

PRAYER LIFE

BY ANTONIO BALDOVINOS

"The word of God is the food by which prayer is nourished and made strong."

E. M. BOUNDS

"Are you coming to the prayer meeting tonight?" I was asked one Friday night, while still at the office. I made every excuse in the book why I couldn't make it to the prayer gathering that I had helped to organize. "There was going to be about 400 people," he said as he continued trying to persuade me to attend. This was a really good size prayer meeting that was focused on interceding for the city. Emphatically, I responded with a big, "No, I have too much work to do."

While leading and directing evangelistic campaigns with Impact World Tour, a ministry of Youth With A Mission (YWAM), I have set up many events around the world. Alongside the campaigns, I would set up citywide prayer gatherings sometimes on a weekly basis, where the city or region prays and even fasts for their area. I have seen many miracles as a direct result of these prayer gatherings. Even though I had seen so many great results, I personally had no real interest in attending or participating in any prayer meeting. I simply thought it was not my thing and agonizing while waiting until the meeting was done, because they could last for an hour or sometimes two, was overwhelming for me. I merely thought it was too hard, boring, and I was not made for it. I told myself: I was a man of "*action*." I will do the work, and let those who pray support what I do or what I am a part of. I undeniably had it *all wrong*...

"Since the days of Pentecost, has the whole church ever put aside every other work and waited upon Him for ten days, that the Spirit's power might be manifested? We give too much attention to method and machinery and resources, and too little to the source of power." Hudson Taylor

I gave all my attention for far too long to just working and doing it with very little power. Looking back now, I can see that other people were actually praying through the work that I was getting credit for. Real power comes from spending time with Him and in knowing and communing with Him.

After God showed me that real intimacy comes from spending time with Him and that true power to do the work comes from His Spirit, I had to find out how to live this lifestyle for myself. I didn't want to live it through anyone else. I didn't want to pretend to know God and talk about Him, without actually knowing *Him*. I wanted the raw reality of God for myself.

So I had so many questions. What do I do now? How do I do this? How do I pray? How do I do the stuff of the Bible? How do I act upon all the things that I inheritably know that I can partake of? How can I know God in a culture that is completely contrary to the things of the Spirit?

Unlocking these questions would prove to be simple. It was *prayer*. Having a prayer life and constantly seeking His face was the answer to all those questions. Prayer was never meant to be duty-based or merely results-oriented communication. Rather, it is in the place of encounter with God where our spirit is energized as we grow to love Him more. It positions us to be energized to love God and people by receiving God's love.

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PRAYER

What *is* prayer? It is simply talking to God. It is a great privilege, a fierce struggle and a powerful miracle.

Prayer is the best way out of a life of despair and the only way into the life of the over-comer.

Why does God want us to pray? He wants us to connect with His heart in deep partnership. It is amazing that God pleads with us to pray, instead of us pleading with Him to listen.

One thing many people wonder is how to pray and what to pray. Many people take the time to pray and draw a blank and then come to the conclusion that it is just too hard and either quit or pray powerless defeated prayers.

POWER IN PRAYER

Would you like your prayers to be more powerful? It begins by meditating and praying the Word of God. Hebrews 4:12 says, ***“God’s Word is alive and powerful, sharper than a double-edged sword.”*** When we speak and pray the Scriptures, we are coming into agreement with God, and His power is released to answer our prayers.

He always (forever) lives to make intercession for them. (Hebrew 7:25)

The remarkable reality that Jesus lives forever interceding for me is tremendously encouraging and uplifting. The Father has deep and wonderful plans in His heart. He ordained that Jesus speak and verbalize them (intercession) as the way to release the Spirit’s power as it was in creation. Father God had the plan to create, Jesus spoke it into existence, and the Holy Spirit created it. Jesus is the creator who said, *“Let there be light”* in Genesis 1. The authority of our prayers when praying the Word is powerful and effective.

THE WORD

One of my favorite times in my married life was one particular moment when my wife and I were laying in bed for the night after talking about the “Word” being “alive” and “active”. We said to each other, “Let’s see how many scripture verses we can say out loud to one another from memory before we fall asleep”. It didn’t matter what verses they were, or how short or long, we just began to say them to each other. It was so much fun and it kind of became a little competitive, which I personally love. This went on for quite awhile: back and forth. I think I won, with quoting more scriptures by the end (my wife may disagree). The point is, to our surprise we both woke up the following morning after sharing that to realize that while we slept that night, we had scriptures reverberating through our minds all night long! It felt like we were awake all night and we should have been tired and exhausted, but we weren’t. We woke up refreshed, with our spirit man alive and vibrant! This was the first time that I had experienced the Word like this, so real and tangible and so alive! How fun it is to meditate on His Words *“day and night”*.

The most substantial way in which we can bolster our prayer lives is by *eating* the Word of God. This includes engaging in active conversation with God as we read His Word. Scripture gives us the best *“conversational material”* for our prayer life. Using this method makes prayer more enjoyable, and it goes deep into our spirit.

“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night...then you will make your way prosperous, and...will have good success. (Josh. 1:8)

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Bible study must lead to dialogue with God. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees, saying:

"You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have...life; these are they which testify of Me. You are not willing to come to Me (dialogue) that you may have life." (John 5:39-40)

We proactively take the words from the Bible and speak them back to God. The will of God for us is in His Word and the best way for circumstances in our lives to change is to make a commitment to pray his Word out loud everyday. Romans 10:17 says, *"So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ."* It sounds so simple, but by doing this we are releasing power, because we are praying in victory. It is important for you to pray the prayers out loud, even if it is in a whisper. The spoken Word makes things happen!

"Then the LORD said to me, "You have seen well, for I am watching over My word to perform it." (Jeremiah 1:12)

We actively dialogue with God by praying promises that we are *"to believe"* from His Word. First, we *thank God* for a particular truth. Then we turn that truth into declarations of thanksgiving or trust. For example, we say: *"Thank you that You love, forgive, lead and provide for me"*. Secondly, we ask God to *reveal* particular truths to us (Eph. 1:17). For example, pray: *"Father, reveal to me the certainty of your love, forgiveness, direction and provision for me"*.

STRENGTHEN YOUR PRAYER LIFE

"Don't pray when you feel like it. Have an appointment with the Lord and keep it. A man is powerful on his knees."

Corrie Ten Boom

There are three simple ways to strengthen our prayer life. Begin by setting a *schedule* for regular prayer times. Then make a *prayer list*, and lastly have a *right view* of God. A schedule establishes *"when"* we will pray. A prayer list gives us focus on *"what"* to pray. And a right view of God causes us to *"want"* to pray.

Most will pray ten times more with the simplicity of developing a schedule and prayer lists. Many who love God never develop a consistent prayer life because they lack these disciplines. Here are some examples that will spur you on in your quest for a strong prayer life.

PRAYER LISTS

1. *Prayer for our personal life*: Breakthrough on our inner man (heart), circumstances (physical, financial, relational) and ministry that God's power may be released through our hands and words (singing/speaking) as we receive prophetic revelation to help others.
2. *Prayer for others (people and places)*: Individuals, ministries, marketplace and governmental authorities, and the destiny of cities or nations.

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3. *Prayer for others (strategic issues in society):* Government (elections, abortion), oppression (human trafficking), natural disasters (hurricane, drought), disease (AIDS, Avian bird flu), social crisis (famine, genocide, etc.) or economic crisis, etc.