

Mike Bickle: Why We Must Pray

We begin our journey of growing in prayer by acknowledging that prayer is not only for beginners but also for mature believers. Otherwise there would be no point in trying to grow in it!

The Lord calls every believer to a life of prayer—no matter how long he has been saved or how experienced he is in this discipline. The best thing all of us can do to improve ourselves, our lives and our relationships is to grow in prayer.

Prayer is a means of connecting with the Holy Spirit, who energizes us to love God. Our love for God then causes us to overflow in love for others. Jesus made an absolute statement about our inability to walk in the fullness of our destinies in God without growing in prayer. He said that unless we abide in Him, we can do nothing related to bearing fruit or maturing in our spiritual lives: “He who remains in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit. For without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

Because we are not the source of spiritual life ourselves, we cannot generate it, nor can we receive it unless we abide in Christ. Just as it is impossible for us to jump a hundred feet even if we push ourselves, it is impossible for us to generate spiritual life. It is not an issue of practice; we were not created to be able to jump a hundred feet! And neither were we created to have Spirit-life while living independently of the Spirit. We must abide in Christ and grow in prayer to make our lives work.

The Holy Spirit will move in a new and powerful way in your heart and life as you take time to grow in prayer. The change may not happen overnight, but it will most certainly happen. The discipline of prayer will eventually become delight in

prayer. Dryness in prayer will gradually be replaced by a vibrant dialogue with God that will change your life and result in many answered prayers.

I invite you to begin the next stage of your journey in prayer right now. There is no better time than today. Do not wait for a special spiritual experience to begin to grow in prayer. We grow in prayer by actually *praying*. Beginners in prayer mature by praying more. It is the same principle we embrace when learning to play a musical instrument—we become better the more we practice.

From Duty to Delight

In my younger days I loved Jesus, but I dreaded spending time in prayer. I saw prayer as a necessary duty that I had to endure if I wanted to receive more blessing. I never dreamed that I would one day be one of the leaders of a 24/7 prayer ministry such as the International House of Prayer of Kansas City.

I endured that dreadful hour of prayer night after night. I did not like it at all. I enjoyed activities such as going to worship services and attending Bible studies to hear teaching. I liked engaging in ministry activity and going on missions trips. But when I got alone to pray or read the Bible, I found it confusing and boring. However, I really wanted to grow in God, so I knew I had to stick with this “prayer thing” until I developed a real life in prayer. I was determined—but not very hopeful that it would work for me.

A New View of Prayer

To be successful, I needed a new perspective on prayer: I needed to know what prayer is and why the Lord insists on it. As I discovered answers to these questions, I began to see prayer as so much more than a religious duty to endure. I learned that it is a place of encounter, a way to receive blessing, an act of partnership with God, and much more.

A Place of Encounter

The call to prayer is a call to participate in the love that has forever burned in God's heart. From eternity past the Father has loved the Son with all His heart, and the Son has loved the Father with the same intensity. The primary factor in the Father's relationships, both within the Godhead and with His people, is wholehearted love. The family dynamics among the Father, Son, and Spirit are based on and flow in this wholehearted love. This love is the foundational reality of the kingdom of God. It is this very reality that we participate in as we grow in prayer, and it is what prayer is mostly about—that is, participating in the family dynamics of the Godhead. We do this by receiving God's love and responding to the Lord and people in His love.

We were created to receive and express the burning love that originates in God's heart. God created the human race to share His love. Why? Simply because "God is love" (1 John 4:16). No lack in the fellowship within the Trinity prompted God to create humans. The Father was not lonely, and He had no needs. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are fully satisfied in the joy of the love they have shared together from eternity past. Yet the Lord created us to share the joy of His love with us. He created us in His image, for love—to receive His love, reflect it back to Him, and share it with others. Love is at the core of our relationship with God, the essence of salvation, and the foundation for understanding prayer.

The preceding is an excerpt from Growing in Prayer (Charisma House, 2014) by Mike Bickle. Copyright © 2015 by Mike Bickle. All rights reserved.

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