

Answered Prayer: 10 Things You Need to Know

by Shane Idleman

Intercession is not about our strength, but about the victory of Jesus Christ, and it requires spiritual warfare, prayer through, and a willingness to make sacrifices and take risks.

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Scripture: Matthew 7:7, Romans 8:26, Ephesians 6:12, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, James 5:16

Topics: "Answered Prayer", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

Shane Idleman emphasizes the significance of prayer in the life of a believer, asserting that weakness in prayer leads to weakness in all areas of life. He highlights the necessity of seeking God's guidance over human opinions, especially in times of uncertainty, and stresses the importance of intercession, perseverance, and aligning prayers with God's will. Idleman also discusses the spiritual warfare involved in prayer, encouraging believers to engage in fasting and to maintain a strong connection with God through consistent prayer. He concludes by reminding the congregation that true prayer is rooted in faith and that God is always in control, regardless of circumstances.

Transcript

The title is, Answered Prayer, Ten Things You Need to Know. Anybody come in with a prayer request this morning? So answers to prayer, ten things you need to know. I came across two Leonard Ravenhill quotes.

If weak in prayer, we are weak everywhere. Think about that. If weak in prayer, we are weak everywhere.

Looking at my own personal life, I can say that is true. Men give advice, but God gives guidance. Men give advice, but God gives guidance.

And we get so much advice out there. And I don't know if you ever watch YouTube shorts or Instagram, all these different opinions on what's going to happen with the banking system. Have you seen those? Or where our government's going? Or what this administration's going to try to pull? Or, you know, I'm like, Lord, I don't know what to do.

Opinions, but You will give us guidance. That's why it's so important to not just take opinions and seek God for guidance, because when He might want you to buy a house, He might want me to sell it. He might

want you to pull cash out of the bank.

He might want me to keep it in there. But see, we start getting all this guidance from YouTube shorts. From people who aren't even believers.

And it could be good stuff, right? Cash out, you better get some silver right now. Pack your home with silver. Okay, what does God say? What is God telling you through His Word? And I believe, it's done this to me many times.

For example, on that point, let's say you're reading, and you're reading how the children of Israel would store up and God would give them silver and gold. And maybe, hey God, as you're praying, that's a good indication. See, that's how the Bible can kind of speak to you through biblical principles, but also through His Word, because it's living and powerful.

Or maybe it's a bad time to start a business for you, but a good time for someone else. And I just really, the last month, there's so many opinions out there on what to do, how to do it. Dave Ramsey versus this guy.

Pay off your house if you can. This guy, no, don't pay off your house. Get a second, use that money to buy other houses for rentals.

Okay, that's great, but what about if the market crashes and your renters don't pay rent? You're in big trouble. Man gives opinions, but God gives guidance. And being honest with you, sometimes I listen too much to the opinions of others.

And you do too, so don't look at me that way. But God will give you guidance if you seek Him. And then there's something incredible that happens.

Let's say, hypothetically, you're one of those banks that went down. And then, Lord, man, most everything's gone, but I trust in You. You're guiding me.

What can man do to me? Sometimes I think we put too much into the things we have. The retirement and the 401k and things. And God sometimes will take those away.

Now, I don't think there's anything wrong with it, but it's what is our trust in. Especially you see it when things crashed in 2018. How many of those top officials and CEOs and different people committed suicide? Because their whole world came apart.

So remember, man will give you advice, but God will give you principles. So I left off with principles of intercession. Principles of intercession.

I wanted to share from, these are from Reese Howells. Anybody heard that name? Reese Howells. Get his book on, he was the intercessor.

And they had, I think, intercession, what, every day during World War II? At three or four times a day? And they can see how that could have brought Hitler's reign to an end. And it's amazing how they track it, what he did. Fasting was not uncommon.

Just throwing it out there for him. He realized how strong King's stomach was. And because of all that, they put out these principles.

Most fundamental of all is the principle that intercession is based on the victory of the Lord Jesus Christ in His atoning death and resurrection. See, intercession, in case you weren't here last week, it's you going in between. So you are going in between God and your prodigal.

You're going in between God and your problem. Many of us are going between God and our government that is so corrupt and arrogant and perverted. Lord, hey, hello, we live here too.

We're interceding. Would You please do something on behalf of Your people? And we would see people would intercede. Look at Abraham.

I don't know if he's Abram back then, but his name changed. But Lord, if there's just 50, spare the city. Forty-five.

Forty. Thirty-five. Thirty.

Spare the city. And sometimes I wonder what if he stopped. What about if he said, Lord, would You spare the city for five? But he stopped.

There wasn't enough righteous there in that city. And he interceded. Just think of how many people interceded.

I talked about Ezekiel where God said I look for someone to intercede, stay in between. And I could not find them. So the Lord's looking for intercessors to stand in the gap? Number two, the New Testament makes it clear that there is consistent war.

You know, I need to talk about one for just a minute. The most fundamental point is the principle of intercession. We have to remember that victory, the victory that was won on the cross.

The victory that was won on the cross. So we pray from a position of victory, not defeat. That should really encourage you because you're like, oh, Lord, please, I know if You could just win this battle, don't let the enemy win this battle.

We're coming from a position of victory, not defeat. Who can stop God Almighty? The New Testament makes it clear that there is consistent warfare going on in the heavenlies. And the Apostle Paul was constantly urging Christians to be aware of this.

To be clothed with heavenly armor and to fight the good fight of faith. So when we intercede, we have to remember, and I think it's going to be one of the points, is what's going on here is often a reflection of what's going on up there. I don't know exactly where the heavenlies are, but it's not right here in front of us.

And this conflict is often a spiritual battle. And you can see all the references there that you can look at in Ephesians and Timothy and putting on the whole armor of God. And as you go in to intercede and you pray, you have on the breastplate of righteousness, of course, Jesus Christ and His righteousness, but also living right before God and holiness before God and the helmet of salvation and being clear and being secure and the sword of the Spirit.

And this is how I fight my battles. This is how I fight my battles. Not with armor-piercing 9mm Ruger shells, although they're fun to shoot.

But you're not going to have a physical result without heavenly warfare. And so that's an incredible principle because sometimes we pray and we forget that I am actually right now, I am pulling down heaven. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against rulers of darkness of this age.

And as we wrestle, like this? No, like this. Oh God, please do something. Draw that prodigal son home.

Draw that daughter home. Lord, she is back on crystal. She is back on alcohol.

She is drifting from You. She is wanting to embrace the LGBTQ agenda. Oh God, would You intervene? And I'm not going to eat until later today.

And I'm going to call down heaven. And Satan, You have no authority in my home. And You begin to do heavenly warfare.

That's heavenly battle. We wonder why things aren't happening. Well, are you at the prayer meeting? Are you scheduling God on your calendar? No matter what the cost, I will seek You.

If you understand that prayer truly moves the hand of God. And you understand, if I'm not praying, I'm not engaging in spiritual warfare. Am I? Pull down heaven.

That's what praying is. It's pulling down heaven. And I see so many Christians, they love the Word, they quote the Word, they study the Word.

But when it comes to prayer, it's not really a passion of theirs. It's hard. Yeah, it is hard.

So is losing weight. Those things that are worth having, worth fighting for, are always hard. Get over it.

Try spending time with your kids. No, I just want to go watch YouTube. No, I want to spend time with you.

No, no, no, no, no. Try having a devotional. It's tough.

I told my wife this morning, she came early and I said, let me get the littles ready and I'll bring them. Never again. I told you that's the secret to marital happiness is taking two cars to church.

Actually, it wasn't too hard. My 13-year-old helped me a great deal. Praise God.

Thank you, Gracie. But I told my four-year-old, I said, listen, you cannot have a meltdown. Daddy needs to be at church in 30 minutes.

Just happy you get to ride in the big truck. Come on, get me through this. Let's go.

We've got to get out the door. My other daughter, she could care less. Like, I've got to be there.

I'm kind of doing something there. Let's go. Let's go.

So thank God for moms, I am not doing that for a while. But you know, isn't it stressful? Like, hey, let's go to rock and jump and you can jump on trampolines. No problem.

I'll get dressed. I'll get dressed. I'll go to the car.

You're actually going out to the car. I'll eat something. Everything's good.

But coming to church, could it be heavenly warfare? Can the enemy plant seeds in the minds of your children? And you? Number three, there is nothing automatic in this conflict. We see Daniel praying through. We see Daniel praying through.

That's in bold. For a reason. Maybe it's me, but I was convicted this week.

How much really doesn't happen because we don't pray through? Have you ever started a pot roast or a crock pot and you're like, five minutes in, I'm just going to put this back in the freezer. Four hours. But could it be you have not because you ask not? And the asking the Bible talks about is not just often a quick request, it's a petitioning.

What's petitioning? What's pressing through? What is travail? The Bible talks about travailing. Weeping in worship. And the early church prayed for five minutes.

No, they prayed for a while. And I do want to put a disclaimer in there because people get confused I guess sometimes. Or George Soros hires them to come after me.

I'm not talking about being perfect and you always got to pray a long time. Thank God for short prayers. Lord, help me.

Lord, I need help getting out the door. Of course, but there needs to come a time also when you put those things aside, if Jesus went to a solitude place and spent the night in prayer, no doubt fasting, should we not have a model to follow? Somehow we've got to make some time to travail and to press in. And it's hard.

Pastor Abram can relate because we have a cabin we go to sometimes. I call it by Wrightwood. Or we used to go to the Oaks.

And I'm just bringing a gallon of water and my Bible, and the first 12 hours are like, I'm going home. I'm going to run to the store and go get some nuts or something. What's going on? My phone doesn't work.

What's going on? I don't like this. Morgan, just say you miss me, the kids need me, I'll be coming home, right? But when that shift takes place, then you don't want to go home. Because it's quiet.

You can hear the birds. You can hear the breeze. Spending time with God, you're not in a hurry.

I get a little jealous about biblical times because I think it was much easier. Absolutely. Think of a little house on the prairie.

Pop, can I go to town with you? Yeah, no, I've got about a three hour walk. Can you call me on my cell? Nope, no Twitter, no Facebook, no Instagram, no chat, snap, whatever. Constant communication.

Constantly going here. Constant stimulation. Constant things that are happening.

You must take time and pray through. Like Daniel, it was a season of weeks where he would pray through for the fulfillment of the prophecy of Jeremiah concerning the return of the Jews to Jerusalem after the 70 years of captivity. And Daniel just kept seeking God and praying through, even in his bondage.

Remember, he was taking captive. It's interesting what difficult times will do and they'll change your prayer life. Sometimes we curse the difficult times, but sometimes they're a blessing.

There are times when the intercessor, number four, there are times when the intercessor finds himself up against very real forces. And if you've ever tried to pray through and you felt that blockage, you get up in the morning and your mind's going 100 miles an hour and you just can't. Heaven is brass, as they say.

You're not seeing results. Life is kind of challenging. You don't feel that great.

And there's times when you feel there's something preventing me from praying. The principalities and powers, the rulers of darkness of this world are opposing the prayer. It is here, folks, it is here and only here that the Holy Spirit must guide the intercessor as He alone knows the way to break through the opposition.

God, I don't know how to pray. I don't know how to pray right now. Have you ever been there? I don't really know how to pray.

I've got things right now like, Lord, You have to take care of this because I don't know how to pray. I'm up between a rock and a hard place. As we press in, we're like, oh, I didn't see the exit back this way.

Thank You, Lord. When God is in the equation, there's always a solution. It's here the Holy Spirit must guide the intercessor as He alone knows the way to break through the opposition.

As we're praying, God, I don't know how to pray for this situation. What is best for this child? What is best for that child? What is best for this situation? God, I don't even know because I don't want to pray amiss. I don't want to ask for something that's not Your will.

Hello? And I'm so broken. To tell you the truth, I have a hard time sometimes. I don't know how to pray for America when it seems like she's out of control.

The roller coaster jumped the track a long time ago, and we are hitting people left and right and wounding the innocent, and the little ones and the perversion. It's like, have we collectively just lost our mind? God, I don't even know how to pray because it seems like nothing's working. Lord, help me pray in these difficult times.

And then number five, a vital aspect of spiritual conflict is that of the responsibility of the intercessor. Oh, my goodness. Are you ready for a conviction alert? Once the Holy Spirit has put a burden on you, you now have a responsibility.

Tell me that's not true. Because God gave you the burden, the responsibility now rests upon me and you to bring it to fruition to pray. Whatever the cost, the intercession must be carried out to the end.

And that's why I said I will die preaching what I preach. I don't have retirement on the radar because I have a responsibility to intercede for our nation, for our state. It's where God has me.

If your calling is the missions field, your calling is for abortion clinics, for the homeless ministry, praise God, let's come alongside each other. But God has given me a burden for this calling is a burden from the Lord. And whatever the cost, Shane, that might mean you can't be as busy as other pastors.

You might have to say no to certain things. I've turned down a lot of speaking engagements, especially out of the country. Like when you look at your calendar and you look at the family needs, and there's a cost.

Whatever the cost, is fasting a cost? There's a cost. I've shared with you before, how fear of man, I don't know if fear is the right word, but opinions of man. Sometimes I fast.

I try to avoid people. Pastor, you're looking too skinny. I'm going to bring you some beef stew next week.

Are you sick? What's going on? No, I'm seeking God. There's a cost. I'd love to see what Jesus looked like after 40 days.

I don't think He was plump to begin with. Let's be honest. Let's be real.

There's a cost to the prayer closet. There's a cost. You know what? I can't hang out with my buddies every single night.

I can't sit and watch TV until 11 o'clock and be stimulated by things that I shouldn't be watching. And I have to get up early and seek God like never before. There's a cost to it.

There's a cost to pursuing God. Yes, there's a cost to coming to morning worship and to prayer meetings and to getting into God's Word. And there's a cost to contend for my family.

It means dying to self. There's a cost. Whatever the cost, the intercession must be carried out to an end.

And God might put on your heart, pray for your son or for your daughter all the way up until Easter. Give up dinner. Or whatever He might put on your heart.

There's a cost to that. And the only reason I mention fasting in this context is because, I mean, maybe it's me, but a full stomach does not make a good prayer warrior. That's when excuses come in.

Maybe next week. Maybe tomorrow morning I'll start. A full stomach is hard to have a fullness of God's Spirit in me.

As difficult as it is. The biggest threat to America is possibly dead formalism. We have form but no fire.

Think about that. Look at all the churches. What is going on? What it reminds me of is the Navy SEALs fighting ISIS.

It's like we should be winning. What's going on here? Because formalism. Form but no fire.

Going through the motions. Going through the motions. And dead, rigid prayers.

No prayer life. No fire. No unction.

No desperation. No desire. You can have form, but no fire.

What's your biblical example, Shane, for that? Well, the Pharisees had great form. Jesus said actually, don't even pray like them. Don't even watch them.

When you pray, go into a public arena and show how wonderful of a prayer warrior you are and how eloquent you were. Boy, they're deep. They're spiritual.

No, go into your private place and shut the door. Shut that door. And I'm not against formal prayer meetings.

Sometimes, we don't always feel like praying. You don't always feel the strong moving of the Holy Spirit, and that's where obedience comes into play. But we will not have reformation without intercession.

We will not have change without some pain. We will not have a cure without a cost. And comfort is the enemy of productivity.

I often wonder, maybe that's why God keeps us a little uncomfortable sometimes. Because if we're comfortable, we tend to get lackadaisical. It's a history of our nation.

Bondage led to freedom, led to this, led to apathy. It's a cycle of when the children of Israel grew comfortable and complacent. Actually, Isaiah and Jeremiah, if I'm not mistaken, were written about 50 years after the nation of Israel's experience.

Fifty years of prosperity and abundance. And they had drifted from God because of apathy. And sometimes, we have to force ourselves out of this comfort.

Force ourselves out of this comfort and be productive. Many of you have heard of cold water therapy, have you? Ooh, it'll wake you up. I tried it this morning.

Oh, the hot water off just the cold water. Man, I'm not comfortable anymore. I need to get out of this thing.

I'm cold. I'm happy. I'm excited.

See, I got rid of that comfort. And as I'm going to be teaching at the health seminar, comfort actually leads to a lack of longevity. Because the body just gets weak and dies even quicker.

And the cells and everything just doesn't like comfort. Fasting is not comfortable for the body. It's actually a stress.

It's actually a stress that takes place. Your cells begin to say, uh-oh, get rid of the microconjure, the old cell tissue. Get rid of this.

I've got to generate new stem cells. I'm uncomfortable. I'm under stress.

And that's where the body begins to heal itself. Exercise is stress. Did you know that? But there's a good stress.

Because it wakes up the body. Wake up! And that's what... Lord, maybe some of you need to set your alarm clock. Watch how strong the flesh is.

Sounds great at night until it beeps and the defense attorney also wakes up with you. Shane, you've got a full day today. There's a lot going on.

The kids are sleeping in. This is your chance to sleep in. Defense attorney, thank you.

I will go back to sleep. So that was the introduction. Here's the message.

What time we got here? Alright. Ten things you need to know. I'm going to have to do part three.

But I have to. I can't just stick with because I felt God's prompting me in a lot of these different rabbit trails and areas, and I just have the skeleton up there and I pray that He puts the clothes on. And that's why if

you ever listen to first and second service, different stories, different analogies, different flow, different structure often.

So ten things you need to know for answered prayer. And the Bible does talk about prayers being answered. It's incredible.

It's either yes, no, or wait. And here are ten keys that the Bible is crystal clear about. I've experienced this through my own life.

Ten things you need to know. Number one, remove the kink in the connection. Remove the kink in the connection.

If you've been coming here a while, you remember the story I told you, but it bears repeating because I have so many new faces every couple months. But when my son was little, I'll never forget, the water was on full blast, and it's like, Dad, it's not working. And we had good water pressure.

Guys, you like good water pressure at your valve? I can tell you I worked for the water district. I can tell you how to increase it illegally, but it's not a good idea. So anyway, yeah, they've got governors on the prayer.

But anyway, so the pressure's on full blast. And this was one that was just like, there's nothing coming out. I said, oh, here's the problem.

Right? The water hose? Well, there wasn't just one. There was a few of those. And I went around, and the last one, oh man, whoosh! He's getting them in the face.

He's crying a little bit. What happened? Same pressure. Same pressure.

Same water. Same hose. There's something that can stop that.

And the biggest thing in all of our lives that can stop answer prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit and direction from God and peace and joy. Have you experienced a peace and joy when you're in God's will and you're living right and you told Krispy Kreme no? Or maybe you were being drawn to the Internet late at night and you said, no, I can't do that. God, please help me.

And you go and you read the Bible? That joy that follows? I just had to deal with this yesterday. Nobody you know, they don't live here, so you're okay. My email was not going to be very good.

My text was, you know, you know how you can go get them. Oh yeah. Hot shot, right? It's like, Lord, just wait on You.

Wait on You. Deep breathing. And then thank God I didn't do it.

Or other things. And when you begin to please God and you keep a small leash on sin, right? And you do business with God. You're transparent.

You're open. That's what I love about this church. It's there, but I don't see a lot of hypocrisy.

I don't see a lot of people coming in with, oh, hi brother, how are you doing? I'm doing so great. I see people at the altar struggling with real things. In the prayer room, struggling with real things.

Why? Because we're being honest and we're being transparent. I can work with that. God, help me a sinner.

Jesus said that man went home justified. Wait a minute, he went home justified? A sinner? But the Pharisee was rebuked by Jesus? Yes, I'm glad I'm not like him. I fast twice a week.

Jesus said your prayers aren't even answered. And so it's so important. But anytime I talk about this and encourage you, I want you to know that I'm not up here saying I haven't sinned in the last six months, man.

What's wrong with you guys? Even like this morning, me and my wife had to apologize. Get a little snarky with each other. Ever happen? You guys.

You're only hurting yourself because I know the truth. And you get things right. Right? But your iniquities have separated you from your God and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He will not hear you.

Now people might say, but Shane, that's Old Testament. True, but I think that's a true principle. We can go into Pauline Epistles.

We can look to other books of the Bible and see that sin separates. Or in the New Testament, it would say quenches and grieves the Spirit. Same outcome.

The prayers are not heard. Your sins actually hide His face from you. It's an incredible picture because it's saying, is God's arm not short? He doesn't have an arm, but it's the imagery there.

Or is ear not heavy that He cannot hear? Yes, He can save. He can hear you. But, your sins.

Unrepentant sins. Boastful, arrogant, stiff-necked people thinking they're right with God and praying, oh God. And He says, I'm not going to hear your prayers.

So we have to start there. Ten things you need to know to get prayers answered. Number one, remove the kink in the connection.

And 1 Peter, man, are you ready for this one? That's a tough one. Your whole prayer life can be hindered by how you treat your wife. A lack of respect.

A lack of honor. Praying, Lord, what's happening in my workplace? Why am I being demoted or humbled in the workplace? Why aren't things going good? Why am I always fighting? Well, you need to stop lashing out at your spouse and demeaning her. And realize that it's two shall become one flesh.

There's an esteem. There's an honoring. There's a respecting.

And God says, I will answer that person's prayer. We don't see that dominating, iron-fisted, woman, do things My way. I'm the man of this house.

You need to submit to Me. Do you know people say that? I'm like, oh my... If you have to say that, the problem's in here. Now, she might not be doing what she needs to do as a wife, but let God change her.

But we always think the Bible says, okay, here's what you need to do. No, it says here's what I need to do, and God, You change them. And as you change, God changes them often.

James and Peter both say that God resists the... And I'm pretty sure they were talking to some Christians in that group of their letters, weren't they? I don't know. They're writing the Bible. Might be written to Christians.

God resists the proud in heart. Number two, wisdom from the Word is your gauge when it comes to prayer, when it comes to knowing God's will. Wisdom from the Word is your gauge.

Am I praying according to God's will? And I've talked to people a lot of times in the prayer room, He's just not answering my prayer. He's not answering my prayer. Are you praying according to God's will? I don't think there's anyone here this morning, but over the years now, God's not answering my prayer.

What's your prayer? Get my husband out of my life. I hate this guy. We shouldn't have ever got married.

Okay, when I say these things, I can relate to difficult, I mean, not relate physically to difficult marriages, but I can understand that it's challenging. And you can say, oh, come on, just get over it. I mean, some homes are volatile and explosive and there needs to be separation.

I got it. But are we sure we're praying according to God's will? And if you don't know it, be praying for Him to show you. That's why wisdom is so important.

Wisdom is so important because wisdom shows you God's will. Wisdom shows you God's will. James 4.3, you ask and you do not receive.

You ask and you do not receive because you ask, what? And miss. You miss. Basically, you miss God's will.

Lord, why isn't this happening? Because you miss God's will, that you may spend it on your pleasures. Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? And so many people when we're praying, we're praying for basically comfort and convenience and this type of job where I can make this type of money, I don't care if it draws me away from God. This is what I want.

And God, why aren't You opening the door? And so the prayers have to be prayed according to God's will. And a lot of times, I don't know what His will is. Maybe I'll share in the future.

I've told you this many times before. There's things I'm praying for. Lord, I don't know if this is Your will.

Would You show me? I'm going to keep contending. I'm going to keep praying for it until You make it clear. Lord, show me if this is Your will.

And I don't think God's up in heaven playing games. Let me just keep messing with them. Because in not knowing His will is where I tend to seek Him even more.

Isn't that true? Think about that for a minute. Okay, here's what God's called us to do here. Okay, I'm good for a while.

But when I'm not sure of something, God, I need to meet with You every morning or every evening. I need to press in. I need confirmation.

I need to seek Your will. And it's that flame of the Holy Spirit drawing me to know God's will. And God, please show me what Your will is.

I don't want to make the wrong mistake. And then number three, persevere. Persevere until you prevail.

Intercede until God intervenes. And something very profound and powerful about prayer is you continue in it until there is a release. And not just give up because you're frustrated.

Can I get an amen on that one? I'm just going to give up? This prodigal son is not coming home? He's actually getting worse? Or my daughter? This situation is, whoa, Lord, You are not answering a thing. Unbelievable. I was praying for this.

Now You've turned this into a nightmare. You've turned this into a whirlwind of problems. Oh my goodness, I am giving up.

Know you intercede until God intervenes or makes it clear. And let me tell you, He will release the burden when the burden's to be released. And I've noticed, often it gets more challenging before the answer comes.

How many times have you seen or you heard you're praying for a spouse and they come home and drunk and rages and all hell's breaking loose and oh, this is not working, but that God uses to break them. The prodigal son or daughter is just as belligerent. The texting is cussing.

I never can serve that. It's like, what is happening? Spiritual warfare is taking place. God is applying some heat and when you apply the heat, you get upset.

And so often, often it does get more difficult before there is a breakthrough. I don't like that. But ask a mom who's had a baby, does it get difficult at the end? Right before you birth forth the dream, is there a little fighting and challenging? Keep persevering.

I'll never forget our doctor. I don't remember what baby it was. Morgan can tell you.

And I was like, whoa! And they get stern. Right? Stop crying and keep pushing. Get this baby out.

Ready to give up. Who can relate to that? Because you know what happens if you stop. What happens to that child if you stop pushing? Emergency C-section possibly or death.

There's so many things. And the Bible also talks about the children are about ready to be born, but there's no strength to bring them to birth. The principle of perseverance.

And you will be challenged more than anything right now in this culture. When I look at what's going on, I'm like, forget this. Unbelievable.

The negative Nellies, Judgemental Jerries. You can't make a difference. Look at what's going on.

But we persevere until the end. Because we never know what God will do. And you have to get to a point to where you say even if God doesn't do it the way I want, I will not bow to this world system.

And I love the three Hebrew boys caught in the fiery furnace. You've heard me talk about this before. They told the king, I will not bow to you.

We will not bow to you. God will deliver us. That needs to be our stance too.

We will not give up. We will not quit. Our God will deliver us.

And then thank God for the rest of that sentence. Hands, who knows what the rest of the sentence says? You guys have to get in your Bibles more. Balcony.

The rest of the sentence goes on to say, but even if He doesn't, we will not bow to you, O King. Thank God for that verse. Has that helped anybody else before? I'm like, okay, whatever.

It could get really bad. Some bank closures. Right to cryptocurrency.

Shut down voices of truth. Nevertheless, I will not bow my knee to this world system. Man, don't fear man that can kill the body.

Fear God who can cast both body and soul in hell. There's too much fear of man in this place. Too much fear of man in this place.

You will never regret praying too much. Before I shared that, I thought about it this week. I'm like, let me make sure.

But I don't think you could you? I mean, I guess somebody's like, oh, I spent way too much. I mean, I guess if it costs you your family, I don't really know, but if you're praying, it's not going to cost you your family. You're not going to get weird out there.

I don't know if we'll ever regret praying too much. The intercessor, though being dead, still speaks. Your prayers will outlive you.

I'm convinced my prayers will outlive me for my kids and for this church, for grandkids, for our nation. The intercessor, though they be dead, they will still speak. Colossians 4.2 Continue earnestly in prayer for a few days.

Stop when you feel like it. Just see if you're awake. He's writing to the church.

The city's called Colossae. And he's writing to the Colossians to encourage them. And he says continue earnestly in prayer.

Why? Probably because their prayer life is being challenged by persecution. Being vigilant. See, it's not just earnest.

Earnest is like the desire, let's do it, let's meet. But vigilant is like sucking it up and fighting. There's an earnest.

Because you can be earnest but not vigilant. Like, hey, we're earnest. Let's come back tonight at 6 o'clock.

Let's come back at 6 o'clock tonight for a prayer meeting. Let's be earnest about it. Yeah, it sounds great.

But if I don't do it, I'm not vigilant. You have to have both of those in place. And then with thanksgiving, man, there's no wiggle room in the Scriptures.

That means I can't pray mad and upset. I have to be thankful for what God has done and is doing. And if prayer doesn't cost you, does it mean that much? There is a cost to following God in a deep prayer life.

I remember when we first got married, things changed a little bit, and I told Morgan, you can ask her if she remembers, we couldn't hang out with people every single night. Because it cost me to prepare sermons

and to get my heart right before God and getting home late, getting to bed, getting up early and just go, go, go, go, go, go, go. Something has to stop and change because there's going to be a cost to seek God like this.

And many of you won't have that cost. You have a different calling. But there is some type of cost to following God in a deep prayer life.

If you don't devote much time to it, is it really that important? Guys, let's be honest. How can people watch Netflix for three hours? And a three minute prayer is tough. If you were Martin Luther in the 1500's getting ready to go in front of the council to possibly lose your life, I think your prayer life might change a little bit.

The Council of Worms I think it was called. Oh, you become a passionate prayer warrior. Justin Martyr before his execution.

Tyndale, Huss. What happened? It's a priority. It was important.

If we could see where our lack of prayers is taking us, we would make a difference. And I will submit to you, you can see what a lack of prayer has done. Look who's ruling and running.

The schools are like a battleground. It's like how is this even possible? How can the White House give a woman of a year of war to a man? Number four, keep asking. Keep asking.

Keep asking from Abraham to the widow. And I told you the story of Abraham already before that he kept asking. 50, 40, 30, 20.

Lord, and the widow we see here. Jesus gave this parable. Hear what the unjust judge said.

Meaning he's not a righteous judge. It didn't even matter. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him though He bears long with them? Meaning God is long-suffering.

He bears with us. Even in our immaturity and praying amiss and trying to find His will, He bears with us. Jesus said, I tell you that He will avenge them speedily.

God avenges those who keep coming to Him. And the whole parable there, if you get time to read it, I put verses 1-8 so you can at your leisure. But this widow kept coming to this unjust judge.

And the unjust judge finally said, this woman bothers me. Every day she's coming, asking, coming, asking. And Jesus is saying how much more the children of God when they come to the Father.

But the principle actually is the principle of perseverance. And asking and continuing and pushing forward and pushing in. Because a lot of things change.

Let's say I come to the Lord and I ask for this. As the days go by or the weeks go by, it changes a little bit, doesn't it? I said that initially, but really, Lord, change my heart. Let it line up with You.

Put us where You want us to be. And things begin to change and develop and we actually get insight as we're looking to God's Word. Our heart is challenged and our heart is changed because we persevered and we kept spending time with God.

Don't let disappointment discourage you. Number five, don't let disappointment discourage you. I put that also just to let you know all of us experience disappointment.

Anybody have any dead dreams out there that you've been praying for or just me? I'm getting so discouraged sometimes. But discouragement is normal to our fallen condition, but what we do with it is the difference. Because a person can get... Here's what happens too.

I've never seen, I just told Pastor Abraham this week, I've never seen a time in ministry, 22 years now in ministry, in planning the church, 13 years of church pastoring, where the enemy has been running so rampant in the lives of so many people, drawing them back into addictions. People I pray for. Back a year in the prayer room.

Back on crystal. Back on alcohol. Marriage is falling apart.

I have not seen anything like this to this magnitude. Where it's just like, who's next? What is going on, God? What is going on? But what happens in many cases is there's been so much disappointment. Was COVID that year or two encouraging? And that led to massive amounts of people backsliding.

Discouragement. That job, I'm doing good, I've been waiting for it, boom, it falls through. Back into my pain.

Back into my false god. Back into my addiction. Back into my anger.

Back into my pride. The enemy uses disappointment and discouragement. Because when we're encouraged, what do we want to do? We're encouraged.

We're happy. We want to make the right decisions. We want to make the right choices.

I want to do what God wants me to do and stay in His will. But when I get discouraged, that's why they call it throwing in the... towel. I'm done, hello, white flag here.

I'm done. But I came here this morning to tell you all of us experience it. Romans 8.28, we know that all things will work together for good for those who love God and to those who called according to His purpose.

It doesn't say, and we know that all things will work together for good by next week. I wish, don't you ever want to kind of put your parentheses in there? I mean, that could technically mean until the day I die. The deeper the Scriptures penetrate my heart, the clearer God's will becomes.

Did you catch that? The deeper the Scriptures penetrate my heart, the clearer God's will becomes. This is why many of you are having a real time discerning God's will because you don't know His heart through His Word. His will is not like a jigsaw puzzle.

Hey, 5,000 pieces, go for it. It's a couple pieces. Like, do this.

Follow this principle. Do this. These things you don't know about, take them to prayer.

I got it. And it's this walk of faith while living in obedience to God's will. Did you know the majority of God's will, I would say upwards of 99% is in His Word? Well, I don't know who to marry.

Have you read Proverbs 31? Have you read Equally Yoked? I don't know where I'm supposed to work. Have you read about pursuing God and not riches? Seek ye first the Kingdom of God. But if you're seeking the righteous, here's why God's will is so hard because they're going after what they shouldn't.

Why is this so hard? Because you're going after what you shouldn't. And that's why there's conflict. Oh, it's God's Word.

Oh, it balances me out. And then there's peace and there's joy. Number six, add fasting to strengthen the spirit, weaken the flesh, and increase faith.

Fullness distracts us and significantly affects our physical and spiritual energy. Matthew 17, Jesus said, however, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting. And this is a disputed text.

I've taught about it before on where we got our Bible translations. You can watch that on YouTube. Some have it in there.

Some don't. But let's assume God wanted it in the Bible. I mean, I don't think God's going, why did Shane read that? I was trying to get that out back at the council of Nicaea and they didn't remove it then.

I tried to get it out 600 years ago. This kind, and most commentaries say, this kind of demonic stronghold does not go out without prayer and fasting. And I've seen it.

I mean, maybe we should just one night give you everything I've seen over the years in this. There are some types of strongholds of addictions that are not easily broken. Now could God break it with prayer alone? Of course.

Fasting isn't some magical formula that makes God do what you want and like, okay, God, You got me. It doesn't bend God's arm, but it bends my knees. And strongholds are often what? Tied to the flesh.

It's a stronghold to the flesh. Lust of the flesh. Most strongholds, are they not lustful? Whether it's an addiction you enjoy or something.

And so to break that, the fasting comes in because it takes away the power of the flesh. The flesh has no power when you tell it to shut up and I'm not feeding you. Feed me so I can destroy you is what the flesh says.

Acts 14.23 So when they had appointed elders in every church and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. And I can just see, hey guys, we're going to appoint these leaders. Let's pray.

Let's fast. At this point, let's not have a big what they call a love feast and communion. Let's not do any of that because it's good to be full and to have fellowship and joy and stuff.

That's good. That's God. God calls it feasting.

And then there's periods of famine of fasting to balance everything out. But they said this is not a time for that because we need to hear from the Lord. We need to starve that fleshly appetite and fast and Lord, here's the... Because on important decisions, you better be fasting.

I'm not going to make a major decision after Thanksgiving dinner. Number seven, prayer is spiritual. Prayer is spiritual.

Physical conflict is often a manifestation of heavenly warfare. I'm not going to go into that because I did earlier. But wrestling is what Paul calls it wrestling.

The Bible calls it wrestling. Wrestling is hard, it's lengthy, and it requires energy and a strategy. See, that's one of the things I want to really get across to people when I teach on health and fitness.

It's not just so you can have a six-pack. I don't have a six-pack. That's not a good goal.

But it's to get the body productive and in warfare and have the energy to pull down heaven and say, body, come with me and we are going to seek God. I'm going to pray for my family. Not all my pants are tight.

I don't feel good. Krispy Kreme got me and now it's going to get me tonight. Oh, I just have no time for God.

Bring that flesh under submission and begin to pull down heaven and seek God like never before. And if you don't like what I'm saying, it's probably because you're convicted. I'm so tired of people saying all this.

The Bible says it. Jesus said when you fast, not if you fast. And then He said if you sin, not when you sin.

But we got those backwards. It's okay to sin, but I'm not going to fast. No, the Bible says when you fast, here's what you need to do.

And I guarantee if you just study church history, fasting is a biblical principle that has been removed. Justin Martyr. Polycarp.

Irenaeus. Ignatius. Augustine.

Early church fathers. Luther. Swingly.

Knox. Whitefield. Wesley.

Didache. Didache. In the early church writings, it's all about fasting.

Not as a work, but as a spiritual discipline. Fast forward to the 1980's. Oh, no, no, no, we don't do that anymore.

We don't have to do that. It's amazing how far we'll go to prove something is no longer for us that we don't like. I think it was Lana Ravenhill said whatever we don't like in the Bible, we just call legalism.

The irony is, I don't know why I'm on this topic. I had no plans of hanging out here for a while. But I'm reading a book right now about 100 years ago.

I put down and laughed a little bit. But the thing they were concerned about, let's say it was 1860's, 1870's. The thing they were concerned about, right? They're talking about fasting.

The biggest thing they were concerned about is people didn't have enough reserves. Now the problem is, we've got too much reserves, and we don't want to do anything about it. See, it's always something.

Something keeping us from that deeper life. You will never know the deep things of God unless some type of buffeting in the flesh takes place. Are we to just let the flesh do whatever it wants? And then we'll receive the fullness of the Spirit? No, actually, it's a wrestling match.

It's a buffeting of the flesh. Somebody, maybe you can remind me, said, I buffet my body daily. The Apostle Paul.

I discipline it and I bring it into subjection lest when I preach to others, I myself should become disqualified. I can just tell you, when I tell my flesh what to do, I feel so much better. Not legalism.

Not works. Oh, I have to do this. Can't go here.

Don't do this. Don't eat chocolate around shame. I like dark chocolate.

Dip it in some peanut butter. But there comes a point when I have to say, no, I want a greater appetite for God. And the more times you say no, the stronger you become.

Don't you see when we become weak and we cave in? It's because we're always caving in. The flesh has got us hooked. It's a stronghold.

But praise God, there's not a week that goes by, I think the last year, not just about a week or every two weeks that people aren't emailing us from all over saying, thank you for talking about fasting. It's changed my life. It's changed my marriage.

It's changed my health. It's changed my devotional time. All the time.

All the time. There's encouragement that people are being changed by that. But I do want to make sure people know I'm not saying that it's a work.

And you have to do this. Jesus plus. No, there's no Jesus, but when I'm following Jesus, I want more of Him.

And to get more of Him, sometimes I have to tell my flesh to be quiet. 8. Find a secluded place. I do not want to do the next part.

I've got to get into Revelation. You guys, the first service keeps me long. Find a secluded place.

The secret place is not a recommendation. It's a necessity. Find a quiet place.

Short, powerful public prayers are the outcome of long, secret intercession. That's why I'm just talking broadly here over the course of 20 years when I've been at prayer meetings all over the United States, those people often who go into long, elaborate, thus saith the Lord, King James prayers, I wonder have you spent time with God? He's not heard by our many words. He hears the groanings of our heart.

Short, powerful public prayers are the outcome of long, secret intercessions. What does he mean by that? That secret intercession with the Lord comes out in powerful public prayers. In other words, I get right to the point because thus saith the Lord.

God has showed me. God has put it on my heart. I don't need to spend 14 minutes telling you all, I just pray because God has put it on my heart.

And of course, Matthew 6, but when you pray, go into your room. Shut your door. Pray to your Father who is in secret.

And your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. And you remember a couple of months ago, I talked about the secret place. This verse is really amazing to me because there's a place where the God of the universe will meet me.

And you. Is Jesus lying? Is He lying? No. Go.

Shut your door. And pray to your Father. And it's not that God's in the secret place.

You've got to go find God. What I've found is I need to get my mind off of everything else and onto Him. He's there.

He's willing. He's waiting. But it's me who's got to get into the secret place.

Faith fuels the fire of intercession. Faith fuels the fires of intercession. Without faith, it's impossible to please God.

Without faith, it's impossible to please God. But just make sure there's a big difference between presumption and faith. You know what presumption is? I presume God is doing this.

Be careful. Be careful. They can look the same, right? They can look the same.

But presumption has the look of pride rather than the heart of humility. And then number 10, ask for help. Help.

Help. God. Help.

I need some help. Anybody ever pray that prayer? Parents. Romans 8.26 The Spirit helps in our weakness.

Thank God for that verse. Oh, I want to tell you something on faith. I just remembered it.

I'm glad I didn't forget it. The first service. Here's what you have to understand.

Faith is like the three Hebrew boys in the fiery furnace. You know that story from Daniel? And the Bible records that they were not going to bow down to the king. And we're not going to bow down to you no matter what, oh king.

And he said, okay, you're going to throw you in the fire. And they said, we're not going to bow down to you. Our God will deliver us.

Can you imagine them getting excited? Our God will deliver us. We're not going to bow down to you until it was time to go in the fire. But then they said something very... How many of you know what they said after that? It's very important.

You can't understand this verse without this last part. But even if He doesn't, my God will deliver me in this corrupt nation. But even if He doesn't, I will not give up.

My God will deliver all the school districts in California's perversion. But even if He doesn't, I will preach the truth until the day I die. You got to get a little bit even if He doesn't inside of you.

Folks, you got to get a little bit of even if He doesn't inside of you. Even if He doesn't restore my marriage. Even if He doesn't let this go through.

Even if He doesn't allow this to happen. Even if I live in financial distress all the days of my life, I will not serve the gods of this world. That's what faith is.

Faith in the midst of no matter what is happening. So ask for help. Help.

The Holy Spirit intercedes. This is interesting. I wish I could teach on this Scripture for a little while.

Maybe in the future. It's not about tongues necessarily for those who think it is. It can be, I'm sure, but the overwhelming Greek language or structure of the sentence is we don't even know how to pray sometimes, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings, groanings too deep for words.

In other words, all I can do is feel it. Oh God, I see that person on their way to hell and I don't even know how to pray. I don't know what will take them back.

I have no words. I don't know how to speak to this situation. But the Holy Spirit will intercede on my behalf.

Now if you want to throw a spiritual language in there, hey, that's fine. I've taught on that before. You can Google it.

On YouTube it or whatever they call it. But we have to ask for help. And I just wrote all these down this morning.

I'm so glad. It was just pouring into me. And I started thinking, who has ever defeated God? Think about that.

Yeah, but in the end, who has ever defeated God? I mean, there's seasons of difficulty. Even Jesus said, this is your hour when darkness reigns. I believe in the NIV version.

This is your hour when darkness reigns right before the cross. Because okay, evil, this is your hour when darkness reigns, but give me a few days. And let's see what happens.

So ask Pharaoh what he thinks now about the Red Sea. Ask boastful Balak, King Balak, who cursed the children of Israel. Ask if that's even possible.

Ask the kings of the land who dared to come against Joshua. God said, My servant Moses is dead. Now I will raise up Joshua.

Who is going to stop that? You know what He'll do? He'll sometimes send hornets. Drive the army. He'll have wind rushing in the top of the trees and they'll hear armies coming.

He'll rain down brimstone. Who is going to stop God Almighty? Ask the Philistines about Samson. Or David.

Ask Goliath about David. Nine feet tall? He said, Am I a dog that this kid comes out to me? Oh, you forgot about God though, Goliath. A little part of the equation there.

That's why it's interesting. David's words. He said, who is this uncircumcised Philistine that is going to come against the armies of the living God? Newsome? Oh, don't go there.

Who is going to come against the church of the living God? Biden, Newsome, LGBTQ. Who is going to come against the living God? Who? Who? Here's the key. You better have your heart right, church.

That's the key. You better have your heart right. No demon in hell, nothing can stop the work of God.

Unless the devil says, hey, shame, remember the good old days? Come on, man. Come on back. Compromise is okay.

You're really not in trouble. Nobody's going to know. Remember the good old days? Remember schooners? Yeah, I remember throwing up and getting kicked out.

I think Perry the bouncer might have been there. He comes here now. Remember Vegas? And Palm Springs during spring break? Oh boy, do I ever.

Remember those? Come on. Oh, but see, He just shows you the delight, not the damage. And the devil cannot stop you.

He's not equal with God. You fight from a position of victory. Hold the line, church.

Hold the line. Ask the Assyrian army. Ask the Assyrian army.

185,000 men trained for war and He just sent a death angel. Hey, go deal with these. Have you ever seen the Rose Bowl fall twice? And they woke up dead? Ask the vast army that came against Jehoshaphat.

All they did was worship and they fled. Ask the Babylonians in their pride. We defeated Israel.

Who can stop us? God says I'm going to raise up Cyrus to defeat you. I can go grab a godless king to do My will. Ask the Sanhedrin what they think of Jesus now.

Or Pilate. What does he think of Jesus now? What about mighty Rome? The mighty Roman Empire? No God but Caesar. Oh, how's that panning out for you? Actually, how did that pan out for you? Nobody has defeated God? Nobody ever from the beginning of time.

There are seasons that we don't understand with the Holocaust and Titus in A.D. 70 in Jerusalem and the communist takeover of many countries and the slaughter of people. And I don't understand it, but I understand that they're in heaven with God and God is still on the throne and God is still working His sovereign control over men. What about Nero in Rome? Had his mother stabbed to death for treason and his wife Octavia beheaded? Demetia.

He was called the beast from hell who sat in the den licking blood. That's why they think he's actually the beast of revelation. Some views do.

Marcus Aurelius. Christian blood flowed more than ever before under his leadership. Diocletian led the greatest persecution to extinguish Christianity.

Ask them how did it work? You're trying to extinguish Christianity. It's the largest movement ever known in the history of man where lives are being radically changed. The demonic realm is being bound and people are living and being set free.

What about Voltaire? Have you heard that name before? I think he's a French atheist. He said, I will bring Christianity to nothing within my lifetime. And then he died and they began to print Bibles in his home.

Who's going to stop God Almighty? His nurse testified. They have it in writing. She said, for all the wealth of Europe I would never see another infidel die like he died.

The torment the last few weeks of his life. Oh, be careful when you mock God. I didn't watch any.

I just saw the title. Some of you follow a guy named Jake Paul. I hope you don't, but he's a famous YouTuber for kids.

But it said on there, this is the worst day he's ever had after he mocked Jesus Christ on air. Worst day he's ever had in his life. Anybody heard of the name Christopher Hitchens? All these guys are so proud and arrogant when they're breathing.

Famous atheist. Recently died. Definitely within 10 years ago or so.

He said, a virgin can conceive, a dead body can walk again, your leprosy can be cured, the blind can see. Nonsense! We need to stop telling kids lies. God is not great and religion poisons the mind.

What would he say today? I mean, let that sink in. Nobody defeats God. Nobody mocks Him and wins in the end.

Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Christ is Lord and Savior. Praise God.

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