

# Disciplines of the Christian Life

by Mike Attwood

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of prayer as a discipline of the Christian life, highlighting the need for both individual and corporate prayer. It delves into the significance of men leading in prayer in the assembly, the power of prevailing prayer, and the impact of prayer on the spiritual health of the church. The speaker encourages a revival in the prayer meeting as essential for the future of the assembly testimony.*

**Scripture:** 1 Timothy 2:1, Acts 1:14, Acts 4:31, James 5:16, Luke 18:1

**Topics:** "The Power of Prayer", "Revival in Corporate Worship"

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## Description

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## Transcript

And it's about 1.15 in the morning there right now. So my body clock may not exactly be on Eastern time zone. And so we'll just see how this goes this evening.

We got back late Wednesday night and Thursday to kind of unpack and repack and then left at 3.30 this morning from Missouri to get here. So if I fall asleep during the message, you understand the reason why. But anyway, it is a joy to be with you.

So 1 Timothy 4, please, verse seven and eight, it says this, but refuse profane and old wise fables and exercise thyself rather unto godliness, for bodily exercise profiteth little, but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. And God will bless that short and concise reading of the word of God to us this evening. I want to think about back to the basics.

And I thought kind of a way to deal with this is to talk about the disciplines of the Christian life. And I want to talk about really four things. Tonight, you want to look at prayer as a discipline of the Christian life.

And then tomorrow afternoon, we're going to look at the believer's relationship to the word of God, and our response to the word of God, so the scriptures. And then the third session, we look at life in the assembly and how important that is for the believer. And then on Sunday, we'll talk about sharing our faith and

witnessing.

And so you're not going to hear anything new this weekend. In fact, we could retile this a refresher course in the basics. Sometimes we just need reminding of things that we already know, and maybe have got kind of lazy and haven't been practicing so well.

So that's kind of our goal is to kind of stir us up. Now, if you think of the Christian life, there's different ways to look at the Christian life. I often say this to people that the Christian life is a wonderful life.

And yet there's different aspects to it. For one, it's the dependent life. It's a life where we're acknowledging we don't have it all together.

And we're living a life dependent on someone else. So even our salvation, it begins by acknowledging nothing I can do to save myself, I have to depend on what someone else did for me on Calvary's cross in order to be saved, right? It's from the very get go, the Christian life is a dependent life. I'm saying I can't get to heaven on my own strength.

There's no way. I can't pull myself up by my bootstraps. I can't change myself.

Lord, you've got to do something. And you did something through your son, the Lord Jesus, I believe and I trust in his finished work. And so I begin the Christian life expressing my dependence on what someone else has done for me.

But I continue the Christian life in dependence, really, because I can't live this life in my own strength. It's not possible. I need that the indwelling Holy Spirit to manifest the life of Christ through me.

So I have to depend on this indwelling heavenly guest on a moment by moment basis, right? It's a dependent life. It's also a devotional life. It's a love relationship with a living person.

Christ is not only my Savior, he's my bridegroom, right? I'm in love. It's kind of a, he said a friend in Ireland used to preach in the open air, and he should get everybody's attention. And he would say, folks, I want to tell you, I'm in love with another man.

And everybody thought, oh, he's one of those. And he said, yeah, Jesus Christ. And aren't we here tonight? Because we're in love with the Lord Jesus.

And so it's a divorce, a love relationship with a living person who is altogether lovely. There's nobody like him, nobody to be compared with him. He's marvelous.

And so we're in love with this person. So it's a devotional life. But it's also a disciplined life.

And so Paul says here that in this disciplined life, and it's kind of using the language really of physical exercise, he's using that kind of language. He often uses things like Olympic games or Greek games or whatever in his illustrations. And so what he's saying is that for an athlete to be successful, there are things that he has to refuse, right? There are things that an athlete, if he's going to win an event, that he does not eat frozen custard three times a day, right? I mean, there's things that he has to say no to, right? So he tells us the things that we have to say no to.

If we really want to be successful in the Christian life, there are things we have to refuse. And he says profane. Profane is an interesting word.

Profane means no sanctuary. A profane person is somebody who has no sanctuary in his life, who has no place for God in his life. Remember Esau was that profane person, no place for God in his life.

He was hunting, and that was his thing, you know, but he had no place for God. So profanity is saying I don't have any place for God. And so we want to refuse profane, and then old wives fables.

And this is kind of, you know, all the garbage of the world, the soap operas, all this kind of stuff, whatever way you look at it today, the stuff that if we want to really go on with God, we need to say, I don't need that stuff. It's just junk. Refuse.

Profane, anything that doesn't have a sanctuary in it, old wives fables. And then he says, exercise thyself rather unto godliness. Now this word exercise in verse seven is a very interesting word.

It's a word which we get our English word gymnasium from. That's why the King James translators use the word exercise, right? Because when you go to the gym, usually it's to get exercise, right? And so what he's saying is that if you want to become a godly person, there has to be some exertion of effort and energy, right? You've got to, as it were, go to the spiritual gymnasium to become a godly person. And, you know, if you're going to have the perfect body, like there's a discipline involved in that, isn't there? Like I don't go to the gym very often.

It's very obvious. You can see that by looking at me, but people that do, you can tell. I was, there's a guy on the flight today and his muscles, I don't know what he did, but by this guy obviously is, you know, kind of doing his exercises.

He really was. And he looked like a bit like Mr. Universe. And of course he's wearing a kind of a little kind of vesty thing because he wants everybody to see how magnificent he looks.

But he didn't just get that way by waking up one morning and thinking, you know, I'd love to have muscles. No, he made a decision and that decision was a costly decision. It affected his diet, it affected his exercise regime.

And so even in Florida, you know, we don't go to gym in Florida, but most people go to physiotherapy, but it's the same idea is to exercise muscles, you know, it's kind of to try and keep living, right? You do that kind of stuff. And so what he's saying is this, you will never drift into a life of godliness. It's not going to happen.

In fact, let me tell you this, if you don't have any discipline in your Christian life, you will drift, but it will not be towards godliness. You'll drift in the opposite direction. Whenever you drift, you always drift away from the Lord.

You never drift towards him, right? Isn't that true? There's a discipline needed in the Christian life. And so he says, exercise thyself rather unto godliness. Discipline yourself unto godliness.

Bodily exercise profits little, but it does have value. It's good. I try to walk every day.

I find it very good to do that. It helps my mind to stay clear and focused. And it's good to, there's profit, there's little profit, but there's profit in it.

But godliness is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is, and that which is to come. It has eternal benefits, doesn't it? And so we need to become disciplined in the Christian life. Now, let me

say this, there's nothing that requires more discipline than prayer.

It really does take concentration of mind and will to be a person of prayer. Now, I can guarantee this, if any one of you have ever sat down to pray, if you're anything like me, the first thing that happens when you sit down or kneel down or whatever you do when you're going to pray, you get in that condition where you're going to pray, and then all of a sudden, what happens? Kind of to me, to do lists come in my mind, I need to do this, and I need to do that, I need to go see this person, need to do this. And it's like, all of a sudden, I'm there to pray.

And like all the cares of the world have come upon me instantaneously. And I literally have to force myself to go back to why I'm there, I'm there to pray. And so there's a discipline in prayer.

And so if we're going to become a people of prayer, we have to be disciplined. And many of us are busy people. And we've always got to be on the move and doing and to stop and go in the closet to pray is hard for us to do in the very first place, isn't it? In fact, if we're honest, if we were to do a survey here, and I was to ask you, in all honesty, what is the weakest area of your Christian life? I'd say most of you don't have too much difficulty getting a quiet time in and reading your Bible.

But how's your time in the closet? How's the prayer time? It's hard, isn't it? And so we really need to become disciplined. And prayer is certainly vital to the Christian life. How do we know that prayer is so important in the Christian life? Well, first of all, I want to talk about the frequency of dimension of prayer in the Bible.

I'm just running these figures off for you. But the word pray is used 336 times in the King James Bible, prayer is used 110 times, prayers 26 times. So just using the word pray, prayer, prayers, we get 472 times.

But then there's other words that are used supplication, right, for instance, and other descriptions of prayer. And so it's just like you can't read the Word of God without seeing that throughout the whole Bible, prayer plays a very prominent place. In Scripture, the Lord Jesus prayed.

Now that should just strike us, right? Like, here's the Lord Jesus, and particularly, you'll notice this in the Gospel of Luke, which portrays the Lord Jesus as the dependent man, the second man, the last Adam. And there's more emphasis on the prayer life of the Lord Jesus in Luke's Gospel than there is in the other Gospels. And so let me just say this, if Jesus as man, perfect man, saw his need to commune with God in prayer, his Father, who do I think I am to think that I could remotely live a Christ-like life without prayer being a big factor in it? You get the point? Like, this is, to me, this is a, it's a given fact.

Apostle Paul, you read his prayers, they just permeate his epistles. In fact, he'll be teaching, and then all of a sudden, he'll burst into a prayer that the people will get what he's telling them, right? It's just, he's a man of prayer, and he's always talking about the people he's praying for, and he was a man whose life was dominated by prayer. Moses was an intercessor.

Elijah was a great man of prayer. David was a man of prayer. Nehemiah, Daniel, and then we go into church history, and let me say this, anybody who was anything in church history was a person who was given to prayer.

And so, the Lord puts it this way, Luke's Gospel, chapter 18, verse 1, he says this, men are always to pray and think not. That's a pretty dramatic statement, isn't it? Men are always to pray and think not. Don't lose

heart.

Don't be discouraged. Keep praying. Look for a minute, please, to Luke's Gospel, chapter 11.

Well, let's do a couple of things in Luke. First of all, let's go back to Luke 3. I just want to show you this. Some of you have heard this before, but it's okay.

At Luke 3, this is the baptism of the Lord Jesus, which was the beginning of his public ministry, and notice it says this in verse 21. Now, when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also being baptized, and then notice this phrase, only given by Luke. You won't find this in Matthew.

You won't find it in Mark. You won't find it in John, only in Luke. It says, Jesus also being baptized and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased.

So, here's just the interesting point. The Lord Jesus' public ministry, everybody said his public ministry began officially at his baptism. How does he start his public ministry? In prayer.

Isn't that interesting? What about Saul of Tarsus? How did he start out? Well, Ananias was told to go to a street called Strait in Damascus, where he'd find one Saul and he praying. Well, that's interesting, isn't it? See, maybe a ministry that starts out in prayer might not amount to much. It started in prayer, the Lord's ministry.

Now look at Luke 11. Luke 11 and verse 1. It came to pass that as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray as John also taught his disciples. And of course, he goes on and gives what we call this model prayer.

I want you just to notice something here. First of all, as he was praying. So, we get this little kind of scene, Jesus is praying.

And the disciples, once he'd finished, they said, Lord, teach us to pray. Now, why would they say, Lord, teach us to pray? Weren't they Jewish men? Like, what did Jews do? Pray, right? Generally, unless they're liberal Jews, but generally Jews pray. And these people grew up praying.

And yet, they saw something in the Lord Jesus' praying that was different to theirs. And they said, Lord, teach us to pray. Then they said, as John taught his disciples to pray.

What does that tell you? Would it tell you that basic discipleship would include teaching somebody how to pray? Because John taught his disciples how to pray. Interesting. And now the Lord's disciples are saying, teach us to pray.

Now, let me just say this, and I think it's important. The Lord's disciples never said, Lord, teach us how to preach. You notice that? They didn't say, Lord, you need to develop this homiletics course and teach us how to preach like you preach.

Never did. John the Baptist was a great preacher, but we don't read of his disciples saying, teach us to preach. But they didn't teach him to pray.

That's kind of interesting, isn't it? And yet, you go to a seminary or a Bible school, I guarantee that there won't be a course teaching people to pray. That should strike us as stunning. So prayer, why is it so

important? It's the means by which we express our dependence upon God.

You know, there are some assemblies that don't have prayer meetings. They just don't. And even those that do, I'd like to guarantee this, that if you were to look at your assembly and say, okay, which is the most well-attended meeting? And then which is the least attended meeting? I would suggest to you that generally speaking, nine out of 10 people would tell you the least attended meeting in the church is the prayer meeting.

Would that be true? What is that saying? You see, if prayer is the means by which we express our dependence on God, our lack of praying is saying, God, we can do this thing without you. We got it covered, Lord. We don't, see, we're Americans.

You see, we Americans, you know, we're the kind of, you know, we took this wilderness and we made it into something and we're a self-made man and we can do this Christian thing, God. We don't need your help. Now, I know you'd never say that, but we're voting with our feet.

We're saying we can do this and we've got it covered, Lord. Don't worry. And yet we're getting what we're voting for, powerless Christianity, because we're depending on ourselves and we're getting what self can produce and what self can produce is not worth producing.

It's not much. And so prayer is how we express our dependence on God. Prayer is how we communicate with him.

He communicates to us through his word, but we communicate to him in prayer. And communication is vital to any relationship. He speaks to us in his word, we speak to him in prayer.

If I said to my wife, I love you, honey, but I don't speak to her from week to week, she might get the hint that there's something bogus about what I'm saying. I mean, if I don't want to talk to her, if I don't want to communicate with her, if I'm just happy not to say anything, she'd think, if this guy loves me, why don't he talk to me? Right? And so communication is vital to any relationship. In fact, our relationship began with prayer, didn't it? Whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

At one point we said, Lord, save me. I mean, I always said that, right? At some point there was this crying out to the Lord. That's how it all began.

And it has to continue. And prayer is how we do that. Prayer is saying we can't do it ourselves.

We need supernatural intervention from the God who is all powerful, who spoke the world into existence. And we're saying, Lord, I don't have this covered. I can't do this this weekend.

I believe that. I believe the Lord doesn't come through this weekend. We're just going to waste the weekend if he doesn't bless.

And prayer is vital. The apostles saw that, didn't they? They said, we will give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the word. Acts 6, 4. Very critical verses.

Many of us, I think, could say, and we've said it before in times past, many of us could say that, honestly, we've given ourselves to the ministry of the word. But few of us could really say that we have given ourselves to the same extent to prayer and the ministry of the word. And I believe if we had given ourselves more to prayer and the ministry of the word, in other words, we spent as much time in the closet

as we did in the study, we would see different results through the preaching of the word of God.

Much more effective. So I want to think about private prayer to begin with, and we'll get on to corporate prayer. But I want us to go back to the book of Psalms.

Lots of beautiful prayers in the Psalms. And Psalm 55, I just want you to see something of David, the sweet Psalmist of Israel, and his discipline. Remember, we're talking about disciplines of the Christian life.

And this is what he says, Psalm 55 and verse 17, he says, For evening and morning and at noon will I pray and cry aloud and he shall hear my voice. So we see something of a kind of a habit in David's life. He prayed three times a day.

Now he starts with evening because the Jewish day starts evening, doesn't it? Evening and the morning were the first day. It always starts in the evening. So he starts his day in prayer in the evening, and then in the morning, and then at noon.

So three times a day, he set aside specific times to pray. Daniel obviously followed the David model, didn't he? You remember Daniel, when they tried to find something wrong with Daniel's life, and they said, we're only going to get him about something concerning his God. And so they said that made this rule that you could only ask the king, you couldn't ask any God or anybody else but the king for a petition.

And Daniel, well, he just did what he always did three times a day. He opened the window towards Jerusalem and he prayed. And there was a discipline, there was a set time.

And so it's good sometimes to have set times that we set aside. If you don't, I find if I don't put things in my calendar, they don't happen. Right? We need to have set times.

So we get into the closet and pray. And certainly David did this. And notice what he did.

He says, I'll cry aloud. Sometimes if you have problems kind of nodding off when you're praying, pray out loud. Cry aloud to God in prayer.

That's okay. It's legitimate. I do all kinds of weird things in prayer, just because I want it to be effective.

And so sometimes I'll walk around the room and pray. And sometimes I'll raise my hand. I don't get worried.

I'm not going charismatic or anything like that. But I just, I love that posture. It's like, Lord, I don't have anything.

I have no bargaining chips. You have everything. I've got nothing.

I need your help. And so I don't mind doing these things. If it helps, it's what works.

Right? I want to have a prayer life that's effective and I want something that's going to be going to work. And so David, he cried aloud. And what an assurance.

Evening and morning at noon, will I cry? Will I pray and cry aloud? And David knew this. He shall hear my voice. I don't have to cry aloud because Lord is defective in hearing.

But he knew God delights to hear the cries of his children. And he answers prayer. And so also it's very helpful in developing good habits in prayer.

I don't know about you, but everybody ever struggled with bad habits. Like habits are hard to break, aren't they? Bad habits. I used to have a terrible habit of biting my fingernails.

It took a long time before I actually finally got free of biting my fingernails. But it was a habit I started when I was a kid and it was really hard to break. And so habits can be a good thing if they're a good habit.

Right? And so there are habits we should get into. And one of them is making a daily prayer list, spending a set time in prayer, having a regular time and even a regular place. It's good sometimes to have a place where you retire the prayer.

The Lord had his place, right? You can tell me where it was. Where did the Lord like to go to pray? Garden of Gethsemane, right? That was a place where he often resorted to pray. He had a place.

And often at nighttime, he would go there. And so it's good to have a time and a place. It's good to have a list.

I find that helpful. I like to pray a lot for different mission fields. And what I do is just to help me practically, I divide the world up in seven days.

And so I just pray through the world. I say Friday, believe it or not, Canada is Friday. And so that's how I pray for the Canadian brethren.

They need a lot of prayer up there. And so Saturday, I pray for Israel and the Jews because it's their holy day. And then Sunday, I pray for assemblies.

And Monday is Europe. Tuesday is Asia. Wednesday is Christian workers in North America.

But I find that it just helps to have this kind of divide of the week in prayer. I go around the world in a week. It's wonderful, isn't it? I mean, I travel a lot.

I cover the continent in a week, every week. But isn't it wonderful that you can speak to the one who sits on the throne of the universe and affect affairs all around the globe in prayer? And again, just good to get into these habits. Private prayer, though, is work.

Let me show how Paul describes some of the experiences in prayer. Look at Colossians chapter 2. Colossians chapter 2 and verse 1. Now, Paul had never been to Colossae. It was started by Epaphroditus, the evangelist, and Epaphroditus, should I say.

And so he'd never been there, never seen them. He heard about them. And he says, I would that you knew, this is Colossians 2 verse 1, what great conflict I have for you and for them at Laodicea and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, that their hearts might be comforted, be knit together in love, so on and so forth.

I want you to get this little word conflict. What great conflict. That word conflict there in the Greek language is the word *agonia*.

You can get the meaning of that, right? In other words, he actually was agonizing over the state of the Christians in Colossae and Laodicea. Never seen them before. Now, that's hard.

I'll be honest with you, my global prayer list is mainly people I've met and I know. It's just so much easier for me when I know somebody. But Paul had never seen these guys before, and he's praying for them.

And I find that amazing. And not only is he praying for them, he's agonizing over them. Now, we know so little of this kind of prayer, if we're really honest, where we actually agonize over people.

I wonder if we see more happen, if there was more of that earnest agonizing over souls. I remember, I've never forgotten it, I was in a prayer meeting in Northern Ireland, and it was during a gospel campaign. And some of these brethren in their starchy black suits, you know, these are gospel holder, they're very conservative brethren.

And some of them were laying prostrate on the ground, agonizing over souls to be saved in this gospel campaign. I have never forgotten that. It's just burned in my memory.

I've not seen that in chapters. I'll be honest with you, I've never seen it. I wish I had.

But what a sight. And there's an agony here, agonizing over souls. Because it is a warfare.

In fact, Ephesians chapter 6, again, speaking just of what goes on in prayer, often the battles are won and lost in prayer. Ephesians 6 verse 12, he says, For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. And so it's kind of a place where we're actually entering into conflict.

Spiritual warfare, wrestling, a wrestling match, wrestling not against flesh and blood, but principalities and powers. So I want to suggest to you that Satan is more fearful of Christians on their knees than all our programs, all our clever organizational skills, all of these things put together, they do not worry him one bit. But what worries him is when God's people get serious about getting on their knees in prayer.

Of course, the Old Testament, there's a beautiful illustration, isn't there? We won't turn there because you know, I'm sure everybody knows the story when Jacob wrestled with the angel. And in the midst of that conflict, that wrestling match, and it's a beautiful illustration of prayer. And you get this great statement, I will not let thee go until thou bless me.

And so this is what you call prevailing prayer. He's wrestling and he's hanging on and he's not going to quit until he's assured of the blessing. When you like to be in prayer meetings like that, where the saints recognize we're wrestling here, but we're not going to let go until we have the assurance of the blessing that God is going to bless.

I wonder if we've ever experienced anything like this. Well, these are the basics. We're getting back to the basics.

These are what we call the basics of the Christian life. Prayer is one of them. It's a discipline.

It's an important discipline. And I find it so much easier to complain than to pray about life in the assembly. I mean, it's so easy to complain instead of pray.

You look at the bulletin, you see who's scheduled to preach. And you think, oh Lord, not him again. You probably never have those kind of battle groups, but you know, sometimes it's like 45 minutes can be a life sentence.

You know that, right? And you're thinking, well, instead of complaining, why not just get on your face and say, Lord, give that brother a message like he's never had before in his life. Let him speak as the articles of God. And you can do these things.

You can speak to a donkey, Lord. You can do this. This is not too hard for you.

And so again, instead of complaining, let's pray. Prevailing prayer. Lots of examples in the word of God.

The Lord Jesus loves to give these examples of people that just will not give up. We're familiar with these. I'm just going to mention them.

Luke 18, great passage on prayer and just delightful to think of it. It says, he spake a parable unto them to this end that men are always to pray and not faint, saying there was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man. And there was a widow in that city.

And she came onto him saying, avenge me and my adversary. And he would not for a while. But afterwards, he said within himself, though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because the widow, this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming, she weary me.

And the Lord said, hear what the unjust judge saith, and shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them. I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when a certain man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth.

So what he's saying is, and it's good to remind ourselves, we're not coming to an unjust judge. We're coming to a loving, heavenly Father. What a difference.

And yet this woman, the Lord is telling us, learned a lesson. This woman, she didn't quit. She didn't give up.

She had to have what she needed. And so she came with that determination, that persistence. And the Lord gave her as an example.

James 5.16, we're encouraged by the example of Elijah, a man of like passions, such as we are. I love that. He's made of the same cookie dough as you and I. Just like you and me.

Sometimes we put these people on such a pedestal, and God is telling us, don't put him on a pedestal. He's just like you, has the same ups and downs. And you look at the life of Elijah.

He had his downs. He had days that he was so depressed, he wanted to die. He went through the whole gamut of emotions.

He's just like you, and he's just like me. And yet, the Lord tells us the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. How much can be accomplished if we get serious about prayer? We're encouraged to joyful praying.

Paul, a great example of joyful praying. Philippians 1.4. Isn't it a joy to just think that I can speak to my heavenly Father, enter into the holiest of all at any time, the merits of the Savior. And so Philippians 1.4, he says, always in every prayer of mine for you all, making requests with joy.

And it is a joy, isn't it? As I pray for different ones that I've come to love and appreciate, first of all, it's a joy to think of them personally as I bring them before the Lord. It brings back happy memories to think of these dear saints and bring them into the presence of God, knowing that He loves them more than I could ever love them. And to bring my request, what a joy it is.

And there is a joy in prayer. There's a joy because there's always a joy in obedience as well. We know we're doing the right thing.

James says a very staggering thing, though, in James chapter 4, in verses 2 and 3, he says this. He says, you lust and have not, you kill and desire to have and cannot obtain, you fight and war if you have not because you ask not, you ask and receive not because you ask and miss, and consume it upon your lusts. One of the things he's warning about really is self-respect.

Prayers that are all about getting my needs met, my wants, my desires. When you think of the prayers, the Lord's prayer that He gives us in His example prayer, how does it begin with? It doesn't begin with our needs. How will it be? Thy name.

Thy will be done, right? It's about Him. And then it draws down to our needs. And sometimes our prayer meetings are all about our needs, not about His glory and His honor.

And so we come to prayer meetings and often it's an extended sick list. And what we're praying is, Lord, whatever you do, don't let these people go to heaven. Right? I mean, they might be 99, you know, and barely existing, and we're saying, Lord, please keep sister, come on, let her go.

I mean, you're going to think, why were they praying for me? This is better than anything, right? Far better. And we spend all our time trying to keep Christians out of heaven. Unless they've got COVID then you don't do that.

You do it over the phone. Pray with them. This is quite a ministry.

As we come together as an assembly, let's mainly cry out to God, the people who will not. Somebody's checking away here, Helen on her iPhone 11. Anyway, so it wasn't me, I just didn't know whether it was bothering you hearing that chatter there.

When we, with private prayer, just a helpful formula that somebody shared with me many years ago is the, what we call the Acts formula, A-C-T-S, like the book of Acts. And so in private prayer, it's good to begin with adoration. Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Isn't that where the Lord begins, right? Later on, he says, forgive us our trespasses as we forgive others. And you say, well, why would you, wouldn't you be better confessing your sin first? Somebody said that to me one time, I was given this Acts formula, and he said, well, wouldn't it be better to confess first? And I get what he's saying, because you want to be in right communion with the Lord. But the bottom line is that as you come into the presence of God, and you realize who he is, and how marvelous he is, and how glorious he is, you might find you have more things to confess.

If you begin with adoration, right, you're getting a right view of him, and then you get a right view of yourself. So begin with adoration, then you go to confession. And again, it's anything in your life that is hindering the Lord from answering prayer, right? Is there something that I'm doing that he's withholding blessing because he wants me to deal with this matter? You know, maybe a brother that I've offended, I need to go to, or something like that.

And so confession, and then thanksgiving, that's very helpful just to thank the Lord. It's a good thing to thank the Lord. My wife and I, she's a good help me, she keeps reminding me, because it's easy to complain this morning, I was so looking forward to, I got an upgrade to first class, because I travel a lot.

And I was so looking forward to my cup of coffee on the plane. Because like it was 3.30 in the morning, I didn't have time to have my coffee at home, going to the airport. So I was really looking forward to it.

I'm a mean guy, I don't want to buy it when I know I'm going to get it for free on the airplane. So I'm not going to pay for it. And so the stewardess comes up and said, sorry, the coffee machine's broken.

And so I said to my wife, this is not Delta's finest hour texting, no coffee. She said, in everything, give thanks. Don't you love a wife like that? It's the right attitude, right? Be thankful, right? In everything, give thanks.

This is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Thanksgiving, and then supplication. After a draw, adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication, coming to the Lord.

Now, I want to just think briefly in our few minutes that we've left about corporate prayer. We've kind of hinted at it, but I want to talk about the assembly prayer meeting. There's something about corporate prayer.

Now, individual prayer is a wonderful thing, but there is something about corporate prayer. C.H. Spurgeon, who preached in London for many years, was greatly used of God. Many, many souls were saved under his ministry.

And people kept asking him, what is the secret? And he said, I'm going to show you the engine room. And so below the pulpit in Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, there was literally a boiler room where they heated the facility. And whenever Spurgeon preached, there were a group of believers who were committed to being down in that engine room on their knees praying as he was preaching.

And he said, that is the secret of the success of this ministry. That's an amazing thought, isn't it? The church was born in a prayer meeting. They will pray.

In fact, I have this lovely quote in my Bible. It says, in Acts 1, they prayed for 10 days. In Acts 2, Peter preached for 10 minutes.

We preach for 10 days and pray for 10 minutes and wonder why we don't see much blessing. It says again, in Acts 1, they prayed for 10 days. In Acts 2, Peter preached for 10 minutes.

And apparently, if you read his sermon, 10 minutes. 3,000 souls were saved. We preach for 10 days and pray for 10 minutes and we wonder why we don't see any results.

The church was born in a prayer meeting. If you go through the Book of Acts and just, and I challenge you to do this, read through the Book of Acts and highlight the prayers in the Book of Acts. And you will notice

that whenever they had a problem in the early church, they had a prayer meeting.

They didn't have a business meeting, they had a prayer meeting. Acts chapter 4, they've been told not to preach in the name of Jesus. So what are they going to do? The authorities are telling them, don't do this.

So what do they do? They came together and prayed. And they said, Lord, behold, they're threatening. So they laid out what they'd said.

And they saw parallels in the word of God. And they prayed for boldness. And it's amazing that as they prayed for boldness, the place where they prayed was shaken.

They were filled with the Holy Spirit and they preached the word with boldness. 1 Timothy 2, 1 Timothy chapter 2. Now this may offend people. I don't want to offend anybody.

But it's just interesting to me that in 1 Timothy chapter 2, Paul says this, I exhort therefore that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and for all that are in authority that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, so on and so forth. Let me just say this.

I just think it's an important thing that when you look at 1 Timothy 2, when he says that first of all, I exhort therefore that first of all, this is a book that deals with behavior in the house of God, 1 Timothy 3.15, that you may know how you ought to behave yourself in the house of God as a church living God, killing ground of the truth. And what he says here, first of all, our first importance in 1 Timothy 2 is describing the prayer meeting, the assembly prayer meeting, what we should be praying for, who should be doing the praying, and what he's saying is this, that this meeting is of first importance. Now we would say, you know, what is the chief meeting of the church, and there's books written on it, and we say it's the Lord's Supper, right? When you say that, the Lord's Supper, chief meeting of the church, the Lord asks us to do it.

I have to say, now I would never, ever minimize the importance of the Lord's Supper. I believe the prayer meeting is the most important meeting of the church because it affects every other meeting. Because if we come to the prayer meeting, and our Lord's Supper can become kind of stale a bit if we're not careful, right? I mean, you know, sometimes you can even say the prayers for some of the guys that pray because it's become a bit stale, but we can come at the prayer meeting and say, Lord, would you somehow fine-tune the orchestra so that just a tremendous, just praise just ascends to your very presence.

We could pray that, and the Lord can do that, and so it can affect the gospel meeting, it can affect the ministry meeting, prayer can affect every meeting, and Paul says it's first importance, and yet we don't see it as first importance. First of all, supplication, prayers, intercession. In fact, didn't the Lord Jesus say that my Father's house will be a house of prayer for all nations? And that's what we see here.

Now, what's interesting as well is that he wants the men to be the ones who pray, because in verse 8 he says, I will therefore that men, the men pray everywhere, that men pray everywhere. Now, all the way through, he's got men in this chapter, but the other words are always the word anthropos, which is mankind in general. So, for instance, he talks about prayers, supplication, prayers, intercession, giving of thanks be made for all men, for all mankind.

In other words, who will have all men, verse 4, to be saved. Not gender-specific. God wants men to be saved, women to be saved, both genders.

We need to be clear of that. The two genders, the only two genders, that they be saved. There's one God and one immediate being God and man, God and anthropos, God and mankind.

The man, again, the anthropos, it's emphasizing not the Lord's maleness, but the fact that he became human to reach the human race. The man, Christ Jesus. And then it says, who gave himself ransom for all, and then he says in verse 8, I will therefore that the men, and that word is a completely different word, it is gender-specific.

I will that the males pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting. And so, when the church comes together, the divine pattern is this, that the men, this is behavior. How do you behave in the house of God? The men pray everywhere.

Now, why? Is woman's prayer not important? Paul obviously didn't think that. In fact, in chapter 5, when he's talking about finance of the widows, the one that should get the finance of the assembly, the support of the assembly before the welfare state existed, it says in verse 4, but if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to show piety at home and requite their parents. And verse 5, now she that is a widow indeed and desolate, she's got nobody to care for her, trusts in God and continues in supplication and prayers night and day, but she that lived in pleasure is dead.

So, what he's saying is, look, this is a worthwhile investment of the assembly's finances to support this desolate widow who gives herself night and day to pray. Like, invest in this sister. She is worth her weight in gold.

What is she doing for the spiritual health of this assembly? She's praying night and day. Paul exceedingly values the prayers of a woman, but when it comes to church order, he said, I will let the males pray. Now, why such an emphasis on the male? Because males, guys, we're lazy spiritually.

And I've been in churches where they ignore this scripture, and I've been in prayer meetings, and I guess who does all the praying? The women. And the guys are happy. They're going to play golf tomorrow.

They're just there, and they're going to check out. Sorry to say it, but that's the reality. God says, no, that's not the way my assembly works.

My assembly works in a different way altogether. I want the men to be spiritual leaders. And they're the ones who are going to lead the assembly in prayer.

And just a quick point, and then we're done because it's eight o'clock, but I wanted to say this, that sometimes people use pragmatic arguments, pragmatism. So, what they say is, well, look, if we divide up and we have the guys in this meeting room, and then the sisters can be back there where the coffee is, then we get twice as many people praying. So, this is value for money.

That is completely false theology and false thinking. Let me tell you why. Because in the assembly, when I pray, like I'm going to pray at the end of this meeting, I'm not going to pray as an individual.

I'm going to pray as a representative of the whole. So, I'm not going to be praying, I, me, my, and myself, but we, us, our, right? And as I'm praying, hopefully you're going to pray along with me and you're going to say, amen. Yes, so be it.

That's exactly what we want to see. And then what happens is at the end of it, when you all add your amen, the whole assembly just prayed, right? I went as a representative, but I took you all with me. We're all praying.

You're praying along with me. You can't have more than all. The whole assembly prays every time somebody prays representatively.

And so, it's important that we do that. I learned that the hard way. I was preaching in an assembly and afterwards I was convicted during my own sermon.

That happens. Preachers have got saved during their own sermons. I don't know if you know that, but there are certain preachers actually got saved while they were preaching.

And actually, people in the congregation recognize it. And one lady stood up and said, the parson just got saved. They could tell he got saved as he was preaching.

Well, I was convicted this day. And at the end of the message, I was confessing my conviction. And a guy came up to me afterwards.

He almost nailed me to the wall. And he said, you think you were the only person convicted today? We were all convicted. You should have prayed for all of us, not just for yourself.

And he said, when you pray, you pray representatively, not individually. I never forgot it. It was a good lesson, a lesson I needed to learn.

So what can we say? Disciplines of the Christian life, back to the basics. Back to the basics. Pray.

If there's any future for assembly testimony in North America, it will only occur if there's a revival in the prayer meeting and that we become a people who are expressing continually our dependence on God, because we can't do this ourselves. We've had years of trying, and it doesn't work. It fails miserably.

So what are we going to do? Maybe some of us need to make an adjustment to our lives and say, Lord, I've got, I've drifted. I used to pray more diligently. I used to be more faithful.

I used to be more orderly in prayer. I used to be more, but I've kind of let things slip. It's a very dangerous thing to let things slip because you get into a slippy slidey state.

It's hard to stop. Maybe some of us need to recalibrate, readjust, get back to the discipline, exercise yourselves rather unto Godliness, the discipline of prayer. May God help us.

Let's pray. Our God and Father, we are so thankful for this marvelous privilege that we can come into the holiest of all, not because any of us deserve this, but because of the merits of Thy dear beloved Son, the Lord Jesus, and His precious blood that was shed for us at Calvary, that gives us access to the throne room of the universe. And Father, we would come and ask that you would indeed make us afresh a people of prayer, that we might be like Thy Son, the Lord Jesus, who was indeed, although verily God was also that dependent man.

Oh, Father, help us to be like Him, to be a people who constantly are in communion with Thee, the living God, constantly seeking Thy blessing, Thy help, Thy leading, Thy direction, Thy empowerment in our lives and service. So, Father, we pray for a revival of the assembly testimony in South Florida, and particularly

that this reviving work would begin with the people of God having a deeper exercise about their prayer and will give Thee the glory in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

Thank you so much, Brother. I just want to make a quick announcement, only for the people who are here. There's coffee and cake at the back.

Thank you so much for coming, this evening, coming out this evening, accepting our invitation. Tomorrow, we will start at 3 30. We'll go from 3 30 to 4 30.

And we'll have some light supper. We'll have some chili, right? Chilies or chili? Chili. And at six o'clock, we will start our second meeting.

And then of course, Sunday, we'll have the 11 o'clock meeting. Brother Mike will be with us. Coffee and cake outside.

One more thing. Tomorrow, you don't have to listen to me singing. We'll have the youth from the Indian Assembly leading us in songs.

So thank you so much for that. Thank you. Thank you.

Hi! Sorry about that. I was so loud. I'm sorry.

Sorry for being loud. I think it works better. Yeah.

Than the other one. Well, thank you for being here.

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