one of the greatest investments in your Christian life is daily time given to God. There's nothing more important than to spend time in the Word of God, in prayer, in time and fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. And here my message tonight is rising early to pray.

Last week we dealt with reading the Bible daily. And I assure you, I'm dealing with things here that I consider the backbone of my Christian life, the foundation of my Christian life. There aren't any things, ministry isn't more important, preaching isn't more important, evangelism isn't more important.

What I'm dealing with here for you as an individual, if you build this into your life, you built the most important things into your life. There is nothing more important than this. So if you don't give a priority to what I'm dealing with in these three messages, you're actually focusing on things that aren't important.

You're neglecting the most important things. And I can't emphasize this strongly enough, that reading the Bible daily like we dealt with last week, it is so critical, so vital that I believe most of the problems in the

church today come because leaders, pastors, Christians, mature Christians do not read their Bible. And somehow they think that's okay, or they think they can get by, or they think they know enough to manage.

That is error, it is deception, and it's dangerous. I want to go on to the second part here, rising early to pray. Reading this one verse here tonight, Mark 1.35, and it's speaking about the Lord Jesus Christ during his earthly ministry.

And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out and departed into a solitary place and there prayed. My message, part two, rising early to pray. Let's pray together.

Father, we thank you for this wonderful blessing of grace to pray. Lord God, we don't want to take it for granted, we don't want to neglect it, that you would give us access to the highest throne that exists, to the highest power, to the only person who knows everything, who can do anything, who has superiority in all realms of life, and the one that's able to answer our prayers. Lord God, I pray that you'd open up our eyes tonight, Lord God, to see that one of the greatest things that we can do is seek you to pray, Lord God, to call upon your name daily, to engage our heart, to engage our mind, to set aside every distraction, to rise early in the morning, to deny our flesh, to crucify the old man, Lord God, to take up our cross and to follow you.

Father, I do pray, Lord God, that you'd establish in our lives, even if there's a fight, even if there's a wrestle, even if there's torment of mind, Lord God, that we'd truly set ourselves, Lord God, step by step, through your grace, by the Holy Spirit, to seek you in prayer daily, to set a time, to set a place, to even get, rise up early like our Savior did. We pray even tonight in this message, bring your grace, oh God, and let the word of God have its effect in each individual life listening, in Jesus' name, amen. There's nothing more important than your time alone with the Lord every day.

Family isn't more important. If you have this in place, you will pay attention to family. If you focus on family, I promise you, you'll end up neglecting them.

But if you focus on what I'm dealing with, the word of God, prayer, if you make it a priority above all else, you won't neglect your work, you won't cut corners at work, you won't neglect your wife, your children, your parents, or anything else. When prayer is in place, when the word of God is in place, everything else falls in order. In fact, I believe that if you set a discipline of rising at a set time each day of your life, you may fall out of that habit, but if you come back to it, if you have a set time, and if it's early each day, I believe everything in your life will be in order.

I believe early rising is such an important thing, rising early to pray, that if it is in place, everything will go well. If it's not in place, everything will be out of order. I don't care how professional you are, how expert you are, how good you are, if this isn't in order, nothing in your life is in order.

And if you are a disorderly person, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, one of the reasons spiritually you're not in good order here tonight is because you don't rise early to pray. This is one of the reasons. If you're not, if your walk with God isn't in good shape, this is one of the reasons.

You may say, but I can't do this because my walk is disorderly, confused, hurting, lacking. No, you've got it back to front. If you put this in place, that would rectify, all of that would come into order.

Your walk with God isn't good because this isn't in place, because you don't read the word of God daily, because you don't pray daily, consistently at a time, because you don't rise early. You go straight from

your bed to work, to the computer, to people, and you only catch up with God later in the day. And you wonder why your Christian life could be out of order.

We've just read here about the Lord Jesus Christ rising in the morning, early, a long while before day, and going out privately to pray alone. Public prayer meetings are important. Having a prayer partner or a friend you can pray with is important.

Praying with your husband or wife is important, or your children, if you're a mother, is very important. But I'm not dealing with any of that. I'm dealing with one thing, private prayer.

Nobody else is there, not your wife, only God. That's all there is. Out of all the people I've met in my life, few people neglect daily eating.

In fact, it's very rare to find someone that says, I forgot to eat today. You'd need to have a big burden, big trial, or something going on. The average person in our Western society actually make a priority in eating.

They give much time to preparation. They don't neglect it. They know that if they didn't eat, they would die.

A person who doesn't eat will die. And so they know that even if they neglect food for a day or a week, they're gonna have to eat to be here before very long. Most people, at least I hope, wash before they encounter anyone else.

I hope you wash your face or your hair or behind your ears. You'd be embarrassed if you went out around friends and family or into the workplace and you're grimy. There's grime on you, dirt on your face.

Your breath smells because you haven't brushed your teeth. We may be embarrassed about that. But are you embarrassed that you didn't seek the Lord before encountering someone? That you hadn't read the word of God before listening to anything else? Imagine talking to others before you talk to the Lord.

There's people who have a priority and buying things every day or checking things. I check. I couldn't imagine the average Facebook addict or YouTube addict or some other type of addict.

What's all the other things? What am I missing? All the different gadgets we have. See, I was trying to catch you out there. I was going to find some things out.

All the different gadgets, we put a priority. I've got to check WhatsApp. Why? Why is that? How could that be a greater priority than speaking to the living God? If you check all these things and yet do not have a priority on what I'm saying, don't tell me it's too hard.

Don't tell me you don't have time. Don't tell me it's too much of a strain. Don't tell me that I don't understand your life.

You have time to eat, to dress, to wash, to check WhatsApp, to respond to all manners of things. You will even go to work. Your boss says be here at nine.

I don't like this work at home workers. I think it's a disaster. And it's the final step before they do away with the workplace.

That's the agenda for 2030. No more work. Computers are going to do it.

We'll just give you a standard pay and stay at home, lounge around, make sure you're on arm education. What a disaster for our generation. I think it's a disaster because it's destroying the work and life.

If you work from home, I'd be shocked if you're diligent enough in comparison to having your boss stand over your shoulder. If I was a boss, nobody's working at home. I want to tell you that, but that's not my job.

What about if a flight is leaving from Shannon to take you on a holiday? Oh, I'm not a morning person. I don't get up early. You will if it's going to Spain on a sunny holiday.

What about if it's a girl in your life? You will get up early. I'm assuring you. You see, all I'm saying is this message, part two, rising early to pray.

And I've got six points here I want to deal with. I haven't even begun yet. Number one, rising early is a biblical principle.

I'm not teaching this to lay burdens on you or a guilt trip or to make you feel bad or for you to feel, I can't do this, please understand me. I'm simply, I don't care if it takes you 10 years to come to a place where you would like to be or where God wants you to be, or if it takes you a year or six months or whatever it takes. I just want to lay this out.

This is a remarkable blessing for your life. There is a certain person, I'll name him, Brother Souf, who when we first encountered him, he actually had to stay up all night on Saturday night just to make it to church at 10.30 or 11 o'clock on a Sunday morning. Oh, that was Rory.

Was it not you as well? Okay, that was Rory done that. But Souf was worse. If he got out of bed by two o'clock in the afternoon, that was a miraculous thing for him as a sinner.

Get up before two o'clock, not a chance. And yet we're building a church from the beginning with dysfunctional people who don't even know what it means to get up between nine o'clock and 12 o'clock, nevermind to get up at six o'clock. So I know the grace of God is very real.

This isn't for a guilt trip. I want to show you what the Bible says because everything else is deception, it's error. This first point, rising early, a biblical principle.

First of all, I'm not talking about prayer. I just want to show you a principle that from Genesis to Revelation, to rise early is everywhere. You'll be shocked how often rising early are people getting up early in the morning.

It appears everywhere. Now that I've told you, you're going to start seeing it in your own time, reading the Bible. You'll see it in places you never saw before.

Let me give you a few examples. Job in chapter one, verse five, it says, and when it was so, when the days of their feasting were done, of his 10 children, that Job sent and sanctified them and rose up early in the morning. Do you see that? Job, a man of God, caring about his children, wanting to pray for them, make sacrifice for them, rose early in the morning.

Thus did Job continually. Job, the man in the Old Testament, who's going to go through great trials, was an early riser, perpetually in his life. What about Genesis chapter 19, 27? It says, and Abraham got up early in the morning.

It says several times about Abraham that he got up early in the morning, in the place where he stood before the Lord. What about Isaac, his son, Genesis 26 and three? And they rose up at times in the morning and swear one to another. And Isaac sent them away and they departed from him in peace.

He had friends with him who in the mornings, they got up early in the morning, making covenant together. What about Jacob, his son? Chapter 28, Genesis 28, 18. And Jacob rose up early in the morning.

It's all through our Bible. It's all through every important person in the Bible. You will read about the principle of rising early.

And so we read, Jacob rose up early in the morning and took the stone that he had for his pillow and he set it up as a pillar and he poured oil upon the top of it. He had met with God in the middle of night. He rises early.

Exodus chapter 34 and four. And Moses rose up early in the morning and went up onto Mount Sinai and the Lord, as the Lord had commanded him and took in his hand the two tables of stone. Joshua, who he trained, listen to this.

Joshua chapter three, verse one. And Joshua rose early in the morning and they removed from Shittim and came to Jordan. Gideon in Judges chapter six, verse 38.

And it was so that he rose up early on the morrow and thrust the fleece together and wringing the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water came out of it. Person after person, all through the Bible was an early riser. This was the normal.

To be lazy, to lie on in your bed, to be a sluggard, to love your bed more than seeking God was actually abnormal, strange, disobedient. Even sinners who wanted to make anything of their life didn't lie in their bed all day. We also have Elkanah and Hannah in 1 Samuel chapter one, verse 19.

And they rose up early in the morning and worshiped before the Lord and returned and came to their house in Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah, his wife, and the Lord remembered her. Here's a couple seeking a miracle from God.

They were early risers and God answered their prayers. 1 Samuel 15 and one. And when Samuel, who was the son, birthed out of that miracle, do you know what Samuel means? It means to call upon the Lord.

His name was named after prayer. He was the result of prayer. Amazing.

And when Samuel rose up early to meet Saul in the morning, then King David in 1 Samuel chapter 17, 20. And David rose up early in the morning. What about the New Testament? Mark chapter 16, verse two.

You read about Mary very early in the morning on the first day of the week, that's Sunday. They came onto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun. What about the 12 apostles in Acts chapter five, verse two? And when they heard that they had entered into the temple early in the morning and taught, the disciples would rise up, go into the temple and begin teaching the word of God early, first thing in the morning.

And so I could go on scripture after scripture. Do you realize the Bible is the most condensed book in the entire world? This is the only book that's inspired of the Holy Spirit. Anything that should be left out was left out.

Anything included is very important. The little statement rise early is all through our Bible. We have examples of people rising early to do all manners of things, spiritual things, natural things, family things.

And this little word rise early is everywhere. God says in the Bible time and time again, my prophets I sent onto you early. The Bible says seek God early.

And so there is an importance from God's perspective on the early morning. This isn't a denominations emphasis or a church or a preacher. This is God, the Holy Ghost emphasizing.

There's something about early morning. There's something from God's side that he says, there's something about men and women getting out of their bed and doing something, having a time, beating the sun during the winter. Certainly there is an emphasis here that is so, so very important.

And that's my first point throughout the Bible. There is a biblical principle about rising early, getting out of your bed, having a set time, beating the day, not lounging around. It is very, very dominant.

And you know, if God says that there's a reason, there's a spiritual reason, a health reason, a natural reason, there is biblical reasons for this. And so there's a dominant biblical principle, rise early. If you're not used to rising early, I'm gonna tell you, you may feel a bit condemned just right now, but I hope it's more than that.

Condemnation never changed anyone. You could continue condemned, nothing will stir you. You'll feel condemned, walk out, and in a week's time, you'll still be the same.

In a month's time, you'll still be the same. In a year's time, you'll still be the same. You know what I'm looking at in this message is that something more than that, the Holy Spirit convicts you, stirs you, challenges you.

If this was your pattern and you've lost it, it's time to regain it tonight. Ask for God's grace. If this has never been a part of your life, it's time to have it as a part of your life.

Maybe you thought it was an option before. It's not an option. It really isn't.

It's one of the greatest blessings. Number two, praying early. Not only is early rising a dominant theme in the Bible, but praying early is dominant.

There's scripture verses that talk about praying three times a day, in the morning, at noontime, and then in the evening. The Bible also talks about praying seven times in the day. So it shows that there were those in the Bible who had set timed times to meet with the Lord.

Remember in the book of Acts, when John and Peter are going up to pray at the temple, it says at the hour of prayer, there was a set time when they gathered together to pray. That wasn't their private prayer. That was a public gathering of the church to pray.

There were set times. If anyone tells you that it's legalistic to have a time to get up, a time to pray, or to say, I'm going to pray for an hour, you're going to have a big problem. Remember what Jesus said to the 12 disciples? They fell asleep in the garden of Gethsemane.

He come and woke them up. Imagine waking them up when they needed their sleep. Could you imagine that? This Jesus who loves everybody, he woke them up, he shook them.

He said, what? Can you not tarry, pray one hour? Can you not even pray one hour? I need your prayers. Why aren't you praying? Was he doing a guilt trip on them? Is it wrong under the covenant of grace to tell people they ought to pray? They ought to rise early. They ought to seek God.

Is that moving to law instead of grace? Absolutely not. Absolutely not. Christ knew there's an hour to pray, a time to pray.

Listen, the Bible also teaches not just early rising, but that you should rise early to pray. Prayer first thing in the morning isn't just an option. I know I'm very gracious as a preacher, and I'll say, if you can get time at lunchtime or in the evening or at some other time when the kids aren't bothering you, then do that.

But really the Bible emphasizes a specific time, first thing in the morning that you rise specifically to pray. Listen to scriptures. Psalm 5 verse 3, my voice shall thou hear in the morning.

This verse actually shows that there was a decision, a determination, my voice, you are going to hear first thing in the morning. I'm not going to wait to halfway through the day or the end of the day, first thing in the morning. Lord, you are going to hear my voice.

Oh Lord, in the morning will I direct my prayer onto thee and will look up. It's a determination. Have you set yourself to say, when I get out of my bed, before I get to work, before I see family, before I speak to my wife, I am going to direct my prayer.

Some people can be talked out of prayer. They go, I don't feel like it. I feel tired.

I feel discouraged. Join the club. If that can get you out of prayer, you will never pray in your entire life because they'll always be a thousand things.

It says in Psalm 63 verse 1, God, thou art my God. If he is your God, he thinks in a certain way. Thou art my God, early will I seek thee.

My soul thirsteth for thee. My flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is. When you get desperate for God, you will deny the flesh, crucify the flesh.

You'll say, I will get up and seek him in the morning. I don't care if it kills me. I don't care if I'm shaken.

I don't care if I'm tired. I am going to seek God first thing in the morning. It says in Psalm 88 and 13, but unto thee have I cried, O Lord, and in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee.

In other words, your prayers are going to be before God, right first thing in the morning. Psalm 119 verse 147, I prevented the dawning of the morning and I cried, I hoped in thy word. Here's the Psalmist saying before the dawn broke, before light came up, some of you's go, there's no chance that anyone should be out of bed while it's still dark first thing in the morning.

Well, the problem is scripture utterly contradicts that. In fact, it encourages you to rise while it's still dark and to literally be in prayer as the sun rises and the light begins to break. Notice that in Psalm 119, he'd been in the word.

I hoped in thy word, I was crowned. The word of God and prayer is mixed together before the sun dawns, before light breaks out. In Psalm 143 verse eight, cause me to hear thy loving kindness in the morning.

Would you like to hear God's loving kindness towards you tomorrow morning? Would you first thing in the morning, not a husband, not a child, not some cute little kid running through and saying, daddy, I love you. But would you first thing in the morning like to hear God approach you and say, I love you with an everlasting love. Well, he gives us the answer on how this can happen here.

For in need do I trust, cause me to know the way wherein I should walk. So there's two things here. He is saying early in the morning, God revealing to me, saying to me, I love you.

But also at that same time, cause me to know the way wherein I should walk. God's will. Imagine having God saying, this is my will for your life.

And I love you with an everlasting life, everlasting love. Then listen to what he says. For, in other words, because.

How is it that this man was in a position where he could hear God say first thing in the morning, I love you. And also reveal his will for his life. He says, for I left up my soul unto thee.

Because he rose early to pray, he knew God's will for his life. Because he rose early to pray in the morning, he knew God loved him. There's so many people in the church that go, does God really love me? I don't feel a love of God.

I don't know if he really loves me. Maybe he hates me. You need to rise early to seek him in the morning.

Because in the midst of seeking him through the word of God in prayer, God's gonna reveal to you. I love you. I died for you.

I loved you before you were conceived in your mother's womb. Before I created earth. I loved you.

It's an everlasting love. I knew you when there wasn't even a universe. I loved you.

I knew you. I had intimate knowledge about you and nothing existed that we know exists at this present time. Saints of God, rise up early and pray.

And you're gonna find that early time of prayer. There's many promises in the Bible connected to rising early to pray. It may kill you.

You may think I'm gonna take a heart attack getting up at this time of the day. Saints of God, there are so many blessings. It's unbelievable.

It says in Isaiah 32 and two, Oh Lord, be gracious unto us. We have waited for thee. Be thou their arm every single morning.

Our salvation also in the time of trouble. Notice again that there are benefits and blessings to those who seek God early in the morning. God is gonna be your arm of strength every single day.

Notice he's talking about salvation also in time of trouble. Think about when you meet God in the morning, he's gonna be your strength, your arm of strength, your deliverer, your defender, the one who fights for you. There could be trouble waiting for you tomorrow at lunchtime or at three o'clock or at six o'clock.

There could be financial problems, a crisis you couldn't imagine. Something's gonna happen in your family. Why not meet God tomorrow morning where God becomes your strength? He arises to defend

you.

Wouldn't you wanna meet him at six or seven or eight o'clock in the morning in order to have his strength with you in the hour of crisis and trouble? Listen to what Matthew Henry, the great Bible commentator, said about this issue of praying early in the morning. Quote, apostasy, which means to fall away from the faith into a false kind of Christianity. Apostasy generally begins at the closet door.

Secret prayer is first neglected and carelessly performed, then frequently omitted, and after a while, wholly cast off. Then, farewell, God and Christ and religion. You wanna know where apostasy starts? How it can happen to someone who once looked very strong, someone who once loved Christ, and they go, I don't believe in him anymore.

Where do you think that began? They didn't have a time of prayer. They used to, and they neglected it. And you know what? The devil comes in with his lies.

You've got no defense. The devil said, is it real? You used to, you had never believed that. Now you tolerate those views.

They torment your mind. It used to be the devil wouldn't even waste his time or he would send a lie like that once in 10 years. You know why? You are defended.

You are in the word of God first thing in the morning. You're in prayer saying, deliver me from temptation. Deliver me from the evil one today, today.

And then you wonder why you went through so strong and why is it you struggle at this present time? Matthew Henry, he also said concerning the family he got raised in, and it was a dark hour, a day of apostasy in the church. He said there was a room in the house, in their home called the closet or the place of prayer. And it was used as regularly as the bedroom or the kitchen.

I wonder if you've got a place, a room in your house that's called the closet of prayer where you go, my Bible's there, my prayer time's there. And you know what? God can count me in being there. And it gets used just as much as the bedroom or as the kitchen.

If you spend more time in your kitchen than you do the prayer closet, there's something wrong. And so we see prayer as an essential. George Mueller that I told you about last week, a man of prayer, a great man of prayer.

Do you know where he got saved? In a prayer meeting. That's where he got converted. He was a skeptic.

Do you know he was such a drunkard, such a vile young man that when his mother laid dying on her deathbed, she was gonna die. He went into the room and he stole money from under the bed and went out drinking. He was a drunkard.

He was a no good reprobate of a young guy. What an evil guy that would steal money while your mother is dying there. All to get drink, to get drunk.

But do you know what? He walked into a prayer meeting one day and as people, it was a small gathering in a house and as they prayed, he got down on his knees and got born again in a prayer meeting. You know what? Day one, he discovered the secret to this Christian life. You can't get saved without prayer.

You can't get filled with the Holy Spirit without prayer. You'll never discover God's will without prayer. No good thing will come into your life without prayer.

God will not bless you without prayer. Prayer is even essential for getting born again. You can't even get born again.

Yes, salvation's by grace. Yes, it's of his mercy. Yes, it's a sovereign supernatural act of God and yet it can't even happen in you unless you cry out and say, forgive me, have mercy.

I repent. I turn from my sin. What a real thing prayer is.

Number three, Christ's example of rising early in the morning. We read it at the start, Mark chapter one, verse 35. And in the morning, rising up a great while before day.

Not just before day, a great while before. He went out and departed into a solitary place and there he prayed. Look at the care Christ takes.

He makes sure he gets up before everyone else. He makes sure he gets away from everyone else. He actually has a place he went to to pray.

You go, this is the most undistracted person ever that's ever been in our world. Can you not imagine that Christ could be surrounded by 100 kids and he doesn't get distracted? Could you imagine that? And yet here he is. It says he gets up very early, way before anyone else.

Why? He wants to pray. Look at the effort here. He wants to pray.

Sure, you can pray in bed. Sure, you can pray last thing at night. Sure, you can pray throughout the day.

You can do it anytime. But here's Christ, the son of God, the perfect sinless son of God. He actually feels a need to commune with his heavenly father.

What does he do? He gets out of his house. He gets away from folk. He has a solitary, lonely, isolated place.

And you know what? He goes there because he says, I want to pray. Where do you go to pray? I'm going to pray in bed. We'll see how long that lasts.

You need to be very careful where you choose. Some people say, I'll just sit here and pray. Or I can lie down on the floor.

Yeah, I know. That's called horizontal meditation. I know all about that.

It's a very dangerous thing. In Luke 4, verse 42, again about Christ. And when it was day, he departed.

He went out from where he was, from distractions. And he went into a desert place. And the people sought him and came onto him and stayed him, that he should not depart from them.

So we have Christ not only looking for a solitary place, he looked for a desert place. He always tried to get alone. He was always surrounded by people.

He was always in the midst of crowds. But he always made it a priority. First thing in the morning, I've got to get alone with my heavenly father.

I've got to go to prayer. There was something happening in Christ's life where he said, I've got to pray before the crowds, before talking to the 12 disciples, before doing miracles, before anything. Remember what Christ said? He said, I do nothing but what I hear the father say and see what the father do.

Some people try to be Christ or do what Christ does. They go, I want to experience all these things. But they don't want to pray like Christ.

They don't want to follow the simple patterns. This is the most simple, basic, elementary thing that Christ ever done. You see, you yourself can't create miracles.

You yourself can't make a few loaves and fish feed 5,000. You can't do that. But you can rise early to pray.

You can do that. And you know what? When the disciples looking at Christ, they didn't say, teach us to do miracles. Teach us to walk on water.

Teach us to heal leprosy. Teach us to cast out demons. They didn't say anything of that.

What did they say? Teach us how to pray. And so they come to Christ saying, we want to learn how to pray. We're watching you.

We're seeing your life. We know the secret of everything is this quiet time. You know what? We wake up and you're not there.

There was several times I was in a room with Brother Clendenin in Belfast or Dublin or other places. And you know what? I never saw him wake up. I never saw him got out of bed.

He would wake me up with the shower going or the sink going or doing something. And then I go, man, I didn't even hear him get up. That man will be up before anyone else.

You know why? The work, the need is so great. It also says in Luke chapter six, verse 12. And it came to pass in those days that he, Christ, went out into a mountain to pray.

Do you see what Christ done? He chose a solitary place, a desert place, a mountain. I'm not saying you have to do that. If you've got a sofa in your house, a certain room, a lounge, a bedroom, an office, you don't need to go out of your house.

But Christ did. He's got 12 apostles with him and a whole batch of other people most often. You know what? They must have crammed into that house.

So he didn't have a room. He said, I'm getting out of here. And he went into a mountain to do what? To pray.

So Christ chose a place. He had a place. He had a time.

He rose up early to do this. And he continued all night in prayer. He not only rose early.

At times he prayed all night. At times he prayed late into the night. He had diverse times to pray.

But praying early in the morning was one of these. Again, Christ rose up not only to pray, but to do all things early in the morning. Luke chapter 21, 37.

And in the daytime, he was teaching in the temple. Notice that throughout the day he's teaching. This is his ministry.

He went out and abode in the mount. That is called the Mount of Olives at nighttime. That's where he slept.

He slept in the Garden of Gethsemane at the Mount of Olives at nighttime. He went out there, slept over. And all the people came early in the morning to him in the temple for to hear him.

So he's already teaching in the temple early in the morning. Don't you know he was praying before that? Before he ever taught? He wouldn't do anything until he was in prayer. Listen to how Christ teaches his disciples to pray.

They say, teach us to pray. You know the Lord's Prayer, don't we? We've done a whole series teaching every comment of the Lord's Prayer. Listen to one of the statements in the Lord's Prayer.

Matthew 6, 11. Give us this day our daily bread. Notice the prayer isn't give us this week our daily bread.

You pray and say, Lord, provide for everything this week. Provide for this entire month, this year, this decade. You pray into that length of time.

Christ doesn't teach that. He minimizes it, saying today you need to pray this. Give us this day our daily bread that we need today.

And you're meant to pray that every day. So the Lord's Prayer actually is focused on deliver us from temptation, deliver us from the evil one. All of those wonderful prayers.

And you know what? It's not an expanse of just pray for the week, pray for the month. It's pray for today. Do you pray for today, today? Do you know what? At 11 o'clock tonight, you can't pray for today.

Give me my daily bread. You're a bit late. You're really late.

Unless between now and midnight, you're gonna go and head all the fish and chip shops or you're gonna receive some sort of miracle of food. I don't know. It's a bit late.

And so Christ says, pray today. Give me this day, my daily bread, what I need. Deliver me from the devil today.

I'm gonna encounter the devil today. There's gonna be temptations today. You're praying and all these things.

You know why? In the morning, early in the morning, in prayer, all these things are yet ahead of you. The trials, the troubles, the difficulties, the crises, the needs, all the people you're gonna meet. Think about you can have a quiet time before you open your mouth, before you embark on anything.

And it's all ahead of you. You can bring it to the Lord in prayer. Oh, what peace we often forfeit or lose because we don't come in prayer.

Point four, the example of the wicked. I've just given you the example of Christ. What was normal in his life? But I'm gonna give you the example of the wicked.

Because you know what? There's many in this city that know what Christians don't know. There are wicked men and women in this city who believe in rising early. Listen to what the Bible says in Isaiah 5 and 11.

Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink, but continue until night, till wine inflame them. Have you ever seen a drunkard who wakes up desperate? They're going in search of alcohol first thing in the morning. It is early before people go to work.

And they are desperate. There's drug addicts will almost go crazy. They'll get up in any hour.

I must have my fix. And yet there's Christians who don't feel that need of God, the creator, their savior. The alcoholic can do it.

The drug addict can do it. And yet there's Christians who lie in their bed. They'll go straight from their bed straight to work.

They haven't prayed or they'll pray a little token prayer. Lord, help me. Lord, you understand why I haven't spent five minutes in the Bible.

You understand I'm still your child. And yet you do not have what an alcoholic has. His desire for alcohol is greater than yours for God or for drugs that ought not to be.

It says in Job 24 and 14, the murder rising with the light killeth the poor and needy. And then the night is as a thief. It says here that there are murderers who will rise up to do their vile deeds.

In 1 Samuel chapter 5 and verse 4, it says, and when they rose early, speaking about the priests of Dagon, remember they captured the Ark of the Covenant and they're rejoicing. And they have their great God Dagon and they put the Ark before him. It says that those false priests, this false religion that was idolatrous when they arose early on the morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground.

Thank God for that. But you know what it shows that these religious people rose up early in the morning. Do you know there's lots of religious people in the city who'll never make heaven, who aren't on their way to heaven, who don't know the grace of God.

They're religious, but they worship idols and statues. They don't know Christ. Remember the second commandment, don't make any image of what you worship.

Don't bow before it. Don't pray to it. Don't use it.

You are not to make an image of God. You're not to make an image of Christ. You're not to make an image that you use in worship.

It's an abomination. And yet they rise early. They'll have their statues.

I want to tell you there's people worshiping Mary in this city. They'll be up devotedly every single morning before any of us here. I have met people who are religious and they sacrifice, they dedicate themselves.

There are some of you, maybe a mother who goes to mass every single day without fail, year upon year upon year. Dedicated, committed. And yet we think it's a cheap route to come in through Christ.

We can be in the church. I'm too tired to read my Bible. I don't have time to pray.

You don't understand. Religion can make people pray and they don't even know the Lord Jesus Christ. It says in Exodus 32 and verse five, remember when they made the golden calf.

And when Aaron, the high priest saw it, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made proclamation and said, tomorrow is a feast to the Lord. This is Israel going wrong.

They've made an image, a golden calf. And he says, this is your God. This is who delivered you from Egypt.

We are going to worship him. Listen to what it says. And they, that is the people rose up early on the morrow and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings.

And the people sat down to eat and to drink and rose up to play. Here they are, religion gone wrong, Christianity gone wrong. Do you know what really bothers me is that a lot of the false worship movements, I've gone on and watched them.

I see dedication. I see tears rolling down the cheeks. You can mock their religion, but I'm telling you, you don't have their passion.

And that bothers me. That deeply concerns me. Many of those that mock the false worship and the compromise Christianity, I see no passion, no fire, no dedication, no zeal for the Lord, no rising early to seek the Lord.

They'll rise early to sacrifice to the latest worship movement or the latest signs and wonders movement. And yet real genuine biblical believers, they're too lazy to open their Bibles. There's something wrong.

It's easy to mock those movements, but where is your dedication? Where is your fire? Where is the rise and early to seek your God? It says they even sacrificed to this golden calf. That bothers me as well. I've seen people in these movements.

They've sold houses. They've given money. They've given their time.

They've given their life. And all the genuine believers, you can't budge them. They're not convicted.

You can't motivate them. They get convicted. They forget it before they go to bed at 12 o'clock.

Because you know what? They don't go to bed early. They don't do that. Our Numbers chapter 14, verse 40.

And they rose up early in the morning and got them up to the top of the mountains. You know what's happening here? This is when Israel sent the spies into the land, the 10 spies and said, go see what the land's like. And they come back.

And you know what they say? They bring an evil reports in. We can't go in. So all the people rebelled and God says, okay, you're not going in.

You'll never go in. You'll die over the next 40 years in the wilderness. And a plague came through and killed those 10 spies.

Dead. Do you know what the people done next? Listen, this is what they done next. And they rose up early in the morning.

How? The people who believe the evil report. The people who wouldn't go in. The people who drew back.

The people who disobeyed God yesterday. They wouldn't listen to them. But this morning, they rise up very early and they got them up into the top of the mountain saying, no, we be here.

And we will go up onto the place which the Lord has promised for we have sinned. Suddenly they get a burst of energy and say, oh no, sorry, we missed it all. Now we're going to do it.

Do you know what Moses says? It's too late. Don't go up now. If you go up now, you will get destroyed.

You're not going to walk out into 40 years walking in the wilderness. If only you'd done that yesterday morning. If you rose early to seek God, you would never have listened that evil report.

My fifth point. What are you doing when you rise early to pray in the morning? Listen very carefully before I finish. Rising early in the morning to seek God in prayer fulfills the principle of first fruits.

It's taught all through the Bible that you should give God the first, the best before you even enjoy it. You don't spend on yourself. You spend on God.

You give to God. You don't take the best hours of the day for yourself. You give them to God.

You don't give the years of your energy to yourself. You give them to God. First fruits is giving to God your best, your first.

When a harvest came in in Israel, they took the first harvest. You don't eat it all. I'm going to eat all the apples, the first harvest or the grain or whatever it is.

No, you took that and you gave it as a sacrifice to God. This is the first harvest. I don't eat it.

I don't put it on myself. I'm going to give it to God because he's given the entire harvest. That's the principle of the Bible.

Why not give him the first hour of the day? Why not give him your best hours? It was Candice often said because of teaching music. She said in a secular sense, they say your best hours are the first hours of the morning. In one hour in the morning, you can learn more than you can in three hours in the afternoon.

Somehow we are geared and wired that early in the morning, we are more perceptive, more open, more teachable than any other time in the day. Do you think God knew about that? Of course he did. What are you going to do or benefit from rising early? You're going to preempt the devil like we already said.

It says in Ephesians chapter five about redeeming the time because the days are evil. Do you realize what a dark evil day we live in? It's never been this dark. Evil stands at the door.

I want to show you there's a lot coming. To redeem the time is you take it back out of the hands of laziness, out of waste. You take it and you're going to use it.

You preempt the devil. Do you know there's a devil who'll tempt you throughout the day? There's a devil that can fire a fiery dart at you during the day. Do you know the devil could be in someone you encounter during the day who's going to deceive you? Don't you want to get before God and pray, saying deliver me from the evil one today? Often we get a side on hit from the devil and you wonder why.

Why didn't God protect me? I wonder why. Why didn't God warn me? Why didn't God protect me from the devil using this person? Did you pray into it that morning? Then it's no wonder. You're giving God time to answer the prayer during the day.

Why pray about things at 11 at night? My prayer time's 11 at night. Brilliant. Give God a little bit of time to answer the prayer.

Oh, I am. I'm praying for everything through the day. Do you know what? I want to pray first thing in the morning so that God can answer prayer at 9 o'clock, 10 o'clock, 11 o'clock, 12 o'clock, 1 o'clock, 4, 5, 6, 7. When you pray first thing in the morning, you're praying of the things that are going to happen to you throughout the day and you're allowing God to be a part of that day.

To simply tag prayer on the end of the day when you're tired, when you're being filled with all sorts of talk, it's over. When you pray early in the morning, you're giving priority to important things. If you pray, everything's going to be affected by that prayer.

Listen to the Proverbs 31 woman in verse 15. She rises also while it is yet night and giveth meat to her household and a portion to her maidens. People like this have prayed early in the morning.

Why is she rising early? To look after her family. And there's many other verses. People who rise early to do certain things, to teach the Bible.

Do you know they prayed before this? They're giving a priority to prayer. Therefore, everything functions in their life. If you don't give a priority to prayer, everything is out of function.

Sixth and lastly, let me finish. Wise counsel for early risers. Can I just finish here with a few simple bits of wise advice to help you? If you're an early riser, I want to help you with that.

Here it is. Proverbs 27 one, very important. He that blesseth his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him.

I know that makes you laugh. But listen, doesn't the Bible cover every little issue of life? I had a friend who was very loud in the morning. We went as a team on a mission in Scotland and the house was on about four different floors.

It was a very thin house with a stairway up. He was on one of the floors and he could hear anyone coming downstairs or upstairs and he thought nobody could hear him. And when he got down to prayer, everybody in the entire block of flats could hear him.

I want to assure you. And I would laugh. Someone would come running down and he went quiet.

And then they ran on down the stairs and they would start praying again. He was extremely loud. And we used to laugh about the scripture saying, brother, don't you know the Bible says this, that those who are still sleeping won't count this as a blessing.

You think it's a blessing. This is just a bit of wise wisdom. Don't put on a performance for others.

It's nice to be alone, solitary, where you can open, cry aloud unto the Lord. But this isn't a performance. This isn't for others.

Be wise in what you do. Here's another bit of wise advice. Read the Bible before you pray first thing in the morning, even if it's a chapter or a few verses.

You know why? I have found with the years, this helps me to pray. When you come to pray and you haven't been in the Word, you're tired, distracted. You don't know what to pray.

Do you know what you need to do? Spend time in the Word of God. I always do this. From my Bible, reading the Bible, I always go to prayer.

It helps me. George Mueller, again, offered this advice. He said, often I go to prayer.

I'm distracted. I can't concentrate. Many things come up during the day.

I want to sleep. And he said, I learned the secret of... I learned it from him. I learned the secret of always reading the Bible before I go into prayer.

If you find I don't know what to pray, try reading the Bible. And as you pray, you'll find naturally as you read, this turns into prayer. Oh God, help me.

Even if it's just, Lord, I don't understand this. Will you teach me? Will you show me? Early to bed is another principle. Psalm 127.2. You know, my granddad, again, with all those secular sayings, early to bed, early to rise, keeps a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.

That's secular. But how true. The new enough, get in bed early or you're not going to rise early.

I guarantee you, if you're here and you do not rise early to pray, you do not go to bed. Or if you do, you're there. No one ever done that until the past 10 years.

I just don't know why I can't get up in the morning. I just don't understand. I was in bed and the world government staring at you going, we need pictures of their face like this.

We will blackmail them. Listen to what the Bible says. Psalm 127.2. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows, for so he giveth his beloved sleep.

I've heard people claim this as a promise. He promises to give his beloved sleep. I can't sleep at night.

Lord, you promised to give me sleep. Yes, to the person who goes to bed early. To the person who gets up early in the morning.

There are principles. We claim promises. We've got no right to them.

Here's another bit of wise advice. Have a place. Remember, like I've said about Christ, a mountain, an isolated place.

Have a place. When thou prayest, enter into thy closet. Jesus is teaching you how to pray.

Enter into thy closet. What is a closet? It was a small cupboard, a small tiny room in the house. Every house had one.

It was over the porch, an entrance to the house. It was out of the way. It's where you put all your rubbish and bric-a-brac.

And Jesus says, enter into that closet. Listen to what he says. And when thou hast shut the door, pray.

Isn't Christ very practical? Go into your closet, shut the door. I mean, what is this teaching us to suck eggs? Yes, you need it. You need a closet.

You need to shut the door, then pray. Don't pray until you're alone in that place. And last of all, holy habits.

The entire Bible teaches discipline, holy habits, deciding things, planning. You've got to do this with rising early to pray. It doesn't just happen.

Lord, wake me up if you want me to pray early in the morning. You're going to have to set an alarm. Don't put it by your bed.

Put it far enough out of reach that you've got to get out of bed. Do you ever have that thought? Again, I know none of you have it. Just five minutes, doing, doing.

Just another five minutes, doing, especially on cold mornings. You see how I'm a prophet. I know everything that goes on in your mind.

I just know it. So you have holy habits. You have discipline.

You know, people are so scared of legalism. They fall into fleshiness, carnality, and literally let the flesh rule their life. I don't want to get up.

Okay. Oh, I'm tired. Okay.

I'm hungry. Okay, we'll go eat. They are ruled by their flesh.

The entire New Testament and gospel preaches self-denial. If you want to be my disciple, deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me. What is self-denial? It's Romans 6, crucifying the old man, knowing that you're crucified with Christ, reckoning or believing that you're crucified with Christ, the old man, your flesh, and then yielding your entire life.

But do you realize sleep is a very dangerous thing? And in fact, the entire Bible teaches the danger of sleep. Proverbs 6, how long will thou sleep, O sluggard? Do you realize long sleep is disobedient sleep? To be a sluggard, lazy, when will thou rise out of your sleep, O sluggard? The Bible's got a nice name for you. It's not 21st century diplomacy.

If you're lazy, it says you're a sluggard, a lazy so-and-so. If sleep masters you, you're a slave to it. You're a servant to it.

You're not crucifying the flesh. What a good opportunity if flesh rules you. If the bed is King Og, go look it up.

King Og who rules over you, who dominates you. What a wonderful opportunity that you can start saying, I'm going to defeat the flesh. I'm going to crucify the flesh.

I will have a set time. Saints, I'm not telling you when. I'm just giving you the scriptures, 6, 7, 8. Maybe you're going to move just an hour earlier and then you'll try two hours earlier.

Maybe you get up at 4.30. Jaws drop, maybe 6. I think 6 is a very good time for anyone to get up. That's not crazy. If you go to bed at 10, it's absolutely normal.

But if you're going to bed at 12 or 1, you really need to rethink things. To go to bed at 1, to be posting at 1 o'clock. And here, I'm telling you all this.

I've gone through the most chaotic three years of my entire life. My sleeping's been out of order. I haven't been able to sleep at night.

I haven't been able to go to bed at night. Everything that's happened to me. I'm telling you, I'm preaching this to you as someone who's been utterly topsy-turvy for three years.

But do you know what? This will be in place as it has been in my life down through the years. And I've got to conquer it. Not death, not the death of a wife can even steal this.

I assure you there's a time for all that to settle down and to go, I'll have a time to sleep. I will sleep when I go to bed. I'll have a regular time, a regular time to arise.

I am going to read the word of God. You know, when Candice was ill, I'd left up my Bible. I couldn't read a verse.

I had struggled for weeks, weeks, weeks. I couldn't read. It was almost impossible to read my Bible.

But I was there fighting. Go and help me, Lord. I knew it was with everything happening around me.

And I understand those things. But saints of God, we've got to fight this fight. We've got to go through.

Nothing will benefit you more than a prayer time, a place. Why not set tonight before you go to bed, set a time? You may fail tomorrow morning, not deliberately, but you may fail. But why not set a time, begin to fight and say, this is going to be a part of my Christian walking life.

So help me, God, I am going to overcome. Not be ruled by feelings or thoughts or the flesh that demands sleep. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you. Lord God, just for your grace in these messages. Lord God, we're not laying burdens.

But oh God, we're looking for tremendous blessing. Like all the men of God and all the women of God through the ages rose to seek you early. They had a place to pray, a time to pray.

And what blessings, what testimonies they raised up. And Father, I pray for my friends right now, just like me. We need the grace of God.

Lord God, we need a victory over the circumstance of life. Lord God, give us the ability, give us the grace. Lord God, to draw a line in the sand, oh God.

And to seek you early before we talk to wife or husband, to work friends, before we look at Facebook, before we do any other thing. Lord God, to simply meet with you in a real and a vital place. Lord God, we're asking for the rebuilding of the altar of prayer, of seeking you through reading the word of God.

In Jesus' mighty name, amen.

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