

Mike Bickle: Igniting a Generation in Day-and-Night Prayer

Mike Bickle planned to practice medicine—but the Holy Spirit planned to use him to ignite a generation with a passion for Jesus that fuels day-and-night prayer.

“I wanted to like be J. Hudson Taylor, the missionary doctor from England who went to China in the 1800s,” Mike tells *Charisma*. “He was my hero. I read three biographies of his life in high school. When I got accepted into medical school, a man asked me if I had asked the Lord about it. How could it not be the Lord?”

With less than 100 of about 8,000 applicants accepted, that was the big question. Nevertheless, Mike pressed in to pursue the Lord’s will and was surprised to discover Christ the Healer had a different destiny in mind for him—a destiny that would see thousands of youths impacted in his generation.

Despite Mike’s choice to pursue God’s call to raise up a generation of youth instead of his medical missionary dreams, he’s still seen lives saved and bodies healed in the name of Jesus—the Bridegroom King—through his ministry. And he’s contending in prayer to see God heal our land.

How Mike Bickle Discovered Enjoyable Prayer

That’s the story Mike never tells. The storyline most people know starts in 1982, when he launched a church that would become known as Metro Christian Fellowship and joined the Association of Vineyard Churches led by John Wimber.

Prophetic ministers like Bob Jones, Paul Cain and John Paul Jackson were part of that church, which grew to over 3,000

members. After 17 years, Mike resigned to birth a new missions organization centered on 24/7 prayer with live worship known globally as the International House of Prayer of Kansas City, or IHOP.

IHOP officially launched May 7, 1999, and went 24/7 on Sept. 19, 1999. This was no small miracle, considering Mike admits he once found prayer boring. He often tells the story of his determination to pray one hour every night in his college apartment—and struggling through the entire 60 minutes until he stumbled upon a promise in Isaiah 56:7 about enjoyable prayer.

“My journey to discovering enjoying prayer started when I began to see God in a different way—to see the tenderness of the Father’s heart along with His generosity and kindness and to see Jesus as One who delighted in His people and who actually enjoyed relating to them. In my college years, I had seen God more like a well-meaning but stern football coach, and if we obeyed Him, then we would win,” says Mike, who played college football at the University of Missouri. He actually committed his life to Christ in 1971 after hearing Dallas Cowboys great Roger Staubach share a personal testimony about his relationship with Jesus.

Mike enjoyed prayer more as he discovered what he calls “prayer-reading the Word”—taking Scripture and turning it into a conversation with Jesus. Praying in a room filled with anointed worship music, he says, also makes prayer more enjoyable. He does that every day at IHOP, which celebrates 17 years of 24/7 prayer in September 2016.

Intercessory Prayer Ministry Is Not Always Easy

Building a 24/7 prayer-and-missions base wasn’t as easy as Mike makes it look. After visiting IHOP or watching the 24/7 live stream, many intercessors have romantic notions of replicating what Mike has pioneered in Kansas City only to

discover unexpected obstacles, like people who commit to prayer with a zealous heart but flame out when spiritual opposition rises.

Even in the IHOP community with so many skilled musicians and singers to inspire “intercessory missionaries”—people who commit to regular hours in the prayer room—there are challenges. Financing a 24/7 prayer-and-missions base is an expected challenge, but IHOP faces obstacles most churches never experience.

“Because of our size with 700 staff members, we have people from many different theological traditions in the body of Christ,” Mike explains. “We have Pentecostals, Presbyterians, Baptists, Lutherans, Nazarenes, Jews and nondenominationals along with some charismatic Catholics. Some have intense approaches to prayer and ministry while others are much more mellow. Some have a strong Calvinist background, and others an Arminian perspective—and some of them end up serving in the same ministry department.”

Another challenge is turnover. Intercessory missionaries stay at IHOP for about five years, on average. Over 17 years, IHOP has had 16,000 full-time staffers, students and interns. That means 15,000 have returned home or started houses of prayer around the world.

Despite the IHOP model’s success, Mike urges people not to launch a 24/7 prayer ministry in one building. He encourages intercessors to work with the many different ministries in their city to develop 24/7 prayer chains in different buildings. His prayer is to see the Holy Spirit help ministries work together in every nation to raise 24/7 prayer with worship in every tribe and tongue on the Earth before the Lord returns.

Practical challenges aside, Mike admits his life at IHOP looks different than he thought it would. He anticipated spending

eight or 10 hours a day in prayer when he launched the ministry, but he spends much more of his time pastoring young adults than he initially expected.

Misty Edwards, senior worship leader at IHOP, has been with Mike from the beginning. She has watched him lead with what she calls a “true shepherd’s heart” and calls him “one of the most consistent men I’ve ever seen.”

“I believe the impact that day-and-night prayer will have on the body of Christ is huge, and God chose a man like Mike who he refuses to quit because that’s the kind of tenacity it takes to keep it going,” Misty tells *Charisma*. “I believe Mike has been used by God to stir up prayer across the Earth and to call the body of Christ to love the Lord with all their hearts—the First Commandment—and to blow a trumpet concerning the need for urgency in seeking the Lord in a wholehearted way. He is one of the clear voices of our generation.”

Mike has needed tenacity over the years. While he’s one of the nicest guys you could ever meet, he has endured false accusations over the years. Of course, this was not totally unexpected, as Jones gave Mike a prophetic heads-up over 30 years ago. In fact, when Mike met Jones in 1983, he shared significant prophetic visions for his life and ministry—and Mike admits that he didn’t believe any of them at that time.

“Bob told me there are going to be thousands of young people,” Mike says. “He told me there’s going to be full manifestations of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in God’s time. He said there’s going to be controversy that’ll rise up against you—and the Lord said don’t answer it, but let the Lord answer it on your behalf.

“We’ve had various accusers over the last 33 years. I do not answer accusers, and by the grace of God, I never will, no matter what they say. At the end of the day, I have learned that accusations against God’s people cannot not stop God’s

purpose in their lives. I want to focus on the big picture of God's story and His plan for the church as well as for my individual life.

The Big God Story

One of the biggest God stories at IHOP has been 24/7 prayer with worship for nearly two decades. Some wonder if it makes a difference, but Mike argues you can't measure the effectiveness of intercession for revival for a city or nation by days or weeks. National shifts are not easy to measure over months—it often takes decades to see the true effectiveness of prayer. That long-term view of prayer throws some people off, but Mike is sure of the impact of persevering prayer.

Prayer releases the blessing and favor of God and the activity of the Spirit. He compares intercession to a divine magnet being dropped in the midst of a people—you cannot see the actual power of a magnet, as it is invisible, but you can see its effect on the metal objects around it. The Lord draws people and resources and shifts things by His invisible hand.

"In 10, 20 and 30 years, you look back and the power or reality of the Lord's invisible hand drawing things together becomes much clearer," Mike says. "We can see many things have been pulled together with greater resources, and we see the impact is far bigger than anything that human personalities or gifting could have achieved. But it takes time to see it."

Over the last 17 years, IHOP has birthed and facilitated many ministries, including Hope City, an inner city outreach that feeds the poor and disciples young believers from the street; the Orphan Justice Center, to serve orphans and children at risk; Exodus Cry, to help victims of human trafficking; the Lukel8 Project, to encourage prayer furnaces on about 1,000 college campuses; and the Israel Mandate, to mobilize many in the church to pray for the restoration of Israel, along with evangelism teams and healing rooms that touch many people each

week.

“The church today needs to be mobilized with continual prayer and fasting to release the harvest of souls waiting to be garnered from among the nations,” says Jack Hayford, founding pastor of The Church on the Way in Van Nuys, California. “Mike Bickle’s reliable ministry at his missions base in Kansas City is helping to answer a great need in this hour.”

A critical part of God’s big story at IHOP is the next generation. Misty tells *Charisma* that one of Mike’s passions is to invest in youth. He often speaks of the Spirit turning the hearts of fathers to young people in accordance with Malachi 4:5-6.

“Mike loves to see young adults come alive by seeing who they are in Christ and by being engaged in the Holy Spirit’s assignment for their personal lives as well as God’s purposes for America and the nations,” she says. “No matter how much criticism or setbacks that he experiences, at the core, he is joyful and at peace because he actually believes God is watching him and is pleased with him. His faith and refusal to draw back or quit challenge me regularly.”

Not Just an End-Time Bible Teacher

Mike views himself mostly as an intercessor, pastor and a Bible teacher who offers practical instruction on the book of Romans, the Sermon on the Mount or how to walk in the Spirit and minister to people effectively—but he also zeroes in on what the Holy Spirit is emphasizing in the church in any given season. Many see him as a preacher with a prophetic burden.

Although he also teaches on intimacy with God and the end times, one of his favorite messages is the beauty of Jesus as Bridegroom, King and Judge—fully God and fully man. “Jesus is a King with great power and a Bridegroom with deep desire for relationship with His people as well as a Judge with zeal to confront everything that hinders love,” Mike says. “I want to

pray because I want to interact with that glorious Man and partner with His end-time plan to fill the Earth with God's glory."

Over the course of the last 30-plus years, thousands of youth have looked to Mike as a spiritual father—and he's fathered them with a tender heart. "I see the Spirit turning hearts of fathers to young people as was prophesied in Malachi 4:5-6," Mike says. "This is one of most important expressions of the prophetic spirit in this hour—to see the value of mentoring young people to walk out their future leadership calling. I find joy in seeing young adults come alive by seeing who they are in Christ and by being engaged in the Holy Spirit's assignment for their personal lives as well as God's purposes for America and the nations."

One of Mike's primary ministry focuses is to equip people to put the First Commandment in first place in their lives. The First Commandment, as Mike describes it, is found in Matthew 22:37-38: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your strength, and with all your mind' and 'your neighbor as yourself." Since God loves us with all His heart and strength, we can boldly ask Him for a greater measure of grace to love Him—and others—with all of our heart and strength. One of the reasons He gave us the Holy Spirit was to pour God's love into our hearts (Rom. 5:5).

Mike prays regularly for God's purposes fulfilled for the nation of Israel and the salvation of the Jewish people. He often asks the Lord to raise up millions of Gentile intercessors across the Earth for Israel's salvation. He's also preparing young adults spiritually to understand the unique dynamics that will occur in the generation of the Lord's return. The greatest revival with the greatest outpouring of the Holy Spirit will occur in the same generation that the greatest increase of sin and darkness will increase. At the time that deep darkness covers the Earth, the glory of God will arise on His people in an unprecedented

measure (Is. 60:1). Mike thinks we may be in the beginning of that final generation, but he stresses no one can be absolutely sure.

“Many of the biblical signs of the times are occurring together on a global basis,” Mike says. “Therefore, I am alerted that we might be in the early days of that generation. It is time to equip the next generation with understanding of the unique dynamics that will occur when the greatest revival in history occurs at the same time that deep darkness is manifest in the culture, crisis in the economy, marriages and families, in government, with growing racial tensions, terrorist threats and so much more—all this is happening as many preachers are compromising some of the essential gospel truths found in the Scripture. A distorted grace message is currently gaining momentum in many ministries promising blessing and comfort without any reference to the need to obey Jesus’ glorious leadership nor to the increasing crisis that is unfolding in our nation. The crisis is serious and it will continue to intensify spiritually, economically, culturally, politically and more.”

What Many Don't Know About Mike Bickle

What many people don't know about Mike is that he is very zealous about the “Great Commission.” Although some think running a prayer ministry is a form of retreating from the battle for souls, he has come to understand the power of marriage of intercession and missions and how evangelism is more effective in the context of persevering prayer.

Loren Cunningham, founder of Youth With A Mission, confirms this: “The great harvest needs to be supplied by continual prayer and fasting. Intercessory ministries like Mike Bickle’s in Kansas City are vital for the fulfillment of the Great Commission.”

Many people do not know Mike taught against the charismatic

movement for five years—he actually traveled to various university campus ministries as a guest speaker to expose what he thought were charismatic heresies. Many also don't know he played college ball. At age 60, he is seen throwing a football with young people in IHOP's parking lot and plays touch football games with the students at IHOP's full-time ministry school. He is a family man first and a minister second—and he's not giving up on America in these last days.

"We are in desperate need of revival and a great spiritual awakening for our nation," Mike says. "The Lord longs for His church to walk close to Him and to be vessels of His manifest power in their cities by developing strong prayer lives individually and corporately as local churches. In the midst of a growing crisis, I am encouraged as I see more and more people responding to the Lord in a wholehearted way. The numbers are still small, but they are increasing. I have great hope in seeing the Lord turn things around, but it will only happen as a culture of prayer is established in the church and a Third Great Awakening sweeps across America."

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Mike Bickle teaches how to experience God's love through prayer in your day-to-day life at [www.mikebickle.com](#).