

Break Every Chain

by Shane Idleman

The sermon emphasizes the importance of prayer, obedience, and perseverance in our relationship with God, and how these qualities can help us break free from bondage and addiction.

Duration: 46:47

Scripture: James 5:16

Topics: "Powerful Prayer", "Spiritual Transformation"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of prayer in hearing God's voice, highlighting the need for passionate, persistent, and powerful prayer. It challenges listeners to prioritize prayer over rituals, distractions, and entertainment, stressing the transformative power of prayer in overcoming spiritual struggles and connecting with God. The speaker urges a return to fervent prayer, drawing on biblical examples of prayer changing lives and the significance of seeking God with all one's heart.

Transcript

God cast hearing his voice through prayer, hearing God's voice through prayer. And really, this is just gonna be a topical exhortation to you. I'm not gonna really pick apart a lot of scripture.

I'm going to exhort you because there is nothing more important than this topic. That's why it's so difficult. It's very challenging.

I actually just got back today. I just came into town, came into the service. I spent two days up at a retreat, and I just brought two gallons of water and a Bible.

I got very hungry. I wanted to drive home a few different times, and it was difficult, and just praying, God fasting, God, hear your people, hear the voices of your children crying to you. Lord, would you move in this place? Because the half-hearted considerations aren't gonna get it anymore.

A five-minute devotional or a quick prayer on our way to work just isn't gonna cut it in this culture. We need men and women who are on their faces before God, praying to God. And we talked three weeks ago on hearing God's voice through worship, then through hearing it through his word.

And then last week, we're hearing, it's on the radio already, we're hearing from a lot of people how that one's changing their life as well, on hearing God's voice through godly counsel. And many people don't wanna listen to counsel. They'll just do their, I'm gonna do it my way.

It's a great song back in the 40s and 50s, right? But it's not biblical. So get that message, they can make copies of that for you. But one thing I forgot in last week's message about seeking godly counsel, I seek a lot of counsel from people who have passed on many, many years ago, hundreds of years ago.

You've heard names like George Whitfield and John Wesley and Jonathan Edwards and A.W. Tozer and E.M. Bounds and Amy Carmichael and Hudson Taylor and those types of counselors. You can spend what I call deep devotional time. These guys could write deep devotional writers that draw you in.

And another good one I wanna recommend is E.M. Bounds. I actually brought this with me this weekend too. It's called The Complete Works on Prayer by E.M. Bounds.

And get your highlighter out and grab a cup of coffee and you're gonna sit for a while. And the forward is actually by Jim Cimbala. Cimbala, however you wanna pronounce it, out of the Brooklyn Tabernacle where they have about 3,000 people on a Tuesday night at the prayer and worship service.

And this book will impact your life. But I wanna read, because I look to these guys a lot of times for counsel, obviously through what they write, and I stumbled across this. And we're talking about James 1.22 in this series.

Be doers of the word and not hearers, only deceiving yourselves. So we've been talking about the vital importance of obedience. And I would even submit to you that the majority of our problems are directly related to obedience.

When we don't obey the word of God, we get into problems. I mean, problems are coming on their own regardless. I don't know about you, but I don't wanna multiply them.

Obedience is vitally important. James says we can hear the word of God, but if we don't do it, we live in deception. And I don't know, maybe it's just me, but every time I read that, it really sticks out because we don't just kind of struggle when we don't obey.

We don't just, you know, life's not a little bit, we actually live in deception. He says, you're deceiving yourself. And then I stumble onto E.M. Bounds, a whole chapter on obedience.

And he said a few things in relation to prayer, and it ties right in. Listen to this. An obedient life helps prayer.

It speeds prayer to the throne. God cannot help but hearing the prayers of an obedient child. He always has heard His obedient children when they have prayed.

If you have an earnest desire to pray well, you must learn how to obey well. Obedient men have always been the closest to God. An obedient life is a great help to prayer.

In fact, an obedient life is a necessity to prayer. The absence of an obedient life makes prayer an empty performance, a mere misnomer. An entire dedication to God, a full surrender, which carries with it the whole being in a flame of holy consecration.

All this gives wings to faith and energy to prayer. The lack of obedience in our lives breaks down our praying, and no man can pray, really pray, who does not obey. And that's just three pages.

This thing will get you. See, are you putting this in your mind before you go to bed, or American Idol? And you wonder why I wake up and I have no passion. You put this in your, I can't wait to get up in the morning.

It's like, is it four o'clock yet? Is it four, I mean, I gotta get to bed because I'm putting that in. The media just keeps me up and up and up and up, and then you get up, I don't know, really, I forgot, I'm too busy. Spiritual appetite, spiritual hunger must be filled with the right things.

So even if you don't want this big, thick one, he's got tons of books on prayer, eight different books on prayer, and it's very convicting because these men were anointed of God. When God's in the book, it's worth reading. When he's not, it's worth recycling.

So here we go, this is an exhortation on prayer, hearing his voice through prayer. As we sang that song, there is power in the name of Jesus to break every chain. But let me remind you that this power is not accessed by going through the motions.

And I see so many people just going through the motions, right, dead prayer, dead religion, dead worship. We're not in the word of God, and we're just going through the motions. So we lack the power of God in our lives.

We lack the power of prayer, and we begin to blame God. We begin to say, well, it's not working. But we can't go through the motions.

We have to be fully surrendered to his work. And you know, right, our foes are many. You don't think you have any foes? Our foes are many.

They go by the name Legion. And they are sent to kill, to steal, and to destroy. That you have an enemy.

They're sent to kill, to steal, and to destroy. And they do not sleep, and they do not slumber. And they are looking for prey to devour.

And I'm not trying to scare you. I'm trying to motivate you. You see the difference? I mean, sometimes I read the Bible, and I put it down and say, oh, God, help us.

We are so unprepared. It's like dropping off a soldier in the middle of the desert of Iraq with some gym shorts and a tank top and a water bottle. Go get him.

When the Bible says your enemy, your enemy, your enemy, your enemy, your enemy, my enemy, goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. You might want to sit up straight and turn off your phone and begin to press into God. And I know this message is gonna impact a lot of lives, whether radio or here tonight, because the last two days were hell.

I'll be honest with you. Trying to pray and fast and seek God, and just that difficulty. And then today, all the challenges that came up with the serf.

And it was just amazing how the enemy just wants to stop that. And I had every excuse in the book. I'll just go home and start Monday.

It'll be easy if I just start. But once I pressed in worship, began to take on a new realm, prayer began to have a power. The brass ceiling began to open and heaven poured into the heart that was seeking God.

But it didn't come after 10 minutes or two hours. And don't get me wrong, I didn't just sit there, you know, woo. I took a walk, I prayed, I had to take a couple naps when you're fasting.

And it was difficult, but it was worth it. Because we have to press in. Scouring through a quick devotional isn't going to cut it.

Reading the Bible as if you're a NASCAR driver is of little value. Dead, cold, and formal worship only embolden the enemy. The weapon of prayer finds its strength waiting on God and pressing in.

See, what we have to understand is perseverance is a Christian attribute. It's a spiritual discipline. Try losing weight and going five minutes on a treadmill.

Oh, Shane, that's impossible. Well, we understand it in the physical, but when it comes to the spiritual, actually the thing that's most important, we forget about perseverance. The old folks used to say, pressing in.

I'm gonna lay hold of God until I get my answer. They used to say that. It was interesting, I was talking to my mom where she says we can trace my lineage back to Pyrrham White who was the first baby born on the Mayflower in Cape Cod Bay, Massachusetts.

So I'm trying to really see if that really is true, but she said also we've had some Methodist circuit writers in our family, and they would go and they would preach and they would pray, and I read some of the journals and some of the things. They would lay hold of God until he answered. Doesn't mean you don't get up and go to work, but you're praying on your way to work.

You're praying at work. You're the best employee there, but you're praying at work. You get home and you're praying.

Lord, I'm not gonna let go until you answer me. You think God says, oh man, what are you doing that for? That's drawing, that's seeking God with all your heart, with all your strength, and Chelsea said, we serve an all-sufficient Savior who was an all-sufficient sacrifice. And we go, yeah, yeah, good point, Pastor.

No, listen, all-sufficient, then fill in the blank. For whatever the need, he's an all-sufficient Savior. He was an all-sufficient sacrifice.

Now we're in right relationship with God. Now we can come in and say, oh Jesus, help. My marriage is collapsing.

Oh Jesus, help. My finances have dried up. Oh Jesus, help.

My health is diminishing. Oh Jesus, help. My life is falling apart.

Oh Jesus, help. My hope is gone. And I know this isn't how tough guys pray, but it's how real men pray because my strength is found in him.

This isn't weakness. You're pointing to the one. You're looking to the one who has the answers.

Think about this. By the grace of God, at least right now, we have the most powerful military that has ever existed. But you know that Navy SEALs get backed up into a ridge? They call for help.

Big carrier about 50 miles out, radio it in. Guess what's gonna happen in about 10 minutes? All hell's gonna break loose. They'll cry out, God, I'm backed in a corner.

Why don't we? God, I'm backed in a corner. Where does my help come from? The Bible says, where does my help come from? See, that's one thing I'm so, going back and forth with media and all this stuff is because it draws us away from God. I got up to the place I was at and I said, hey, where's the internet at? He goes, oh, you don't get it here.

You gotta walk down the, I'm like, what? Really? And that in and of itself is an addiction. Facebook addiction. Now, granite sermons I wanted to listen to and different things, but it was like God was saying, listen, seek me with all your heart, with all your strength and with all your soul.

But where does my help come from? Does it come from therapy? Does it come from pills? No, my help comes from the maker of Israel. He who holds Israel in his hands does not sleep and he does not slumber. Where does my help come from? I look to the hills.

There's where my help comes from. Sometimes it takes perseverance and pressing in. He is an ever-present help in time of need.

That's who we serve. That's our God. He is an all-sufficient Savior.

And maybe you're familiar with the story that Elisha prayed when they were surrounded by the army and his servant was scared. He said, oh, we're done, master. They're gonna kill us.

And Elisha said, open his eyes, God. And he opened up his eyes and he could see in the spiritual realm that God had chariots and God had soldiers encamped around that other army. And many times I want to pray, Lord, open my eyes.

If you could see the spiritual battle, you would run to the prayer closet. I don't think they're here necessarily, but when you get out there and you start to drive and that demonic influence comes in, we are legion and we're coming. That's what the Bible says.

I can't give a politically correct sermon. I must give a biblically correct sermon. If you could see the spiritual realms, I'm coming after your daughter.

I'm coming after your son. I'm coming after your spouse and I'm coming after you. That's what he does.

You don't think I know? You think I just get in my truck and just walk on clouds all week long? He plants the same desires in my heart as well. If you could see the spiritual realm, if you could see the look of the demonic, it's so gross. Oh, he appears as an angel of light, but in their true form, it would scare you to death.

People watching all these exorcist movies and all this background, where do you think they get that from? Oh, it's just phony, it's just made up. I don't know. I think if we could see into the spiritual realm, that's what we would see.

We would see the demonic realm in their true colors. And all they're waiting is for an open door. Just open the door.

The devil goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. How does he devour? You open the door. Prayer is the only weapon.

Prayer is the only weapon that will truly come against that shame. What about the word of God? Oh, absolutely. Thank God for it.

But if you read this and you don't pray, that's what they call Pharisee. Actually, it'll work against you because now you're all puffed up and you don't think you need prayer and the enemy loves that. You just open the door.

That's how he works. Again, I don't want to scare you, but I do want to motivate you to change course. So when it comes to this topic of hearing God through prayer, I'm just gonna have three points and then we'll get into worship, but these are vitally important.

We need persistent prayer. What I talked about earlier, persistent prayer. The old saints used to say, I'm not letting go.

What happened to that? Where did it go? Everybody's in a hurry. I've heard churches now getting their services down to an hour. Why is everybody, well, we got to accommodate to the culture, Shane.

No, we've got to preach the glorious truth of God's word and let the spirit of God draw on them and convict them. That's how you change people. As soon as you conform the church to the culture, guess what? You just lost your power.

You just lost your unction. You just lost your spiritual authority. You'll tickle ears, but your sermon will fall on deaf ears and you'll be a dead man preaching to dead people.

That's how important this is. When the Bible says we wrestle not, we wrestle. Listen, this isn't a tea party, right? My little girls are little girls, five years old.

She loves to have a tea party. Yeah, let's make a little tea party. We sit around a little tiny table, but the Bible says we wrestle against.

Do you know what wrestling is? You should watch it sometime. They wrestle. You think it's over in a minute? Some of those guys, they're wrestling.

That's our battle. We wrestle not. See, I'd rather prepare you and have you go out armed and trained than sitting open.

That's what happens to a lot of Christians. If all we hear is feel good and feel good encouragement, we go out there and the enemy says, oh, I love this group. They have no idea of the schemes.

Actually, the Bible calls it the wiles of the devil, the trickery of the devil. He goes about tricking and deceiving. We'll train boxers to go 15 rounds, right? NASCAR drivers to go three hours around a track and Olympic athletes to train years for a medal that perishes.

But yet when we talk about persistent prayer, sometimes we just say it's not worth it. The amount of time reflects the commitment level. Think about this.

Here's where the rubber meets the road. Let's just be honest. Let's be transparent.

The amount of time we've spent with God just reflects the commitment level. Why are these Olympic athletes training so hard? Commitment level. NASCAR, boxing, what? Commitment level.

So once we get that commitment level up and we look at how powerful prayer is, that's where real change can take place. But I'm still bound, many people say. Shane, I hear you, but I'm still bound.

Have you been struggling with something for years? Decades? I'm still bound. Well, I've got news for that. The bondage should drive us to our knees.

See, if God just removed all temptation, guess where we'd probably go? See you later, God. But that need for a Savior drives me to the cross. My need for ever-present help drives me to prayer.

To say, Lord, take this away. But then you think, well, leave a little bit of it because I wanna be drawn back to you. I don't wanna fall into the sin, but I want that temptation to be able to pull me back to you.

And I talk to people, I've counseled people. We do that here often. My mom does a lot of counseling, and they're in deep bondage.

I mean, addiction runs deep. It's hard to overcome. I don't wanna just say, oh, get over it, come on.

But the majority of the time, I've said this before, when it comes to even the addiction or bondage, you tell the person, tell me about your prayer life. Mm, yeah, I really need to do that, I know. Well, no, tell me about your prayer life.

I don't really have one. I mean, you don't hear a person that has a powerful prayer life fall on their face before God in the Word of God, worshiping, filled with the Spirit of God, yet I still struggle with heroin every other week. Or I get out of this powerful time of worship for two hours, now let me go click 36, 28, 36.

Ex-porn site. You don't, why, why isn't that happening? You see the difference? Shane, I'm in so much bondage. Alcohol calls me as soon as I get in that vehicle, or the pill, or oxytocin, or whatever those things are.

They pull me, Shane, they pull me. I know, I've been there. Addiction is hard.

It's the wiles of the devil. But if you exchange that for prayer and worship, you will see that addiction begins to slowly lose its grip. I remember a lot of times back, especially in 1999, 2000, I would just be doing so good for a month, and then it just hits.

You're like, it's almost steering your car to the liquor store. It's like, where did this come from? Where did this come from? So immediately, you pray to God, you put on worship, put on powerful messages of worship, and then it begins to change the atmosphere, and it begins, that desire begins to get conquered. The problem is, when we allow that to, well, I'm not gonna worship, I'm not gonna pray.

Let me just see where this goes, and it takes you right to the place that's trying to take you down. But when persistent prayer will offset that, persistent prayer will bring you back into, and see, it's not easy. That's what we forget.

Oh, forget it, I can't do this. It's too hard. Yeah, we wrestle.

We wrestle against flesh and blood. It's not a tea party. It's not, this is difficult stuff.

And Paul was building warriors. Paul was building soldiers, not cheerleaders. He was strengthening believers, and strongholds are not easily broken.

It's not. Why some people are delivered instantly, and others struggle for a long time, I don't know. I sure wish I did, no, no.

But E.M. Bounds, also in this book, said patience has its perfect work in the school of delay. You wanna get this, don't you? Delay just means that there is work to be done. Patience has its perfect work in the school of delay.

See, when God is delaying something, I'm convinced that He might keep that temptation right here. If it'll drive me to an hour or two of prayer and worship, it'll drive me closer to Him. He might keep that temptation right.

See, without that temptation, you're not gonna come to me. Without that struggle, you're not gonna come to me. You're not gonna give me everything, an all-sufficient Savior.

So we have to allow that delay to develop patience in our lives. Passionate prayer is the next thing. I could preach a whole sermon on this.

Passionate prayer. I want you to think about this for a minute. The God of the universe, not just America, the God of the universe holds everything in place.

He creates life and He sustains it. He's not a co-equal to the devil, right? We've made that crystal clear. He's not a co-equal to evil.

Good sits up here, God sits up here, everybody else is created. By words, He conquered kings and kingdoms. He just spoke the word, that's it.

That's who we serve, that's who we're looking to. And He says, I will listen and I will listen for hours. Not only will I listen, I will lead you and I will direct you, I will conquer your enemies and I will devour your foes.

He doesn't look at the time, He doesn't text people, He doesn't say He's in a hurry. He will sit there if it takes all night, if it takes all morning. Think about what I'm saying.

This is an ever-present help in a time of need. At two in the morning, you can cry out to God at 11 o'clock in the morning, you can cry out to God. On the backside of the desert, you can cry out to God.

In your jail cell, you can cry out to God. He doesn't sleep, He doesn't slumber. He says, here, here I am, come to me, all who are weak and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

That's who we serve. When I thought about this, it just blew my mind. He's always, He's there right now.

If we just stop and say, oh God, heal our family, heal our nation, heal our church, He hears the prayers. I'm not lining up my calendar for next Monday. I'm not gonna try to get ahold of Him after the service.

He's here right now. As you call out to Him, He will answer. How do you know, Shane? Because I've seen it time and time and time again.

And so if you're honest, passionate prayer, He can break every chain, subdue any addiction, and conquer any obstacle. See, that's the truth. And it's one thing, it's one thing to say the truth, and it's another thing to

believe the truth that you're proclaiming.

Many people say, I know that. What about when Lazarus died? You said, I'm here, He'll be resurrected. Oh, I know, I know He will, later on.

Later on the resurrection. Jesus said, no, I am the resurrection and the life. You see, they believe later on, but when it comes to right now, the disconnect will happen.

Shane, I've been praying and it's not happening. Well, yeah, that's persistent prayer. That's praying with faith in mind.

And sometimes, you know the old song, thank God for unanswered prayers, right? God knows. So this person, this creator that can break every chain and subdue any addiction, conquer any obstacle, I know He can. But it boils down to this, do we surrender to that, or do we just surrender to our flesh? One or the other will prevail.

It's time to recover our passion for prayer. And you might say, well, Shane, how do I do that? How do you cultivate desire? Let's think about that. How do you cultivate desire? Before I got married to my wife, how did I cultivate desire for her? What do you think I thought about every day? Couldn't wait to get home, work, call.

Right here, men, women now, too, addicted to pornography, where are they cultivating that desire? We go out and we just eat too much after the service. Where do we cultivate that desire? Right here. You think about it, you think about it.

I guarantee, the more you think about God, the deeper your desire will be. The problem is we go through life not thinking about God. Oh yeah, I've gotta go listen to a guy on Saturday, that's about it.

And oh, I'll put on air one. And I've got, oh yeah, I've got something I gotta read here. It doesn't send me an email alert.

That's persistent prayer. Thinking about God. David says, I'll think about you when I go to bed and when I wake up.

That, again, goes back to my issue with entertainment. You see where this is going? If that's what I'm filling my mind with, I have no thought for God, my prayer life is dead. My prayer life is dead on the vine.

But as I'm thinking about God, as I get up and say, God, you are so good, look at what you've done for me. I look back, look at my journal, how he's answered so many different prayers. We begin to read the word of God and you read the Psalms, how that verse, it would just jump out to you.

I'm gonna read that again, actually. Where does my help come from? As you're reading Psalms, where does my help come from? My help comes from God, the maker of heaven and earth. He holds Israel in his hands.

He does not sleep, he does not slumber. And you start to think about that. You start to read good books, you start to think about God.

You develop an appetite for God. So if you have no appetite with God, it goes right back to what are we feeding our mind? There's no desire there. This is why worship is too emotional for some people.

Their heart is disengaged. It's grown cold and callous. They don't worship and they don't pray.

But I've got good news. That can be changed today. That can be changed today.

Listen, the whole point of this sermon is not for you guys to go, oh, that was a great job. That was close to last week, good job. Can I get a CD? That's not why I come up here.

I come up here so lives are changed and God speaks to His people. And He first preaches to me before He preached to you. And it's good to say, okay, Lord, I need that.

See, I remember when the church prayed in an upper room for days, then fire fell. Isn't it funny? You go to Acts, they were in the upper room praying, and they all gathered in the upper room for 10 minutes, and the Holy Spirit fell. What? Why is everybody laughing? You know what it says? Days.

Now, there's a lot of debate. Do they just sit there the whole time or do they go at work, come back? Who cares? People wanna argue over that. I don't wanna argue, I just wanted to motivate me to pray.

So they waited in the upper room. They waited and they prayed. They waited and they prayed.

Lord, Your Word says this. You've promised the gift of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, I must go, for when I go, the Comforter will come, and He will be a paracletus, come alongside of you.

He will be inside of you. He will dwell, He will come upon you. You will have the anointing and the filling of the Holy Spirit.

Not in 10 minutes, not in 10 hours, but in days of persistent prayer. And then the fire fell, and everybody knew of Him. They actually turned the world upside down because of a few people in an upper room in Jerusalem.

Now America has reaped the benefit. Now the nations have reaped the benefit of those men in the upper room. I remember when the church was started in a prayer room.

I remember when we weren't in a hurry and sitting in the presence of God was biblical. Now it's called fanatical. In churches that worship the Word of God, they call our worship fanatical and emotional.

God help you, God help you. The Word you worship should point you to the true one you worship. You think God loves it when we worship His Word? Really? Talk to me after the service, and we'll go over Scripture, over Scripture, over Scripture.

My Word is living and powerful, discerning the thoughts and the intents of the heart to point you to the one who has the answers. My Word is like a fire. It's like a hammer that does what? Breaks the arrogant heart into pieces so they will point them to the Savior.

My Word came and healed them and delivered them from their destruction. It's the means. Don't get me wrong, I love the Word of God.

It's one of the, if our house ever catches on fire, I'm grabbing it with a couple kids in each arm. That might, let's see if it'll fit. Actually, I have a bigger one at home that I use to study Bible.

I remember when prayer drove the church. Now it seems like methods, marketing programs, and potlucks are front and center. I remember when you'd come early to pray and stay late to hold on to God.

You remember that? Maybe not, young crowd. You would go early and the worship team would just be up there early and you'd pray. And you'd stay, you're not in a hurry.

It's the presence of God. I mean, if you just think about this. God says, my house will be called the house of preaching.

My house will be, did he teach his disciples? Teach us how to preach. You see where all this is going? The most powerful weapon you've ever possessed is here and here, to pray and petition God and seek his face with all your heart, with all your strength. I remember when prayer was an asset and entertainment was a liability.

I remember when people got excited about prayer and worship. And I remember when prayer changed lives. And it can do that again today.

Again, the whole point of this is to stir that fire. If I had one of those little lighters, I'd just go under each of your seats. So when you leave, you're going, ah, man, Lord, let me go through my CD collection.

Let me go through my DVD collection. Let me go on Netflix. Actually, let me cancel Netflix for a month and instead we're gonna pray.

Whoa, your hearts will be radically changed. You will come for both services. It's that we need more worship.

We need worship nights every week because you're fostering that. My house shall be called a house of prayer, not potlucks and committee meetings and VBS and studies and groups and get-togethers. Now, don't get me wrong.

We need all those things for fellowship and iron sharpens iron and people come together. But when they become the forefront and prayer begins to be back here somewhere, where do we put that prayer at? You know, I guess we better do it. I mean, the church is supposed to do it.

I don't know where the prayer's at, but we'll get to it when we can. But when prayer, prayer is the focus. I mean, if I had, if this was our building and I didn't tax the worship team, guess what we would have every week? Prayer and worship night.

You think I'm gonna be looking for leaders for this church out in the lobby or wanting to go to dinner? I'm gonna be looking in prayer meetings and worship meetings. That's who God builds his church with. I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail.

It's a church of prayer. So all these other things are great, but they're supplemental. You know that word supplemental, right? I'm gonna take a supplement.

My diet is lacking in vitamins and minerals and all these things, so I'm gonna take a supplement. These things are supplemental to a prayer life. On the bulletins, you'll read another quote by Ian Bounds, I don't have it handy, but it says something about our public prayers are only gonna be powerful in our private prayer life.

How we pray here should be taken back to our homes. What happens in many churches, let's preach for an hour, but scurry through worship, right? Let's have videos and let's have this person talk and let's do this and let's do this and y'all preach for a while, and then come on, we gotta hurry up and scurry through

worship. And prayer time, well, let's cut that out.

The most important thing, the engine that runs the train is being cut out. Let's exegete the text, but not exegete our hearts. I know a lot of pastors.

They're so impressed by their exegetical ability to break down the Hebrew and the Greek and the nuances of the verb tense and all these things. You wanna say, when have you exegeted your heart through prayer and worship? That's where it takes place. We have polished sermons, but our knees are not worn from praying.

You see how important this is? This is vitally important. Prayer moves the hand of God. When faith ceases to pray, it ceases to live.

When your faith ceases to pray, it ceases to live. The reason some of your faith seems like you're that dead vine, why we say dying on the vine, you see those grapes, right? And the vine is just dead, it's dying. What's wrong there? When faith ceases to pray, it ceases to live.

So if your faith is dying, look at your prayer life. Have you ever seen anybody with a passionate prayer life says, my faith is dying. I don't know where God's at.

Doesn't mean they don't go through challenges, doesn't mean that they're not going through difficulty, doesn't mean there's not anxiety and depression from time to time, but they know where their help comes from. Their faith is not dying, it's being challenged. Big difference, big difference.

And I often ask critical people, I'll just throw this out there, I know there aren't any at the four o'clock service. Well, there's not, right? I often ask critical people to tell me about their worship and their prayer life. You know what they say nine times out of 10? Well, in the morning, at night, I'm reading this, and oh, I didn't say that.

Tell me about your worship and your prayer life. Because you can't worship and pray and be critical. There's no such thing as the gift of criticism.

People come in critiquing with a critical heart, there's not a praying heart. That's not a praying, worshiping heart. Now, can a praying, worshiping heart critique? Of course, we're called to have discernment, but you see the difference? A critical spirit means they're critiquing everything, they're criticizing everything.

And when I challenge them on it, they go to this instead of the heart. Because you can defend it from this. Well, the Word of God says I need to defend the truth and point out these things.

What it also says, don't overlook all the scriptures on humility and grace and love and forgiveness and gentleness and compassion. While you're at it, look at the scriptures on not being divisive and being teachable. And while you're at it, Paul says to rebuke a divisive person, so I'm in the process of rebuking you, sir.

That's where this leads. And then finally, of course, powerful prayer. The day of passive, dead, ritualistic prayer is over.

The Pharisees prayed. Remember this, folks. The Pharisees prayed.

Cults pray. You realize that? Heathens pray. Jesus said, don't pray with vain repetition.

Heathens do that. And I got some people upset last month, but I'm going to say it again, vain repetition. You know what it reminds me of? Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed are thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of the womb, Jesus. But hail Mary, full of grace. And you just keep 15 times, and you put it around your neck, and you're good with God.

That's vain repetition. That's vain repetition, folks. I'll challenge that by the authority of God's word any day of the week.

Because the last time I checked, Christ died on the cross. But when you pray, Jesus said, when you pray, this is amazing. He said, when you pray, go shut yourself into a room.

To me, that gives the imagery of, OK, this is going to take a little bit of time. To go into a room, shut my prayer closet, and pray to God, and not show off to other people illustrates our prayer life. You should have a place to go and pray.

Husbands, you should watch your kids and let your wives go and pray. That's one reason why mine's not here this weekend. Getting away and doing that, times of refreshing.

There is a distinction. There is a difference. There is a power.

There is power in his name. See, it's ironic. Sometimes I sit there and go, Lord, help us.

We break every chain. There's power in his name. There's power in the name of Jesus, blah, blah, blah.

But if you really understood that, if you really understood that, you would pray as if God is listening. Pray as if eternal destinies depend upon it. Pray as if your marriage depends upon it.

Pray as if your spiritual life depends upon it. Guess what? It does. It does.

Sound the alarm. Sound the alarm. Everything begins in prayer.

The church was birthed in prayer. Christ would go and pray. Prayer moves the hand of God.

It sustains everything. Everything. That's why the enemy seeks to destroy.

If a kingdom divided cannot stand, do you think a church divided can stand? Divisive Christians are powerless. There's disunity and no power there. Prayer and worship breaks disunity.

This is why I love. This is so funny. On worship night, Monday night, you can have issues going on in women's ministry and men's ministry and this and this.

The churches have issues because there's a whole bunch of sinners here. I'm caught in the middle of all this. But when you come to worship, guess what vanishes? What was that we were arguing about? Who cares? Who cares? Little petty, little hurt feelings get out of the way.

Jealousy gets out of the way. Envy gets out of the way. Jockeying for position gets out of the way.

We just come to worship and you leave here. You're loving each other instead of hurting. You're guarding instead of pulling down.

What happens with prayer and worship? Arrogant Pharisees become humble servants. Prideful Bible thumpers fall on their face and worship God. Prodigals run to the altar.

Lukewarm believers fully surrender their lives all because of prayer. When you truly pray, when you truly pray. And I'll just hopefully close with this.

If you're dying spiritually, which most people are, let's be honest. That's why I wrote my whole book, Desperate for More of God. You guys, there's free copies, I hope.

I think we have some left over. I've seen one of the ushers. But that's the hardest thing for me to be a pastor is I see people dying spiritually with water right here, right here.

It's like you remember the Terri Schiavo case, right? That terrible court case that she ended up dying. There was water right there. But the good old government got in the way.

Well, there's opinions on that, but I'll keep quiet. But that's what it resembles, right there. There's living water right there.

If you're dying spiritually, if God seems distant and depression is setting in, this is the only tool, the only medication known to mankind that will set you free. Did you catch that? The only medication known to mankind given from God himself is prayer. That will set you free.

Too many times we're popping the pill. We're going, I got to see my therapist this week. I got to see my therapist.

I got to talk to this person. I got to, I got to, I got to. The only, the only medication known to mankind that will set you free is prayer and time with God.

He gives us a solution right there, right there. But on this whole issue, you can't call him father and pray until you call his son savior. Did you catch that? You can't call God father unless you call his son your savior.

This is the point where people start wiggling their seats a little bit. Not this four o'clock service. Remember, this one's a spiritual service.

But think about that. You cannot call him father until you call his son your savior. You can't pray to the father unless you go through the son.

Nobody comes to the father but by the son. And the father says nobody comes to the son unless the father draws him. You won't hear God until you first, or he won't hear you until you first hear him.

Until you hear that still calling of the Holy Spirit, drawing and convicting and drawing and convicting and drawing and convicting. He won't hear you until you first hear him. That's how powerful this topic is of prayer.

It has everything to do with catching the voice of God, hearing the voice of God, praying to God. Think about, we're given the absolute magnificent responsibility or gift of being able to sit and pray to the creator of the universe. If we truly believe that, why is our prayer life not more passionate and persistent and magnified? I'll tell you why.

I just spoke about for 40 minutes. Get the CD and listen again. That's why.

So I just encourage you, worship team's gonna come up. We're gonna go into a time of worship and prayer. This is where we move the hand of God by praying.

I truly believe that. I've seen many prayers get answered. I'm not just up here, oh gosh, let me wing it and hope they believe me.

I know God will answer prayers. And we also have communion up here. This is for those who are believers in Jesus Christ.

We remember his death on the cross. We remember his resurrection. And the Bible says examine yourself.

Examine yourself. Don't come to this table in an unworthy manner. Examine yourself.

Is there bitterness? Is there a critical spirit in your heart? Don't come up here in an unworthy manner. So this ties in perfectly with communion, a broken heart praying and seeking God and worshipping God.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/F8Nw7XYK2wo.mp4>
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