

Prayer as Ministry

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[0:00] And now we have the privilege of having Kirk, one of the elders at City of Grace Church here, to bring the next part of our prayer series. Kirk, it's all you. Awesome. Good morning and welcome back. It is good to be back, isn't it? We survived Snowmageddon and we're here and we're alive and doing it.

If you're new to City Grace or you're a visitor this morning, usually we teach through passages of scripture and go, you know, verse by verse or chapter by chapter. But in the last few weeks, we've been doing a topical study on prayer. And so that's where we're at.

And today we're talking about prayer as ministry. Now that's a ginormous topic. That's a huge subject. And I feel like I'm only going to be like scratching the surface of what does it mean to do prayer as ministry?

But my hope is to give you some helpful principles that I've learned and learned from others throughout my life. And then some examples from, again, my life and others on how do we do this prayer as ministry.

And first I'm going to zoom out and look at kind of the big kingdom of God principles. Like what does this mean for the whole kingdom of God and in praying and ministry and then kind of zoom in to at least experience in life.

[1:11] Some of my life testimony and how God has impacted me by the prayers of others and then through how he's taught me to pray. And loosely to define prayer as ministry, we're just talking about praying for others or ourself.

You know, praying for our family, our communities, the world, for God's kingdom to come. And there are a lot of different types of prayers. We pray for confession. We pray with others for that. We pray for healing. We ask for help and wisdom and discernment.

There's so much we can talk about in praying as ministry. But where I believe we need to start, and this is, I think, very important for us from the very get-go, is to recognize spiritual authority.

Okay, so here's my first point. It's recognize spiritual authority. And here's what I mean from that. From the very start of Genesis, we see that God has authority. He creates the entire universe, the world, just using his words, right?

God just says, be light. The earth, the trees, the stars, you know, the heavens, everything. He just says it and appears. And then God creates humans, Adam and Eve, and he puts them on this earth.

[2:15] And they're image bearers, right? He says, you're like me. If you look at what he asked them to do, he's like, you're doing what I'm doing. You're going to be co-creators with me. You're going to attend and keep this and subdue this and multiply.

And so we're ambassadors. We're doing what the Father is doing here on earth. And then even after the fall, we see God's redeeming process continue, right? He chooses this man called Abraham, and then he makes a nation out of them.

And I love what happens when God brings them out of slavery, and they're walking through the wilderness. We see God doing these miraculous things, again, showing, again, his authority over his people, over the earth.

He guides them by day in this cloud, and then at night, this pillar of light. Remember that light. And then he provides food for them. They're hungry. He gives them bread.

He gives them manna from heaven. And then water from auspicious places like rocks, because they're thirsty, and they're complaining, and they're tired. And so he gives them water. He keeps them alive. All right, now fast forward with me to the New Testament.

[3 : 13] And Jesus comes, the Son of God, the Messiah, Emmanuel, God with us. And what do we hear Jesus say? What does he say about himself? He says, I am the light of the world.

I am the bread of life. I am that living water. In other words, like, I am God. I'm with the Father. I'm here doing what the Father's doing. I'm ushering in the kingdom of God that's already been happening.

And now you're going to see it right here, right now with me. And so I and the Father are ushering in this kingdom right here on earth. In Luke 4, when Jesus gives one of his first sermons in his hometown, he says this about who he is and what he's about.

It says, In other words, it's on.

This is who I am. This is why I've come. And then Jesus, he proves his authority, right? He proves his authority over nature and creation by speaking to storms, and they're stilled. He proves his authority over diseases and sickness.

[5 : 02] Like, he touches people who are blind and they see. People who have diseases and they're cured. He tells people who are lame to get up and walk. And then he proves his authority over all spiritual powers.

People who are demon-possessed, they bring them to Jesus. And even before they get to him, the demons are crying out, like, We know who you are. Like, leave us alone, right? And he rebukes them and they flee. Jesus has authority over everything.

Okay, now listen, okay, here's where it gets exciting for us. And this is from John. And I'm skipping around a little bit. We're from the book of John. Here's Jesus' words recorded. John 5 says this.

Jesus gives them this answer. He says, Okay, do you see it?

What the father's doing, he says, I'm doing. John 14. Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing. And they will do even greater things than these.

[6 : 02] Blows my mind. Because I'm going to the father. John 14, 20. On that day, you will realize that I am in the father. And you are in me. And I am in you.

This is exciting for us. Here's why. Okay, prayer as ministry to others. It's simply joining the work that God is already doing in his kingdom. Right here in this world, in our communities, in our families, in our workplaces, in our lives.

When I stop to pray, when you stop to pray, you are joining this active living relationship with Father God. With Jesus. With the Holy Spirit. In the redemptive mission that God has already been doing since before time.

Okay, you're joining in this ministry of God, Father, Son, Holy Spirit. It's already going on. And throughout the very beginning of scripture, like we see that God chooses us. He invites us in.

He loves to have us work with him and be a part of his plan. When I was a kid, I was impressed with my dad. I just, you know, I don't know if it's everybody, but we look up to our dads.

[7 : 03] And I was impressed with two specific things that my dad could do. One was he could tie a tie. I'd be eating my breakfast, my cereal in the morning, you know, getting ready for school. And he'd come out and he'd have this tie.

And he'd be doing his thing. And it was like magic just watching him. You know, it was like, boom, there's a tie. And he didn't even look in the mirror. I don't know. As a kid, I was just like, that's amazing. Wow.

How's he do it? It was like this magic show every morning. And the other thing that he could do that I was very impressed with was he could drive a car. You know, I'd jump in the back seat. We had this station wagon.

For those of you who are kind of young and don't know what that is, it's like a very uncool SUV. Okay. It's just like, whatever. And we'd cram in the back seat and there's a hump in the middle, whatever. And he would do this magic stuff. He'd have a key and all of a sudden this machine would start and he'd be driving it.

And it was like, wow, he's controlling this whole machine. This is incredible. I was just very impressed. First, my family used to go on family vacations and we drove, okay, and we camped.

[8 : 04] And so we'd often take these very long road trips and we often drove at night. I'm not exactly sure why, but we did. Through the night or whatever.

And my dad would drive and I don't know if I just wasn't a great sleeper, but this would happen on more than one occasion. I remember this. I had this specific memory this week. Of everyone, everyone in the car was sleeping.

Like my brother's in the back. There's like this compartment in the back for these things. I don't know, whatever. And then my sister would be sleeping somewhere. My mom's out, you know. And I'd just be watching. You know, it's dark. I'm watching the lines or whatever.

And my dad would, my dad would say, hey, why don't you come, why don't you come sit up front here? So I'd step on the hump and I'd jump over the middle and sit on this. Come sit on my lap. Okay. Now don't judge y'all. It's the 80s.

Okay. It was the wild west. It was the wild west. There's no seatbelt laws. Okay. I know these kids are watching like stranger things. And like, is that what it was like, mom and dad? I'm like, yes. It's all true. The 80s was true.

[9 : 00] It happened. Anyway, so I'd be sitting on my dad's lap. And at first he'd teach me how, I remember him teaching me how to do the brights. You know? And it's at night. Like we're going through the Midwest somewhere on some interstate. There are no turns. It's just straight forever.

And he's like, when you see another car, you see the headlights coming. Okay. When they start coming, then you flick this and the lights, the brights go down. Okay. So that's my job. I'd sit on his lap. And then I'd wait and wait. I said, no one comes in the middle of the night.

Like, oh, I see a car. Yeah. I'd flip it. You know? The lights go down. I'd go past. And then he'd take my hands. Like, you want to steer? I'm like, you? Yeah. Do I want to steer? Of course I want to. I'm like, and he'd put my hands up on the wheel.

Right? And he'd have his hands on my hands. And then he'd kind of slowly, like, you know, take them off a bit. And he's like, okay, now we've got to keep it between this line and this line. And I'd be driving. And then he'd kind of take his hands off and just let me steer.

Man, I was a seven-year-old driving a car with my father. It was amazing. Right? It's awesome. That story came to mind. And I wanted to share that with you.

[9 : 58] Because in this prayer ministry journey that we're about, I can't tell you how much is me sometimes.

How much is you? And how much is father? I can't explain how it works all the time. Okay? We could dive into theology for hours and hours. I can't always tell you how it works.

Here's what I know. Father's in control. He is sovereign. He's ultimately driving this thing. The goals, the roots, the agendas, the outcomes, the destinations, they're all his.

Ultimate realities into eternity, it's all his. What happens on this earth, every single detail, in the end, it's all his. But since we were created, God chooses us.

Again, he loves to invite us in. We work alongside him. And it's not passive. I mean, there may be times when you're just like, Jesus, take the wheel.

[10:59] I'm just, I'm out, whatever. And it's like, okay, that's fine. But there are also times when, man, you might feel like you're steering this thing. And there are times in Scripture when Father God, he says to you, like, if my people, if you'll come to me, like, if you'll come and pray to me.

And then we see these people like Moses and Phineas, Deborah, Esther, John the Baptist, all the prophets. There are times when they come on behalf of God before the people.

But there is, it says they stood in the gap. One person stands in the gap on behalf of humanity where there's a gap, whether it's evil or just negligence or whatever.

And that one person stands in the gap on behalf of, like, their God's representative doing what he's called them to do on earth. Man, they make a choice. It takes courage.

Sometimes it costs them. But it matters. Like, their part matters. Your part matters. When we pray, it matters. So remember this.

[11:59] Prayer is ministry. First of all, it's primarily, it's this relationship with Father, doing what Jesus did with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. And this relationship, this is the source of our spiritual authority, our ability to minister to others in prayer.

We're just doing what Father's doing, and we're doing it with him. So first of all, recognize your spiritual authority. You have that, and it comes from your relationship with God. That's where the purpose, the mission, the life comes in our ministry and our prayer for others, for this world.

Secondly, cultivate a praying life. And I realize they use, like, on a farming term. I was like, cultivate. Students, if you don't know what that is, it's a good SAT word. Look it up. But cultivate a praying life, right? And Jesse and Elliot have already been talking about this.

I'm not going to rehash the whole thing, but we are so used to, in this, in our culture, like, saying our prayers. Right? You see it in movies, like, little kids get down with their bed, and they fold their hands. Like, we say our prayers.

And before meals, we say grace. And that's great. Don't get me wrong. I love that. That needs to be a part of our routines, and these are important. But that's not what I'm talking about with a praying life. I'm talking about this active, living, again, relationship with Father.

[13:08] Like, listening to God's Spirit. I don't have time to go through it all today, but I've referenced this before. But if you want an extremely rich passage of Scripture that will detail the theology of, like, what we're all about here.

What our mission is. How it works. Like, go read John, the Gospel of John, chapter 13 through 17. And Jesus has these words for his disciples. He's like, guys, I'm leaving. And they're like, where are you going?

Why can't we come with you? He's like, no, it's better that I leave and you stay because I'm actually going to be with you. And I'm sending the advocate and the counselor. And I'm going to remind you what to do. Like, we're going to keep doing this. I'm not going to be here.

And they're just completely confused. But then it's amazing. But he says, like, we're going to keep doing what we're doing. And I'm going to be with you. And I'm going to remind you. And the advocate, the counselor, the paraclete is going to encourage you and tell you what to do.

Paul's famous admonition, again, that's been mentioned the last few weeks, this pray without ceasing. It's this idea of we have this constant communication with God.

[14:08] Now, students, I work with students. So I love this because they take me back. And I remember what it's like to be young. And, like, students, you're good at this. You have your BFs. You know, like, your friends are always on your mind.

Like, when you wake up in the morning, you're probably not excited about calculus or whatever. Maybe your little science is pretty cool. But, like, you're thinking about your friends. Like, you can't wait to go to school to see your friends.

And then you get out of school and you go home. And those friendships, like, you're thinking about your best friends. Like, they're kind of always on your mind, even if you're not in constant communication. You're not in proximity with them.

Like, social media has made it really interesting. Like, some of you track your friends with Snapchat or whatever. Like, you know where they're at. It's like, oh, they're at a cookout. Oh, they're at a cookout. Whatever. It's like, you have this thing of, like, at any moment, a text could pop up.

Or, like, you can call. It's just like, and I remember that. Always being, like, aware. What are my best friends doing? Like, man, it's just, you're always conscious of that. That's kind of how it is with the Holy Spirit, with Father God.

[15:06] We have to cultivate this praying life. It means that we're always aware that God is ready to speak, to lead us. Jesus is going to remind me of his words. Like, God's Holy Spirit will nudge me for something he has for me, and maybe something he has for someone else.

There's a book called Practicing the Presence of God. There's a 17th century friar, this Catholic friar named Brother Lawrence. And maybe some of you have read it. It's a great little read. And there was this guy who just, he had this practice of what he called praying from the heart.

He always wanted to have an open mind, an open heart to the fact that God was present with him, whether he was in the garden or in church or in the community. And he would actually sometimes even annoy people, because he worked in the kitchen a lot, and he'd be doing this thing where he's making sandwiches, and, like, this is for the king, you know, whatever.

And they're like, why do you care so much? He's just making it. And he's like, no, this is for God. I mean, he just has this constant sense of God's presence, and that was a, his mission was to cultivate that and always be aware of God's presence. For us, we need to do that.

We need to somehow cultivate this understanding that God is always present. He's always desiring to lead us. And here's the question. Are we aware? Are we listening in our heart and our mind?

[16:17] I was in my garage a few months ago, and I was listening to some worship music, and I don't remember if, like, I was working out or just, like, you know, working on a project or something, but this song came on and on my Spotify playlist, and I was like, wow, it just, like, my friend Danny came to mind.

More than just, like, oh, this song reminds me of him because he plays the guitar, so I'm like, he doesn't. It wasn't anything like that. It was just, like, I hadn't been thinking about him. And the more I listened to the song, I was like, wow, this seems like, this is almost like a prayer for Danny.

Like, this fits what's going on in his life. And so I was like, I felt like I needed to send it to him, and I don't do that a lot. But I was like, okay, I'm just going to share it with him. Spotify.

Share it. Boom. There it is. Done. Okay. I keep going on with my thing. And this was not a new, it's not like a new song. It hadn't just come out or anything. And Danny texted back a little while later, and he's like, dude, my friend here at school just gave me that same song this morning.

I was like, wow. Like, that's kind of crazy. Something about that song that Danny needed to hear, God's spirit knew that, gave me a little nudge. And then God is so gracious sometimes to affirm that.

[17:23] Like, hey, someone else is on the same track there. There's something I'm doing here. I have a friend named Zach. He's one of my best friends, and he lives in Mauritius. And his family went back recently, just a few months ago, and they needed a house.

Because they had, their lease was up, and they had moved, and so they were home for a while. And he asked us to pray. And now, just let me pause for a second. This story, this is not like a flex or anything, because I forgot. Like, I forgot to pray.

Okay? That happens to me a lot. I'm very forgetful. It's my confession. It's out there. That song, that's recorded too, isn't it? Shoot. Anyway, so I forgot to pray for Zach.

Again, I'm in my garage one day. This is about, again, two months ago. And all of a sudden, I'm just like, I started, like, God put Zach on my mind. And it wasn't just like, oh, I remember that time we had Zach. It was like, oh, man, I got to pray for Zach.

Like, they need a house. Like, it was just this very strong sense of, like, just be praying for Zach. And so I started praying for Zach. You know, God, help him find a house. And that was kind of, Jesse talked about contemplative prayer, but just kind of listening and thinking.

[18:25] I was like, man, God, would you just, would you give Zach something that's just a surprise? Something that they don't even expect. You know, something that, you know, we have our strategies and it's like, but it's something that just doesn't even fit what they're looking for.

But it's good for them. And so I prayed that for Zach. Now, here, note to the story. They're in Mauritius on the other side of the world. So our daytime is their nighttime. Again, I just moved on with my life and thinking about it.

I woke up the next morning after that day and there was a text on my phone from Zach. And Zach, he just, he texted and he said, hey, I just wanted you to know I was thinking about you because I had a dream about you last night.

And he's like, you were hanging out with my family. And it was like Uncle Kirk was there with my kids. And it was just like, it was just this graceful time with your friendship and we're hanging out. And then he finishes his text with like a little jokey kind of like emoji.

And he's like, hey, someone must be praying for me. And I was like, oh, my gosh. Like, wow. And like, again, God just, he likes to tell us things. He likes to invite us in on this.

[19:23] And so I wrote Zach back. I was like, man, that's crazy. I was like, actually, I was praying for you. And I told him what I was praying for. Like, I'm really praying that you guys find something. But it's a surprise. It's not something you expect. I'd love to tell you Zach found a house like that day.

That'd be amazing. Like, wow, praise Jesus. But he didn't. They went on a few more weeks, maybe another month, of looking and Airbnbs and staying with people. But then Zach wrote me back.

We actually called. We got to talk. And he goes, Kirk, like, this is amazing. Like, we did finally found a house. He goes, but it was in this neighborhood that we weren't really even looking at. And even if you were, you wouldn't go, this is a weird looking house.

Like, we would have passed it and not thought twice. He goes, but this realtor lady was like, hey, let's go check this out. I think it might, you know, whatever. He said, it's kind of odd because there's different, like, levels. And it's been added on to multiple times.

There's, like, five dining room tables. He goes, one is, like, the craft table. One we actually eat at. One is, like, whatever. One is school table. He goes, but, Kirk, this is an amazing house.

[20 : 20] He said, there's a roof. And he goes, when you go up on the roof, like, there's this kind of porch area up there. And he goes, we were totally surprised because you go up there and you can see the ocean. And he goes, and you go out the back gate and you're like, it goes onto the ocean.

He's like, Kirk, people like us, we don't, we can't afford homes like this. Like, no one in Mauritius can see the ocean unless you have a lot of money. He goes, this was such a graceful surprise for our family.

And we weren't even looking for it. I'm like, geez, wow. Right? I didn't know that, but God knew that. And God does this. He reminds, he invites us in when we cultivate that praying life.

We're just, we're just ready. And guys, I'm not great at this. I'm like, it's hanging out in my garage, right? Like, it just happens. Like, God, when you start listening and waiting, God gives us things.

Again, I can't always explain it. But Father's working. He loves to invite us in to work alongside him. And Jesus, through the Spirit, he prompts us to pray for others. We need to create space for this.

[21 : 20] But also, just always be mindful that God's presence, he's everywhere. Everywhere you go, he's with you. All right, number three. And this is very important. As we pray for others, as we minister to others through prayer, is to keep your heart right.

And, you know, in multiple places in the Scripture, especially I love this verse in Hosea 6, where God basically is saying, like, I don't need all your sacrifices. You know, this is in Psalm 50. I think it's like, I don't really need bulls and, like, birds.

Like, the blood of animals. Like, animals are all mine. But in Hosea 6, like, I don't need your sacrifice. I want your heart. I want your love. I desire mercy. And this word really is like loyalty, faithful love, goodness.

It's an incredible Hebrew word. But God wants our heart, our desires, our affections, our allegiance to him first. And then when we give and receive that love from him, we got to pour that out to others with a good heart.

In Jesus' ministry, he was constantly in struggle with the Pharisees. You ever notice that? Like, he doesn't argue with a lot of people, but, man, he's always arguing with these religious leaders, right? It is just, like, it's tense, too.

[22 : 28] I don't love conflict, but he goes at it. And the problem was, like, they knew the law. Like, they're teachers of the law. They know all the things, but they are very concerned with morality. They are overly concerned with behavior and how people act.

But Jesus is concerned with reality. Like, he actually makes an effort to get into constant contact with people who have poor morality, who are spiritually depraved and sick.

And what is his reaction to those people? Truth, with compassion and love. In our prayer ministry, it's easy to get caught up in trying, like the Pharisees, right, to change other people's behavior.

Sometimes our motivation is frustration and move into anger or even self-righteousness. Like, man, if they would, if those people would only act more like me and Jesus, you know?

Like, if they could just think and believe more like me and Jesus think, right? This world would just work so much better. Years ago, I was working at a school. And I started to feel some pushback from my administrators and my leaders.

[23:36] And this is a Christian school, so it was kind of odd to me. But as the school chaplain, I would, I was really looking to create more opportunities for students to grow in their spiritual walk.

Which to me seemed like a good thing. And looking back, everything I was trying to do was good. Like, it was good. But it was just constantly met by this opposition. And it was weird. It was like things I try to do, like maybe if I start this class or we start this group or club.

And people are like, well, that would take time. Or that would really take some of the best students out of some of our other opportunities. Like, some scholastic things. Or we need more athletics, really. I'm like, what is happening here?

It was really weird. And at first, it just started with confusion. And then it moved into a little bit of like frustration. Be careful with that one. And then that turned into a little bit of like anger and resentment.

And then it turned into offense. Like, I felt offended. And I literally found myself like praying for my leaders, but also praying against them. Do you know what I'm saying? Like, I'm praying for them, but I'm like, God, would you just change them?

[24:35] Would you just fix whatever's going on? And it was very easy for me in those moments, right, to see their character flaws. Like, you know, and there may have been some things that were wrong, but here's what God hit me with. I was in the jungle, like actually the jungle.

And I was praying and just kind of thinking. And God hit me with this word, and it's just very clear in my heart. And God said, I need to destroy your faith in yourself. I was like, dang. In other words, like, you're putting so much faith in your leaders.

You're putting them in a place that they're not supposed to be. Like, yeah, all these things are good or whatever. Like, this could happen. But you're looking to them for your affirmation. You're looking to your leaders for, like, your, like, sanity and peace and joy and all this stuff to happen.

And you're just for you as well. You're at your personal affirmation. I was like, whoa, yeah, I am. And then God hit me a few weeks and months later. God hit me with this idea of, like, who my enemies are.

God was like, your brother's not your enemy. The enemy is the enemy. I was like, snap. It's true. I was looking at my own brother in Christ and my sister in Christ and, like, starting to get offended.

[25:39] And, like, they're against me. And I turned them into my enemy. And there's only one enemy that we're really fighting. Months and years later on the same, God's still working on me in this.

I'm a very, I think about things a lot. And, like, I feel things a lot. Right? And working with people, we have these things that hit us. And God's been continuing this process in me. And a couple years ago, God hit me with another layer of this.

And I was offended at some stuff that was going on. And I had been kind of backstabbed by some whatever, things that were happening. And God hit me with this thing. He said, if you're offended with your brother or sister, like, you can't be part of healing your brother or sister.

In other words, if I'm so offended that now I put them at a distance, like, there's no way God can channel his love through me to, like, heal them, to be part of their healing, to see them raised back up and restored. Because I've created this distance, this wall.

We need to be careful to guard our hearts against being offended by others. Okay? Ultimately, that offense, like, it's really not against us. Now, don't get me wrong. There can be abuse and offense and all this.

[26 : 42] That's not really what I'm talking about. I'm saying, like, ultimately, that sin is against God. It's not against me. And God seems to be very patient with people who sin.

I don't know if you've noticed that. Praise him. Praise him. But where we need to start in our prayer, especially when we're praying for others, is that God will give us the ability to see in others what he sees in them. Like, we sang it this morning.

Like, let me see what you see in those people. Let me love them like you love them. My very first school was in Korea. And this is a Christian school that we were working at.

And I was young and kind of fresh off the boat. And I worked with this lady named Tanya. And Tanya was in charge of, like, the worship team. And so there was some proximity.

And we worked together on some things. And she was a very, very detailed person. A very structured person, okay? And I'm getting better at that in my life. I'm starting to get more organized.

[27 : 38] But that's not my default setting, okay? And as a young guy, I was just like, YOLO. Everything was like, send it. Whatever. You know, let's just do this. It was like, just a lot of adrenaline and charisma, I guess.

I don't know. Energy. I was, like, fueled by energy. I don't know. And so when I worked with her, it was hard. Because, like, I was constantly like, gosh, she's such a buzzkill. And she, like, asked me to do all these things. And I had to work kind of under her.

And so she's, like, always bossing me around. And I was, guys, I was immature, okay? Guys, I've grown up a little bit. I was, like, 23, okay? But it was just like, I started to resent this lady.

Like, man, it's just so hard working with her. Really, God was trying to teach me something. But, again, instead of praying against her, God started to, like, nudge my heart a little bit. Like, that's, this is a problem.

Like, if you're this resentful, like, something needs to change. And so I was, like, okay, God, I can't love this person. I don't feel any love for her. And let me just tell you something. If you don't have something in your life, it's okay to pray for her.

[28 : 33] Sometimes, like, okay, I'll just try harder. But, like, that's not really how it works. And so I just prayed, like, God, help me to love, help me to love Tanya. Like, I, I'm not seeing, I'm not feeling it, but it's got to be you.

But, like, I don't know if it was, like, the next day, a couple days later. But I can, I can tell you exactly where I was. We had this little Quonset hut thing that was our teacher's lounge, whatever.

And I remember opening that metal door and looking across the teacher's lounge. And there was Tanya making copies. And, like, something in me welled up. Like, God's spirit, like, there was a spark.

Like, I looked at her and felt an appreciation in my heart that was not, it was, like, zero. Like, empty tank. And all of a sudden, there was something there. Like, God, I felt a sense of love for her.

That was the first time in my life it happened, like, boom. And I'm not saying it always happens like that, but it was incredible. All of a sudden, I was, like, well, she's a good person. I have something to learn from her. Huh. She's not that bad. Maybe it's me.

[29 : 29] Like, and I'm telling you, God, easier to work with her. Because I started, like, God changed my heart. He gave me some love there. Here's what's funny. She used to tell me all the time. She's like, Kirk, you've missed your calling.

You're supposed to be a pastor. And I'm like, yeah, no thanks, Ty. That's not for me. Like, I'm a student life minister. I'm a chaplain. I'm a whatever. She's like, no, you've missed your calling. You're supposed to be a pastor. Crazy.

Wow. Hey, when we desire to minister to others in prayer, we have to guard against offense and keep the love of Jesus just, like, flowing through our hearts. We can't be offended with others.

Or when we are, we take that to Jesus. Let him deal with that. But we've got to keep praying with love. All right, last point here. When it comes to a ministry of prayer and how we pray for others, do what works for you.

2 Corinthians 3.17 says this, Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. Do you feel freedom in your prayer life, in your prayer ministry?

[30 : 31] Jesus makes this comment that, again, it's been brought up. Like, he says, my yoke is easy. My burden is light. Right? Come to me, all you who are weary. I'm gentle.

My yoke is easy. My burden is light. Man, I used to struggle with that. I'm like, God, this Christian life thing does not feel easy. Nothing light about this, Lord. But over the span of my Christian life, I'm starting to understand what he means.

The heavy burden comes. This is where I believe that the burden comes from when we start feeling like our righteousness is our own business. It's up to us. Like, I've got to cure myself. And I've got to do, especially when it gets into performance, like, I've got to do all these godly things, like prayer, to please God.

That's where the burden comes. I'm trying to please the creator of the universe. This was the attitude of the Pharisees, right? Jesus says to the Pharisees and the teachers, the religious people, he says, they actually tie up these heavy burdens.

They lay it on people's shoulders. They lay them on people's backs. That's where the burden comes from, trying to keep up like they were always trying to look good and do the right thing all the time and perform and behave.

[31 : 42] And Jesus says, I've already done that work. Like, the righteousness thing is already, that's finished. That's up to me. Like, you don't have to carry that anymore. I'm carrying that.

Okay, so here, grab this, church. We don't work for our identity. We work from our identity in Christ. Hear me again. Like, we're not working for that. You don't have to work for your identity, your goodness, your righteousness in Christ, all those things that he's done for us.

You don't have to work for that. But we're working from that, out of that place of grace and like, man, he's already done it. Father's already doing this. Wow. I have the freedom just to go for it.

There is such freedom in this. Knowing that my action, your action or inaction doesn't affect the work of Christ. Doesn't change the love of God.

His love is perfect, all right? We're not earning it. We don't diminish it. But we're offered this, this amazing opportunity in life. This, freely, this gift to join with him.

[32 : 40] So pray with freedom. Pray with joy. Do what works for you. And if at times it feels easy, good. That's okay. I had this friend named Chad in college. And, you know, us guys in college, we were always trying to press in.

And I think we didn't know what discipline was. But we were trying. You know, we heard about it. And so Chad was like, man, I want to pray more. I really want to be more about prayer. And it was funny. We would come in and like late at night or whatever.

You know, how does it go? You don't sleep. And often we'd go into Chad's room. And there would be Chad. It'd be like after midnight. And we had these, you know, single like dorm beds. Right? And he'd be on his knees, on his bed, just like passed out.

Just out cold. We're like. And part of me was like, wow, look at him. Really contending. Right? He's going for it. Right? It's like, no, dude. He was just sleeping. Like, I'll be honest. The best time to pray for Chad and all of us was not like after you did all your classes and then worked your night shift and then you get home late and blah, blah, blah.

It's like that probably wasn't the best time for Chad. Very difficult time. Chad needed to sleep. I struggled with devotional times in college. And again, I had this obligatory sense of like, man, I got to do my daily devotions.

[33 : 44] It was an obligation. It was a thing that I had to check off my box. And I met with my, I was an RA. And so I met with my resident director once every couple weeks or so. And his name was Jim.

And I remember explaining this to Jim. Like, Jim, I'm just, I'm really struggling. I can't seem to have my devotions. And he's like, well, how often are you having this time? You know? And I was like, well, I feel like I should do it every day.

And then I miss a day. And then I miss another day. And I'm like, I just kind of stopped because I just feel defeated. So I'm not really ever doing it. And he's like, okay. All right. So let's look at your schedule. And it looks like you have classes early Monday, Wednesday, Friday.

He's like, what about Tuesday and Thursday morning? Maybe you just put in like 10 or 15 minutes on Tuesdays and Thursdays. I was like, what? You can do that? Like you can only pray on Tuesdays and Thursdays? Like, is God okay?

I was like, it just blew my mind. It's the first time someone was like, just do it when you can. I was like, he's like, well, it's better than nothing. Right? Like, I was like, oh, good point. A lot of charisma, a lot of energy.

[34 : 40] Not always a lot of intelligence, but working on that. Right now, the best time for me, like I pray best in solitude. This is what works for me. I pray best in solitude. For me, that works best in my garage because it's the one place in my house no one else seems to want to be.

Like no one else is dying to get in there. I love my garage. No one else cares. It's great. So I go into my garage because I can just be alone with my thoughts. I also love being in nature. Again, this is what works for me.

I love to walk in the woods. I find a little path. I just, I have to be moving. And so if I can go do a little prayer walk through the woods and just, again, be listening to what God has for me, whatever he brings onto my heart and my mind.

That's me. We're all different. Some of you, like me, you're a naturalist. Like, you want to be outside. You've got to be in God's creation. Some of you are creatives. You love to pray while you're doing something. I've seen people who they love to paint and like their art somehow brings them closer to God and they're thinking about others and praying through their art and, or music.

Like you're kinesthetic. You have to do something while you're praying. That's okay. Do that. Some of you are words people. Like I have friends who like, they focus on one word a year. Like the whole, like this word from, I'm like, well, a whole year, one word?

[35 : 46] Like, but that's the word for the year God gives them. Or they're always journaling. Like people journal their prayers. They write it out. That's, that's great. Do that. Yeah. Some of you are exercisers. Again, like you're in there working out.

You got the hype worship music going. You're crying out to the Lord. Okay. That's your thing. Do it. You're highly relational people. Some of you, like you love to be with other people praying. Others like, oh, I just want to be by myself or maybe one other person.

And hear this. If you don't have a prayer partner, I want to encourage you, get a prayer partner. And it can just be one other person. And just like, man, we're going to go contend with the Lord once a week, once every two weeks, once a month.

It doesn't matter. But have a prayer partner who's like, encourage you in this ministry. We need each other for this. Some people love, love structure. Like prayers from scripture. They like to read out the Psalms.

That's perfect. Or liturgy. Some people like templates. You know, as a kid, there's this Acts. There's like a template. A-C-T-S. Like Acts. Like the book of Acts or something. It's like adoration.

[36 : 42] We start with that. And then confession. Thanksgiving. And then supplication. Which as a kid, I'm like, that sounds like supper. Is that when we go eat? What are we doing here? I don't know. It's like supplication.

Okay. Those are kind of big words. But hey, somehow it's stuck. And every now and then it's like, okay, what do I do? How do I start? If a template works for you, do that. Praying in the morning. Praying at night. Again, find your time to meet with God.

I had some friends in seminary. I went to seminary in the Philippines. And I had friends from Burma. And Southeast Asian people are kind of quiet in general. They're just kind of reserved. And they had had this experience.

They were telling me about it one day. This experience with these Korean missionaries. And there's like a little conference thing. And then the Korean missionaries, like they went out to this mountain. And they're like, it's time to pray. And they're like, okay, we're going to pray.

And they get in their little huddle. And it's like, they kind of pray quietly together. And the missionary's like, no, no, no, no. You got to pray out. We're going to pray out loud now. It's time to, it's time to, we're going to pray. And they're like, whoa, okay, what do we do? And they're like, hey, we're going to get on the mountain.

[37 : 41] We're going to put it out there. We're going to shout. And they're like, okay. These are Burmese. They're very quiet. They're like, okay. We're going to pray. And they're very quiet. And they're like, no, no, you got to shout. You know, in the Korean, like they're shouting on the mountains, right?

Or whatever. And it was funny watching these guys, like we didn't know how to shout. We didn't know what to do. Like whatever. If you're quiet, be quiet. That's okay. If you want to get on the mountains and shout, you do that.

And I've seen, I've seen it work. I've seen Koreans, man. I went, I lived in Korea. It's beautiful. See, they're passionate. Like they go for it. And everybody praying at once in church, you're like, whoa, what's happening right now? But that works. Okay. All right.

I hope you get the point. Ask God to lift off the weight of obligation. Okay. And to give you joy in your prayer ministry. Now, listen, it won't always, it's not always going to feel easy.

There are times when we need to just, we've got to contend. You're going to pray and pray and pray. And it is work. And you're going to have to persevere. That's okay. But ask Jesus to show you the way and to help carve out the space for this.

[38 : 41] Like, God, what is my, I don't even have space for this in my life. Like, show me how to do this. I need the space. I need the knowledge. And then enjoy the freedom of Christ. Christ to pray in a way that fits the way he's created you.

We're going to, we're going to wrap up. And as the band comes up, just want to offer you some, some things to do with this. If you, if you, if this is new to you, if this, you know, even this relationship with God, this idea that like, what, I'm somehow working with God, the creator, father, and Jesus, and this, on this, this earth, this mission, this purpose for me is like, is going on.

If that's new to you, if that whole idea is like, this is a new concept. I want to encourage you to pursue that. Ask questions. There's going to be a prayer on the screen that will lead you into that relationship.

And if, if that's, again, if that's something like, I don't know about this, but I want to, I'd like to just come ask. Believe it or not, we are going to be praying after the service. There's people up here who will pray with you. So, so come talk to someone.

Like, I want to know more about this. I want to pray that prayer. I want to, I want to have that purpose in my life. But then for the rest of us, if you are involved in this already, you want to grow in this.

[39 : 54] Like, you're like, I know God. I, I love Jesus. I want to know more about that. Man, that spirit, like, how's he going to speak to me? As you come to the table, as we take the elements, Jesus' body and blood, what he's done for us, confession's always good.

Okay, maybe there's something that you've heard this morning, like, yeah, I need to confess about that. I've been a little offended by my brother or sister. Or, you know, there's just something on your heart. That's good. Do that first. But I want you to stay there.

And I, and before you make a vow, or like, God, I'm going to start praying more. Okay, I want to do, like, please don't do that yet. And here's why. I just, I want you to receive.

I want you to receive prayer ministry this morning. Here's what I mean. Let me just read these verses to you. Romans 834 says this.

Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus, who died, more than that, who was raised to life, listen to this, is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

[41 : 02] Hebrews 725 says this. Therefore, he is able to save completely those who come to God through him because he always lives to intercede for them.

And then Romans 826. In the same way, the spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for. But the spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless grounds.

That's pretty cool. Whatever's on your heart, grab this this morning. God is praying for you. Jesus is at the right hand of the Father with you on his mind, going to the Father with what you need already, praying for you.

The spirit is with Jesus in the heavenly realms before the Father praying for you. So whatever's on your heart, just affirm that with him.

Release that to him and let him minister in prayer to you. Let's pray. Father, as we come and receive your grace, this is your grace to us, your body, your blood.

[42 : 09] God, your death on our behalf, the life you give. Forgive us. We all fall short. That's not a surprise to you, God. So we confess that to you in whatever way we need that healing this morning, Lord, that you heal us.

And then, Lord, for your church today, for each one of us, let us experience the reality that you are praying for us before we contend for anyone else or even lift up our own needs.

God, you already know. And on our behalf, God, you contend for us. You intercede for us, Jesus. Spirit, you already are with us, praying with us in mind.

Thank you. We receive that this morning. In your name, Jesus, amen.