

How to Develop a Habit of Personal Prayer

by T.V. Thomas

Developing a personal prayer habit requires scheduling an appointment, setting a specific amount of time, guarding that time, and finding a place for prayer.

Scripture: Genesis 1:1

Topics: "Personal Prayer", "Effective Worship"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of dividing our prayer time into four parts: adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication. He encourages listeners to make time for each of these aspects in their prayer life, rather than focusing on just one. The speaker also emphasizes the need for a quiet and dedicated space for prayer, suggesting the use of earplugs or other gadgets to create a peaceful environment. Additionally, he encourages listeners to develop a balanced prayer life by incorporating acts of adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication into their prayers.

Transcript

In the next 45 minutes or so on how to develop a personal prayer habit. How to develop a personal prayer habit. Sorry, I don't have a handout because I decided to do this after I listened to Pastor Joe.

Friends, all of us have habits. Some of us have good habits, others are not so good. And if you want to know whether you have what your good habits are or your bad habits are, ask someone who you live with or you relate to.

They will tell you. If you don't ask, they're telling somebody else. Telling somebody else your bad habits.

So all of us have habits and habits are cultivated. Habits are cultivated. Sometimes we pick up habits from somebody else, but they're cultivated.

They're reinforced. We do it time and time again. And so it's also important that we develop personal prayer habits.

One of the saddest things in the Church of Jesus Christ is we tell a new believer they have to pray, but we never seldom do. We really teach them how to pray. We tell them to read the Word, but we don't tell them how to read the Word.

You know, so as a new Christian, you sometimes start with Genesis. You're discouraged by numbers if you get that far. And so one of the things, things that are absolutely part of our life, we learned some time or the other.

And there are many, many Christians in our Bible preaching churches who do not have a meaningful prayer, a personal prayer experience simply because nobody has actually taken the time to teach them and show them how. So about every person I disciple, I've committed myself to teaching them over a period of time. I usually do not disciple and finish in six weeks.

Usually it's a year, year and a half that I take a new Christian through step by step. And with my schedule, as it is, it is never weekly. Sometimes two weeks from now, sometimes nine days from now, sometimes it's three and a half weeks from now, but over a year and a half to two years I try to cultivate in that person some of the basic things that they must develop and use for life.

And so personal prayer habit is one of them. Number one, I want to give you a few steps. Number one, schedule an appointment for prayer.

Schedule an appointment for prayer. When I make this statement, I want to make a distinction between four spiritual disciplines, four spiritual activities that often are used confusingly from the pulpit and therefore the pew is totally in disarray. We use it back and forth and so we're going to talk about four different disciplines that I identify.

Number one is personal devotions. Personal devotion sometimes called as choir time, time with God. It's a daily commitment where the focus primarily is reading God's Word.

So if you use some kind of a format, reading seven verses or 15 verses, as Joe said, he goes through three chapters. Every day you read through those passages of Scripture. So the focus is on reading God's Word and asking how, what it means and how it applies to your life.

And during personal devotions, the focus is on Bible reading, some prayer, but it's daily. So you pray for some things. So personal devotions is not prayer time.

You have some prayer in personal devotions. So I tell a new Christian that I'm discipling, I say, if you're not committed to personal devotions, you should not eat for that day. No PD, no FD, no personal devotions.

That means you're not planning to have food for the day because our physical bodies need physical food. Your spiritual body, your spiritual aspect of your body needs spiritual food and you do it through personal devotions. How long do you take? Anywhere from 15 to 20 to 30 minutes.

Now those of you who can afford longer is great, but we are talking about real, being realistic, being realistic. When you have a farm, you have a job, you have a family, you have responsibilities and you're not in full-time ministry. Friends, I will tell you something regular, something that you're going to defend, you are going to protect and you're going to really pursue where you become realistic.

If you are not realistic, you're not going to develop habits. You need to be realistic and if you think 20 minutes is too long, start with 15. It's better to start something systematic and steady than trying to hit something that somebody else has put as their goal and fail and be discouraged and be accused by Satan.

So personal devotions is a non-negotiable. Now you may say, are you trying to be legalistic? No, I'm not trying to be legalistic. That's what it takes to develop a habit.

So I tell people, if you are not ready to do PD today, there's no FD. That's a great motivation. Food is a great motivation.

Hunger pangs are a great motivation to commit and say, I need to do my personal devotions. Second activity is what I call personal Bible study. Bible study.

Personal Bible study is when you are going to dig in. You're going to use other resources to help you. You're going to use the Bible dictionary.

You're going to use a study Bible maybe. You're maybe going to use a commentary. Other things to help you to really study.

And how do you start? What do you study? You may study a book. You may study Philipians. Or you may study a theme.

The holiness of God. You may study the Psalms. Or you may study a character.

Perhaps today you got fascinated by Isaac. You know, and you say, hey, I want to study about Isaac. You know, he's almost hidden.

Today we dug him out. Right? So whatever it is that really captures your fascination or captures your interest. And for a little while you're going to stay and study at your pace.

You're going to study what's helpful for you. Or what you're interested in. Or what you're struggling in.

You know, I had a person that I disciplined. And he was struggling with the whole issue of giving to the Lord. He just struggled.

So finally I said to him, I said, I'll tell you what. I'll give you a couple of books that talks about this topic. God and money.

I want you to go in. Look up all the passages, scriptures they make reference to. And do a study.

Eight months later, he was a changed man. Giving to God is not a problem for him. Why? Because he was convinced, biblically, this is the right thing to do.

Now he cannot give enough. I didn't take the time to teach him. I could.

But I made him go. Dig. And I just gave him two key books to get him into that topic.

And life changed for him. He's changed for eternity, actually. Because he has got a new perspective of why he should make money.

And how he should use it. For the glory of God. So friends, personal Bible study, you can't do it daily unless you're a pastor.

Most of us don't have the luxury. So personal Bible study, you may want to say once a week or twice a week. I'm going to set aside one hour.

Or one and a half hours each time. I'm going to dig in. I'm going to schedule it.

You know, schedule it. And all of our lives are not exact rhythms of another week. So you may say, next week my schedule looks like I'm going to do Bible study here and Bible study there.

And you keep it. You keep your, almost your books open. You come back to it.

You study it. You leave it. And how long? To the extent that you feel you have felt you've exhausted it for at this time on the topic.

Could be three months. Could be six months. Could be five weeks.

You study the theme. Understand it. Now those of you who have to lead a Bible study, if you have to lead a home Bible study, or you have to lead, you have to teach Sunday school, a great way to, if you have a Sunday school coming up on the spring semester for next year, you can find the quarterly all the topic and start doing that as part of your personal Bible study.

A series that I'm going to preach next spring. I did my Bible study in it last year. So most of my sermons come from my Bible studies that I've already done.

And out of that comes the culling of what needs to be spoken at a conference. The conference I'm going to speak to in Chicago. You know the material was done by last November.

I just tidied up to get ready for Chicago. The theme was given to me. I used it as a wonderful Bible study, personal study.

I got a lot more than I can give. I wish I was preaching 18 times. They've only given me six.

I'm going to ask them to invite me back. Once a week, sometimes some of you are people who study, you need longer time. So it may be once a week, two hours or three hours.

You want to sit and study. For some of you three hours study, it looks like a life sentence. So you break it up into two, one hour and dig in.

Highlight, borrow books, whatever it takes to help study the topic. Thirdly is personal prayer. So back up in under personal Bible study, you're prayerful as you do your study, but it's not prayer.

You may pray and say, God help me to glean some things in my digging through this topic. And then you go into your study. But in personal prayer, the focus is on extended time for prayer.

And in personal prayer, you may take a glimpse at the Bible, but you're not going to do that for Bible study. It's not personal devotions. It's sometimes just to frame your mind to focus on the Lord.

And you may want to say twice or three times a week, I'm going to set aside time for personal prayer on top of personal Bible study and on top of personal devotion. And you may ask the question, how long? If you have never done it, start with 10 minutes, succeed with 10 minutes. Then God may take you to 15 minutes and then 20 minutes.

Don't try to run the Olympics when you have not run a hundred yards. Be realistic. Don't try to put somebody else's spiritual pilgrimage as your pathway.

God knows who you are. You make your pace according to His promptings. The worst thing you can do is say, oh, I went to the conference, I heard so and so, and I want to do that.

You may get there sometime. You may. But God wants to develop you.

So extended time of prayer, a glimpse in the Word to focus on the Lord, just to read, how to study, and two or three times a week you focus on personal prayer. Why are you there? For prayer. Fourthly, personal retreat.

We are not talking about church retreat, and we are not talking about men's retreat, and we are not talking about women's retreat, and we are not talking about all the other wonderful retreats that are there. We are talking about personal retreat. A personal retreat is an extended time where you are uninterrupted, where you can soak before the Lord, where you want to be totally refreshed.

You want to have extra time to sleep. You have to have extra time to read, extra time to pray. You just want to wait before the Lord.

I would recommend at least once a year, if possibly twice a year, that you take a personal retreat. It's a great time to look back and look at the present and look into the future. It doesn't always have to be away from home.

It doesn't have to be always an expensive place. It doesn't have to be always in a far off place, but if your home is going to be interrupted and it's a place that it's a high traffic area, then you may want to figure out creatively within the body of Christ to see if you can use somebody else's home when they are away. We can build, we can bless each other by saying, I'm going to be away for nine days, out in Arizona, out in BC.

Anybody wants to use our home, you know, it's available. But you go and park yourself for two days, a day and a half or a full day. You can go as an individual.

If you're a couple, you go there. But as a couple, you may want to decide you're going to have a personal time and a couple time. If you don't plan it, it won't happen, so you have to plan.

You know, we're going to have a personal time and a couple time and then a personal time and a couple time. Now, personally, if you can do it more often, it's great. But I want to say at least twice a year, if you can say, I'm going to take one Saturday or I'm going to be every third Friday is free for me.

I'm going to take the time and going to spend time with God, listening to Him. Now, when there is an emergency, when there is a decision that needs to be made, there's a crisis looming, there is a struggle, difficulty, sometimes you may have to do an emergency personal retreat to hear from God. See, when you make space, when you plan space in your schedule, God knows about it.

And when you make space in your schedule, God is excited about it. Because He's not focusing on you. He's focusing on Him.

He says, hey, I'm looking for the date. He's really going to listen. Okay.

So, these four, the problem has been the pulpit has been responsible for a lot of confusion. And we have never taken a new Christian and said, this is what it takes. And friends, I want to tell you, so when we talk about reading God's Word, what are you talking about? Talking about personal Bible study? Are you talking about devotions? We need to be very clear.

Helping people in the Christian life. Secondly, so we talked about setting, scheduling an appointment for prayer. And I've shown you which is personal prayer that I talked about.

Secondly, you need to set a specific amount of time for prayer. So, you say at eight o'clock on Tuesday night, I'm going to have my personal time of prayer. You need to also decide, I'm going to pray for 20 minutes.

Why? If you do not set the time, at least in the early stages of learning the the art of praying, your mind starts saying, am I done? Am I done? Am I done? So, get an alarm clock. Put it right there. And you know, till it rings, make sure there's batteries or it's plugged in.

Till it goes, I can keep going. You don't have to worry that I've scheduled for 20 minutes and if I'll be caught up in prayer, I won't make it to my friend's place who said I'll be there 30 minutes from now. You know you will get up from your prayer time.

So, set a specific amount of time. Thirdly, guard your time for prayer. If you schedule it, schedule it carefully.

But once you schedule it on your day a week, protect it from being hijacked. Because I want to tell you, friend, Satan is so interested in distracting you from your prayer time, he will send all kinds of opportunities to distract you. And you need to guard your prayer time just like your appointment with the specialist.

To see a specialist is difficult. Once you get it, you want to get there. So when people call you, you need to say, I am busy.

I can't make it. Because you need to be wise that you put it at the right time. You need to think through your day and you decide, you know, that that's likely not a time it's going to be competing with anything that is legitimate.

Now, don't put your prayer time the same time as worship time. That's not a good thing. You're supposed to be in the house of the Lord worshipping.

Not in Bedside Baptist or Pillow Presbyterian or Lakeside Lutheran. You need to be in the house of the Lord. So you need to think through your schedule and say, where is the best time? You don't want to get competition and it can be protected.

But if there is competition, you say, I'm busy. I usually don't tell why I'm busy. I just say I'm busy.

I don't have to act super spiritual. You know, don't have to say I'm having my prayer time. I just say I'm busy.

I can't make it. And friends, you need to guard it almost legalistically. You're only going to break it if the house is on fire or child is in emergency.

That's the only way you develop discipline. Fourthly, find a place for prayer. You can pray any place.

We know that. God is accessible from any place on the universe. But it helps to have a specific place because it helps condition you to do what you came there to do.

You know, you go in the kitchen, what do you do? Either you're going to prepare a meal or rate what is prepared, right? So my kids growing up, they were all into basketball. You know, I had to tell every one of the three, they'll come back from basketball practice. They will have the ball in their hand and they're coming to tell and talk to mama how the whole experience went and who shot the goal or what competition it was and who they're going to face next week.

And you know, sometimes they come and they're dribbling their ball in the kitchen. Once in a while I have to say, do you know where you are? This is not the basketball court. This is called mama's kitchen.

See, a place conditions you and also protects you from other people. Other people will know. My kids know when I'm in praying, don't disturb.

It helps you and helps others to behave accordingly. So find a place. You know, in Matthew chapter 6 verse 6, Jesus said, but you when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door, pray to your father who is in secret and your father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

Some of the earlier translations you used to say, but when you pray, go into your closet. I'll tell you friends, when I first became a Christian, I looked at the word closet. The only thing I could think of was a broom closet and a broom closet doesn't have much space.

It's not the cleanest place in the house. You open some broom closet, several things could fall down, even if it's not on an airline. And so I used to wonder, what is this passage? I want to tell you friends, you know what is he talking about? He's saying, you pray, you go into your inner room.

He's talking about the bed chamber. And as Pastor Joe earlier said, prayer is a conversation. It's a dialogue with God.

It's a dialogue with God between two lovers, God and you. He's talking about going to the inner chamber, the bed chamber where you have total privacy so that you can have total intimacy with God and total secrecy of what takes place. That's what the scriptures Jesus is talking about.

Go into your inner chamber where you won't be disturbed. You won't be seen. You and the Lord, you will hear from him.

He will whisper into your ears what he wants to tell you as his beloved. You can be totally vulnerable to him and he can be open to you. He wants to share secrets with you long before it takes place.

Friends, as we cultivate that intimacy with God, we'll hear from God. We will even hear promises from God. He will even show you some cautions you need to take because he wants to direct and lead us individually in our Christian life.

And most Christians cannot tell you of their experiences of hearing from God and being led by God simply because they have not been in a place where he could speak. But in the inner chamber of a bedroom, you're focused on your beloved and your beloved is focused on you and you are totally vulnerable to each other. He or she will share what they want to share about things that burden them or concern them or the things that cause fear in them or whatever.

Friends, he wants that experience from you and me. He's waiting in the spiritual bed chambers of our life to commune with us, to reach that intimacy that we in Western Hemisphere doesn't seem to get to

because we are in a rat race and the rats are winning. Find a place for prayer.

Friends, it needs to be a functional place in the sense we all don't pray the same way. You know, the average Westerner thinks prayer needs to be knelt down. Friends, that comes from a European cathedral concept of prayer.

Nothing wrong with it, but that's not the only way. The Jew seldom knelt and prayed. How does the Jew pray? The Jew, often, most of their prayers were standing up.

Look at the Wailing Wall. They stand and pray and sing. When do they get down to their knees when they're desperate, when things go wrong? And friends, that's why in Scripture in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus was so desperate as the darkness of the hour was coming.

He finally could not just stand and pray, but he went down on his knees and lay prostrate before the ground. That's the Greek word. Friends, some people pray best sitting.

Some people pray best kneeling. Some people pray best walking. I'm one of those individuals.

My best prayer times is when there's movement because that's how I'm wired. I like to keep moving. I like to see, you see, you know, if I sit in a place and pray, I will go into zombie land before too long.

And some of my best prayer times is while I'm driving. You know, and I prayed, I pray, you know, I love listening to music and sermons and all, but once in a while I get into prayer time and I do not know how many accidents I've crossed in the highways in North America because there are people who are looking through the thing and this is before hand phones and mobile phones and cell phones and they will say, who is he talking to? And there are truck drivers who will speed up and go beside me and look behind to see whether there's somebody lying at the back I'm talking to because I'm praying with my hands and excited and I'm talking and keep moving. And I want to tell you, I do not know how many accidents I caused in heaven.

The numbers will be told. I need a, you know, prayer place where I can walk around. I talk.

I raise my hands. I do exactly what I do in preaching and I, you know, that's me. That's exciting.

Invigorating. Never go to sleep standing up and walking. Haven't yet.

Find out what is the rest. You see, some people would like to dance before the Lord. See, we raise your hands.

Some people like to lie prostrate before God. Dangerous for me. I've been sleeping with it some people like to lie on their back and talk to the ceiling.

Find the best posture that makes prayer workable for you and do it because it's your personal prayer time. Obviously, you want to find a quiet place. You know, quietness is relative.

You cannot always, if it's in a personal house, of course, you can control quietness. But quietness is relative, friends. If you lived in Hong Kong, an 18-story building apartment and you, the sound of the traffic never dies.

It's high and higher. Thank God for earplugs. Now they have soft earplugs.

Praise God. I carry them in my briefcase traveling because I cannot control all the places I'm in. The airplane for one.

I wear earplugs. Hey, it doesn't matter what's happening around. If I want to pray or I want to sleep, those soft earplugs cuts the world out.

Whatever it takes, friends. Whatever gadget you can get to help you to find a quiet place, find it. Use it for the glory of God.

Fifthly, you need to design a plan for prayer. So that 15 minutes you plan to pray or your 20 minutes you plan to pray or your 35 or 40 minutes you plan to pray, you need to design a plan for prayer. What do I mean by plan? You need to figure out that you develop a balanced prayer life.

What do we mean by a balanced prayer life? You know, we all have a tendency to be narrow and focus in one direction. So I say use the word acts, adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication. Four parts.

Divide your time into four parts. You see, some of us like to praise God and sing and we love adoration. Some of us are into thanksgiving only in supplication.

We all say, give me, give me, give me, give me, please help me, help me, guide me, guard me, provide for me. But friends, you need to also have times of confession, times of thanksgiving. So if you do not work at it, you will end up focusing on one dimension, depending upon your experience and your personality.

Some people are just into confession, just confession. Others avoid it all the way. No, you need to say, is there a confession I need to make? Because sins of omission, sins of commission.

Let the Spirit of God, you know, go through your life in the last day or last two to three days and see things where God wants you to confess if He has already not convicted you. Let the laser beam of the Holy Spirit scan your life and keep short accounts with God. Friends, but you also need to be looking for things to be thankful for.

You know, friends, if you develop a thankful attitude and spirit in your personal prayer, it will come through in your public demeanor as well. So to keep balance, and I'm not trying to say you have to be exact, but to say generally my prayer will have these four elements. Sometimes there's more in supplication because you've got some news about a missionary that you're supporting that is going through struggles and you may take a little more time, or there is an issue in the church, or there's an issue of a family that goes to your church that you need to pray for, or an issue in the community that has got everybody upset because of a major accident that took place with the school bus or whatever.

It may, certain weeks, change a little bit, but friends, you need to make sure there are four parts to the prayer time. Sixthly, take your Bible and other prayer helps to the place of prayer. You know, you take your Bible because you just do not know when God is going to say, I want you to turn that passage of scripture.

I'll go to this place. Or you say, remember what the pastor preached about three weeks ago? I want there was some cross-reference that was made and God wants you to look at that passage. It will come there.

Or there's a promise that you want to claim and apply to a supplication issue that you're praying for, but you also want to take other prayer helps. What are the prayer helps? There could be a world prayer map that perhaps you could get and put it in for your prayer time. Or you can get Operation World that has all the countries of the world divided into different days, talking about the population, the number of Christians, the challenges of the national church, the number of missionaries that are there, the rate and rapidity at which the gospel is advancing.

That's a helpful thing. Or you definitely want to take your church bulletin. You know, church bulletins are made not to keep busy when the pastor is preaching.

Church bulletins are fuel for prayer. Church bulletins become those things of actual names of people and say, these three people are in hospital. Two of them I know quite well, the third person I do not know, but it is in the bulletin.

Therefore, we need to pray for this person because they are not feeling well. Or the prayer bulletin talks about a missionary coming home and it will be a speaker three weeks from now. Hey, that is prayer.

Pray for their travel. Pray for their family. Pray for the field they're leaving behind when they come to your church.

Or you start praying meaningfully and prepare that person's ministry to your hearts and the hearts of other people. It's a wonderful time to get the prayer letters that come. You know, I go to church after church.

I'm in 40-50 churches in a given year and I go there and many good Bible preaching churches have tons of prayer letters there never picked up. Sent by the missionary agency or sent by a missionary's relative who sacrificially prints it out and ships it to you because you are supposed to be a praying church and a supporting church. But they're not picked up.

Friends, we are destroying the trees on the hills of BC and not advancing the kingdom of God. You need to be serious. Take the prayer bulletin.

You can't pray every day, but you put it in the prayer basket or whatever and when your prayer time comes you pick up that bag, pick up that file, go there and have a prayer time. You have got all the fuel that you need. You have a church bulletin, a denomination of prayer bulletins if you get, all that a mission agency, missionary letters.

Friends, anything that uses can be part of the fuel. You know, missionaries walk away from here. You know, I have a frequent question.

I ask missionaries again and again. All over. It doesn't matter whether there is a missionary I support.

Whenever I meet missionaries all over the world, especially in the West, I usually ask them, what's the difference you've seen in the last three furloughs that you've made back to Europe or to Canada, U.S., Australia? You know what they say? You have less and less people praying for us than when we first started because those intercessors who used to cry out to God have been translated. They're sitting in a different place. They're no more living.

We have not filled the gap of intercessors we need for the missionary cause of the church. Secondly and lastly, it's helpful to start a prayer diary. And when I talk about diary, I'm not talking about a three-inch

binder.

It could be a small little notebook that you can even slip into the Bible cover of your Bible. You know, if you have one of those things that that is a cover, you can slip in so that it's yours. It's a private notebook.

And you may want to divide the diary under acts, adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication. Or you want to divide it by seven days of the week. Whatever.

There's no perfect way. But friends, the issue is you want to put things down. You're not, you know, if you want to write a journal, some people are into journals, others are not.

For some people, writing a journal is helpful. For me, it's tedium. For me.

But I praise God for those who can write journals. But this prayer diary is to put down things, write down things, write up names of people that you pray for. And it's there.

Prayer requests that come in that are very close to you, not general. People who are lost in your family that you want them to come to Christ. You know, whatever category.

Some diary is personal. Mine is not seen by my wife. My wife's, I've never looked at it ever.

It's personal. Now, I travel, and because I travel and I go into countries that is not encouraging to the Christian faith and Christian religion, I don't carry a notebook because I carry post-its. I carry a lot of post-its.

Thank God for the colored post-its that have come, pink and yellow and all the colors. So my prayer diary, because 70% I'm operating away from home, are post-its. And if I want to destroy it, I can destroy it very quickly before I go into another country so that no person's name and no person's this thing is caught.

And I can go in and come out. And so, doesn't matter what the format is, the issue is have something that triggers, something that records what you're praying for and praying about. Friends, very simple.

It has to work for you. What works for your spouse may not work for you. Do what works for you because you are developing your own personal prayer habit.

If it doesn't work for you, don't wear it. Find another size. We do that with clothes.

We do that with shoes. We do that with cars. We do that with clothes, with suits.

We do that with gloves. Why not do it for prayer? Amen? Any questions? I want you to be practical. This is practical, friends.

This is what it takes to develop the supply. Yes. Prayer and request.

You know, I mean, it's just that the two words have been separated. It should be together. It should be a prayer request.

Prayer request is that has come to you from somebody usually. You know, a church calls, there's a prayer line in the church. There's a prayer request has come.

Please pray for Bernice in Burnaby who is facing surgery tomorrow. It's a request that comes. Anything else? Yes.

Right. When you pray for your personal needs, it is petition. So under supplication, there are two categories.

Supplication, intercession is praying for the needs of others. Needs of the school, needs of the church, needs of missionaries, needs of the nation, Christians, non-Christians, situations you know. That's intercession.

Petition is when you take your personal needs and say, Lord, I'm scared about the checkup I'm going for. That's being honest with God. Anybody else? You know, pray in your mind is okay sometimes, but it's dangerous to do that all the time because He wants us to verbalize.

He wants us to talk. Many times we have to pray non-verbally because of the situation. You know, so when I sit on the plane and God is telling me I wanted to go talk to that person and I'm not going to verbalize and say, Lord told me what to do and 40 other, 40 rows of people hear me.

Right. So there are times that but when you're in personal prayer, there is a verbal part and a listening part. But if all prayer is non-verbal, there's a problem.

Why did He give you a tongue? He wants to hear us. Declare. And sometimes when we declare or when we say verbally, it's more real than when we just think about.

So it's helpful. Helpful. For some people, they write out their prayers.

And some dimensions of prayer or some situations, some people, they write out their prayers. It becomes meaningful. They're praying to God, but they're writing their prayer.

They're writing their prayer as they're praying. They may not keep it. Some of them keep.

Yes. The prayer of the unsaved? I don't think so. Because which I will share tomorrow night, Christian prayer is a relational prayer.

No, it's a Christian prayer to the living God is a relational prayer. It's prayer that you are making to a person who is related to you because of the Lord Jesus Christ. A non-Christian prayer has no relationship.

So they cry for salvation. God will hear. He's waiting for that call.

They're waiting for that desire, salvation. All the rest is we may say God in His mercy may have acted. Maybe it's not because they prayed.

Maybe it's because of God's grace. He stepped in and was preparing them for an environment to hear the gospel. Or in their desperate need, they suddenly say this could not have been possible without a sovereign intervention.

Any other questions before we close? Yes. It's not my view that counts. It's what the Bible says.

First John chapter one very clearly says if we sin, right? We know we sin and we confess our sin and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us of all sin. So that is though Christ has died for us sin, our experience of forgiveness is ongoing. And that forgiveness comes because we recognize this sin.

He has convicted us and we need to confess it so that we experience forgiveness and cleansing and then we ask for filling. So it's important. The scripture very clearly says that.

Yeah, right. But right. And I've also heard people say it is, but he wants us to experience it.

You know, it's not positional salvation. It's experiential salvation that is worked out. So in Philippians, we have two principles that in Philippians 1.6 he talks about that he will fulfill it to the day of the Lord.

But two chapters later or second chapter or chapter three where he talks about that we are to work out our salvation. So we want God to, God will work in that salvation blessings and we are to work out our salvation in fear and tremor. So we work out what God works in.

And one of the working out is when he convicts us, we confess and recognize and that's the point of learning to say, hey, that's wrong. And he tells us why it's wrong. And that experience of true confession and true forgiveness resulting in true cleansing becomes a marker to say, I know what it is to break that law or do that thing because true confession is painful.

It's painful because you've hurt God or hurt God and somebody else and that confession helps you. So I think we have not taught more about confession in our churches than we should. You know, we have reacted.

We, there are service after service that will go through in evangelical churches with no sense of remorse for sin of the weak. But friends, we need to pause, not just at good, at communion time. We need to pause on Sundays and say, we are not worthy to come to you, Lord.

We are sinful people. We live among sinful people. If you're wrong somebody, if they know about it, you need to tell them.

You have to ask God to, but you also have to go deal with that person. Now, there are things you do that that person perhaps doesn't know and God has convicted you, you need to deal with that. If the consequence has not come, I have to think, I need to deal with that, deal with that.

But sometimes we can hurt people when you have not, when they do not know you have hurt them and God will give you wisdom on that. So if I've said something wrong about somebody else and I realize that, hey, I found out facts different and the time between I said and the time I find out is 20 minutes and nobody has shared that and I call back and say, hey, what I told you about that person is not true. The reason he could not submit the report earlier was simply because of he had problems with his computer and I give the impression because he is sloppy.

I don't have to go tell them I told so and so you're sloppy. I just made another Arabic for nothing. So we need to be sensitive.

The circle of confession needs to be the circle of offense and the timing is important, the way said is important. It's not a blurt out. Everything doesn't have to be known by everybody but if everybody knows about it, then you have to deal with at that level.

So the circle of confession needs to be the circle of offense. Okay. One last question and we are going to close and there's no extra price for it.

Okay. Confess your faults to one another. You know, for me, I'm trying to think where was it that I was going to cover that? Oh, maybe it's not here.

You know, if we really are true community, you know, and the church has not worked at being true community, you know, they're very poor examples of what real community is. But if we really function as the community that God desired us to be, church will be a safe place to come and most of our Evangelical churches is the last place you want to confess or say to anybody that you have a problem, right? We are so, why? Because we have, we, community takes trust, community trust, community sees that there's a hospital, there's a family, this is not the shooting range. And we add community or circles of community within the community.

Say you had a small group or a cell group and within that group there is confidentiality and there is support and there is openness and honesty. That group can then become a place where you can say, you know, I want to say to you, I'm really upset with my boss. I just can't handle going to work.

You know, it could be everything. It could be, it could be sin, but it could also be sin that I hate my boss. That is it.

But a gun or shooter, you know, all that, the sinful, you see, sin is not only after it has happened. When you, when you even consider in your heart, you know, I have a tendency to do this. That openness to help me, pray me through and, you know, as somebody else come and say, hey, I used to feel that way a few years back and this is how I handled it.

All that, confessing one another. If only our churches could express that and create that kind of forum, I will tell you the world will come running to us. The world will be attracted.

Because that means there's absolute love. I love you regardless of what you did. I'm going to love you even if you fail me, if you disappoint us and you embarrassed us.

I'm going to love you because you are a fellow believer. We are part of the family of God. We have the same last name.

We have that kind of trust. You can confess. No, no, it doesn't matter.

You know, why? You don't have to worry about that. You know, but I, but you see, those kind of communities and I wish our churches, because our rugged individualism in this country, this society destroys it because it has infiltrated the church to the extent that we cannot believe how much damage it has done to the expression of the church in this world. I tell you, if you have a church that's that kind of supportive, loving, caring, you accept it not because how good you are.

You accept it because you're a fellow child of God and we are in it together. We are going to get through it. We are going to become overcomers.

What does it take to make you a person of victory? Because this time it's you. Tomorrow, day after tomorrow, it could be me. That kind of honesty and openness and trust.

Can you imagine if that happens? And that's what God wants the church to be. The redeemed community. Continuously forgiving each other.

Continuously bearing each other burden. Continuously encouraging one another. Continuously building one another up.

And all the one another's put together. Friends, if you could have a community that hits 90 percent of that, I'll tell you, the world will come to us in droves. And I long for.

Every so often I see it. In many parts of the world, I see it more often than here. When I see it, I say, this is the church.

This becomes a magnetic community. This is something that the world cannot reproduce in whatever form. So friends, the local church, and Joe would agree with me, the local church is God's primary centerpiece of the redemption plan.

Primary. Nothing comes close to it. And when the church meets friends, God meets with you.

When the G8 leaders meet, they meet with each other. But when a group of believers, however small, when they gather in Jesus' name to worship Him, God has called the meeting and He wants to meet with you. Friends, ecclesiology is the weakest doctrine in North American church.

If we only could get a glimpse of what the local church is to be, our expectations would be higher. God will show up. Because why? We come to meet with Him.

You're not coming to meet a worship team. You're not coming to hear a preacher. All that may be there, but I'll tell you, we came primarily to meet with Him and He will love to come down among us.

That's why I'm about and involved in reviving the church. As much as I love to see the lost one, if the church is not positioned right, they can't handle the ones who come to Christ. When the church is positioned right, oh I tell you, the lost will have a place to be accepted, to be loved, to be cared for, to be encouraged.

Because why? That's what you do with each other. Amen. Shall we pray? Father, we want to thank you for our time together.

We pray for tonight. We pray for our brother Bill as he prepares and ministers God's word. And may this place once again be a place where you are lifted up.

You are lifted up as we come together with many others tonight. And may you speak to us clearly and powerfully. And we'll give you praise and preeminence in everything we do.

We pray this in Christ's name. Amen and amen. Thank you.

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