

What Mike Bickle Taught Me About Enjoyable Prayer

I was in a faith crisis. I had just left a spiritually abusive church and didn't know where to go from there. I didn't know who to trust or what to believe. I wasn't sure if I could darken the door of a church ever again.

That's when a friend recommended I soak to the 24/7 livestream out of International House of Prayer (IHOP) in Kansas City. I went to sleep listening to prophetic singers and musicians declaring the Word of God over my life. I woke up to devotional music led by worshippers with a passion for Jesus. It was healing to my weary soul.

Eventually, I started listening to IHOP Director Mike Bickle's expansive online teaching library. His approach to prayer and intercession was much more intimate than the spiritual warfare-only camps I knew. His teachings on the Sermon on the Mount lifestyle challenged my faith. And his in-depth Bible studies on the Song of Solomon, Revelation and Daniel exposed me to Scripture angles I had never considered. I was inspired.

Two years later, the Holy Spirit told me to make prayer my life's work. I launched Awakening House of Prayer in the Fort Lauderdale area with a mandate for day-and-night prayer, equipping the saints for the work of the ministry, standing for unborn life, exercising the gifts of the Spirit and pursuing holiness.

The thing is, I never enjoyed prayer. It was drudgery—and I was scared to pray publicly. In fact, as a young Christian, when corporate prayer meetings were going on, I would hide in the bathroom, hoping the leader wouldn't call on me to make intercession. Prayer was boring, and I wasn't sure how effective it was despite James' argument that the effective

fervent prayer of a righteous person makes tremendous power available (James 5:16).

Mike not only taught me new ways to study the Bible; he taught me how to make prayer more enjoyable—and more effective. IHOP has 16 values of enjoyable prayer, and employing just a few of these in your prayer life can make all the difference. Some of the most impactful from the list in my own prayer life are:

Enjoying intimacy with a beautiful God: When you realize God is not mad at you—that He actually likes you and takes delight in your weak prayers—it changes your perspective on prayer. Instead of begging and pleading with a faint hope that He might hear you, you are confident that He not only hears you but will answer you (1 John 5:14-15).

The necessity of combining worship with intercession: I realize old-school intercessors lay prostrate on the floor with only the sound of travail to accompany them, but praying with worship music sets the stage for intimacy and fuels your passion to pray.

Praying in the Spirit and spontaneous singing: Praying in the Spirit has long been part and parcel of my prayer life because I need to build myself up in my most holy faith (Jude 20). Plus, I don't know how to pray as I ought (Rom. 8:26). But spontaneous singing also makes prayer enjoyable. Paul said he would sing with the Spirit and his understanding (1 Cor. 14:14-15).

God-centered spiritual warfare: I mentioned I came out of spiritual warfare camps that were excessive. But spiritual warfare is still vital. Putting God in the center means we are agreeing with God and His Word rather than hyperfocusing on talking to the devil. There are times to rebuke the devil, and we certainly bind and loose, but agreeing with and declaring God's promises is more fruitful and enjoyable than screaming at the devil.

Mike also taught me to set a time to pray, create a prayer list, pray-read the Word and pray the apostolic prayers to strengthen our inner man. If we don't make an appointment with God to pray, chances are something else will distract our hearts from this mandate. Creating a prayer list helps fuel our prayer time. We may or may not use the list, but it comes in handy when you don't feel inspired.

Pray-reading the Word is essentially reading the Word while having a conversation with God about what it says. You can also pray the promises of God in Scripture. Finally, Mike echoes the late Kenneth Hagin's practice of praying the apostolic prayers in Paul's epistles. These prayers open the eyes of your heart and strengthen your spirit. I encourage you to do everything you can to make prayer more enjoyable, because nothing happens without prayer.

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