



**BIVOCATIONAL & SMALL CHURCH
LEADERSHIP NETWORK**

BSCLN LEADERSHIP SERIES

**STRIVING TO BE A
PASTOR WHO PRAYS**

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INTRODUCTION

This morning during His Time I was reading in Joel chapter 1. You may want to get your Bible and read it before you continue. Have you read Joel 1? If not, stop right now and read Joel 1. I know you don't want to and that's why you are struggling in your time with God. You would rather read anything else than spend time with Him. So if this book is going to do any good at all, stop right now and go to the only book that really matters, the Bible, and read Joel 1.

Hopefully you have read the scripture, and are now ready to hear my journal entry for today.

Lord, "Withered" is an accurate word to describe my spiritual condition in these days. It is as though I have been debarked, left to dry, wither, and die. Lord, why am I not in mourning? Why am I not running to you? Why am I trying to find my joy in cisterns that do not hold water? Why am I content being a cloud drifting without rain?

The signs of 'wither' are all around me, yet I remain unmoving, unmoved. So it was with Israel. So it is of America. So it is with me.

Lord, you can bark the debarked. You can give water to the cisterns that are dry. You can return the rain to the clouds. You can give life to the dead.

Stir me in a way that the mourning, the howling, the crying out, the coming to you is like that of a panting, thirsty deer. Do this in Trish, in my children, in their families, in my church, and in all your people. Leave none of us dry, withered, dead, and ready for the burn pile. Love thirsty, withered me!

Pastors and church staff, you need to understand that the writer of this book is just like you. No matter how many times I commit myself to being faithful in my prayer life, no matter how many times I pray, no matter how many times He has delivered me from "the dry and thirsty land", I return to the desert. I don't want to be withered, but my actions communicate a different message. No matter how many times God teaches me that, at His feet, there is life, joy, understanding, peace, and Himself, I still constantly try to live my life and do ministry without Him. Pretty foolish, wouldn't you agree?

This book is not meant to be exhaustive or even close to it. If you are looking for that kind of book, then read the Bible. And that is perhaps one of the biggest truths I hope you get from this book: Stop

reading everything and anything and return to the Bible! If you are truly looking for truth and God, then stay with His book. All I can do is share my journey and the things that I have found to be helpful to my spiritual walk with my Lord. May the Lord lead you to a closer walk with Him.

Chapter 1

LESSONS THAT I HAVE LEARNED

Chill Out! You Are Not Alone.

In the writing of every book that I have ever written, I am constantly thinking, “I am the worst person for doing this.” You don’t know me, but writing a book is about the last thing that anyone would have anticipated from me. My grammar and mastery of the English language is far from perfect. But in each book, I was able to “Chill out!” once I knew that I had an editor. A good editor can make any writer look good, and I have had some good editors.

I want you to know that I have stopped worrying if my prayers were “worded” correctly, or, even if I had asked for the right thing or not. You know why? Because I don’t have one editor, I have two, and they are perfect! Romans 8 make it very clear that the Son and the Holy Spirit are interceding for me. They never pray wrong and they never faint in praying for me. Part of praying in the name of Jesus and in the Spirit is being willing to submit to them. Submitting to them in your praying means allowing them to edit, to change your prayer so that it is a prayer that they have no problem putting their name to. I strive to pray according to God’s will, but even when I don’t, I don’t have to worry because I surrender my prayers into their hands and they can do whatever they need to make them pleasing to the Father. Because of the Son and Holy Spirit, my prayers rarely resemble what I originally offered up by the time they get to the Father, they have edited the words, and I am okay with that.

There is a lot of peace and comfort in knowing that I have the very BEST praying for me and that they never pray wrong. Now don’t get me wrong, knowing this does not free me from the responsibility

of striving to know His will as I pray. I am to strive to hear from Him and to pray according to what He says.

There are two extremes that I have witnessed in relationship to prayer. One is the thinking that whatever you ask God, He has to do. This thinking assumes that, just because your heart is right, your prayers somehow force God to act on your behalf. That He is just failing to act because you haven't asked. This foundation generally comes from the misuse of James 4. This belief sees God as a slave to you. This view makes prayer bigger than God. The other extreme is that God is going to do whatever He wants to anyway, so why even bother to pray. This view makes little of prayer. I believe that a true understanding of prayer is found somewhere in between these two.

Prayer is always a response to His invitation. Prayer is first and foremost God's idea before it is ours. God invites us to squeeze in between the Son and the Holy Spirit when we pray. This is where the will of God is done and where it is found. In that position, we almost always start out praying wrong. But, if we will linger and listen, we will hear the cries of the Spirit, and we will feel the Son and the Spirit at work transforming our heart, and our prayers as a result. Remember, in order for your prayers to change, your heart must change. Everything that comes out of our mouth is a reflection of our hearts. If we are going to pray according to His will, then we must first be seeking it and submitting to it. The main thing God wants is our heart, and not our prayers. If He has our heart, then He will find our prayers wanting Him.

When I pray, the realization that I am constantly being interceded for, has been extremely humbling and liberating for me. The image of me kneeling in between the two of them has brought me to broken, uncontrollable sobs more than once.

Today respond to God's invitation. Today squeeze in between the Son and the Holy Spirit, let them be your perfect editors of every prayer that you will ever pray.

Chill out! You are never alone when you pray. You are covered. You don't have to worry or fret if you fail to pray for someone or something. They never pray wrong and they never fail to pray. They are not like us.

Draw Away So As To Draw Near

Mark 1:35 records, *“And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.”* Luke 5:16 records, *“And he withdrew himself into the wilderness and prayed.”* Jesus habitually withdrew to a solitary place to draw near unto the Father. This pattern, this habit, is the only way that you will ever find the intimacy in your prayer life that you desire. Hopefully, you are not longing for a habit of prayer or a religious ritual void of power and meaning. If you are, then throw this book away. God has never been moved or impressed by the prayer life of a Pharisee. I know I have lived there more days than I care to remember. It makes you feel good, but it is self-righteous pleasure that often leads to a judgmental attitude with strong condescending tendencies. Each day you check prayer off your list of things to do, but you are still empty (Well, unless you live off your own religious pride and strength). God wants more of us because He wants us, and not a vain repetition. Good point by the way. A vain repetition in prayer is not just the prayer but it can be the habit of prayer. The difference between a vain repetition and a persistent prayer is NOT the words, but the birth place of the prayer. A vain repetition begins in the head and stays there. A persistent prayer begins in the heart and grows into a constant, persistent heart cry. Prayer itself can become a form of godliness but denying the power there of. You don't have to be a Muslim, a Buddhist, a Mormon, or Jehovah Witness to have a godless and powerless prayer life. There are many in the Baptist church and in the ministry that have the same kind of prayer life. Just because you have a lot of praying does not mean that you have a lot of God.

Your goal in prayer is always God! Many people, and sadly many in our churches, pray to GET. They pray and look at prayer only for getting something from God. I have heard for many years now that prayer is not about getting. I must object to that statement. I believe that prayer is all about getting. But not as you may think. I believe that prayer is about getting WITH God! I have found that when I come to Him in prayer for the purpose of Getting WITH Him I always get more than I could ever ask of Him if I just came to Get FROM Him. God is the One who invites us to pray, to come to Him, to draw near unto Him. He desires intimacy with us. He desires to hear our voice

and to see our face. He desires our attention and our time. We must learn to withdraw, or to draw away in order to draw near to Him.

What does this look like? I am not talking about going away to some remote island or some get away for a few weeks or becoming a monk. We have callings to be done and life of constant non-stop solitude is not even God honoring. I am talking about a departure from the normal things of life for focused, intentional, intimate, uninterrupted time with God. Jesus did this every morning, but he did it at other times as well. He is found doing it at night, in the middle of the day, and, well, whenever he needed it. Mornings are a must and must be the start, do not think that you know better than God. He knows what is coming your way each day, you only think you do. If you will spend time with Him each morning, in an unrushed time, He will give you what you need for that day. He will feed you “your daily bread” if you will wake up hungry for Him each morning and spend some time at His breakfast table. Forever I have heard that breakfast is the best and most important meal of the day. That is true for your spiritual food as well. When was the last time you asked God for your daily bread? I believe that this directive, “*Give us this day our daily bread*”, is more than just about the food that we would put on the table. I believe that this prayer directive is about asking God daily for what we need to “*Hallow His name*”, for “*His Kingdom to come and His will to be done*” in our lives each day. When you understand this prayer directive in this manner then how can we not ask for “*our daily bread*”? Many of God’s children have decided to live off of yesterday’s bread, instead of asking for fresh bread from heaven each day. Are you trying to live off of yesterday’s bread?

In James 4:8 God invites us to draw near unto Him. “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.” This time is critical to a prayer life that is vibrant and life giving.

I encourage you to intentionally draw away so as to draw near. We need this daily, but I want to encourage you to do so for extended periods of time as well. Plan a time where you can spend some extended quality time with the Lord. I know some that do this for a few days, others for a week, and even some for a month. That is not doable for most of us, but a few hours every now and then will be well worth it. I own a 70+ acre farm, and several years ago I built a 10 foot by 10 foot hunting house. It was built for my grandchildren so that they would enjoy hunting. This very rough little cabin has become a

place of thought, prayer, and withdrawing for me. I can go there for an hour or for several. I know some people that go to a park, and, one pastor I know has a gazebo, and another told me of his rock. Find such a place for your withdrawals. Not all of us can go to the Mount of Olives, but we all can find our place for being alone with the Father.

None of our lives are filled with more important “stuff” than Jesus’ was. If He could do it each day, we can too.

Listen More Than Talk

I was doing a conference in East Tennessee on the Prayers of Crying Out. I had already taught for several hours and we were returning from a break. The congregation was singing, and I was sitting there getting ready for the afternoon session. The church had created a banner for the conference and had it stretched across the front of the sanctuary over the baptistry. The banner read, “Hear my cry!” They had stretched it between two cloth banners that hung in the sanctuary on a regular basis. These other two banners read, “Lord of Lords” and “King of Kings”. As they were singing, I started to read the banner for the conference. I wasn’t reading it out loud, just kind of reading it in my mind and staring at it. At some moment, God drew my attention to the other banners on each side of the Conference title. I began to read all three at the same time. “Lord of Lords, Hear my cry, King of Kings.” Then all of a sudden, something happened that has changed the way I look at prayer. I read them differently and heard them differently. I heard the voice of God saying, “I am Lord of Lords, Hear MY cry, for I am King of Kings!” I was broken. At that moment, they called me forward to start the afternoon session. I stood before them and read the banners both ways, and then I asked them a question, “Which is more important for God, to hear our cry or for us to hear His?” The answer to that question has always been the same, we must hear His cry. Our cry does not change God, but one word from Him better change us. That afternoon I spent the rest of the conference going through the scriptures showing that hearing His voice is critical to powerful and effective prayer.

We have a strong tendency to want to be heard, and, sadly, this strongly influences our prayer life. Let me ask you that question.

Which is more important; God hearing from you or you hearing from God? We know that praying according to His will is critical for us to receive what we ask. We also know that He invites us to ask for wisdom when we lack understanding about what He is doing in the midst of our trials. But, when it comes to prayer, we spend so much time talking that we fail to listen. If it is true that hearing from God is critical in praying according to His will, and hearing from Him is more important than Him hearing from us, then we must learn to listen.

I just returned from visiting with my daughter and her family. I have some wonderful grandsons, who are 'all boy'. They are full of energy, and love to be busy, non-stop busy. They also all love to talk, a lot. On several occasions while visiting with them, I heard my daughter say to them, "You aren't listening to me." She was correct, they were not listening. We are so often like that in prayer. We really don't care that much about His plans or His agenda. We already have our day planned and we just are stopping in at the store to get what we think we need before hitting the road. How sad we are when it comes to prayer.

None of us like to be treated the way we treat God, always talking but never listening. Some call it contemplative praying, some call it meditation. Personally I am too much of a redneck, and, definitely not an intellect to use those kinds of words. It isn't that difficult, I must learn to listen!

To listen, I must be near Him. Therefore, drawing away so as to draw near is critical. To listen I must be still! I don't know if you have ever studied that word, if you haven't, you might want to. To wait and to be still means to STOP EVERYTHING and KNOW that He is God. To listen means to STOP. You will have a hard time hearing Him if you are always rushed.

I will be sharing about IT praying in the following pages, but there is an event that is recorded in my journal that is applicable to this present discussion. It concerns an IT prayer for my daughter. Each Christmas we try to share our IT prayers and covenant to pray for each one during the coming year. My daughter's IT prayer one year was for a baby. We all agreed to pray that God would give her a child during the next year. She became pregnant very shortly after the first of the year and we all rejoiced. We continued to pray for her and this child. As I prayed for this IT I noticed that God kept leading

me to pray for my daughter to become a woman of great faith. Every morning as I prayed this, prompting of the Lord grew stronger and stronger. I began to notice that God was changing my prayer for my daughter. I knew I had squeezed in between the Son and the Holy Spirit because this new IT prayer took over my heart. Sometime that spring I was driving to a conference when my son-in-law called to tell me that my daughter had just lost the baby. I pulled over to the side of the road and wept. I cried out to God, "How is this going to make her a woman of faith?" My wife, Trish, had gone to Louisiana to be with my daughter for a few days shortly after the miscarriage. She called and said, "Don, you would be so proud of our daughter, her faith has never been stronger." Even retelling this story I weep. You see the next Christmas my daughter's IT prayer was for a child and once again she became pregnant and we now have Micah. A few years later her IT prayer was once again for a child. As I prayed for this IT I once again found myself asking God to make her a great woman of faith. On the same day as she lost the first child, she lost this child. I thought, "Lord she will not survive this." But when my son-in-law gave her the phone, she boldly and strongly said, "Dad I am ok. God is going to get me through this." HE HAS! My daughter is a woman of great faith and these miscarriages are part of her testimony of how God made her one.

What is the point of me sharing this story now and not in the IT section? You must withdraw so that you can draw near if you are going to hear Him and have Him draw near unto you. This is what God did for me in the midst of praying for my daughter. He changed my prayers because I got near unto Him and was able to hear His voice. God wants you praying according to His will, which cannot happen if you will not get close to Him.

One of my favorite stories in the Bible is of a little known man named Ahimaaz. In 2 Samuel 18 one of the stories of Ahimaaz is recorded. If you get a chance read this story, you can almost see him jumping up and down begging to run. The Bible says he was a good man. He was a professional runner. He is found delivering messages for the king. In a time of great danger and threats to David's life, a runner was needed to deliver a message to David. Ahimaaz is there and so is a Cushite. Joab sends the Cushite to run and tell the king the news. Ahimaaz, being the runner that he is, is going crazy that he isn't allowed to run. Several times he asks to run. Each time Joab says NO! But Ahimaaz knows nothing about standing still or about

submission. So he asks again and finally Joab says, GO! The story goes on to say that Ahimaaz out runs the Cushite, but, when he gets to the king, his message is incomplete. It was a day of humiliation for him instead of celebration. He should have listened and stood still, but Ahimaaz doesn't know how to stand still. He doesn't know much about listening. He may be the first there, and he may bring a message, but it is incomplete because he refused to listen. Listening is about submission!

I am Ahimaaz! I like to run! Waiting and being still don't come easy for me. What about you? Are you listening?

Remember praying is about intimacy. Praying with power is always more about listening before talking. Are you a good God listener or are you a good God talker? Learn to listen more than talk, it will change your prayer life; it will change you.

Give Thanks For All Things and In All Seasons

When you spend more time listening, you will spend more time in thanksgiving than you do in asking. Psalm 107 is one of my favorite chapters in the Bible. It is divided into four sections by two different phrases that are repeated 4 times. One of them deals with the people of God crying out to God and Him delivering them. The other deals with a yearning that God has for the same people to give Him thanks for what He has done.

To me it is sad that God has to plead for thanks from those that He has just delivered. *"Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!"* But isn't that true of us? We spend so much time asking but so little time in giving Him thanks. I think that it is a reflection of our culture today. Being thankful is rare today. It is not just a generational thing, it is all encompassing. The older generation will lecture the younger on how they fail to say thanks, but at the same time you will have a hard time getting a word of praise or thanks for who God is and what He has done from any of the generations today. If you do, it is so generic and so artificial that you wonder why they even bothered.

Giving thanks is hardly even mentioned in most books on prayer today. In fact, most books on prayer only talk about asking. Again a

reflection of the age we are living in.

If you want to have a prayer life that is vibrant and intimate, then you must learn to become a thankful person. Listening to God will help you be thankful. You will always leave His presence after hearing from Him wondering, “Who am I that He is mindful of me?”

Do you like feeling unappreciated? I don't know anyone that likes feeling that way. Now understand that giving thanks to God does not change God or make God any more God. The same is true for any prayer. Prayer doesn't make God more God. But prayer does make us more His and so it is with thanksgiving. Thanksgiving makes us more His, by causing us to reflect and to express gratitude for what He has done for us and in us.

Luke 17:11-19 tells of Jesus cleansing ten lepers, but it also records these words, “Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.” I have found this to be so true, that those who are the most familiar with Jesus and His workings are often the last to give Him heartfelt thanks. How many times have I seen someone that has not been in church come to know Christ as Savior and the more they realize who He is and what He has done the more they praise Him. Their praises are not held back until there is a “praise service”, they often are loud and take every opportunity to give Him thanks. Are you too familiar with His workings that you have failed to give Him constant thanks? When was the last time you fell at his feet and gave Him thanks for what He has done for you? Are you so busy going to the temple that you have failed to run to Him?

Thanksgiving is about Bounty. To give thanks means to express gratitude for a bounty that He has bestowed on us. Thanksgiving is always specific in nature, you can always name what has been received. For example, “I give you thanks for_____.”

One other thing before moving on, you will never give God thanks faster than when you have an IT. When you have an IT you are constantly praying, watching, waiting for IT. During that praying, watching, and waiting period a level of anticipation and expectation builds so that when God does anything at all in relationship to your prayers you can't help but give Him thanks.

What is it that God is waiting for you to give Him thanks for? Take a moment and read Psalm 107. How much time do you spend giving Him thanks?

Know Your IT.

Matthew 7:7 says, “*Ask, and it shall be given you*”. I challenge you to do what I did several years ago, read through the scriptures and record what people prayed for. I think you will make an interesting discovery, there are no prayer lists in scripture. You won't even find people going around asking for prayer requests. What you will find is that most of the prayers are about one thing, sometimes two. We should not be surprised by this. It is very hard to be fervent in prayer about many things. When one thing grabs our heart we will pray, fast, weep, and even beg day and night for years for God to hear us. Jesus was constantly asking individuals what they wanted Him to do for them. Sometimes it was so obvious what their needs were but He made them reveal what their IT was. Most of these people could have filled a book with their needs but they all only asked for one thing, their IT.

I was driving thru San Ignacio, Belize when a very frantic woman flagged me down and jumped in my car. I could hardly understand her, but it was obvious that she was filled with fear and a sense of urgency had grasped her. She immediately started screaming, “Drive! Hurry, my little boy has swallowed a marble!” She continued yelling instructions about where to turn. I was driving as fast as I could, but my heart was racing even faster. The whole time I am praying to myself, at least I thought I was praying to myself. I looked and saw her face and realized that I was screaming my prayer. She had become totally silent and was just staring at me as I was praying. I am sure that at first she thought I was some kind of nut, but then the two of us exploded forth with the same prayer, “Lord, help! We don't know what to do but you do, remove this marble!” I thought we would never get to her home. This woman had tried to help the boy, but when she realized that she could not, she left him in the arms of her young daughter and ran for help. I was the first person she found that would even pay attention to her. As we rushed out of the car and up the steps, her daughter slings the door open. Standing behind her was this little boy, choking. I was still praying as I entered the room, but before I could take a couple of steps inside, the marble came flying

out in a flood of vomit. Let me tell you something. That was the most beautiful vomit I have ever seen! The woman grabs her son and then grabs me and starts to unleash all the joy in her heart. As I drove away, I remember weeping and saying “Thank you, Lord!” over and over again. This lady had an “IT” and she gave her “IT” to me.

Willie was a young, homeless 13 year-old boy when I found him sleeping in the corner of the mission house we were building in Belize. That young boy captured my heart from the first time I saw him. He wasn't a saint by any means, in fact, he was constantly causing me extra heartache, but I could not seem to walk away from him. One time I was walking down the street when a young man walked up to me and asked if I wanted to buy a camera. He held out a camera that looked very familiar to me. I turned it over and immediately knew that it was mine. I said, “This is mine! Where did you get it?” He said, “From Willie!” I had to buy back my own camera. Another time Willie was working with me, and I noticed he had a brand new machete. Willie didn't own anything and everything that he had came from me or a couple of other men in the church. I could tell by his look though that something wasn't right. I said, “Willie, tell me where you got this machete?” After much questioning, he told me that he had taken it from the store next to the church. He showed me how he had been climbing on the church's roof and jumping over to the roof of the store. He would then lift up the tin, drop into the store, take what he wanted, and then climb back out. He showed me how he had been hiding everything in the attic of the church by lifting up its tin and laying his “stuff” inside. Needless to say, I was a little upset. We collected all of his “stuff” and went next door and gave it all back and told them that they might want to fix their roof. The shop keeper was a friend and he laughed and then scolded Willie. Needless to say, Willie caused me a lot of grief, but he also brought a lot of joy to me. Willie stayed with me nearly every day all day long for several years. Then one day, I caught him in a horrific sin. I was mad, he was furious and ashamed. He made up his mind that he would kill me. He tried everything that he could to find a weapon. The other young men all came and warned me, but I loved Willie more than I feared Willie. I prayed, and, oh, did I pray for that boy. He became my “IT”. Before he could hurt me, he stole an unbroken horse. The horse had been running with a few others in the cemetery (that was normal in Belize at that time). Willie tried to ride the horse and it threw him onto a

grave stone and broke his back. He was left paralyzed. The church and I prayed for Willie with all that was in us. Once again Willie became our “IT”. God did some amazing things during the next year in Willie’s life, but he never did walk again. He did turn to the Lord and began working with the youth. God didn’t do what we asked but God answered our prayers. Willie died a few years ago, and to this day, I cannot think of that young boy without tearing up. That boy made me pray, a lot!

Through the years, I have learned to categorize my prayers by the “ITs” that I have had. My first “IT” was for my own salvation. My second was for a girlfriend, and God gave me my wife. One “IT” prayer I remember was when I was home watching my little girl. She was just a newborn at the time. I was at home alone with her when God began to ask me, “What kind of daddy are you going to be?” I wept so hard when I offered Him this “IT”, “Lord, I want to be the best daddy I can be, but I don’t know how. Help me to be the best daddy I can be!” That night our church was in revival, and God began to call me to preach. I had such a hard time talking to people. I was so afraid of people. But the calling of God was so strong that I rushed to the altar and prayed another “IT” that day, “Lord, open my mouth!” He took away the fear of people and filled my heart with boldness. I have never shut my mouth since. You may ask, “How are these two “ITs” related?” Well, that’s easy! In order for me to be the best daddy that I could be, I needed not to be afraid and I needed to submit to the will of the Lord.

Thru the years, God’s people have granted me the sacred trust of sharing their “IT” prayers. In those moments, their “ITs” became my “ITs”, and I joined them in anticipating God moving in their lives. The salvation of many a lost man weighed heavily on my heart as their loved ones would say, “Pray for them.” Men like Buddy, Buck, Jake, Moses, and Jack became my “IT” during those seasons of sowing, watering, and, eventually, harvesting. Praying for them became my heart cry and not just another name on a list. I rejoiced as I watched God answer my “IT” prayers for them.

Some time and somewhere I noticed that my prayers for my family became “IT” prayers too. In my journals there seems to be reoccurring prayers for various ones. These were prayers that were given birth from the heart and not the head. When these prayers were answered, they were the ones that gave birth to the greatest praise.

These “ITs” have become part of my testimony, my story of God’s wonder working power as He has responded to the likes of me. At some point, my family decided to intentionally make “IT” praying a part of our tradition. Each day the “IT” prayers of my family are lifted up before the throne of God. Generally around the Christmas holiday, my wife begins the process of collecting the “IT” prayers, the heart cries of our family. We sometimes express these as the “One Thing” that we long for God to do among us in the next year. She puts them all together and sends them to each of us. They become a natural part of our devotions each day. As a family, we have seen God do some amazing things as He has answered our “IT” prayers. These answers have become a part of our testimony.

In working with churches I often ask the pastor and leaders, “What is the one thing that you long for God to do among you in the next year?” Most have never thought in this way, but when offered the challenge they are usually quick to share a desire that is so dear to them that they are unable to share it without tears. “IT” prayers are like that.

IT prayers are the most common prayers in scripture. IT prayers are all about praying the heart’s desire. An IT prayer is that one thing that you long for in a situation. Let me put it this way, what is the one thing that you long for God to do in your life? That is your IT prayer. What is the one thing that you long for God to do in your family? That is your family’s IT prayer. What is the one thing that you long for God to do in your church? That is your church’s IT prayer.

God has IT prayers also. He has recorded them in His Word and He challenges us to pray them. Putting God’s IT before ours is not natural, it requires surrender to His Spirit and will. As a pastor you must take the lead and help your family and your church seek God’s heart for His IT.

You will never pray harder or longer until you have an IT prayer. It is hard to be fervent in prayer about many things, but it is not hard to be fervent in prayer about one thing, especially when that one thing has your heart.

What is your IT prayer? If you only had one thing to ask God to do in your life, what would IT be?

Intercede More Than Petition

A good friend of mine, Steve Holt, always reminds me of a simple truth by constantly saying, “It isn’t all about you, Don.” You have no idea how much I really need to hear that. If you are anything like me, then you understand that “self” can be really big at times. Remember that whatever is in your heart will come out in your words. That is true of our prayers. Our prayers are a reflection of our heart. If this is the case, then what are your prayers telling God about your heart? What are the prayers of your church telling God about the heart of your church? Through the years of being Prayer Consultant for the Tennessee Baptist Convention, I received many prayer requests and listened as churches shared theirs. When you have done it for as long as I have, it isn’t hard to discover where people’s hearts are. Most of the requests are crisis driven and generally self-focused. It is as though we have forgotten our callings. It is as though we have forgotten that we are pilgrims just passing through this world. Let me encourage you to Intercede more than Petition.

Petitions are all about “you”, “your” needs, “your” family, “your” church, “your” denomination, “your” nation, and “YOUR”. There is nothing wrong in praying for “you” and “your”. In fact, we are encouraged to do so. But when all of our prayers are focused on “you” and “your”, then it reveals something about our hearts. We are children of God. He is far bigger than “you” and “your”. As His children, we, too, should have His heart and be about “Him” and “His”. Intercession is about God’s which is always bigger than “us” and “ours”.

To intercede more than petition requires an intentional and proactive effort that moves in the direction away from “self” and “ours” to “His”. It is difficult and it takes time and consistency. I don’t always achieve this goal, but I must strive. I encourage you to do the same. God has a way of blessing us when we put Him and others before ourselves. As a pastor, you will have a heart for “your” flock but always remember that “His” flock is bigger than “your”.

Remember, interceding is the work of the Son and the Holy Spirit and we are invited to join them. Frequent intercession is a sign of a powerful prayer life because it gives evidence of what it is to pray as Jesus and the Holy Spirit pray. Which describes your prayer life most, petition or intercession?

Are you a “row farmer”? Some years ago I was studying the passages on God’s vineyard and His calling of laborers to work in His vineyard. I discovered that I had been laboring as a “row farmer” and not as “vinedresser”. Row farming is all about “your row”. God’s vineyard is far greater than “your row”. He was looking for laborers to work in HIS vineyard and not to work in a “row”. My praying started to change as a result of this truth. I understand that focusing only on my “row” is not what He ever intended. He wants laborers that are about Him and His vineyard.

Are you praying as a “row farmer” or as a laborer in His vineyard and field?

Seize the Moment

As a pastor, your praying takes on many forms. You will find people expecting you to pray. You must seize the moments. When you are given a prayer need, stop right then and pray. Some time ago I was asked to do a conference on praying for the sick. Though I had addressed the subject often while teaching on prayer, I had never spent a whole conference on the subject. When they told me that I would have almost 6 hours to teach on the subject, I remember thinking, there is no way I can teach on praying for the sick for 6 hours. That conference was perhaps one of the most powerful and most educational conference that I have ever done. As I studied, I quickly discovered a reoccurring pattern that ran from the Old Testament on through the New Testament. But, I also realized that it was not the way that I had been taught to pray for the sick, nor was it the general way that the churches that I have been acquainted with prayed for the sick either. Biblical praying for the sick is generally one of “Prayer with Presence”, except for a very few exceptions.

The normal biblical pattern of praying for the sick generally meant physical presence with the sick and often involved touch. The sick generally went to the priest or prophet for prayers of healing. In James, the elders are directed to go to the sick and to lay their hands on the person. Our general pattern of praying for the sick is one of “Distance”. We have built our method of praying for the sick around a single encounter of Jesus healing a person from a “Distance”. A closer look at that passage reveals that Jesus’ first words were, “let’s go.”

I believe that “Prayer with Presence” is the model that Jesus and the New Testament gave the church for praying for the sick. I understand that it isn’t required, but it is encouraged. It is very difficult to fulfill James 5’s instructions for praying for the sick by long distance praying. The best time to pray with someone is when you are with them.

Why would I share this under the title “Seize the moment”? Because I believe that the best time to pray for someone is immediately and while they are in need. The best time to model prayer and praying is when someone is in need. Seize the moment and do so with “Prayer with Presence”.

I no longer trust my memory, but that is not the primary reason why I try to pray at that moment. Seizing the moment is expected by your people. This is not a time for you to get caught up on your praying, but it is a time for you to love on others through prayer.

Seize the moment!

Don’t Faint!

“Don’t grow weary in well doing.” “To know to do good and not do it is sin.” “I want men everywhere to pray and not to faint.” These verses or phrases are embedded in our minds and our souls. Each of these verses is calling us to stay faithful in our walk with Him. We know that we can do nothing apart from Him. We know that without abiding in Him, we will become dry and dead and good for nothing. We know that salt which has lost its savor is good for nothing but weed killer in the road of life. Our problem is not knowing, our problem goes much deeper than that. Our problem is doing.

I want you to know and understand something that has disturbed me about the present Church of America. We have become a Church that is a collector of information without transformation. We read book after book. We attend conference after conference. We collect more and more degrees. We listen to more and more sermons. We wrongfully have thought that more information would transform us. Information is not what we need. Transformation is what God desires. God is not like me, He does not talk because He likes to be heard. God talks because He expects to be obeyed.

One thing I learned very quickly from being a missionary for 7

years in a Third World country is that it doesn't take much to truly worship and it doesn't take much for someone to follow Him. God is not looking for more, He is looking for obedience. We can quote "to whom much is given much more is required", but we then fail to practice that which we have. We fill our shelves and desk tops with book after book and note after note but our lives are not forever altered. We are a truly pitiful people of all the people of God in the Church Age.

When it comes to prayer and our spiritual walk with Him, it is not information that we lack but unction and urgency because we lack transformation. The book of Joel is so appropriate for our generation, for it calls for a return to Him.

Do not let this book be added to your quest for more information. This book is incomplete, it will always be so. I pray God uses it, but I know that the main thing God wants is not another book, but ME. HE wants the same for you.

Do not faint in prayer! Some days you will fight the Enemy all the way as you try to seek God's face. Some days, most days, the Enemy will not be Satan. The one that you will most need for God to deliver you from will be YOU. You will have to extend forth your hand toward His each and every day asking Him to take you praying. Did you hear that? Just in case I fail to say it later, let me say it now. The main thing that you need is not to "Go praying", but for you to let Him "Take you praying".

He will invite you to join Him in a heart to heart talk each day, all you have to do is go with Him. He will take you to where He desires you to be so that you will be ready to fight the Enemy all day long and so you can stay close to Him all day long too. Do not faint in prayer!

We generally use the phrase, "Do not faint in prayer!" to refer to persistence praying for a request and rightly so based on the context that Jesus shared it in Luke 18. However, persistence in prayer is more than just being unceasing. In the larger context of this Luke 18 passage, the problem that leads to fainting in prayer is one of faith and not prayerlessness. That is why, after the parable of the persistent widow, Jesus asked the question, "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" This question is prophetic in nature. "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint... Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on earth?" The idea is that men faint in prayer as a direct result of a failure in their faith. The

prophetic nature of this question implies that in the Last Days men will faint in prayer because of a failure in faith. This is not a failure in their Christian faith but a failure in faith that relates directly to prayer. They fail to pray without ceasing because they have come to believe stronger in something else. What would that be for you? Would it be your age and your experience? Would it be your theology? Would it be a “story” (an event in your life that has caused you to stop believing in prayer like you use to)?

Let your faith be bigger than your experience, your strength, your “story”, or your theology. You will never have the prayer life that you desire or that God desires for you if you continue to have prayer faith that is weak.

Do not faint in prayer! Pray believing is more than believing that you are going to get what you asked for (Ask Paul about praying for his thorn to go away.) Pray believing is about believing that you have God’s ear and that He will speak. The church of America’s understanding of God answering prayer is a far cry from the biblical record. Biblically, God answering meant more than getting a yes. It meant that God would respond and that He was near. Once again the biggest thing God can give us is Himself. You can never get more from God than Himself, but for some, they want more of what God has than God. Believing that God is listening and responding is difficult in difficult days, do not be afraid to tell God that you are struggling with this, the prophets did.

Do not faint in prayer. What causes you to faint in prayer? When Jesus comes, will He find a prayer faith that leads to persistent prayer in you?

Chapter 2

KEEPING A PRAYER JOURNAL

“I will proclaim what the Lord has done.” Psalm 118:17b

In the day before TV and Smart phones and other computerized gadgets, reading and writing were common practices. During that period of time many Christians kept some kind of journal, log, or diary. It was their way of recording their thoughts, their life experiences, their struggles, and their prayers. Many of those records have been instrumental in shaping other's lives. God has used many journals of missionaries to inspire others to be faithful and to respond to the call to missions. Those journals turned into biographies shaped my own life and led me to become a missionary. The journals of many of our early church fathers have not only revealed their spiritual struggles but have taught us so much about walking with God. Many journals reveal the secret thoughts behind some of the greatest sermons of history. In a very unique way, Luke and Acts are journals of the life and works of Jesus and the early church. Journals have been and continue to be powerful instruments to shape not only those who use them but those who rediscover them. They proclaim what the Lord has done in a very personal and intimate way.

I have kept a journal for decades, and, through the years the way that I do so has changed, but, regardless, of how I have done it, my prayer life was the most meaningful during those times when I have kept my journal. When I journal, something changed in my prayer life.

Some of you are going to want to skip this chapter, I encourage you not to. Let me share some of the principles and methods that I use as I journal. This is what works for me, it may not work for you. Find a way that works for you. At the end of this chapter I will share some of the reasons why I believe journaling is important to a growing and vibrant prayer life.

Getting Started

1. Have your Bible in hand. Start reading wherever you left off yesterday. Each day you will need to pick up where you left off the day before. This is important, read until God tells you to stop. Many years ago God kept interrupting my quiet time (a phrase I don't use any more, now I call it God's Time). The fact that I felt that He was interrupting my quiet time was an indication that for some time I had forgotten why I had it. Anyway, I kept hearing Him asking, "Who is in control of this time?" I kept responding in my thoughts, "you are, Lord." But time after time, I kept hearing Him asking the same question over and over again. Then one day, I realized that the reason He kept asking the question was because my answer was incorrect. He wasn't in control. One day in a state of embarrassment and confession I said, "Lord, obviously you are not in control of my quiet time. But I don't know what that means." The first thing He said was then you must stop calling it "your quiet time". He was right, it was truly all about me and there was nothing quiet about it. He showed me that He was inviting me to be with Him. It was His time, and, that whether it was quiet or loud, was completely up to Him. I also heard Him say, almost as loud as His calling on my life, "If I am going to be in control of this time, then you must stay with me until I speak and until I release you." I quickly confessed that I didn't know what either one of those meant.

That began a journey with Him that has transformed my life. I had lost the ability to recognize His voice and wasn't even aware of it. I had for some time lost the ability to tell the difference between a good sermon from the Word and a "Thus saith the Lord word from the Word for that moment." You see, for some time I had let everyone and everything determine where I stopped "my" quiet time each day. For some time I had used the 'Read through the Bible' in a year format. At other times, some kind of devotional book. What God was saying was the decision for leaving Him needs to be when He releases and sends me. So a new journey began until I knew beyond a doubt that God had just spoken to me. At first, I would read and read and read. I think that it was like this initially because He had to retrain me to recognize His voice. There are still days like that but most are not. Sometimes I only read one verse, and, at other times, a whole book of the Bible. My goal is to hear from Him. This is His Time and not "my" time.

Studying the Bible is for another time. Reading the Bible through in a year is for another time. This is His Time.

As time has gone on, I have learned to look for 3 G's (these are not originally with me, I heard them shared by a missionary from Africa.) These 3 G's have become part of His Time. The 3 G's are a God Word (that word that He speaks from His Word that you know is for you for that day. It is the sword that you pick up daily. It is a God word from the Word of God that is chosen for that day. You cannot fight the Enemy with yesterday's sword), a Good word (that word from His Word that you get that is good. You can kind of think, Wow! I need to remember this.), and a Guiding word (that word that the Spirit of God says to you hold on to this, it will guide you and protect you.) I don't always find all three but I know that I am not to leave His presence until I have received the God word for that day. Sometimes the God word is all three in one.

2. Have Journal in hand. I prefer a simple blank book that can be purchased at any dollar store or Walmart. At the top of the page for that day I write the date and the verses read. I then write out word for word the God word that I have received. I then start my praying. I have just heard from Him and so my prayer is reflective of what I have just heard. At times, I will write and write my heart cry to Him as a result of the word received. These prayers are personal, transparent, and God seeking. I do not worry about who will ever read it. This is for me and God. The rest of my prayer time will usher from this spring. God will lay on my heart others that I need to share this word with. Sometimes I will text them or email them immediately. Sometimes it isn't until later in the day that I encounter the person who needs to hear this.

3. Continue to Pray. Your praying is now no longer isolated to this morning time with God. You will find yourself praying throughout the day as God continues to unpack and interpret what God has said to you. It will affect how you pray that day when you are visiting in the hospital or at homes. It will affect how you pray at meals. It will become a part of your day and you will be looking for ways that He desires for you to act on what He has said.

4. Always start each day with what God said last. I start reading with the last verse from the day earlier. God will build on what He has already spoken into your life. This is a faith statement. If you believe it, then you will want to pick up your conversation with

Him right where you left off. The older I get the more I realize that prayer is a conversation more whereby God is speaking into my life. You can count on Him growing you too. You will anticipate and enter His Time with a spirit of expectation and you will delight in being with Him. Come prepared for Him to speak and not just you.

Why should one keep a journal?

1. The primary reason, for me anyway, is A Personal Proclamation of the Acts of God Provided to the Generation that follows. I think you can already see that the main reason is because it has changed me, it records more than my travels. It records my journey with Him. I hope my children and grandchildren will one day read my journals. I know that they will be surprised and perhaps even shocked at what they will read but I also know that the greatness of God will be clearly seen in their pages. They will encounter how He has shaped me, how He has answered me, how He has rebuked me, how He has loved me, how He has revealed Himself to me, and how He worked around me. It is a way that we can proclaim what the Lord has done for us to generations that may never know us. You see, it grants a legacy of prayer to those I love. Regularly I read from my journals to others. I teach a new members class at church and one of the lessons is on journaling. Most of this class is spent reading from my journals. Each time I have done so I have had people comment on how my transparency has helped them. I read from them to my children and grandchildren at special moments in our lives. I have read from them at their weddings. I have read from them during some of my sermons. My wife also journals and in our home there is a bookcase that houses them.

2. Another reason is A Revelation of Self Is Granted to the generations that follow us. Those who read my journals will find me very human. A journal is not the place to create a false image of self. To be less than genuine is a waste of time. It should record our fears, our sins, our struggles with sin, and or victories over sin. It should reveal our burdens for ourselves and for others. It is a record of our search for the heart of God. It is a place for praises and thanks. It is a place for our doubts. It is a place for our life reflections.

3. Keeping a journal Strengthens the Other Spiritual Disciplines. It is in the writing of prayers that I have learned how to communicate my heart in prayer. Countless times God has spoken

to me through my journal. Some of my most intimate moments of worship have taken place during these times. I recall a time where I had been on an extended fast, during which time I had been seeking one goal: greater intimacy with God. Each time I turned in my journal God drew me into His presence. Journaling can enhance every single one of the spiritual disciplines. It can be a tool for maturing us in Christ.

4. Journaling Provides A Mirror for Self-Confrontation.

Romans 12:3 warn us, “Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.” A journal reminds us of whom and what we are. When we daily practice journaling, it is hard to deny the truths about ourselves. Journaling provides a means for keeping track of our spiritual progress and regression. It allows us to evaluate our spiritual development. In some areas I have seen considerable growth yet while in others I have seen reoccurring battles. God has used my journals to reveal these reoccurring themes and issues to me.

5. Journaling Enhances Meditation.

As one writes, one is forced to put thoughts into words. Many of these thoughts have never been expressed before. There is something about writing our thoughts down that triggers reflection and self-examination. Journaling can serve as an aide to understanding God’s Word. Joshua was directed to “meditate” in Joshua 1:8. This meditation is nothing like the meditation of TM and Eastern philosophies. That type of meditation was for the purpose of “emptying”, biblical meditation is for the purpose of “filling”. It was the law and the Word of God that Joshua was to meditate on, to take into himself. He was to fill his day and night doing so. This Hebrew word “hagah” meaning to ponder, to meditate, imagine implies “a reciting, a rehearsing, a repeating” the biblical truth to yourself over and over again so as to master it. Joshua was promised both to prosper (to accomplish God’s purposes) and to succeed (to fulfill the will of God). This meditating on the Law and the Word of God would fill him and he was to carry it out in strength and with courage, truly signs of great faith. Journaling is part of taking the Word of God and rehearsing it, chewing on it, meditating on it for the purpose of filling us with it and strengthening our faith.

6. Journaling will Increase Thanksgiving and Praise. Each time you reread your journals you will be amazed at what God has done in your life and it will give birth to a flood of praise and thanks for His goodness.

If you don't journal, I encourage you to start.

Chapter 3

FASTINGS AND WATCHINGS

This chapter is not intended to teach you how to fast or even to prove that you need to. This chapter is to share that biblically and historically fastings and watchings were a major part of the lives of those who had strong prayer lives. Through the years, I have had several opportunities to teach on fasting and each time, I have started by encouraging the class to bring a Concordance. We spend that session looking up every reference on Fasting. They look up the words “fast”, “fastest”, “fasted”, and “fastings”. After they have sorted out all the references that refer to this subject and have disregarded all of the other references to things like, “he ran fast”, they are amazed at how often this spiritual discipline is referred to in the scriptures. The discovery is that there are 48 separate texts (texts are sections of scripture that discuss fasting, the word may be used more than once in this section, thus why text is used instead of reference). 48 times texts, 28 Old Testament and 20 New Testament are discovered. I then ask them a simple question, which has more on fasting, the Old Testament or the New Testament? Most will quickly respond, Old Testament. But there is generally one person that realizes that this may not be so. The Old Testament has 39 books that mean that out of 39 books fasting is discussed 28 times. The New Testament has 27 books that mean that out of 27 books fasting is discussed 20 times. Percentage wise which has more on fasting, the Old Testament or the New Testament? The New Testament has more on fasting. The point is that fasting is neither an Old Testament nor a New Testament teaching, it is a biblical teaching. When you take into consideration that there are 32 concordance listings on fasting in the New Testament and only 8 New Testament listings on tithing, you quickly realize that the New Testament has 4 times more on fasting than it does on

tithing. But how many sermons have you heard on giving and how many sermons on fasting? But we aren't done yet. When you consider words and concepts that for the Jew implied fasting, the amount of fasting in the Bible is truly remarkable. For example, take these words into consideration as you decide if fasting ought to be a part of your normal walk with God. Here is a partial list of words and phrases that for the Jew refers to fasting: Day of Atonement, Sabbath, Nazarite Vow, sackcloth and ashes, humble, and afflict. If you will study these words, you will discover that they often refer to fasting events. Fasting in the Hebrew means "to cover the mouth" and in the Greek it means, "to abstain". It may help to know that in scripture that there are at least 5 things that can be fasted, most times more than one of these are being fasted at the same time. It is rare that all 5 are fasted at the same time. These five things are: food, drink, sleep, work (or a radical change in one's normal routine), and sex. The sleep fast is referred to as "Watchings" in the New Testament and is actually pretty common today, especially in times of great crisis and distress. It seems to be a natural fast. You will find these in the hospital often as people will spend all night waiting and praying for a love one. With all of this said, this still does not take into consideration where fasting is taking place but the word or the normal phrases are not used. For example, in Acts 9, Paul is described to be in a state of fasting for three days, yet the word fasting or the normal phrases attributed to fasting are never used.

The one universal characteristic in all biblical fasts is that fasting without prayer is not fasting. To go without any of these things and not to spend time seeking the face of God is not fasting, it is just going without.

My first experience with fasting took place when I was a missionary to Belize. There was a problem in one of the churches. The pastor kept coming to me saying, we need to pray and fast. Each time I put him off by saying things like go ahead fast, get your church to fast. Then one day he came to me and persisted that we needed to fast. I gave him the response that I had previously given him, and he looked at me, and said, "Brother Don, you and I need to fast." I looked at him, and, after 7 years of religious study, I confessed that I knew nothing about fasting and that I never had fasted. He said, that is ok, I will teach you. That first fast was a watching. He called the church to a fast on that Saturday night from 7 pm to 7 am. I really didn't anticipate anyone showing up, and, if they did, I did not expect them

staying the full time. I also thought, what in the world will we do for 12 hours. That evening the church was full and no one left. In the middle of the bush, on top of a mountain, in extreme humid and hot conditions, under a thatched roof, sitting on chain saw cut wooden benches that were as hard as rocks we fasted and prayed! No nursery, no classes, no preaching, no music, for 12 hours with a church filled with old people and babies, we prayed and prayed and prayed. By morning God had taken care of the problem. I have fasted many times since then, and, I have seen God do many things during fasts. But the thing that He has always done in each fast was not always what we were fasting for, but it always was an act of God in my life.

Fasting is one way of withdrawing so as to draw near. During a fast, your whole attention is on seeking His face. You are in a state of listening more than speaking. You desire to hear from God, you crave hearing from Him. Fasting is like any religious activity it can become an empty vain ritual. The heart is the main difference in fasting just like it is in prayer.

I tell people all the time that fasting is about hunger. How hungry are you for hearing from God or seeing God work in your life or in a situation? Are you hungry enough to go without the normal things that fill you? Are you more hungry for Him than for the things that normally would satisfy you?

There are plenty of books out there on fasting, I challenge you to read some of them. Bill Bright's books are some of the best on this topic.

Are fastings and watchings a normal part of your prayer life? Are you hungry? When was the last time you spent the night or got up much earlier than normal to pray? I encourage you to withdraw away with Him through prayer and fasting. There truly are some "kind" (Matthew 17, you do your own homework) that will not come out but by prayer and fasting.

Chapter 4

BE MENTORED AND MENTOR!

For years I had been taught that spiritual disciplines are more caught than taught. It is a spiritual truth that walking with Christ is much greater than what takes place on a pew or in a pulpit. What we call Discipleship is nothing more than classroom teaching. Biblically, discipleship is an investment into a life that goes way beyond a class setting; a Bible in the hand, and an hour once a week. Biblical discipleship requires intimate, frequent, consistent walking together. It involves listening, sharing, working, staying together. The model for discipleship is that which Jesus set for us. We must stop offering Him tokens and others scraps.

After the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, Jesus just didn't teach them, he took them praying. There was a change in their relationship with him from that moment on as it related to prayer. Very few of the translations have the disciples asking Jesus to "teach them HOW to pray". The reason is that they were not asking Him the HOW's, they were asking Him for the PRACTICE, the REALITY of prayer in their lives. We often read this scripture as though the disciples were merely looking for another "How to" session. One of the saddest things that I discovered in my nearly 13 years of doing conferences nearly each day, was that Baptists are collectors of Information but are not all that concerned about Transformation. We go from one conference to another, we do one study after another, we fill our desks and shelves with books after books, but there is very little transformation taking place in our lives. We think that the more we know, the more we will obey. I quickly learned while serving in a Third World country that great knowledge does not lead to great service. We think that we have a better way of making disciples than Jesus did. I am certain that there are many reasons why we refuse to make disciples the way Jesus did and told us to, but one of those reasons has to be that we refuse to get close to people, we refuse to be vulnerable with others. We think that we are busier than Jesus and that we need to find a way of doing it more efficient and to more people at a time. Shallow sacrifice leads to shallow returns. If you only give a little, don't be surprised if you only get a little back. Distant ministry always leads to

distant followers. WE DO NOT KNOW BETTER THAN JESUS!

Most pastors only do what they have seen modeled. They have a tendency to preach like those that they admired and watched. They witness in the way that they most often saw it done. Prayer is a spiritual discipline that is as much caught as it is taught. You can study many books of prayer and go to many conferences on prayer, but the best way to catch prayer is to be taken praying.

I have been blest to have many mentors in my life, men that I have been able to walk with and pray with through the years. Some of them just for a season of my life, men like T. W. Hunt, Henry Blackaby, Chris Scofield, Randy Sprinkle, and Lonnie Riley. Others I had the benefit to work with and pray for a little longer, men like Steve Holt, Bobby Welch, Gene Williams, Jason Cruise, Gary Williams, Thumper Pigg, and John Franklin. These men have shaped my prayer life tremendously. I watched and I listened to them. I followed them and they showed me as much as taught me.

I have intentionally tried to have 3 types of mentors in my life as it relates to prayer: One that could pour himself into me; One that was walking along about the same pace as me so that we could sharpen each other together; and One that I could pour myself into.

Today John Franklin is the one that I have chosen to have to teach me about and to take me praying. I actually presently have two that I am trying to walk alongside of for the purpose of sharpening me in the area of prayer, Gary Williams and Jason Cruise. I am also blest to have a young man that I have been mentoring for some time, Thumper Pigg. Thumper is so funny, everything is a task for analysis. It is interesting the questions that he comes up with. He causes me to think much harder than I normally would. Each of these individuals has contributed to my walk and journey as I have sought God through prayer.

Here is my challenge, find someone to mentor you and find some you can mentor as it relates to prayer. Confess that Jesus was right and you are wrong. Admit that He stills desires for you to make disciples the way He did. God never intended for discipleship to be done from a classroom or from a pulpit. You have to walk with them, listen to them, and be with them if you are going to make a disciple. Who is it that God desires for you to pour the presence of Christ that is in you into? Who is it that you need to ask to take you praying and fasting?

Don't tell me you don't have the time. Time is not your problem, priorities and obedience is.

CONCLUSION

Always remember that God is the one that invites us to come to Him in prayer. Take Him up on His offer regularly. Keep it simple but at the same time strive for maturity. May the Lord be the One that takes you praying. May your heart-cry be that of the disciples, “Lord, teach me to pray!”

CONTRIBUTOR BIO:

Don Pierson served as the Tennessee Baptist Convention's Prayer Strategist for almost 13 years. He has been blest to teach on prayer for a couple of decades. He has intentionally sought to mentor pastors in prayer for more than three decades. For nearly 12 years he served as a Church Planter, both nationally (North Carolina) and internationally (Belize). He is the author of, *IT Praying: What is your IT?* and *Desperate For God*. He presently serves as pastor of Stewart's Chapel Baptist Church, Flintville, Tennessee. He has devoted most of his life to leading God's people in intercession that is focused on the callings of the Church: praying for God's name to be hallowed, His kingdom to come, and His will to be done in all of the earth. He longs for a true spiritual revival of God's people and a spiritual awakening in the world. He invites you to join him in praying for such a movement of God.



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