

The Prayer Life of a Disciple

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[0 : 0 0] Okay. Apologies. Somebody, the guy before me spoke too long in the first session, so 15 minutes last time in the seminars.

I apologize for the guys next door. I've put them in it as well. Okay, good. Let me pray because that's probably a good thing to do today before we dive into the next bit.

Okay. Father, here we are again. We are just before you. We are so, so, so, so thankful for your love for us, the sacrifice of your son, the invitation to eternal life, the experience of regeneration and transformation by the power of your spirit.

And as we've come and just believed you and just taken you at your word and just said yes to your gracious, merciful offer of salvation and reconciliation.

So thank you, Lord. We're here because of you today. We are who we are because you are who you are and because of what you've done in our lives.

[1 : 2 3] And so we come to you just again, knowing that there's, there's just so many ways that we have to grow, so many things we have to learn. So, so much distance still to travel in the time that we have in this life.

And we pray that somehow this, this day together in this short time just now in your word would be profitable and bear fruit in our lives for your glory.

Amen. Okay, good. This is, so this is, this is, this is seminar. And, and seminars are supposed to be, you know, kind of work related.

I kind of had a wee peek at the breakdown of what you're going to get in the other seminar, which is probably truly seminar, because I think they've got some interaction and they've got some prayer time. And I'm not going to have any of that because there's too much I want to say.

But I do just want this to be seminar like. Okay, that doesn't mean pretend it's a seminar when it's not really a seminar. But it would be good if, if, if you do want to raise a hand or you do want to ask a question or you do want to make a statement or whatever.

[2 : 3 2] Let's, let's try that. Okay, so, so I'm just going to take you through some stuff. It's going to be maybe a little bit more personal for, for, for, for me and my life. But we've all have lives.

So it's not just me and my life. It's, it's, it's us and our lives. And so if there's something that, that kind of sparks something off for you and you want to make a comment or whatever, just, you know, pop your hand out or shout out or whatever.

And so that'll be the seminar. Okay, we'll, we'll kind of approach it that way and we'll see how it goes. The title for this bit then now is a prayer, the prayer life of a disciple.

And I would probably say more, more personally that, that for me, in my case, it's probably better to say the struggling prayer life of a disciple.

Okay. So that's my title. I'm not saying we're all struggling in our prayer lives. Yeah. I'm not saying you're struggling in your prayer life, but I just want to be brutally honest and, and, and, and, you know, confess to you that, that, and, and, and I don't know.

[3 : 39] I don't know what pastors are supposed to be. You know, I, I don't know necessarily that every single pastor is a champion prayer. I would imagine that most of us, um, other than Graham, no, I'm kidding.

Most of us probably would just, you know, have to confess that, that, that we, we, we probably, it's probably as much of a struggle for, for us as it is for anybody.

Um, it's, it's something we're totally in together. My, my confession, confession is that I am not a strong prayer. I'm not, and I told Graham, you know, when we met and we had a coffee and I said, are you sure?

It's probably, maybe there's other guys that could do a far better job and they really are strong prayers. Um, and there's a lot, and some people are, I'm not saying every Christian's a rotten prayer.

I don't think that's the case. I think, I think some of you, and you've maybe been on the road longer than I have, or you've learned faster than probably. I'm sure that's the case.

[4 : 43] You've learned faster than, than I have. And, and I don't think the church is just full of weak prayers. I think there are some people who, who are just, you know, they're walking a road that, that is, is more of what God is calling them to.

And, and, and, and, and their prayer life is, is, is strong. You look back through church history. There are, I don't think the church has been completely littered with strong prayers, but we know people, George Mueller and others who, who have been very, very faithful in their prayer lives.

John Wesley and, and, and people like that who, who have championed prayer. And, and my confession is that that's my desire. My heart is that I would champion prayer at some point before I leave this world.

But, but I, I don't feel as though I'm championing, championing prayer. It's like an Everest for me. It's like I'm a hill walker. And one day I hope to climb Everest.

Okay. So, so that's a bit of my confession when it comes to, to prayer. And, and, and, and I'm just reflecting back on, on the main session when, when I think of maybe why I struggle so much is because I think I'm very, very prone to self-reliance.

[6 : 04] And, and I'm sure you are too. I'm sure at some level we're all prone to, to the self-life. The Bible says so much about that. And so much of our, of our, our church community folks, so much of our time together should be working to resolve that problem.

We shouldn't be, we shouldn't be encouraged more to self in church. We, we, we should be in, what does Hebrews 10 say? Consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking your own assembling together as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another all the more because the day is drawing near.

We don't have forever. And so part of, a big part, I think of church life should be encouraging one another in, in, in, in, in leaving self.

And, and I guess as I say that, I know the whole theme today is if we're going to be doing that, we should be encouraging one another to pray. We should be encouraging one another. If you have a prayer meeting to go, to make whatever sacrifices you need to make to go, to be there.

It's important. It's a place where the church is helping us in this area. When we, when we, we say once a month or once a quarter or once a week or whatever, we're going to gather together as a church and pray, go.

[7 : 21] That's the church helping you to deal with this issue of being less self and more God dependent. I think a massive default setting for us is, is self.

And, and I, and I, and I think that, that, that's borne out again by experience, isn't it? Why is it that the prayer meeting, by and large, not in every church, but by and large, why is it that the prayer meeting is one of the most poorly attended meetings in church life?

I mean, I, I, I, I know philosophically and theologically why, but in my heart, I don't get it. I don't get it. We have two services at Corubbers.

And I don't think it's two services because people need to come and listen to me or anything. I think we, you know, the Lord just, I will build the church, Lord, and it's just all sovereignly up to him. But we have two services on a Sunday morning because, because we couldn't get everybody into one room.

And they're coming and, and they're listening to me expound scripture. And, and, and, and on a Tuesday night when we pray, we have to meet in the small room upstairs because otherwise we're embarrassed by the, the, the, the space and the lack of, when, when, when, when, when they're coming to pray to be with God.

[8 : 37] I mean, what's, what is that all about? What is that all about? I'm, I'm, I'm struck by those things. Why is it that when I ask people about their prayer lives, they go all quiet?

Why is that folks? Come on, come on, think about it. I think it's because by and large, we're all in the same boat. I started telling you a little bit about my testimony in the, in the first session.

Um, and, and, and, and I know that I can't say the persistent, prayer has probably ever been, um, a huge strength of mine. Um, it has been a constant challenge.

It has been a constant challenge. Just, just the whole discipline of prayer for me is, is, is, is, is, is, is hard work. I'm going to talk about this in a minute.

Um, and, and some of you might be just looking at me and just saying, Sutton, man, you've got so much to learn. And I know I do. So many ways to just grow in my intimacy with Christ.

[9 : 38] So that, so, so, so, so my, my dream, my dream is that, um, I will get to a place where, where, where the intimacy of my relationship with God is such that, that, that, that I can't help.

But pray, uh, you know, I, I, I, there's a first Thessalonians 5:17, just, just, just continually without ceasing. Just pray with God.

But my testimony is that that hasn't happened naturally for me. It's not happened naturally. And so my testimony is that there's been a number of times over the course of my walk with the Lord now that God has stepped in.

He, he, he loves me enough to not leave, leave me just paddling in the shallows, um, of prayer. And there's been a couple of times where he has, um, stepped into my life, um, and, and, um, and, and, and made a difference and, and drawn me closer.

Um, I'm under the impression that God loves us. I think that's fairly true to say, isn't it? God loves us. Um, and the work that he started in us to conform us to the image of Christ and to draw us near, he's going to finish.

[10 : 57] He's going to finish. And my read of scripture is that he kind of throws that line out to us. Come with me. Come with me. Come to me, all you who are weary, weary and heavy laden.

He gives us these invitations. By and large, you know, I do have a thick head and often a hard heart. And so I don't know that I often take the invitations as often as I, as I should when they're thrown out to me.

And so God loves me enough to then step into my life, um, to make the difference, particularly with my, my prayer life.

Um, I, I think communion with God in prayer and dependence on God in prayer are two of the things that he is going to work out in our lives, whether we like it or not.

Is that fair? Communion with him. And dependence on him. Both of those happen in prayer. I think my read of the Bible is that, that as children of God, he loves us enough that he is going to take us there whether we like it or not.

[12 : 04] Um, and now we can come willingly. Okay. We can come willingly or we can be dragged in kicking and screaming. And some of my experience, um, has been that I have been dragged in kicking and, and screaming.

And, and he's done this with me, um, really in, in, in, in two main crises of my life. Um, the Lord.

And, and, and, and I guess part of what I want to do here is, is, is, is open up a dialogue, a discussion, or, or, or, or, or have some considerations, um, around this whole idea of dependency again.

Okay. And, and, and, and, and how that works, um, with prayer. Um, but also at the same time, try to encourage you, um, as I think I've been encouraged.

Um, it's taken a while for me for it to get through to me, but I think I've been encouraged. I've been encouraged that, um, particularly the, the most difficult periods of my life have been the times when God has gone deepest in my heart and, and made the most radical changes in my life.

[13 : 16] Would that be fair? Can you, can you relate to that? It hasn't been the easy times. I enjoy the easy times. I, I, I, you know, I like the ease.

I like when the sun is shining. Don't you? I like when the sun is, I like when life is, is, is, is, you know, um, is, is, is peaceful and, and, and the waters are not rough.

I like that. We all do. We all like to be comfortable. Well, with the trouble with that is that we're sinners. That's the trouble in heaven.

I don't think being comfortable or, or, or, or, or, or enjoying the environment is going to be a problem because there'll be no sin. It is a problem now because we're sinners. And what happens is, um, we tend to want to make, uh, the, the, the, the, the path of least resistance, the norm.

And, and that's not the best for us as sinners because God has to eradicate that sin from our life. He has to draw us into a relationship with him. Is that, am I, am I making any sense in here? It's just, I think that's, that's the path of what I see in the lives of disciples in the word of God.

[14 : 22] Um, and for me, the, the, the, the, the, the, the, the two biggest crises that I've faced has been a nervous breakdown 15 years ago, particularly my breakdown experience.

And I'm going to get to the scripture, by the way. Okay. I just want to share a little bit of, um, um, personal testimony before we get into the word. But, um, particularly this, this, whatever it was, I don't know what a breakdown is.

I've just had one, you know, I don't know how to describe it. People say, you know, just, it was a burnout. It was a burnout experience. It was exhaustion. It was breakdown.

I don't, the, the terms even now as I've, as I've, you know, I never had a book on my shelf about breakdown or anxiety or anything. Now, like half of my library is full of this stuff.

Same with eating disorders. And, you know, it's just, you, you learn by experience by, don't you? You know, you may know nothing about a certain event and then it happens to you. And so I don't know what this was. I just know what it felt like and what happened and, and, you know, just how, how dark it was.

[15 : 24] My, my experience was, was mainly an anxiety based kind of panic attacks, um, a, a, a, a period of acute anxiety for about six weeks.

Um, the bottom just fell. I couldn't do anything. I couldn't talk. I couldn't relate. I couldn't, um, I, I sat virtually for six weeks when it all began.

I sat on my sofa and the only thing I could do because I, I, I needed God. I had become desperate. And when I say desperate, I mean, I, I can't, I don't know how else to put it.

I just was, I had never been so desperate for the presence of God and the reality of God in my life than I was, um, in those six weeks.

And I, I woke up. The moment I woke up, I had this profound anxiety. I, I, I wanted to run, but there was nowhere to go because anywhere I went, I took my head with me. So I couldn't go, I couldn't go up in the hills.

[16 : 21] I couldn't go. I just, I sat on my couch and I was so desperate for God that all I could do was sit there and hug my Bible. It just sounds so pathetic, doesn't it?

I sat and I just hugged my Bible because tangibly this was the closest thing. I knew God was in this. You know what I mean? I knew this was his. And I, I, I hugged my Bible for, for virtually eight hours a day for probably six weeks.

Um, and I prayed, I prayed. I, I, that's all I did was, I had never prayed for six hours before in my life.

I'd never prayed for six hours. I don't know if I, I could keep my focus for six minutes, but, but God had, had taken, had brought me to a place where I, where literally I felt I had nothing to stand on.

My, my, every, all my foundations of everything just fell away. Any confidence I ever had, any ability I felt I had, just everything was gone. I was, I was literally a nervous wreck.

[17 : 24] And maybe that's why they call it a nervous breakdown. I just, I was a nervous wreck. And I prayed constantly. So much so, and I've been a pastor for 12 years, but I prayed so much so.

But it was that profound for me. And I remember just thinking, something has happened between me and God here. Maybe I haven't just gotten saved, and I don't think I did. But something happened where God pushed a button in my life that had to do with my dependence on him.

And everything changed. Everything changed. And I would sit there and pray and pray and pray and pray. And I wound up just getting a book and started diarying and going up the hills and sitting for days and just talking to the Lord.

Something. I shared this with a guy who's one of our missionaries who was home recently struggling with cancer. And I just shared with him just how it seems to be through the most difficult experience of our lives that God draws us near.

Or goes deep in his transforming work in our lives. And his question to me was, what happened as you got better? Oh, what happened as you got better?

[18 : 35] You know what's happened as I've gotten better? I've begun to struggle again with prayer. Now, take that as you will. I'm not asking the Lord for another nervous breakdown.

Believe you me. I think there's been some permanent changes. But the curve somehow seems to go that, you know, as your, I don't know, as your situation deteriorates as far as it seems.

Your dependence on God grows. And maybe there's, he said, well, maybe there's a point where it meets in the middle. Where you have just enough balance of struggle. No, seriously. You have just enough balance of struggle in your life where you have to depend on God.

Think about that. Because we all want to be comfortable. We all want to be at ease. And I just don't think that's how it works. I just don't think that's how it works. And for me, and I'll give you some practical stuff in a minute.

And for me, there have been loads and loads of different things that have developed from these experiences of my life.

[19 : 39] 1 Peter 4.10 became precious to me. And it says, let him who serves. Because I wasn't sure I'd ever go back into the ministry. But my wife was behind me there.

And I think the Lord was behind my wife. And kind of pushed me back in. Because I was saying to her, she's an occupational therapist. And I was saying to her, well, sweetheart, I think it's time for you to start working full time.

And I think she said, you're going back into the ministry. We're going to get you there. And I have. But as I've come back, there's been loads and loads of changes.

And 1 Peter 4.10 has been a precious verse to me that says, Let him who serves do so as with the strength which God supplies.

That's dependence. Let him who serves do so as with the strength which God supplies. I pray that verse over my life every day now.

[20 : 37] I start every single morning praying with that verse. And then working my way through my day. And I bring every appointment, every journey, every phone call, every bit of sermon.

I bring the whole day before him. And I say, Lord, supply me with strength for this. Supply me with strength for this. Supply me with strength for this. Because how do you serve as with the strength which God supplies? Is there a switch you flip?

Do you go and say, oh, there's the strength switch. I haven't flipped it today yet. Okay, now I have it. How do you serve? How do you live as with the strength which God supplies? I think you have to know you need it.

And I think you have to go to him and ask him for it. Independence. And then you have to trust that having asked him for it, he'll give it to you. And you'll live with it.

And you'll have it. I don't know. I'm happy to hear any other perspectives on living with the strength of God that you might have. Turn with me to Luke 18. Just in the few minutes that we have.

[21 : 37] This is the passage for the seminar. Luke 18. And we're not going to look at the whole passage like we did last time. I just want to pull one little bit of it out here.

I'll read it for you. But it's only one little bit that I want to look at. Luke 18. Now Jesus was telling his disciples a parable or the people who were there with him.

A parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart.

Now that's the bit I'm going to come back to. So just think about that. Jesus is telling this parable. And he's giving us the reason up front why he's telling the parable.

He's telling the parable because people need to pray. And they need to not lose heart in praying. In other words, this whole discipline of prayer.

[22 : 31] There seems to be a possibility or a propensity or whatever for children of God to lose heart. To grow weary. To get tired. To not persevere.

In their prayer lives. So he tells them this parable about this city where there's a judge. Who doesn't fear God.

Doesn't respect man. There's a widow who's in the city. And she keeps coming to the judge. Saying give me legal protection from my opponent. For a while he was unwilling.

But afterward he said to himself. Even though I don't fear God or respect man. Yet because this widow bothers me. She's so persistent. I'm not bothered with her.

But she's bothering me. Because she's so persistent. Because she's so persistent. I don't want to give her what she wants. But because she's so persistent.

[23 : 30] I will give her legal protection. Otherwise by continually coming to me. She'll wear me out. Okay. Here's a judge who doesn't really care about this woman. Who is limited in his capacity.

Because he can be worn out. Alright. Remember that. Because there's a contrast. A big contrast. That Jesus is going to bring out here. The Lord said. Hear what the unrighteous judge said.

Hear what he says. About. I don't. I'm not bothered with this woman. I don't really want to. I'm unwilling to give her what she wants. But she's bothering me. And there's a possibility she's going to wear me out.

So I'm going to give her what she wants. Hear what he says. Now. Will not God. Bring about justice. For his elect. Who cry to him day and night.

Will he delay long over them. I tell you. He will bring about justice. For them quickly. However. When the son of man.

[24 : 34] Comes. Will he find faith. On the earth. Or. As I like to say.

In the sudden. Uninspired version. When the son of man. Comes. Will he find people. At the prayer meeting. So he ties in.

Both in what we looked at. In Mark. Nine. And here. You see how he ties in. This whole idea. Of need. Dependence. And faith. What did Jesus say.

To. To the whole crowd. To the disciples. To the man. Who brought the son. What did he say. Oh. What kind of generation. Oh. Unbelieving generation.

See how it. This whole faith. Thing. Is big. Isn't it. Isn't it. We're saved by what. Grace through. Faith.

[25 : 30] This faith thing is big. Isn't it. Faith's big in the. Christian life. Faith's big in the bible. Isn't it. Faith's a big thing. This faith thing is big. But it. It. It.

It. It. Baffles me to no end. Doesn't it. It baffles me. When I step back. I've been a Christian for 30. Seven years. 38 years.

38 years. When I step. And I've been living. You know. And going to church. And reading my bible. And. Struggling with prayer. And talking to God. And I've had. Great experiences. And I've had flat times.

I've had the whole thing. And I step back. and I look at this whole thing, this whole, what I've been doing for the last 38 years, I just think it's so weird. It's so just, I look at the whole faith deal and it's so bizarre what God calls us to, isn't it?

That He would call me to give up everything in my life to come to the end of myself for somebody that I've never seen. I get down on my knees to pray like I imagine you get down on your knees to pray.

[26 : 34] If this is different for you, tell me. But I get down on my knees to pray like I imagine you get down on my knees to pray and I don't know what you do. Sometimes I close my eyes, sometimes I don't close my eyes, sometimes I look at the hills, sometimes I look at my Bible.

There's different things that I do practically when I'm praying but I never see Him. I never see Him.

And I'm sitting there and you know, every night, I remember the first time I prayed. Do you remember the first time you ever prayed? For real? Remember the first time you ever prayed for real? First time, I didn't grow up in a Christian home. I got saved when I was 19, fresher at university.

So the first time I prayed was when I got saved. When I prayed, you know, to confess my sin and to receive God's gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ.

To put my faith and trust in what He did for me on the cross. That was the first time I ever really prayed. I mean, I prayed the Lord's Prayer. I grew up in a New York, Italian, Catholic environment. So we went to church and there was no, in our life, there was no reality.

[27 : 33] There was no, there was no substance to any, but we did it. But it wasn't praying. I was just verbalizing things that weren't connected to my heart or reality or anything. The first time I prayed, and I remember the first time I ever prayed, I remember feeling so weird because I was, you know, what do you do?

You've never prayed before? You've never talked to God before? What do you do? You just, you know, I remember being in my room and this guy had been kind of leading me through the script and he left me alone with some things to read and it hit. The penny dropped and I think that's when I got saved.

And I remember just going, well, you know, hey, God, you know, don't know where you are. This is weird.

You know, you and me, nobody else here. It's kind of like that. Lord, this is, okay, I'm giving this a shot was kind of like what I was, I'm giving this a shot. I'm pretty convinced this is it, but I feel kind of strange because I can't see you and I, you know, I don't really know you, but I'm convinced by what I think you're saying here.

And so, you know, and then I went on and I, and, and, and, you know, it was just, it was, it was hard because it was weird because it's this whole faith thing. You know, Paul says it.

[28 : 52] Paul says we focus, not on that. We, we look, we put our eyes, we turn our eyes to the things that we can't see. Now, that's weird, isn't it? Because aren't eyes there so you can see something? So we look, Paul says, 2 Corinthians 4, 18 I think is, we look not at the things which are seen, but the things which are unseen.

The things which are seen are temporal, the things that are unseen are eternal. So there's this whole kind of wrestling with, with, with prayer. There's such a danger of losing heart and, and again, depending on self.

And we don't have time to go through the whole parable, but, can I just ask the question, why it might be that we actually can lose heart and persisting in prayer?

What is it about prayer in particular that makes it so easy to lose heart in? Because that's why Jesus tells this parable. And I reckon, if I'm, if I'm, if I'm in good company here, I don't know you all, I know very few of you, and, and probably none of us have actually talked intimately about our prayer lives.

I don't know if you guys do together in your church. I try to do this with guys that I'm discipling or, or, or just, I think it helps. I think it's good. But it's very intimate. Prayer's very intimate. And have you ever sat down with somebody and told them exactly how you pray?

[30 : 08] What do you think when you're praying? What, what, what perception do you have? What, where do you, do you use the Lord's prayer? You know, in Matthew 6, do you do something out? Do you, do you have a pattern? What do you do?

These are very, very intimate things, but really good to share. Really good to share. I'm actually thinking now of altering what I do here and using the last five minutes for you to share about your prayer lives, but I think I'm almost in my last five minutes.

I haven't even looked at it yet. Let me suggest to you six possibilities as to why we might lose heart in prayer. Okay? Six possibilities. One, because it's just hard.

It is hard for a broken, fallen human person to pray. J. Oswald Sanders says that true prayer is a strenuous spiritual exercise that demands the utmost mental discipline and concentration.

Do you find that? I don't mean to just get down and go through a list with God. I mean to really connect with God. To really connect with God. To feel like you have been with God.

[31 : 10] Not just go through a list and then you get up off your knees and you think you've done your thing. But to really, I, this is my experience. Maybe I'm unique. Maybe I'm really so far back from you guys that it's unbelievable.

But my experience is that for me to really pray, I almost have to grab a hold of something. Okay? Till my knuckles are white. To concentrate long enough to stay with God more than for five or ten seconds until my mind goes off on something else.

What I'm going to be making for lunch. You know, I, one of the dangers for me praying looking out at the Pentland Hills where we live is that there's a golf course up there on the side of the hills.

And I've often started to pray looking at the hills to see the bigness of God and the next thing I know I'm thinking about how golf balls are made. And I trace my thinking back and I think I see where I departed.

I was praying to God and I was focusing on the greatness of who He is trying to connect with Him. And then I saw a guy taking a swing. And I thought, you know, and then my mind went to the swing and I thought, number one, I was a bad backswing.

[32 : 18] He's not going to get anywhere with that. And then I just thought, I saw the ball go and I thought, golf balls, well, they're amazing things. You know, they're just, they're coated with this hard kind of, and then inside they're wrapped with all, have you ever seen the inside of a golf ball?

It's wrapped. And I must have gone on with that thought pattern for 15 minutes. And I'm thinking about factories that build golf balls and, and I'm on my knees, I'm on my knees to pray.

That's why I'm there. It's just the whole deal of drift and the mental content. I'll tell you, the one time I didn't have any problem doing that was when I had the most profound anxiety I've ever had in my life.

I couldn't think about golf balls. Golf balls meant nothing to me. All I needed was some assurance that my life wasn't going to fall apart at the seams. And I prayed. Man, I prayed with the freedom that I never had in my life.

But outside of that kind of crisis moment, prayer's hard. In the normal warp and woof of life, prayer is hard. And I think that's, I think God knows that. He knows we're fallen people. He knows we're struggling people.

[33 : 20] Maybe that's why we're told in 1 Peter 4, 7 to be of sound judgment and sober for the purpose of prayer. Maybe that's why Peter says that. Maybe that's why we're told that it's the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man that avails much.

Or why the writer to Hebrews says that when Jesus was in the flesh he offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears to the one that was able to save him from death. And he wasn't dealing with sin, but he was dealing with humanity.

Maybe that's why we're told that Epaphras who came close to death in his devotion and his commitment to the Colossian Christians labored earnestly. The word there is agonizomai. Agonized.

In his prayer for them. So prayer is hard too. Why can we lose heart with prayer? Because it's sacrificial. And by that I mean it takes time.

It takes time. David, I think there's a second point coming up there. Okay, thanks. It's sacrificial. It takes time. S.D. Gordon has said that the great people of the earth today are the people who pray.

[34 : 27] I do not mean those who talk about prayer nor those who say they believe in prayer nor yet those who can explain about prayer. I mean those people who take time to pray. They don't have the time.

It must be taken from something else. That something else is important, very important and pressing but yet less important and less pressing than prayer. It's hard because you know this.

You know this. I'm sure the worst thing in the world for me in one sense although I'm going to come back to technology later on has been technology because emails which of course have made all of our lives so much easier haven't they?

Right? They've made all our lives so much easier. That's what they said when they first started coming out. They've made all our lives saying the worst thing in the world for me is to start my computer in the morning before I go to the word because as soon as I get sucked into my emails and everything else that's my time with God gone.

The worst thing I have got to go straight to prayer straight to prayer to make the time for it because otherwise the business of life just takes so it makes it hard.

[35 : 34] Third thing prayer is spiritual it's spiritual and it's what I was just saying before it's this whole faith thing I don't see him I don't it's not you know and he knows this he's created it this way so I've got a few questions about that as to why but I'm sure this for good reason that I don't see him I have to persist in my relationship with him without seeing him I see him in his word and I know what we mean by that but I don't see him physically like I see you and I can I can sit down and you can put your arm around me and I can feel it and it's a faith deal the Christian life is a faith deal prayer is a faith deal and that's hard isn't it?

do you find it hard? I find it hard I find it a challenge to go into this room where I pray it's my dining room it faces the hills if I want to look I can look and to get on my knees and actually succeed in a decent amount of time with God that's hard because I don't see him and I struggle with that there's things that come into my mind there's pictures I don't want the big bearded guy in the sky thing I want somehow to perceive of the greatness of God so reading Psalms or something like that to get started with sometimes is good because it gets me in that frame where I can just sit before I even begin to think about opening my mouth Andrew Murray was big on this I don't know if you've ever read any of his stuff but Andrew Murray was just sitting and engaging with who God really is before you ever begin to think about opening your mouth but that's hard because

I'm looking at the Pentland Hills and the Pentland Hills are not God the sky is not God he made it so I've got to go beyond that you guys you understand American do you?

you understand I don't know if this is so you've got to give me some at some point in the break or whatever give me some feedback Jesus said in Matthew 21-22 he said all things you ask in prayer believing it's a faith deal believing you shall receive Hebrews 11-6 you know this without what?

it's impossible to please God without faith it's impossible to please God for the one who comes to him must believe that he is because we're not gazing upon him directly it's a big it's a big subject but it's it factors into prayer four prayer is trusting in other words I think we often we often don't see the response that we would like to see right?

[38 : 14] we pray we ask God for things but do you struggle with that? I'm praying for a family right now in our church is in desperate straits and I'm praying I've been praying for two years for them and their family and issues that are going on in their family and nothing's changing that I can see I've been praying desperately for these guys meeting with them praying with them crying in our coffees together with the dad and as far as I can tell nothing's changing are you alright with that?

you guys alright with that? it's not hard it's you know it's a trust exercise I've got to trust that he's hearing me there's somebody on the other end of the line and they care God doesn't work to our timetable we know that and that can crush a prayer life if we're not committed to it and believing in it and trusting God four and five prayer is humbling it's hard because it's humbling you know to pray what are we doing the whole posture of prayer often we talk about kneeling in prayer you don't have to you can stand in prayer you can raise your arms you can go out in the countryside there's loads my little picture there in the background you know just you don't have to be but the posture of somehow dependence submission you kneel before a king don't you?

the whole posture and it's hard because we you know this obitome doesn't want to depend on anybody he wants to depend on Wayne but I have to depend on God that's why I pray because I do depend on him I need him but it makes it hard one man's written that whether we praise him for his unfathomable majesty or petition him for daily needs prayer is the expression of our dependence upon God our whole soul reliance upon his power to sustain us his mercy to forgive us his bounty to supply us and his glory to overwhelm us as we reflect on who he is that's why I think prayer rubs so raw against our egocentric human nature it rubs raw against that and it makes it hard to pray finally sixth prayer is a battle isn't it we often talk about the battle and so does so does the word of God

Ephesians 6 especially right talks about our battle is not against flesh and blood it's against principalities and powers all these forces of darkness and heavenly realms this is huge it's huge the stuff that's going on around us that we can't see is huge and God invites us into this somehow and I don't know how it all works I don't know he doesn't tell us enough to know exactly you've got those passages in Daniel where Daniel's praying and you've got the prince of Persia and you've got Michael and you've got this battle going and you've read I don't know piercing the darkness or whatever it was that you know I can't remember the guy's name Frank Peretti and it was his kind of deal on that whole the bottom line is we're not exposed to everything that's going on there and how how does my prayer affect the work of God I believe it does I believe scripture tells us it does I don't know exactly does it move an angel that moves you know a community of angels

I don't know it could be because we know that there's you know the Lord's given us a little bit of insight into that in the word but not enough to be I think overly confident or go too far with it like maybe some people have but something's going on something's going on when we pray you know and I and I and I have been moved by some of those books that speculate a little bit Randy Alcorn's book on heaven and some of it you know I've been I've been moved by that it's speculative but just to think that maybe maybe you know and and and and there's things that could be moving and changing but I'm not praying and so are they not moving and changing because I'm not praying and this is big and it goes into the sovereignty of God and all but but something's going on and it's a the Bible tells us that it's a battle there is a spirit and we have to we've got a weapon we've got the sword of the spirit but we put all this armor on we and prayer and petition with thanksgiving and so prayer is a big part of the battle and yet I think here we are and we're bothered about whether our local coffee shop is going to be renovated and we're not going to be able to go for a drink and you know or

[42 : 52] I've got to get a spare tire today you know and I'm and there's eternal stuff going on in the realms around us and God tells us that and invites us into that with prayer it's a battle but it's a battle and so you need to be ready for whatever that's going to mean for you is Satan going to oppose that?

Probably how? I don't know but I'm sure he's going to oppose the prayer life of a Christian and try to distract you in any way he can any way he can well I don't know are there are there that's I think my time's just about up but you know I gave you a little list that prayer's hard but anybody want to say anything?

I mean throw something in there is there have I missed something? is there something that you so this is I want to be able to go walk away and say yes we've had a seminar okay I have a few you guys have recommended some books and I know time's up here but one of the things that I started doing during my breakdown period was I started using a prayer book okay because as a pastor I'm on the door every Sunday and people say would you pray for this and I think oh yeah yeah and you know it's gone and I just didn't want to do that so I keep a piece of paper in my pocket and a pen and I just put it into a book and this starts in 2003 when I had my breakdown boom 2003 and then I've got I don't know if you can see it or not but I make and when I feel there's been an answer or a resolution I tick it with a red tick and I can go back I can start from just a couple days ago when the last entry was and I can work my way back because chances are the more recent ones are the ones that are unresolved or whatever and I just and that's how I pray there's more I'm a very driven guy but I'm highly chaotic

I'm very disorganized and maybe that's why I had a breakdown but using something particular like this has so helped me and there's people in here from the church mainly but from my wider life and if you asked me to pray for something I'd write it down and I would put it in here and until I hear from you I'll keep praying for it I'll just keep like the persistent widow I'll just keep going back and going back and this family that I've been praying for because the Lord the Lord's told me to so this has been good and let me just give you a couple of my own recommendations these tend to be older ones but I don't know if you ever read Paul Miller's book A Praying Life really good book Paul Miller's just some real practical stuff in here I read this again most of the stuff I read when I wasn't at work because I was just desperate to learn more about prayer Spurgeon's prayers will just knock you for sex there's just a book called Prayer and they're just Spurgeon's prayers and I think this guy prayed these in the services that he preached at and I just think they're longer than my sermons you know and they're long just Spurgeon's you know just somebody who seemingly has mastered or is mastering the art of prayer learn from them learn from their example this one was a lifesaver for me particularly in a dark place and it's Andrew Murray and it's just called

Waiting on God and I don't know if you've read much he's a bit of a mystic kind of you know but good stuff man did he get me thinking about just the mechanics of my prayers and probably during my breakdown prayer I was off work for about nine months and I think I must have read this through like about 15 times I mean it just was phenomenal there's a little thing that's even more mystical and some of you guys might hate it but you may have heard this little book called The Practice of the Presence of God by Brother Lawrence there's a few things in it I would just say be careful not taking too far but I like the idea I like his idea of just praying everywhere you know the guy was a monk and he was the cook in the monastery he was the cook and he became one of the most well-known guys in the world just for his he learned to just do everything communing with God and I thought that's a good idea you know driving exercising walking whatever you know learn to pray with God anyway that's just a few practical things okay let me pray

[47 : 04] Lord thank you for thank you for your word thank you for the body of Christ thank you for the precious time we have together and the opportunity we have to to make the most of it thank you especially for opening the way for us to commune with you through the blood of Christ and the sacrifice of Christ and help us Lord teach us as your disciples said teach us to pray in Jesus name Amen