

The Simple Truth Series # 7

The Christian's Life of

Prayer



A study of the Christian's intimate prayer life,
with our Lord, and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Brother Kevin
www.therescueshop.org

'And expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.' Acts 18:26.

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1.

The Praying Christian

'Now it came to pass, as they went, that He entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard His Word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to Him, and said, Lord, dost Thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.' (Luke 10:38-42).

I was explaining the depths of prayer to a Sister one day, when she exclaimed, "But I thought Prayer was telling God what you want?" It seems that a lot of other Christians believe that too, because, that's as much as their prayer life ever seems to amount to. They see prayer as Martha, "Lord, can you do this for me?" When prayer is Mary, sitting at the feet of Jesus alone, in Communion with Him.

An Evangelist friend of mine likes to point at the unsaved, and tell them they're going to hell. Then, he adds, if they get saved, they will *avoid* going to hell. But Salvation *isn't* about avoiding going to hell. It has *nothing* at all to do with hell. It's about loving the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and *desiring* to be with Him. Why did Mary sit at Jesus' feet? Was it to avoid helping Martha with the cooking, and the dishes? No! It was because she loved Him, and she wanted to be near Him, and talk to Him. And Jesus said, "*One thing is needful,*" meaning it needed to be done, "*and Mary has chosen that good part, and I will not take it away from her.*" And if it was needful for Mary then, it's still just as needful for us today as well.

A young Christian once asked me, if it was hard to pay tithes? I was honest with her, and said, "Yes, it is! If you don't trust the Lord. But, if you do trust Him, it's easy." There's a difference between doing something because you *have* to, and doing it because you *want* to. People who pay tithes because they *have* to, will find it hard. And they will look at tithes, the way they look at taxes. It's something they are *told* to pay, that they don't *want* to pay. So, they will avoid paying tithes when they can, but they will *pretend* they're paying them. That's what Malachi chapter four is about. It's about Israel short-changing the Lord. So, the Lord warned them, "*Bring your whole tithe in.*" But when we have a reason to pay tithes, it's easy; because there's a reason *why* we pay tithes, and, there's also a reason *why* we pray.

If you look at your watch and think, "Uh-oh, 8 o'clock, time to pray," and you have your five minute prayer, you might as well pray the rosary, for all the good it will do

you. Because, there's also a reason *why*, we want to pray. The best example of this, I've ever seen, is a young couple I know, named Albert, and Rhoda. Albert told me, before they got married, he would shower and eat after work, then phone Rhoda and they would talk all night. Then at five am, he would say, "I'd better go now, because I need to get ready for work in an hour." So, he would sleep for an hour, then he would go to work. And he did the same thing the next night, and the next, and the next, and he said, "You can survive on one hour's sleep at *them* kind of times." At *what* kind of times? The times when you are so in love with someone, that you think about them *all* day long, and *all* you want to do is be *with* them; and if you can't be *with* them, then just to *speak* with them, and hear them speaking back to *you* personally is enough.

That's what intimate, personal prayer is about. It's about having such an attraction, and devotion to the Lord, that *all* you want to do is be with Him, the love of your life. The Lord said, "*Mary has chosen that good part.*" She wasn't asked to do it, she *chose* to do it. She had a desire to *be* with Jesus, whereas Martha had a desire to *serve* Him.

'*As for God, His way is perfect.*' (2 Samuel 22:31). The reason *why* His way is so perfect, is because He never does anything without having a purpose for doing it, and a reason for doing it the way He does. He doesn't have a single blade of grass growing on a rock in the middle of the wilderness, without having a purpose, for that *particular* blade of grass, to be growing on that *particular* rock, on that *particular* spot. There's a reason *why* it's there.

And, it's the same with each one of us. The Lord wanted us to be a certain height, to have a certain eye colour, hair colour, and skin colour, and to have certain characteristics. We are here by design, not by chance. We are *exactly* what the Lord wanted us to be. But the problem we have is; the Lord can create a boy, with an attraction to girls with red hair, and green eyes, because, one day he will meet a girl with red hair, who the Lord knows, will be a perfect match for him. But, this girl decides, she doesn't want to be a redhead, she wants to be a blonde. So, she bleaches her hair blonde, and they pass with scarcely a glance. Then, that boy goes on to marry the *wrong* girl, with the *right* hair colour, and she marries the *wrong* boy, and the purpose of God is unfulfilled.

We should all be *just* what the Lord created us to be, nothing *more*, and nothing *less*. We should *never* be jealous of anyone else, and we should *never* copy anyone else, because we are all *unique*, within the Perfect, Divine, Will of God. We are *who* we are, and *what* we are, for a reason.

And the reason why we do things is important too. If you see a boy who's going to jump off a bridge and drown himself, and you stop him, you'll feel good, and think, "Hey, I saved his life!" No, you didn't. Because, you didn't change the reason inside, *why* he wanted to jump off the bridge. So, now, he will step in front of a truck, or take an overdose of pills. But, if you give that boy a reason to live, you wouldn't be able to throw him off a bridge, because he would fight with all his strength, to survive.

During WW2 a Jewish boy named Victor Frankl, was put in a German Concentration Camp, and he survived. Most of the inmates in the camp died. Either they were murdered by the Germans, or they died of disease, or starvation, or they simply lost the will to live, and died. But a handful survived all the horrors of the camp, and Victor wanted to find out *why*, these particular people survived. He found they all had the same story to tell. They all had something to live *for*. They had an unfulfilled ambition in life, and they were determined to survive this, and fulfil their ambition. Having a reason to do something, gives us the motivation to do it.

If someone comes to me and says, "I don't pray enough, what can I do about it?" I could tell them to pray for five minutes a day this week, then ten minutes next week, then fifteen the week after, then twenty the week after that. But what will happen? They'll fizzle out. Because, if they can't pray for five minutes today, there's no way they will pray for twenty minutes in a month's time. Because, prayer isn't about time, it's *about* desire.

What if we had told our young friend Albert, to go and talk with Nina, over in the corner, because she's a 'nice' girl? If there's no attraction between them, he will go over there very sheepishly, and, all the time he's talking to her, she will be thinking, "Why's he talking to me? Why doesn't he just go away?" And he will be thinking, "I wish it was time to go home now." If we contrast that with the way it was, between Albert and Rhoda, talking all night, there's a big difference. Because, having an attraction to someone, doesn't just give you the motivation to be with them, it gives you a *longing* to be with them. No one has to tell you to do it, because it comes from your heart.

I could tell everyone they have to pray for three hours a day, and that may seem like a long time, but Paul commanded us to, '*Pray without ceasing.*' I'm sure some would do it, at least I hope they would. Some would start and fizzle out. But most people wouldn't bother, because, that's what happens, when you do something that isn't from the Lord, it doesn't work. You can't legislate Christianity, to make people into Christians, because we are all given Free-will, and the Lord will never work outside of our Free-will. Anything we do for Him, must be done out of a *desire*, and *willingness* to do it. Any other reason is a *wrong* reason. If we aren't doing something because we *want* to do it, then we aren't doing it at all, it's that simple.

In the 1530's John Calvin went to Geneva, and teamed up with William Farel. They got themselves elected onto the Council that ruled Geneva, and in their zeal, decided to make Geneva into a 'Christian' city. They passed Perfunctory Laws, that banned, dice, cards, gambling, immoral dancing, and a myriad of the other pastimes that the people of the city enjoyed, to curb the rampant immorality and vice that polluted it. The lives of the people were strictly controlled, with an iron fist, even going so far as the burning of women suspected of witchcraft. They also made attendance at Church Services compulsory, which didn't sit well with the unconverted, and unrepentant multitudes. The good people of the city did not appreciate their private lives being policed so rigidly

by these two, so they formed a Political Party in opposition to them, called the Libertines. In 1538, the Libertines and Patriots won the Election, and after Calvin and Farel refused Communion to the people of the city, a riot ensued, after which, they were banished from Geneva. You can't make anyone a Christian by forcing them to act like a Christian. And you can't force anyone to pray for three hours a day, or even five minutes a day, because, their lips will be moving, but their heart won't be.

2.

Why do we pray?

Just why do we pray? It's because the Lord was *alone* in Eternity, before creation. Then He created Angels. The Bible tells us they are servants, and messengers. He could have made them love Him, but he wanted someone who would love Him just because they *could*, with no strings attached. No reward if they did, or punishment if they didn't. Someone who would love Him, *because*, they had the *choice* to love Him.

So, He created this universe, as a place to fellowship with those who wanted to fellowship with Him, and somewhere to spend eternity with them. John 3:16, doesn't say, 'God so cared for *the world*.' It says, 'God so loved *the world*.' We aren't just *something* to Him, we are *everything* to Him. We aren't *just* the reason for Calvary, we're the reason for *all* creation. We're the reason there's a planet earth. We're the reason there's a sun, moon, and stars, in the sky. We're the reason for lakes, rivers, mountains, and flowers. It's because we are the love of His life, and He should be the love of our lives.

That's the reason *why* we pray. It's a desire to be near the One who so-loved-us, the way Mary had to be with Him, and the way Albert and Rhoda just had to be together. We should be so in love with Him, that nothing else in this world matters as much. We should love Him so much, that we would do anything for Him, or give anything up for Him. That's what prayer is about. It's *communion* with the love of our lives. And our intimate prayer time with the Lord, is the most *important* part of our lives. That's why the Lord said, "*Only this is needful.*" Because, it's the reason for all creation.

In Isaiah 5:8 we are warned, '*Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth!*' Does the Lord want us to be alone? Not necessarily. But He does want us to be *able* to be alone with Him. And no matter what else we do with this earth, we must always leave space for intimate, personal, fellowship with the Lord.

So, the Lord created the earth, and everything upon it, then He created us. And, in order for us to be able to love Him by choice, He gave us Free-will. Free-will gives us the freedom to choose to love the Lord. It also gives us the freedom to choose to ignore Him all our lives, or even fight against Him as an atheist, and still get to enjoy the blessings of this wonderful world He created for us. As the Lord said *“For He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just, and the unjust.”* (Matthew 5:45).

Because you have Free-will, you are sovereign in your life, and you get to make *all* the decisions. You can be as selfish as you like, because you don't have to consider anyone else on earth, and you don't even have to consider the Lord in the choices you make. You can choose to become a doctor, and save hundreds of lives, and the Lord will not stop you from doing that. You could also choose to become a serial killer, and murder hundreds of innocent people, and the Lord will not stop you from doing that either, because, having Free-will, allows you to make that choice. But, Free-will doesn't come cheap. It comes with accountability. And every person on earth will answer for the choices they've made in their lifetime.

In John 17:3 the Lord Jesus said, *“And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.”* The Jehovah's Witnesses have their own version of the Bible, which they have mis-translated to suit their own warped teachings. In this verse, their mis-translation says, *“This is eternal life, their taking in knowledge of Thee.”* In other words, learning *about* Him. I've told JW's, learning about someone, is not the same as knowing them, but they always assure me that, yes, when you're learning about someone, you're getting to know them.

If that's true, then I know Adam and Eve, and Cain and Abel, and Tasman. I know all the American Presidents, and all the bad boys of history. I know Rembrandt, and Aristotle. You name them, I know them! But in reality, I don't know any of them, I only know *about* them, which is *not* the same as knowing them. And, I will *never* know them, unless I meet them, talk to them, and get to know them personally.

And it's the same with the Lord. We can read the Bible, and learn about Him, and we can go to fellowship, and hear about Him, but that isn't enough. Because, *‘this is life eternal, that they might know Thee.’* We must meet Him in Person, the way Paul did, on the road to Damascus, and the way Moses did at the burning bush. Not just, *“Why did you become a Christian?” “Dunno?”* Sorry, wrong answer. Go to the bottom of the class, and start again, because Christianity begins with *meeting* the Lord in person, then getting to know Him daily, as we walk with Him. Even though Martha and Mary both knew the Lord, Martha chose to continue with her normal life, while Mary chose to stop, and spend time with Him personally. And Free-will gives us the freedom to choose to live as Martha's, or Mary's. We can live a Christ-centered life, or a self-centered life. There is only one throne in our hearts, and only room for one on that throne. Either He is on it, or we are on it.

3.

Prayer

Prayer is important, because as John Wesley said, "God does nothing, *except* in answer to prayer." So, anything we do without prayer, we do without the Lord. Mary and Joseph went to the Temple at Jerusalem, when Jesus was twelve years old, and they left for home, *presuming* He was in among the crowd of friends and family travelling together. But, days later, when they found He wasn't there, they went searching for Him. And when they found Him, Mary proclaimed, "*Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing!*" Luke 2:48. But, that's what we do. We rush into things without prayer, presuming the Lord is with us, and when it all turns to custard, we seek Him sorrowing. If we sought Him before we started, and had Him with us, all the way, we wouldn't get affairs into the mess we get them into. We think every day is a race against time to get too much done, but one day we're all going to lose that race, so why not just slow down now, and stop running off, ahead of the Lord? We should pray until we know He's with us, then move off when He's ready to move, the way Israel did on the way to the Promised Land. They moved when the Pillar of Fire, (The Lord's Presence), moved, and they stopped when He stopped. We need to be communicating with Him in prayer, so we can know His leading, and stay with Him.

When Israel were slaves in Egypt, the Lord met Moses at the Burning bush, and said, "*I have heard the cries of My people, and I am come down to deliver them.*" (Exodus 3:8). He heard their prayers, and He acted in response to them. Why were only Noah and his family saved during the flood? Because no-one else was crying out for deliverance. The Bible tells us they were eating, drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage, until the rain began, and then it was too late. The Rapture could take place today, or tomorrow, but I don't believe it will, because the Lord doesn't do anything without having a purpose for doing it. He won't take us off this earth while everything is going well for us here. And the Rapture won't take place just because the Lord has nothing better to do on that particular day. It will take place in *response* to something. He will deliver His people from oppression, when He hears us crying out to *be* delivered. We sing, "This world is not my home," but we've made ourselves very comfortably at home in it, and we enjoy being here. But, when the Godless World Government is ruling this world, and treating us the way Israel were treated in Egypt, we won't care about our houses, our cars, and boats, any longer, and we will be crying out for deliverance. Then the Rapture will take place.

Many Believers 'lay a fleece before the Lord,' as Gideon did in Judges 6:36-40, to obtain counsel, or guidance, from the Lord. I did it myself, the first time I felt the

Lord's Presence near me, when I was 16 years old. I had felt something that was alive in the room, so I took my mother's Bible, and went to stay in a hut in the bush, for the weekend, to find out for myself, if there really was a God.

When I arrived, I wondered how I could have this important question answered, so I began to read the Bible to find out how, and was led to the story of Gideon and the fleece, and I decided to do the same. That first night, I lay my mother's Bible in the middle of a clearing, and said, "If there really is a God, in the morning let all this grass be soaked with dew, but let the Bible be dry." I was sincere in asking the question, and stayed awake all night, desperate to know the answer. At first light, I went outside. The grass was all soaked with dew, but the Bible was dry, not one drop of dew on it. The Lord had answered my question. But, about lunchtime I wondered if it may have been just a coincidence?

So, the second night, I lay the Bible out there again, and said, "I really do want to know the answer to this question, so, if there really is a God, this time let the grass be dry, but let the Bible be soaked with dew." I spent another semi-sleepless night, and went out as soon as the sun came up. The grass was completely dry, not one drop of dew anywhere, but the Bible was so wet, I could have wrung the water from it. And I knew forever, there is a God.

If you do 'lay a fleece before the Lord,' it must be something so impossible, that it couldn't happen, unless the Lord does it miraculously. And you must be sincere enough to accept the sign, as the final answer, because it's dangerous to trifle with the Lord.

Prayer is normally defined as, 'Talking with God.' And when you talk with someone, it's always a two-way street. You're both free to speak, to ask questions, and to answer, and our prayer time should be the same. Often, I have Christians tell me they asked the Lord about something, and they add, "And I'm just waiting on Him for an answer." It doesn't look like it to me. From where I stand, it looks like they asked the Lord a question, then walked away from Him, without waiting for the answer. How would you feel, if someone asked you, "What should I do about this?" Then they walked away? You would be wondering, what was that about? You expect them to wait for an answer. But we treat the Lord as a second-class citizen, who doesn't deserve our time. We have to do better.

I think the reason many Christians ask the Lord something, but don't wait for His answer, is because, they aren't in touch with Him personally. They go to Church, and faithfully fulfil their duties, but they don't spend time in personal fellowship with Him. They are Martha's, when the Lord wants Mary's. He wants us to stop our busy lives, put everything down, and spend time getting to know Him. If we had the love for the Lord, that Albert had for Rhoda, prayer would be more important to us than sleep. And we could pray all night, and survive on one hours sleep a day.

An iceberg has what we refer to as its 'tip' showing above water, that's visible to

everyone. But below the water is the huge body of the iceberg, that no-one ever sees. That's what our prayer life should look like. There should be that small amount of public prayer, our prayer meetings, and family prayer times, that are visible to the whole world. But there should be volumes more of this intimate, personal, private, prayer time, that no-one else knows about, because it isn't meant for them. I'm sure young Albert and Rhoda didn't want anyone listening in on their conversations, because they weren't meant for anyone else, it was an intimate time between them two alone. And your intimate prayer times with the Lord, have nothing to do with your wife, husband, children, friends, or Church. It's for your ears, and His ears *only*.

For many years, the Lord woke me at one o'clock, every morning, and my prayer time lasted until the sun came up. One Sunday, I was having lunch with a Pastor, when his mother-in-law was present. She was talking about sleep, because she obviously didn't sleep well. She asked how well I slept, and I told her I woke at one every morning. "Oh no, one o'clock!" she exclaimed, thinking it was a bad thing. "No," I replied, "It's the best part of my day. It's my prayer time, from one o'clock, until..." "Until?" She asked. But I didn't want to answer, knowing I had said too much already. "Until?" She repeated. But I still didn't want to answer. Then, finally I said, "Until the sun comes up," to end the conversation. The next morning, the Lord didn't wake me up at one. Or the morning after, or the morning after. He changed my prayer time; because our lovers' tryst with the Lord has nothing to do with anyone else in this world.

When the Lord called to the child Samuel, in the Temple, Eli the Priest didn't hear the Voice, because it wasn't meant for him. And when you spend time alone with the Lord, you will hear things others don't hear.

About an hour before the first Christchurch earthquake, the Lord told me it was going to happen. Does that make me a Prophet? No. It's just that I was in His Presence, listening, when He wanted to tell someone, "There's going to be a big earthquake." And, because I was in the right place, at the right time, I was that someone, and I heard it. You don't have to be super-spiritual, to hear from the Lord, you only have to be in His Presence.

It's the same as if I spent a lot of time with one of your friends. They would tell me they're going to do this, and this, and I could tell you what they said. Then you might ask, "Why don't they tell me these things?" It's because I'm spending time with them, so I hear what they say. It's the same with the Lord. If you spend time with Him, you will hear what He says, but if you don't you won't. It's that simple.

I have a friend whose father was a truly Godly man. He was a farmer, and he would get into the Lord's Presence in the morning, and remain in prayer all day long, as he worked, to keep the Lord's Presence with him. If he cut himself, he would ignore it, because, if he took his attention off the Lord, and focused on his wound, His Presence would leave, and he didn't want that. But when he looked at the cut later, it would be gone, healed, because good things always happen in the Lord's Presence.

We can live our lives in the Presence of Life, the Lord; or death, which is this world. It's been under a curse of death since Eden. Whether our blessings come from Life, or death, depends on where our attention, and heart are. Whether they're on the Lord, or the world.

Psalm 37:4 tells us to, *'Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart.'* When you make the Lord the object of your delight and devotion, He won't take it away from you. And He won't let Martha, or a cut arm take it away from you, because, you are fulfilling His purpose for creation. You are doing what He yearned for, when He was alone, back in eternity. You are loving Him, *because* you choose to love Him. You are sitting in devotion at His feet, when you could be sleeping, or fishing, or doing something you enjoy. The Lord wants our hearts, He wants our love, He wants our devotion. He wants us to delight ourselves in Him, and desire nothing more in life than to be in His Presence, in intimate private prayer. Only then can we truly say, we love the Lord with *all* our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

The surest way of prayer, is not to ask for something, then walk away; but, to wait in prayer, 'until' the Lord lets you know your prayer is answered. If you needed to borrow ten dollars from a friend, you wouldn't ask them for it, then walk away without it. You would ask, then wait until they give it to you, and walk away, once you have it in your possession. That's the way to pray. Wait 'until,' not just 'accept it by faith.' Whether it's guidance, healing, or intercession; wait 'until' the Lord answers, then you know it's in your possession.

4.

Into His Presence

So, how do we get into the Lord's Presence? We don't get into it so much as, we *attract* It to us. In 2 Kings: 3, we read about Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, and the king of Edom, who travelled seven days through the desert with their armies, to ambush the Moabites, because they had rebelled against Jehoram. But there was no water on their journey, and they were going to perish. So they went to the Prophet Elisha, to ask a Word from the Lord. Elisha didn't have a Word for them, and he knew he couldn't just summon the Holy Spirit any time he wanted to. But his Ministry had been a learning curve, as all of our Ministries are, and he had learned that if he could just create the right *atmosphere*, it would *attract* the Presence of God, and his Anointing might come.

So, he called, *"Bring me a minstrel!"* And when the musician came, he asked, "Could you play That Old Rugged Cross real soft for me please Brother?" And, as the minstrel began to play on his harp, and sing, Elisha felt the Lord's Presence, he felt his Anointing

come, then he had Thus Saith the Lord, for the three kings, *“Dig this valley full of ditches.”* That's what Worship music is about, in Fellowship. It gets us all singing in *unison*, and that *unity* among us, creates the atmosphere that *attracts* the Holy Spirit to the Fellowship.

When the Lord Jesus ascended, there were five hundred people present, and he said go into Jerusalem, and wait there until you receive power from on high, then you'll be witnesses unto Me. So, they went to the upper room, and prayed, and waited. After ten days, there were only one hundred and twenty left. All the half-hearted had gone off, to somewhere that interested them more. And the Bible declares, *‘When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a mighty rushing wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost...’* (Acts 2:1-4). They were all in *one* place, of *one* accord. There was unity among them. They were of one heart, and that attracted the Lord's Presence to them, and He filled *all* the building, and He filled *each* one of them with His Spirit.

5.

Waiting on the Lord

Before the Lord does anything, there is always a time of preparation. And ‘waiting on the Lord,’ is a time of preparation, before He comes. That's what our Ministries are about. They aren't about us doing something for the Lord. They're about us preparing the way for the Lord to step in, and work through us. Remember, *‘For it is God which worketh in you, both to will, and to do of His good pleasure.’* (Philippians 2:13). If you want to plant tomatoes, you don't plant them on your lawn. You prepare it first. You weed it, fertilize it, and break the soil down, so the seeds will have the perfect place to grow, then you plant them. Preparation is important.

There were 400 years between Malachi and Matthew, when Heaven was silent. No visions, or prophecies, and no-one on earth heard from the Lord in any way. Why was that? It was because Calvary was His next step, and He had already done everything *He* had to do, so, now, he was waiting on *us*. He waited patiently for those 400 years, while the Greek language was spread from lip to ear, one person at a time, right across the known world, so there was a common language for the Gospel to be spread *in*. And He waited patiently, while the Romans built their network of roads, one rock at a time, right across Europe, so there was a highway, for the Gospel to travel *on*. When that was

done, and we had finished our part of the preparation, then the Lord called John the Baptist to his Ministry, to '*prepare the way before Him.*' (Matthew 3:3). Then, when mankind had finished their part of the preparation, and the Lord had finished His, John could make the announcement, "*Behold, the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world.*" (John 1:29). But it took preparation, before that could happen.

It's the same with us today. There's always something for us to do, and the Lord waits patiently, while that preparation takes place. Our time of 'Waiting on the Lord,' is about us preparing the way, by creating the atmosphere that He can step into, and work through. When the Lord asked me to pray for Gordon and Kettering for five days, that time was the preparation for what He was about to do there. Anytime we can't see the Lord moving around us, it's because He is waiting, for us to '*Prepare the way before Him.*'

That's what intimate prayer is about. It *attracts* the Lord's Presence. When two of His Disciples were on their way to Emmaus, after His crucifixion, they were talking together about Him, and He drew near, and began to walk and talk with them. (Luke 24:13-31). When we mention His Name, it attracts Him. Prayerful singing, with devotion, and worship, attracts Him. So, when you pray, you should Praise Him, Worship Him, repeat His Name softly, and softly sing meaningful Worship songs, such as, 'You are the King of Glory,' until you create the atmosphere that attracts Him.

It's called, 'Waiting on the Lord,' for a reason, because it involves patiently *waiting*. If He isn't here yet, it isn't because He doesn't want to come, it's because the atmosphere isn't quite right, or we aren't ready to receive Him yet. Then, when you feel His Presence with you, have your time of speaking, however long that takes. And, after that, wait on Him to answer you. How long do you wait? You wait, until.....Just wait. As you wait, you quieten your thoughts. If you have a song going over in your head, quiet it, until you can just hear it, and the Lord can speak over it. Remember, it's a still *small* Voice. One thing you never do, is make your mind go blank. Eastern religions teach that, and it opens you up for demonic influence, and even possession. Always stay in control of yourself.

I had a friend, who Pastored a Church at Beaumont, Texas, and he decided to have a prayer vigil at the Church. So, they had someone praying in the Church, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. This went on for some time, then in the middle of one night, the Sister who was in prayer phoned him. She was terrified, and said, "Brother Green, you have to come down here, there's someone walking around in the building." So, he went to the Church, and when he opened the door, the Presence of God poured out. It was so strong, that it knocked him down the steps. He went inside, and the whole Church was full of the Lord's Presence.

Why is it such a rare event, to have the Presence of God in our lives, in our Churches, in our homes, like that? Is it because, we don't take the time to create the atmosphere that He can *dwell* in? We spend all day ignoring Him, while we work, or shop, and just

before we get into bed, we sleepily announce, “Here I am, Lord,” as if we’re the great I Am, and we expect Him to come running to us. He loves us, but He doesn’t worship us. He wants us to spend time with Him alone, and not just for five minutes, telling Him what we need.

What sort of a relationship would it be, if the only thing a husband ever heard from his wife was, “Can you buy some bread and butter today?” He would hear more from the checkout operator at the supermarket, than he does from his own wife. That’s not a relationship, but, that’s the sort of relationship many members of the Bride of Christ have with their Lord, and they think it’s enough. It isn’t enough. He wants our *hearts*, and our *devotion*. Because it’s all about love. Creation was about love. Calvary was about love.

I have a friend who would phone me and say, “Kevin, could you pray for this for me, please?” He had more confidence in my prayers, than his own. This went on for a long time. Then one night he phoned, and asked, “Can you pray for this please, it’s urgent?” I replied, “Yes, I can, but I’m not going to.” And I told him, “The Lord doesn’t want to hear your prayers coming out of my mouth, He wants to hear them from you,” and I advised, “You pray, and trust the Lord and He will do that for you.” He protested, “But, this is urgent.” I said “No, you pray, you trust Him, and He will do that for you.” He wasn’t pleased with that, but we said our goodbyes. The next morning, he phoned, and he was so happy. “Kevin, I prayed last night, and a miracle happened this morning!” Of course, it did, because he was doing it the Lord’s way.

The Lord created us individually, and He treats us as individuals. He wants to *speak* to each one of us personally. And He wants to *hear* from each one of us personally, and not just, Lord, this is urgent! He wants us to stop what we’re doing, put everything down, take the headphones off, give Him our undivided attention, and spend time alone with Him. We should never tire of telling Him, He’s more important to us than anything else in this world, or telling Him how much we love Him.

6.

What happens when we wait on the Lord?

Just when you choose to spend time with the Lord is up to you. I have personally found the best time to be between, 1 am, and sunrise, when I have the world to myself, and my mind is uncluttered by the events of the day, which fills it in the evening.

Morning can be a good time too, while my mind is still a 'blank slate,' waiting to be impressed upon. But, I find, the night time hard, because my head seems to be a jumble of the 'business of the day,' and to quieten my mind is nearly impossible. But for some people, that may be the only free time they ever get. Don't drink two strong coffees, eat a huge meal, or a lot of salty food beforehand. You have to be able to wait quietly, and that's hard when your heart is beating like a drum.

From experience, I've found, the Lord speaks, or gives me a vision. What He says is concise, and to the point. I've heard others say, "I said," and "He said," then "I said," "then He said." I've never had that experience, nor has anyone I've met, but the Lord is Sovereign and He can do as He pleases. How do we know it's Him? If He says something will happen, it will, if it's Him, and everything He says will be Scriptural. He can do things that *aren't* written in the Bible, but, He will never do anything *contrary* to the Bible. And the Lord isn't like us, He doesn't make a noise, just for the sake of making a noise. If He doesn't have anything to say to you, He won't say anything, no matter how long you wait. Remember there were 400 years, when He didn't need to say anything to anyone on earth, so He didn't. But, when you're waiting on Him, His Presence will be there, with you, and that alone is worth the wait.

If you continually pray in the same place, it seems to be quicker, and easier, to get into a 'spirit of prayer.' When Moses met the Lord at the burning Bush, he was told to, '*put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.*' (Exodus 3:5). What made it holy ground? The Presence of God. When we spend a lot of time in prayer in one place, it becomes '*holy ground,*' because the Presence of God has been there. And it becomes easier to *attract* the Presence of God. So, if at all possible, have a place of prayer, a trysting place, with the Lord, where you always meet Him.

Humility is a precious trait in the Lord's sight, because, '*God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.*' (James 4:6). King Ahab was an evil King of Israel, and when the Lord told him his time was up, he '*rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and walked softly.*' And the humility of this evil man reached into the Presence of God, and the Lord let him live. Being on our knees before the Lord, is a sign of respect, and humility, but, lying prostrate before Him, with our faces to the ground, from where we came, shows even greater humility before Him. Always come before Him in humility.

When Moses saw the 'burning bush', and went closer to it, the Lord said, '*Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.*' (Exodus 3:5). Removing his shoes was a sign of humility, because it takes humility to get closer to the Lord, and without humility we will never step onto holy ground.

Guy Bevington, was one of the greatest of the Pentecostals from the early 20th century. Read his biography, *Modern Miracles Through Prayer and Faith*. Guy would

crawl into a hollow log in the forest, to fast and wait on the Lord. He would be in there for days, or even weeks, until the Lord answered him.

If the Lord was on foot among those who call themselves 'Christians' today, He would chastise most of them sternly, with the rebuke, "*What, could ye not watch with Me one hour?*" (Matthew 26:40). Christians can happily be entertained by hours of so-called 'Christian' television, but to spend an hour with the One they claim to love with all their hearts? The real problem is, they are Martha's, wanting to carry on with life as usual, without the Lord, but expecting Him to bless it, when He calls us to be Mary's.

Early one morning, I was waiting on Him, when He said, "The fifth day of prayer, Gordon Kettering." Of course, I imagined it was a book about prayer, that the Lord wanted me to read, to make my prayer life more successful for Him, so I wrote it down immediately. I imagined this brother Gordon Kettering had found out some certain thing happens after five days of prayer, so it piqued my interest. There was no information about this book on the internet, but there were two towns in Tasmania, named Gordon, and Kettering, and the Lord let me know that's what He had mentioned to me. He was going to do something in Gordon and Kettering, but, He was going to do it in response to five days of prayer, which I did for Him.

On another occasion the room was pitch black as I waited on Him, and the room suddenly became as bright as daytime. The walls and ceiling were covered by the ugly faces of demons, hissing, and snarling at me. At the time I was facing opposition from religious groups, and the Lord spoke, warning me, "All hell is against you, but they won't prevail." Comforting Words, that reminded me of Paul's admonition, "*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*" (Ephesians 6:12). We have to remember that our fight is not with flesh and blood. It's with the unclean spirits that influence, or inhabit them. They are lost souls, who need the Saviour. We are in a war, between good and evil, light and darkness, and it's a fight to the death, because eternity is forever.

The Bible tells us, '*The Word of the Lord comes to the Prophets.*' So, does that make me a Prophet, because He speaks to me? No, because He doesn't tell me things to share with the whole world. It's His way of leading me personally, which He wants to do with each one of us. He does speak to me, as I talk with Him during the day, but that quiet time of intimate communion with Him is much different.

At another time, the Lord showed me a vision of Maori culture. There were carved meeting houses, with many carved poles standing around them, of the type that are now placed along motorways, bridges, and at rest areas. Behind these artefacts, the land was growing dark. He explained to me how allowing these carvings to be spread across our country was bringing Spiritual darkness to our land. Because, the faces on the carvings, aren't just the figment of someone's imagination, they are the faces of the demons that inspired them. Please note that it was only the carvings He showed

me in the vision, because they were inspired by evil spirits, and often inhabited by them. This is in no way a judgement on Maori people, or anything else in Maori culture.

When we ban anything to do with our Maker from public buildings, and schools, but welcome demonically inspired figures, and even propagate them with Local, and Central Government financial aid, and encouragement, it shows how far from our Maker our country has strayed. The great Missionaries of the 18th century, came voluntarily to this land, cloaked in Spiritual darkness, that had never known its Maker, to share the love of Jesus Christ, and show its people the way out of darkness, and into Light, and the Presence of God. But, we're turning away from that Light today.

Isaiah 5:20 warns us, *'Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness.'* We live in the midst of a Spiritually starved generation, that doesn't know it's Maker, yet feels brave enough to revile Him. We ban Him from His place as our God, yet we welcome things inspired by demons, and we wonder *why* He doesn't bless our land?

7.

Why don't we pray?

The question is never, 'Why can't we pray?' Because, if you have ever been in love, you can pray. Prayer is passion. And, Intimate Prayer is the expression of our love for another, pouring out of our souls. We have all experienced the joy of love, to some extent, so, we are all able to pray. That is not the problem. The problem is, 'Why *don't* we pray?' The first query that comes to mind is, 'Do we really love the Lord?' Think about our young couple, they were so in love, that they thought about each other all day long, and they talked to each other all night long. Their love consumed all their time, and all their devotion.

Are we so in love with the Lord, that we want to spend all day, every day, in His Presence? Or is our time and devotion consumed by selfish desires? As the Lord said, *"Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."* (Matthew 6:21). Our life can be self-centred, or Christ-centred, depending on which fills our heart. The Lord said, *"My sheep hear My Voice, and I know them, and they follow me."* (John 10:27). Do we indeed hear His Voice, and follow Him? Or is His Voice so muffled behind the television, and the radio, and the *'pleasures of this life,'* (Luke 8:14), that we can't discern it?

The Bible states, *'As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons (or daughters) of God.'* (Romans 8:14). We can be led by Him merely prompting us at times, but, as being a husband and wife involves more than just sharing a house, so, being in a loving relationship with the Lord, also involves intimate communication, so we can

be led personally by Him.

I've heard all the excuses under the sun, and some, about why Christians don't pray. The most common one is, they don't have time. Really? So what will you say to the Lord when you meet Him face to face? "Um...I was so busy all my life, that I didn't have time to talk to You. Sorry." It's true that none of us have all the time in the world. We have lives. We have others depending on us. But, there is a level playing field, because every person in this world has twenty-four hours in every day, and we can choose to live them as Mary's, or Martha's. Albert worked all day, so he talked to Rhoda all night. He *made* time for her.

People tell me they fall asleep while praying. So, don't leave it until just before you go to bed. And don't kneel or sit while you pray. Have a prayer walk. Either in a room, or outside, and walk around and around it, as you pray. We are told that '*Enoch walked with God.*' What does that mean? It means where God went, Enoch went, just like Adam. A prayer walk is a place to walk and talk with God. We are also told, '*As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*' They walk with God. One Pastor had a prayer-walk in his back yard, and, by the time he died, he had worn a trench in his yard that was above his knees.

Some people say they don't have anywhere to pray. At one place where I lived, there was a beach with big boulders at one end. There was one boulder there which I named Ebenezer, (meaning, 'the stone of help'), because of an experience I had there. I would go there, and cast a fishing line out, without any bait on, and pray for hours. Anyone who saw me would think I was fishing. We want the Lord to give us the desires of our heart, but, the Bible says, '*Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart.*' (Psalm 37:4). We must delight ourselves in Him first. He must be our joy, and desire.

If the only time you have alone is while you drive to work, or to the shops, then pray while you're driving. When I'm driving alone, I pray for the people in other cars, or, if there aren't any other cars, I pray for the people in the houses I pass. When you're travelling, don't just look at the scenery. There are at least seven billion people on this earth whose existence is going to end in the Lake of Fire, unless we share the Gospel with them. So, pray for those you see along your way. If you're in a cafe alone, pray for the other customers. If you're standing at your kitchen window, don't just look out and idly daydream the time away. Pray for your neighbours in the houses you can see, or people passing by. Redeem the time. Redeem your life, and make the most of every day. Remember, John Wesley said, "God does nothing, *except* in answer to prayer", so pray without ceasing, and give Him something to *bless*.

I have people telling me that reading the Bible, or listening to a sermon, is their time alone with the Lord. If Mary had been sitting, reading the Bible, would that have been the same as sitting at Jesus' feet, listening to Him? No! We aren't JW's. We want to *know* Him, not know *about* Him.

Every one of us must have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus. There is no mediator between Him and you. He wants you to take the time to speak to Him directly; then wait on Him, and hear from Him directly. He won't tell me what He wants you to hear, and He doesn't want me to tell Him what you want to say. The curtain enclosing the Holy of Holies was torn open by Him, after Calvary, so go in there into His Presence yourself, and meet with Him.

Our world needs prayer. Our country needs prayer. Prayer is the most important duty of the Christian. So, to pray, is an ultimatum for us. When the Lord was speaking of His return, in Mark 13:35, He mentioned the four 'watches' of the night, between 6pm, and 6am, each of 3 hours; '...even(ing), midnight, cockcrowing, morning.' During these 'watches,' the sentries were vigilant, watching for the enemy, to protect their homes, towns, and land. But our enemy has slipped into our land, polluting it with casinos, sporting arenas, clubs, bars, dancehalls, ethnic paganism, spiritualism, new age teachings, and cults of every description, while we stand idly watching, with barely a word spoken against them.

Christians spend their evenings, tucked up with a packet of biscuits, and a coffee, being entertained by so-called, 'Christian' television, if not worldly television. Others will listen to sermon after sermon, or non-stop 'Christian' music, and though better, it is still mere entertainment. Are we Martha's, or Mary's? Do we want to hear *about* Him, or spend our time *with* Him? We need to stop spending our lives being entertained, and 'go on watch.'

Each one of us has the responsibility, and sacred duty, to claim one of the watches as our own, and stand watch diligently in prayer. Worship and pray, bring the Presence of God into your home, and stand together with the Lord, and your Brothers and Sisters in Christ, against the things the Lord stands against. Pray against these strongholds, where Satan has a foothold in our communities, and our country. The people involved in these things are often Spiritually hungry people, who have not found the 'Bread of Life,' so Satan has given them these garbage cans to eat from. They need our prayers and help. This world is not our home, but the Lord still sets His Mark on those who sigh and cry for the abominations done in the city.

Do you have to pray through the whole 3-hour watch? No, but one hour should always be the minimum. All the greatest Christians of history, were men and women of much prayer. They never became men and women of prayer because they were great. They became great because they were men and women of prayer. Many Christians, past and present, prayed for up to 10 hours a day, every day. People ask incredulously, "How did they get anything done?" Ten hours spent with the Lord, followed by one hour in the 'field,' will accomplish much more than, one hour with the Lord, and 10 hours in the field. Young Albert spoke with Rhoda for up to 10 hours every night; so, why can't a 'Christian' speak with their 'Loved One' for 10 hours a night? Without much prayer, and time with the Lord, we go unarmed to the 'battle,' and unfit for the Master's Service.

The one thing we will all regret, when we step into Eternity, is the amount of time we wasted on worldly pursuits, and the little of the time the Lord gave us on this earth, that we actually gave back to Him, in His Service.

8.

Your Prayer Duty

There is one part of Prayer that isn't a conversation, and that's a Prayer List. A Prayer List is a sacred duty every Christian has, to faithfully pray for *every* day. That list should contain the names of every member of your family, including, grandparents, parents, brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts, cousins, nieces and nephews, children and grandchildren. Your friends, your co-workers, your neighbours, and acquaintances, should be on it, and those around the world who you have a desire to support.

All the Ministries you know of should be there too, including, Pastors, Worship leaders, musicians, Sunday school teachers, Evangelists, Teachers, and Missionaries. Many Ministries fail, but they seldom fail because of a lack of effort or enthusiasm. They usually fail because of a lack of prayer. Prayer supports, and strengthens them.

In 1st Timothy 2:1-2, Saint Paul says, *"I exhort therefore that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."* We may not agree with the politics of our Politicians, but we should always pray for them, and pray that they may allow us to Worship the Lord freely, and unhindered.

In Numbers 24:9, Balaam prophesied of Israel, saying, *"Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee."* This is also echoed in Genesis 12:3, and Genesis 27:29. So, on your prayer list, ask the Lord to bless Israel, and you will also be blessed. In Psalms 122:6, David exhorted us to, *"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, they shall prosper that love thee."* So, pray that there will be peace in Jerusalem, for the Lord's people, Israel, and you will prosper. After a while your prayer list will just become a routine, but it's an important routine, so never give it up.

Another good thing to have, is a prayer journal. In it, write the date of the prayer, the prayer itself, and a space for when the prayer is answered. It's good to have a prayer journal, because as you look back through it, you will find prayers which you had forgotten about, which had been answered. This is good to do, because it allows you to do as the Scripture says, and, *"Give the Lord the glory due unto His Name,"* for the answered prayers.

9.

Fasting

The Lord didn't say, "If you fast," He said, "When you fast," (Matthew 6:16), so He obviously expected us to fast. And in Matthew 17:21, He linked prayer and fasting together, as making prayer more effective. A friend once told me that fasting twists the Lord's arm, and gets Him to do things He wouldn't otherwise do. That isn't true. Fasting doesn't affect the Lord so much, as it puts us in a better place to contact Him, because, it takes our heart off our fleshy desires, and centres it on the Lord.

10.

What about our Churches?

The Lord Jesus said, "It is written, My House shall be called a house of prayer." But, how much real prayer is heard in our Churches? World-shaking, life-altering prayer? Very little. In too many Churches, their part of the Body of Christ has been dead for years, and they don't want Him resuscitated, because they're happy with the status quo. They have just enough 'religion' to salve their conscience. No call to, "Take up their cross and follow Him." No-one warning them, "Unless a man is born again, he will not..." Nothing that makes them uncomfortable in their pews, just the usual, "I thank you Lord I'm not like other men..." They prefer to keep Jesus on the Cross, or in the tomb, or in heaven. Anywhere, as long as He's at arm's length, where He can't interfere with anything, because their Churches are organised, and run as though 'God' doesn't exist.

The 'unchurched' look in through their doors, and know, "They haven't got anything I haven't got," so off they go searching among Eastern religions, Spiritualism, and Cults, ever searching for something real. A living God. They want hope. It was wisely put by one brother, when he quipped, "The Church is the only business in the world, that can be out of business, and yet be in business."

We need new wineskins, to hold the new wine. We need to stop playing 'Church' and welcome the living Jesus Christ into our buildings. It begins with welcoming Him into our lives. 'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?' (1 Corinthians 3:16). He needs to come in and cleanse the temple again. Out with man-made religious games. Out with the world. And in with Jesus Christ.

In 1727, after the Holy Spirit moved during a communion service, in the Moravian Church, in Czechoslovakia, they began a 24-hour prayer vigil, 365 days a year, that lasted unbroken for 125 years. From there they fanned out to take the Gospel to the world, and the Lord went with them, and blessed them everywhere they went. We seem to believe our casual, haphazard methods will produce the same results. Remember, God does nothing, except in answer to prayer.

Every Church building should have someone in prayer in it 24/7, until He steps in, and then keep on in prayer 24/7, to keep Him there. When the Believers gather into the Church building with that atmosphere, we will have real solemn life-giving, and life-changing, prayer meetings. Not just the same people praying for the same things as last week, because last week's prayers weren't answered. Then we would have something real to offer this dying world. We need to be Annas, *'Which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.'* (Luke 2:37).

Prayer is the only way given for us to communicate with our Creator. Prayer changes things. Prayer from the heart. Prayer that makes it through the roof, and into the Presence of God. We can never pray too much. But we should never pray too little. We need to make His house a house of prayer, once again. In eternity, we will learn that our prayers achieved more, than all our other efforts, works, and Ministries combined. These sentiments were also echoed by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, when he stated 'More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.'

11.

Living your Prayer life

Your Prayer life is your intimate, personal, private time alone with your lover, Jesus Christ; because Christianity isn't a religion, it's a love relationship, made possible by the love of God. It's your lover's tryst, with the love of your life, and you fulfilling His desire in Creation, so it brings Him the greatest joy, even more than it brings you, and He will not let anything take that away from Him. It wasn't really about Mary after all, it was about Him. He wouldn't let her go to help Martha. He wanted her love, her devotion, her desire, and she gave it to Him, willingly. She chose to, because, she was in love, as He was in love.

How fulfilling it is, to love the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. To be so totally in love with Him, that it brings tears to your eyes, just to think of Him, and more so, when you know you've failed Him, or

offended Him. Just to be alive, and be able to be with Him, is the greatest opportunity anyone on this earth is ever offered. To spend time with the great I Am, the Creator of all things, personally. Are we really so busy?

In the Book of Ezekiel, before Jerusalem was destroyed, an Angel was sent through the city, to *'mark'* those who *'sighed and cried'* for the abominations done in it, so they wouldn't be destroyed with everyone else. If the fate of the unsaved around us doesn't bring us to tears before the Throne of God, we won't be *'marked'* by the Angel, when the destruction comes. *'God so loved the world,'* the lost unsaved world, enough to personally die for it. If that same God lives in us, we will love the unsaved world so much, that we will sigh and cry in agony for it. An uncaring, carnal life, doesn't amount to anything in the sight of God. As the Lord said, *"Many are called, but few are chosen."*

During the revival in Nagaland, in northern India, in 1959, an Angel appeared to Pastor Kegwahi Kent, and warned him, "All Preachers should live according to the message they preached; their lives should not be inconsistent with their words. Singers should live according to the message of their songs. And anyone who prayed, should live according to their prayers." So, our prayers should not just be idle chatter.

If our young friends, Albert and Rhoda aren't saved, their love, as momentous as it is, will end with their deaths, never to be remembered again. But, to be in a loving relationship with Jesus Christ, will last forever, and forever, and forever, and it will never cease, as long as there is an eternity. It begins with meeting Him personally, and it grows, as any relationship does, as we spend time with Him personally. And, the more time we spend with Him, the greater it grows, and matures, until, *'neither death, nor life, nor Angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'* (Romans 8:38-39). Amen.

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Ed.D.