CITYLIGHT CHURCH

SERMON NOTES & TRANSCRIPT

The 27-Minute Routine

How to Build a Daily Bible Reading and Prayer Routine

A daily time with the Lord is built, not stumbled into: 15 minutes in the Bible, 7 minutes in prayer and 5 minutes in worship, held together by simple triggers at the same time and in the same place.

PREACHED BY
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SERIES
Stand-alone message

MAIN TEXT
1 Corinthians 2:1-5

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youtu.be/4sDGXki_jJ4

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01

Sermon Transcript

Well, this morning I'm gonna do something that I've never done in a service. I have made videos to this effect over the years, but this morning what I wanna do is I wanna take you into my time with the Lord. We've been in a series on the Lord's Prayer as we prepare to go into 2027. We're talking through the Lord's Prayer, but also, we believe that 2027 is gonna be a year that there is a supernatural flow of power through this church attributed greatly to prayer. 2027 is gonna be the year that this church becomes a church of prayer, and we're basing that all in something that we call Power 27.

27 minutes that you spend with Jesus every single day. We've talked about this a lot. I'm gonna break it down again today, but I wanna walk you through what my morning time looks like with the Lord. As I was growing up in the faith, I got saved around the time I was 12 years old. So how many of you know that your kids' director and your youth director matter? It's a good time to go ahead and put your hands together and thank the Lord for 'em So at 12 years old, I became a Christian. I gave my life to the Lord, and almost as soon as I got saved, you'd hear people talk about you need to pray, you need to read the Bible but I'd never see anybody do it.

We'd have intercessory prayer meetings, but what I saw in intercessory prayer meetings, I couldn't translate that into my own personal time with the Lord. I couldn't-- Coming into the room with the lamp and the boom box playing and 50 people in the room, and everybody's walking around and kinda doing their own thing, it just I could never make that make sense. And then I would see people, I would see preachers with Bibles but I'd never see them in them. I figured they were doing something. Statistically, it turns out I shouldn't have had that assumption They say, and I'm not certain on this statistic, so I want you to know as I say it I'm not 100%, but they say that less than 2%, now this one I could validate, less than 2% of Christians in America are engaged in the Bible.

But they say that less than 5% of pastors in America are engaged in the Bible. I don't know if that's true, but if it is, I just want you to know that me and two other men in town read the Bible. Really. Go to a minister meeting, and I'm looking for the other guy. Amen. That, isn't that sad? But that's the state of the church that we're in. So I just never saw it. So over the years, as I've developed these systems for myself, I've just thought, "Man, let me open up the curtain and show people what this is." There's a principle here, because I'm not gonna take you into... I've struggled with this for years.

I've thought about live streaming my morning time, and I've never felt comfortable with it. But there's a principle that I'm following. It's found in Luke chapter 22. This is how Jesus prayed with his disciples.

> **LUKE 22:41** ESV
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> 41 And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed,

Luke chapter 22 verse 41 says, "And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw away, and he knelt down and prayed." He withdrew about a stone's throw away. And the principle there that I've tried to follow is that you can watch this where you can perceive enough of what the experience is like, but I can still protect what I'm praying for. See, everybody's business that I pray for, I don't always pray things people want me praying for them See, because I'm a

child of the living God, I have right to go to the secret place and conspire against any person with the Lord that I so desire to do so.

If you're doing something I don't think you ought to be doing, I can go in there and talk to the Lord and see if we can just turn that thing around. So I don't publish everything that I pray for. I don't show every- everything that I pray for. but this morning I wanna, this is what I'm trying to do. I really wanna show this to you.

> **1 CORINTHIANS 2:1-5** ESV
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> [1] And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. [2] For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. [3] And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, [4] and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, [5] so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

Second or 1 Corinthians chapter 2, Paul says this of his ministry when he's preaching in Corinth. He says, "And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom."

He says, "I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest on the wisdom of man, but on the power of God." I started to think this week about that phrase, the demonstration of power. I actually heard someone say it on a podcast, and it got me agitated. You need to get agitated in the Spirit once in a blue moon. Amen.

And so I got agitated, and I started thinking about that phrase, and I thought there's really two ways you could read demonstration of power. One is that it's a demonstrative presentation where you see, you know, we have church, and I preach a little simple sermon, and we invite people down, and we just start laying them down on the ground, baby. Pow. Demonstration of power. Roll a lady up in a wheelchair. Stand, sister slap somebody with my blazer Good church, amen. And so that's one way you could read it. But there is also another idea of the demonstration of power, which I feel like we lack in the body.

I feel like this is something that we don't do enough of, and that is a demonstration as in like a, an ideal use case demonstration. Like whenever they come out with technology, they always show a demonstration. Like these keyboards, when they come out with these keyboards, that thing, y'all it's like standing behind a spaceship. There's so much going on with it. And so they'll have a demonstration to show you everything it can do, the potential use. Now, at the end of the day, the way I use the keyboard is the way I'm gonna use the keyboard. I don't have to use it the way they use it, but if they'll show me enough, I can go, "Oh, I could do that," or I could throw some strings in, or I could use a piano sound, or I could... It's a demonstration.

It's a user demonstration. That's what I wanna do this morning. I just wanna give you kind of a user demonstration of spending time with the Lord. So, are you ready? Okay. First thing you have to do is pull up your notes. That was all without notes. I felt like it was gonna get long if I didn't open these up. These aren't for me. This is for your roast at home. I try to stick to a certain amount of time, amen. Hallelujah. All right, so I want us just to start with this. The 27-minute model that we teach here, we teach people this regularly, is that and we wanna see you do this in 2027.

In fact, we're gonna spend the first 27 days of 2027 spending 27 minutes with Jesus Christ. In lieu of a fast, which I think is great, I think fasting's great. I think if you learn to pray, it's gonna do you a whole lot more In fact, I'll tell you, if you learn to pray, you might not have to fast. And I'm in favor of that. Amen. It hurts me when you laugh. So the 27-Minute Model is very simple. It's 15 minutes with Jesus. Or 15 minutes in the Bible, 15 minutes reading the Bible. I'm gonna break all of this down as we go through the morning. 15 minutes reading the Bible, seven minutes in prayer, and then five minutes in worship.

So it's very simple. It's 15 minutes in the Bible, seven minutes in prayer five minutes in worship. I'm gonna explain all of that to you this morning. But it starts, before you do any of that, with your prep time. Starts with your prep time. You've got to get ready to go into the secret place and, in in the old covenant, the priest would have to purify themselves and clean themselves to go into the Holy of Holies.

> **LEVITICUS 16:4** ESV
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> 4 He shall put on the holy linen coat and shall have the linen undergarment on his body, and he shall tie the linen sash around his waist, and wear the linen turban; these are the holy garments. He shall bathe his body in water and then put them on.

Well, that's not what I'm talking about. I'm not talking about having a time to confess sin and get right with God before you go read the Bible and pray.

I'm talking about very simply, you gotta wake up, go to the bathroom, and brush your teeth. You gotta prep to go into the presence of the Lord. You gotta get up and get going. Somebody say, "Get going." Get going. You gotta get up and get going. You just gotta start your day. So you gotta get up. So for me, that's actually what it is, and I was gonna wear one this morning but I was so hot I had to change. I don't know how it's so cold outside, and I am so hot right now, but I don't feel good, so that could be it. By the way, if I pass out or anything, that ain't the Holy Ghost.

Somebody call an ambulance. You just never know. And, so you gotta get up, get prepped. But so what I do every morning is I get up, I go to the restroom, I brush my teeth, then I have some black sweatpants that I put on, and I have a black sweatshirt that I put on. I do this every single day. Black sweatpants, black sweatshirt, and when I get out into the living room, I have brown house slippers. I look like this, but at home. I'm like this, but more comfortable. Amen. And so I do this every morning, and then I go brew my coffee. 'Cause I'm cool. Okay? 'Cause you got a cool pastor.

I can actually start my coffee brewing from the bathroom. I have an app on my phone. I know some of y'all were like, "Don't tell us anything else." But I have an app on my phone, so I start the coffee brewing. When I come out, my coffee is brewed. I don't do anything fancy. It's store-bought coffee. I'm easy-peasy. And I put my coffee, normally it's a mug, but when I come to the church, I bring one of these. I have a yellow Yeti. If you ever wanted to know why we have yellow coffee cups, we are gonna change them with the new brand for Citylight, but the reason we use yellow coffee cups in our church is because I use a yellow coffee cup to pray every day.

And I figured I might not be able to get you to pray right now, but I can get you on a yellow cup right now. And that's gonna be it. So this is actually a supernatural gesture in our church to move you towards the secret place. I know that sounds silly We're a silly church, amen. Amen. We're having a good time. So I put my coffee in here, normally it's a mug, and then I go to a chair that in our house, what do we call the chair? The brown chair of meditation. The brown chair of meditation. And so I have a brown chair exactly like this. It's a brown leather chair, and I go sit in the brown leather chair.

That is my morning prep. That's how I prepare. Every- most of this is not spiritual. Most of this is just go do it. Okay? So then I come here. Now, the reason is what you're doing is you're building for yourself triggers that prepare you to go into the secret place and to receive. Now, this is not a Christian book, and I don't know, I don't think it has any profanity in it, but I don't wanna be, I don't wanna get ugly emails from y'all. So send them to pastorjohn@citylightalabama.com if you got a problem. But this is a book by a man named James Clear. It's called Atomic Habits.

It is probably the best book about spending time with the Lord that has nothing to do with spending time with the Lord I've ever read. And one of the things he talks about in this book is triggers, how all of these triggers set you up for the next thing. They set you up to do the next thing. So now I've done it so long that when I get up and I get my coffee in the morning, I've actually set a trigger in place that is about to get me through my time with the Lord. When I put the black sweatshirt on, that is like putting on an ephod. That's like I'm ready to go pray.

Right? Now, there's no super... It's not that it's supernatural, it's that it changes my mind. It changes the way... for instance, another example that's not this, but I used to do some business stuff. I'd do business meetings, not like church business meetings, but like talking with business owners and stuff. Whenever I go talk with a business owner, I always take my Bible with me. I keep my Bible with me 'cause I don't have I have nothing really to share with business owners. I've... People tell me I'm helpful, that's great, but when I'm talking to business people, I don't, man, I don't know.

But I'm a preacher. So if I'm gonna talk to you about QuickBooks and I've got the Bible in my hand, I'm gonna talk to you about the QuickBooks under the anointing. Hello. And so it's a trigger. Come on. And so they're just little triggers that you have so you wanna prep in the morning. I always say it like this. Do y'all remember, I grew up watching Adam West Batman. Not the original run. Okay? All right. No, that's fine. I'm 97. No, I didn't watch the original run, obviously. But I would watch it all the time growing up as a kid. And you know, Batman, when Adam West was on it, they were always two-part episodes.

They always did them over two parts, and so they would finish one episode and then the announcer would come on, and he would say, "Will the dynamic duo make it out of the grips of The Joker, or will the joke be on them? Find out next time, same bat channel, same bat time." Okay? Well, I found that prayer works really well at the same bat time on the same bat channel. So if you'll do it at the same time and get in the same channel, get in the same place, always find yourself back. There's a reason it's called a secret place, 'cause you need a place that nobody else knows about that's your place.

You need a place. In fact, I'll tell you real transparent, I've struggled a little bit, 'cause I have not found my place since I came here. I'm still looking for my place in the house. I've tried a couple of different things. I'm still trying to find my place, but you gotta find your place, 'cause it'll trigger you, and then you'll have powerful time with the Lord. Okay, so the first thing that we do in the 27 minutes, this is the routine that I follow, is you read the Bible. You read the Bible. It's the first 15 minutes. The reason that you spend 15 minutes reading the Bible is because you can read the Bible in an average of 12 minutes a day, and that'll get you through the Bible in a year.

If you read the Bible for about 12 minutes a day, it'll get you through in a year. If you're gonna pray at 4:30 in the morning, you're gonna need three more minutes Math is good, right? So you're gonna ... 15 minutes will get you through the Bible. Spend 15 minutes in the Bible. Bible reading is the cornerstone of your 27 minutes, to the point that I will say this. If you do not pray, read the Bible. Don't try to fix your prayer. If you don't pray and you don't read, don't try to pray. Go read the Bible. And the reason is that a word will actually set you up for more success than prayer will.

I have found that people who pray but they don't know the Word, sometimes you'll see powerful things happen because every once in a while a blind squirrel finds a nut But to go pray a bunch of ignorant mess for two hours, there's no merit in that. You need to know the Word. You need to know the Word. That's why we just spent three weeks talking through 10 names of God from the scripture, so you would know who you're talking to. You'd know who you're praying to. You'd know what he's gonna do, how he's gonna respond. You'd know how to come in and address him.

That's why we do that. So you need to know the Word. So start with the Word. I'm gonna give it this to you simple. Read the Bible, folks. Amen. And this has been my thing on this for years. It isn't that hard. It's 15 minutes a day. I'm gonna make it a lot easier for you today. My goal, though, is for you to not just read the Bible here and there. My goal is for you to be engaged in the Bible, and this is what I count as being engaged with the Bible. I'm gonna give you my formula for being engaged with the Bible. It means that you read the Bible at least four days a week.

The reason is, if you read four days a week, you win the week because four is more than three. Okay? So you wanna win every week. You wanna go, "I've read the Bible more days than I haven't." I read the Bible four days a week for years before I went to every day, and I'll tell you why I went every day in just a minute. There's also some statistical study that says, this is through surveys, this was the Center for Bible Engagement that did this, but they have found that people who read the Bible one, two, or three days a week have the same results in their life and in their faith, as someone who reads the Bible no days a week.

So if you read the Bible one, two, three times a week, it's almost the same impact as reading the Bible none. However, at four days a week, people's life, their quality of life, their quality of faith, their belief in God, all of those things skyrocket for some reason at four days a week. Then at four, five, six, and seven days a week, there's virtually no change again. There is something about reading the Bible four days a week. The science has said it, and I'm saying it, gosh darn it, and that ought to be good enough for some of y'all. Praise the Lord.

Amen. Hallelujah. And so four days a week. The other thing is you wanna read through the Bible in its entirety at least every 18 months. Not saying that you read the Bible over 18 months, but sometimes, and I've kinda been here lately, where I can kind of random draw in the Bible and do something. So I might just on one morning go, "I'm gonna open this book and start working my way through this book." I want you to know, though, you gotta read the Bible about 10 to 20 times before that becomes a viable solution. Otherwise, you're gonna need to have some type of a plan.

And then the last thing is you repeat it. You repeat it. You repeat. Your plan is to continue through the scripture. The scripture is not a one-time book. The Bible is not a one-time book. It is a lifetime book. Amen. The more you read it, the more you will see, the more you will grow. I'm not kidding. I'm well above 30 times through the scripture. I was in a little room. I don't wanna call it an office, but it's kind of a dining room we've converted to a library area. And I was in there about a week ago, and I was feeling pressure. I was feeling pressure as the pastor of the church.

And I walk over, and I start reading, and I see something I've never seen before. And I got a word from God. Because here's the thing, it doesn't matter how many times I've read it there's gonna be something for me today. And if there's nothing for me today, guess what? There's gonna be something for me tomorrow. And if there's nothing for me tomorrow, you know what? There's gonna be something the day I need it. That's the reason I read the Bible every day. And I went from four to a week. I gotta stop talking about this. I like Bible reading. This is fun.

I'm gonna preach like this from now on. This is great. There's a reason that I read the Bible every day. I was on a daily Bible reading plan, I think, at the time. I may have still been doing four days. But I was teaching a class at the church I worked at in Michigan, and I was prepping for my class that morning, and I thought, "I wanna add this scripture." And I

couldn't remember where it was, which is normal. I don't... So I have to look up and see what references are all the time, still today. And I have a lot of Word in me. I just don't know... I know roundabout where it's at.

Amen. And, so I start looking it up. And y'all, I'm looking on Google, I'm looking in Logos Bible software I'm looking on Bible Gateway. I can't find... I know this scripture is in the Bible, and all of a sudden I cannot find it anywhere. I want to add this scripture, talk about it in my class cannot find this Bible verse. Well, that morning, I'd had a funky morning, and so I didn't do my morning Bible reading. Well, the next morning, after... I was frustrated all day long. If y'all know me, I can't let stuff go. So I'm looking for it at 10:00 AM, 1:00 PM, 3:00 PM, 4:00 PM, 5... I'm eating dinner going, "I think I can find it."

I just can't let it go. The next morning, I wake up, I go to my Bible, do my morning Bible reading It's in the first three verses of my daily Bible reading, right, sitting right in front of me the way that I was searching for it on the internet. And I'm gonna tell y'all, I fully believe the Lord did me dirty on that the day before. So I would understand the value of coming to the scripture every single day. What I needed, even though it was the Word of God, even though it was to teach, it wasn't on Google, it wasn't in the Bible software that I pay for, it wasn't on Bible Gateway.

It was in my morning time with the Lord waiting for me, and I chose not to show up So there is some power to coming back day after day. And Lord, these people don't read for messages. Please don't do them dirty like you did me that time, in Jesus' name. Amen. So if y'all have a problem with me saying that, well, go pray. You won't have an issue with it no more. Amen. So Bible engagement at that level, four days a week, reading every 18 months, or getting through, or intending to start over after you read the Bible. There was a big thing, by the way, going around recently with Tony Robbins who I have some measure of respect for, but Tony Robbins trying to dispel some beliefs of Christianity because he read the Bible once in four days.

I don't give two hot dog droppings about you reading the Bible in four days. I have read the Bible time after time. You better show up and repeat. Tony Robbins, I don't care what you have to say about the Bible. He's a big motivational speaker guy, if y'all don't know who he is. Y'all gonna hear people get out here and try to dispel the Bible. I don't care about you reading the Bible one time. I'm telling you, I'm plus 30 times. I'm still trying to figure stuff out. Amen? Amen. But I trust in the Lord. So here's a major piece of advice. You need a physical Bible you like.

Okay? You need a physical Bible you like. There's something about holding a Bible. By the way, the reason I have this thing in my lap is this is where I put my Bible when I'm in the chair. Okay? So you need a physical Bible you like. The reason is, the more you like to hold the Bible, the more you will hold the Bible. The more you hold the Bible, the more you will read the Bible. The more you read the Bible, the more you're gonna operate in Revelation. So all of these things play together. So you need a Bible that you like to hold. I will tell you a couple of things I'm using.

This is a thin line Bible. I like the size of this. I had a great time in this Bible, by the way. These are three Bibles I really like. So this Bible, it's very easy to hold, easy to transport, very cool. This one is probably my favorite one over the last few years. This is a wide margin Bible, and so I can write notes in there. Let me open up to a real colorful page so I look real spiritual. So you get in there, you see all these. Now, you see I have all my pens and everything. This is actually I could, like, just do my thing right now. We could just turn some music on and go.

But all of these colors mean things for me. If you've never read the Bible, a black pen and a yellow highlighter will get you as far as you need to go right now. You don't have to get all complicated with it. But these, I could pretty well open the Bible and know what I'm looking at by colors. So this is a wide margin. Then this is a really nice wide margin. And this

Bible is interesting because it's got a grab on me. I love this Bible and don't love this Bible at the same time. I'm not talking about the Word, I'm talking about the physical makeup of the Bible.

But this is the problem. This is very cool, okay? This makes a Bible. People are looking for this. They call them floppy. The Bible's floppy. I like this a lot. There's a problem, though. When I try to preach from it, this is weird. And so I love these Bibles, but they're a little ... This is a Cambridge wide margin. So you gotta find a Bible that you like, and you'll like Bibles for different reasons. I'm gonna give you some guidelines on finding a Bible that you like. The first thing is that you like it physically. If you don't like the Bible physically, if it's too heavy, it's too big, it sits funny, you're just not gonna like it.

One thing that does help that, though, if you're in a chair, a little table like this goes a long way to making your Bible work for you. So the next thing is you gotta find a translation you can read. Now, I recommend three translations, and I'm starting a new rule. This is a rule in this room, this is a rule on the internet, okay? I recommend these three translations. I'm not answering questions about the translation you've got unless it's a cult translation I gotta get you off of. But I'm ... You know, these are three translations. Read one of these three Bibles.

I'm telling you, this will get you where you need to go. One of them is the NLT, the New Living Translation. New Living Translation is a great translation. You'll understand it. However, its accuracy word to word translation is a little low. They kind of explain it in the translation of the Bible. It's good. If you're super academic, it's not a great Bible. But if you need a Bible you can understand at 4:00 in the morning, NLT is your friend, amen. If you want a Bible that's a little more word for word, it's still not quite there, the NIV, the New International Version, will work great for you.

My wife uses the New International Version every single day. This works for her. She likes it a lot. It's easier to comprehend. But if you want a good academic Bible, the ESV that I preach from and I use every day is a great Bible. Now, there's other great Bibles like this. The New King James Version has a great translation, but it has great footnotes. Some very good footnotes in the New King James. The New American Standard Bible is probably my other favorite Bible. I vacillate a little bit. I like the New American Standard Bible from 1995. It's a very good Bible.

But the ESV'll get you where you need to go. In fact, we just are starting this today. If you come in here and you don't have a Bible, we have a free ESV for you out there at the Connect Center. Come on, somebody, give the Lord a praise for that. So you need a Bible that you like, a physical Bible that you like, and, you need, you need one that helps you meet the goal, and I wanna explain what that means. You need a physical Bible that helps you get where you wanna go. And so I know a lot of people get large print Bibles 'cause it's easier to see the words.

When I'm sitting in the chair, I wanna be able to kinda glance and be able to see the text really clearly and really easily, but I'm gonna give you a secret. Sometimes I'm not in the chair. Sometimes I'm at a desk. I have seasons in the chair, seasons at a desk. When I go to the desk, I like a tighter print. I'm gonna give you a secret. This is some secret stuff right here. This is a tighter print Bible. It's harder for me to read on the fly. I don't like to read from it when I preach or anything like that. The tighter the print is on a Bible, the smaller the print, the tighter the print, the more your brain shifts into gear to focus.

You will operate in more natural insight into the scripture the tighter the print is. That's a little science for you. Amen. I just messed up y'all's... Have y'all ever noticed that they have, like, ultra-mega, super giant print Bibles that, like, it's like they're getting a word on the page? You're like, "For God so loved the world." All right.

> **JOHN 3:16** ESV
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> 16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Sorry, I'm geeking out on y'all a little bit. I'm jumping around a little bit, too. One other thing I wanna mention is you need a plan. You need a plan. You need a plan. Ready, aim, fire is not gonna work in Bible reading.

You need something that takes you day by day. That's why we've got the Power27 app. You can go to power27.app. I'm gonna have a slide for that at the end, but you can go get Bible reading plans right there. That is a super helpful deal. When it comes to Bible reading plans, though, I want you to know there's some Bible reading plans I'd keep you away from that are super popular. One of them is the Bible in 30 days. I know that some of you would probably like to do that, 'cause you think If you wanna do the challenge, do it as a challenge. That is way too fast.

You're reading way too much. You're not gonna get what you think out of it. The fastest you should read the Bible is 90 days. Three months is the absolute fastest you should read the Bible for it to still make sense. That's gonna take about an hour a day, by the way. There's another Bible reading plan that's a chapter a day. A chapter a day gets you through the Bible in about four years. That is way too slow. 18 months is the absolute slowest you need to read the Bible. On the front end, you'll read the Bible so much you won't know what it says. On the other side of that, you'll read the Bible so slow that you won't know what it says, because all of the context is disconnected from itself.

So you need to read the Bible in a 90-day to 18-month rhythm to actually understand it. And then I'll also just encourage you not to get stuck into topical reading plans. You will find that you need the whole counsel of God in your life.

> **ACTS 20:27** ESV
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> 27 for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.

There is stuff hiding in the Bible waiting for your situation that you're never gonna find if you just read on peace every day. My grandmother, bless her heart, she read Psalm 23 every day.

> **PSALM 23:1-6** ESV
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> A Psalm of David. 1 The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. 3 He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. 4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Every day. And I think she got about everything she's gonna get out of it about after the second week And you need to make sure that you don't buy into some little superstitious thing.

If I do the Bible or I keep the Bible, the Lord will protect me. No. You need the Word, man. You need the Word. So you need a plan that gets you through the scripture. There is a question we get a lot: Do you need to read the Old Testament? The answer is yes and no. The Old Testament is valuable, it is helpful. The New Testament is gonna get you where you need to be. I recommend reading through the whole Bible, but if you get into Isaiah and you just go, "I just can't do it anymore," go read Romans. Get into the New Testament. That's fine. The New Testament will be fine for you.

But I will tell you, there is something about reading it and not knowing what to do with it, and not understanding it. You don't need to get a study Bible. You don't need to get any of that. Just read the scripture. It'll work. You'll figure it out. It'll explain itself. And I'll tell you, I had been plus 20 times through the Bible. It was in this one, too. I'd been plus 20 times through the Bible, and every time I'd read the Bible, Isaiah just was like white noise. I just would read it and make... It's nothing. And in this Bible, the first time I read this one, I'm sitting in my chair just like I am right now, and I open up Isaiah to chapter one, and I mean, I was kinda like, "Good grief."

And I start reading, and the Book of Isaiah opens up all of a sudden. And I'm like, "Oh my gosh." And I'm just soaking it up and every page has got something on it that is so powerful and I'm seeing so much. 20 plus times through the scripture before this happened but I'm getting so much out of it. It happened in this Bible. I'm looking at the marks where I was going, "What in the world?" And I'm just writing stuff down in notes. I think this is where I started writing notes in this Bible. And I'm just, "Oh my gosh, look at all of this." Read the Bible.

Keep coming back to it. Not knowing what to do with it is fine. Your goal is not to understand the Bible, your goal is to read the Bible. Well, wait, I thought we were supposed to understand it. Not all the time. If you get it all the time ... I know people with PhDs who don't get it all the time. If you don't have a bad day reading the Bible, you do not read the Bible. You a liar is what you are. You, if you don't have a bad day doing this stuff everybody have a bad day. Everybody. I don't get stuff every day, but it compounds over time. So your goal is to get through the Bible.

It's to get through the Bible. This is the last thing I wanna say on that same topic, is you need to manage expectations. You need to manage your expectations. Manage your expectations. You think you're supposed to go to the scripture and get something out of it. That's what we've been taught. Daily bread.

> **MATTHEW 6:11** ESV
>
> [11] Give us this day our daily bread,

You go get, "Oh, I'm gonna get a word from God today. I'm gonna..." Okay, you might not. You might not. But see, I'm gonna tell you, I've been working off of a word from two weeks ago that's still doing something for me. Have I gotten stuff since then? But I've got, I got an insight in the last two weeks that's working on me.

Come on. It's working on me. I got an insight sitting at my kitchen counter, drinking coffee, eating Honey Nut Cheerios, reading the Bible. 14, 15 years ago? 14, 15 years ago. And today it shapes my life. Today. So how it... Listen, and let me just tell you something. When it gets on you, when you get into a flow of revelation and God opens it up to you, it doesn't matter how many days it took to get there, it doesn't matter how many days it's been since, when you go to the Word and you get... If you can get one gem, I'm talking it's like a treasure, a pearl of great price, somebody.

You'll pay what it costs to get that treasure in the field.

> **MATTHEW 13:44-46** ESV
>
> 44 "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. 45 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, 46 who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

Preach. Amen? Hallelujah. Sorry, I'm done now with that. Amen. This is weird to preach this way If you've never been here, I'm a Holy Ghost spirit-filled preacher, but you put me in a chair And I'm chilling out. So here's two more tips that'll help you with Bible reading and then we'll be done. If you have trouble reading the Bible, I wanna encourage you, the Bible app on your phone has audio Bibles. I do this constantly. I come back to this. I go through rhythms where I don't do this, and then I'll come back to it.

There's ... You can read the audio Bible along with the text. If I'm reading the Bible in 90 days, homeboy is with me. His name's David Cochran. David Cochran has spent more time with me in prayer than any other human being in the world, amen. David Cochran reads the Bible to me, a lot. So but you can read with an audio Bible. That'll help you get, stay on track, keep the train on tracks. And then the other thing is sometimes if I'm not doing that and I'm just reading by myself, I will turn on what's called binaural beats. There is a science they have figured out where they can play a tone at a frequency in this ear and a tone at a frequency in this ear, you have to have headphones for this, that'll cause your brain to focus and they're called binaural beats.

There's an app called Brain... Some of y'all wanna write this down, if that sounds interesting. It's called brain.fm and it'll help you to focus when you read in a way that you'll ... And and the different frequencies will do different things for your brain. It's very cool. Okay, prayer. I wanna talk to you about prayer for a minute. The next thing we do, so we'll read the Bible for 15 minutes, and we're gonna pray for seven minutes. I'm over that now. Found that at Target. I know that's gonna be the question, "Where'd you get that thing from?" Target. Amen.

So the next thing you're gonna do is pray for seven minutes. Now, we've been in a series on the Lord's Prayer 'cause my goal with the Lord's Prayer is to give you some long format prayer stuff, long format content where you can pray. I'd love for everybody in the church to go pray for an hour, 'cause then I figure I don't really have to do a whole lot and the church will grow. Amen. So I want you praying. But the best base model that I've ever seen is this one. It's the seven-minute model. It's very quick. It's not super spiritual. It doesn't get down in the weeds, and this is all it takes to pray for seven minutes.

You thank God for one thing, and then you ... And this is one thing you really mean, by the way. This ain't no, "Lord, we thank you for the day." This is a real prayer. Lord, I thank you ... You know, for me right now, last week we had a miracle finance week in the church. I didn't, I thought we were gonna maybe have to, not do this anymore. Amen. And we had a miracle finance week, and I ... So right now, you know, you ... And hey, stuff is good as long as it needs to be. If you get, if you have stage four cancer and you go to the doctor and he goes, "Hey, that thing's gone," out of nowhere?

Okay. It deserves more than a day on the thank God list. If you won the lottery today and won, got a Powerball, got $500 million out of the clear blue sky, I imagine six months later you're opening up prayer going, "Well, Lord, I still I know I've talked about it quite a bit, but I appreciate that winning lottery ticket in Jesus' name. Amen." $500 million'll have you right there every day. Hallelujah. Y'all are acting like it, this ain't real. Like you wouldn't pray for money. Hey, have not enough money for your power bill, you'll pray for money. Amen. Amen.

Y'all better respond. Y'all know I get mean when I don't get no amens. Amen. Hallelujah. So thank God for one thing, and then ask God for three to five things. Ask him for three to five things that you actually need. Write them down and track them. Write them down and track them. The Lord likes to get glory. Amen. So if you'll put a, an actual record down of, "I'm asking God to do this," then I, then the Lord is more likely to do it. The Lord wants to bring glory to his name. He'll do things for his namesake. Amen. So I also tell you this on the three to five things, I don't pray just be with prayers.

Lord, just be with Ashleigh today, and just be with Jocelyn, and just be with Ali. I know enough about Ashleigh, Jocelyn, and Ali to not do just be with. I can pray specific things over them because I either want something to happen for them, or I want them to behave a certain way in my house So you pray and you ask God to do certain things. And so, and by the way, that's the whole seven minutes. That'll take up seven minutes. Now you may do it in four minutes the first day. You'll get to seven minutes if you just talk about it. Just talk it out with the Lord.

Treat the Lord like, treat the Lord like he's three things. Like he's above you, so you need to honor him. So treat him like he's above you. Treat him like he cares. Treat him like a therapist, like he cares, like he wants to know what's going on how you feel, and treat him like he's the guy who's gonna approve the check Because that's what he does. The Lord doesn't write checks, but he'll get the insurance company to send you something from six years ago that you don't know nothing about, and you'll walk home. I did that one day. I was in the car. I was going to preach somewhere, and it was just a miserable trip.

I was driving at, like, 4:00 AM in the morning, four or five-hour drive, praying. It's foggy the whole way there, and I said, "Lord, I'm gonna need to reap something off of this." And I'd gone and preached for this church a few times. There wasn't no money at the end of that rainbow. Amen. I do this for a job, folks. I don't know if y'all get that. And so, they're, they ... I'd not made anything, and I got there and they gave me a $200 check. I thought, "Thank God." That's, but on the way there, I had prayed. I'd said, "Lord, I need to reap something off this.

This miserable little drive that I'm doing." And I get there. They give me the $200 check. I'm happy. I come home. I tell Ashleigh, "Let's run to Publix." And on the way there, I checked the mail. Pulled the mail out. I got a $2,000 check from... That's like preaching at a pretty decent-sized church if you're a traveling minister. Get $2,000. I had, I... The Lord gave me the honorarium through Blue Cross Blue Shield. Come on, somebody. Take off for a run. Amen. So you wanna honor the Lord, but ask him things those way, and it'll become seven minutes. Lord, I need to see this happen.

I wanna see this happen because this, that, and the other. Just talk to the Lord. And then if you wanna expand your prayer time, here's two things I do, two things I do to expand my prayer time. One is I pray the word, okay? And I just pray the scripture. And by the way, one thing I do in prayer is I do change my posture. So oftentimes I'll get down, and I'll put the Bible like this. I'm not gonna do it in front of y'all, 'cause I don't want y'all looking at my rear end. I feel weird about that. But I'll get down on my knees, and I'll put my face in the, in the crack of this Bible.

And so then what I'll do when I get towards the end of prayer is I'll flip over to the Psalms is typically where I go. And I like this Bible. For some reason, this is a good Bible to pray with. I don't know what it is, but it's a good praying Bible. and so I'll get into the Psalms, and I kinda have some little notes and stuff, but I'll just scan, and I'll see. So here's Psalm 103.

> **PSALM 103:1-5 ESV**
>
> Of David. [1] Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! [2] Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, [3] who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, [4] who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, [5] who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Well, I've preached on that quite a bit here. Let me go somewhere else. I don't want y'all to think I'm mailing it in. Amen. Amen.

> **PSALM 85:1 ESV**
>
> To the choirmaster. A Psalm of the Sons of Korah. [1] LORD, you were favorable to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob.

So I'll go to Psalm 85 here, and it says, "Lord, you were favorable to your land.

You restored the fortunes of Jacob." So immediately right there, I can start, "Well, Lord, I thank you that you're favorable towards your people. God, I thank you that you're favorable towards me, and you're gonna restore my fortunes. Father, anything that I've lost since COVID, you're about to bring it back. Anything that I've had an issue with in my own personal economy, Father, you're about to bring that money back into my life. You're gonna restore my fortunes. I'm not gonna need anything, because you're gonna meet all of my needs. I'm not gonna have any want, because you're gonna restore my fortunes.

So you're gonna put me back in a position where, like Solomon, that if I have a problem, money can solve it." Check out the hook while my DJ revolves it.

> **ECCLESIASTES 10:19 ESV**
>
> [19] Bread is made for laughter, and wine gladdens life, and money answers everything.

Amen. Don't play with me in prayer. Hallelujah. We'll bring Vanilla Ice in here and make something happen. Amen. And no, I'm serious. So now, I've gotta work, and you just get Psalm 84.

> **PSALM 84:1 ESV**
>
> To the choirmaster: according to The Gittith. A Psalm of the Sons of Korah. [1] How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts!

It says here, it says, "How lovely is your dwelling place." Father, I thank you I can just spend time in your presence today. I can just sit in your presence. I can enjoy your presence today. That takes nothing to pray.

And this'll remind you some things about the Lord and things you could That'll expand your prayer time. The other way I expand my prayer time, if you're Baptist Grab one of them cards and you can fiddle with it for the next minute or two.

The other way is I pray in the Spirit. And so I'll pray through, and I'll do the seven minutes. Seven minutes is my baseline. If things are funky, I'll do the seven minutes. And so I'll go back and I'll pray, thank God for one thing, seven things. I'll pray the scripture. And by the way, that, in that model, that's normally my longest time 'cause I can just go until I'm done.

Kinda just when I start to feel like I'm done. And but I'll also pray in the Spirit. And so I'll just begin to pray in the Spirit, and what I'll do is I'll partner with the Lord in praying in the Spirit, and I'll say, "Lord, I wanna pray for this". And so me and the Holy Ghost will partner over something. So if I'll, again, back to my finances, we'll pray in the Spirit. If I've got something going on with somebody in the family and I really don't know what to do about, with it, which is, pretty regular. I'm not the solution to everybody's problem in the house.

So if I've got that, I'll say, "Lord, this situation that's going on, I wanna pray over it. I wanna pray," and so I'll pray in the Spirit. And I'll kinda do that through a target a few things. By the way, there, a lot of times people ask, "How do you start praying in the Spirit?" For those of you who've received this gift. And if you wanna know how to get it, if you wanna get this this gift, come to church in 2027. It's gonna be hard not to get touched by the power of God in this church in 2027. But people never ask when to stop. People always ask how to start, they never ask when to stop.

So when I start praying in the Spirit, I just want you to know I stop as soon as I start thinking about what's coming out of my mouth. At some point, your attention will turn towards what you're doing. That's when I stop. I just go, "Okay, we're done. I'm, I've ..." 'Cause now I'm not in the spirit, I'm in the mind. And the difference between the spirit and the mind when you're doing that, because when you're praying in tongues, you're supposed to be praying in the spirit, not in the mind. So if I start thinking about what I'm saying, now I'm just illegibly jibber jabbering out of my mind.

So I wanna keep it in my spirit when I'm doing it. So when I start to think about what I'm saying, I stop. Okay? so that's how you can expand your prayer time. Also, we're teaching you all this stuff on the Lord's Prayer and that's helpful as well. So that's how you can pray.

> **ROMANS 8:26-28** ESV
>
> 26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. 27 And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. 28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

by the way, the reason I pray in the spirit, Romans chapter 8 does say this, "Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we know not, we know not, we do not know what to pray for as we ought. But the Spirit himself intercedes with us with groanings too deep for words." Now, I want you to see a connection here.

I don't know how to pray. So even though I'll do the seven minutes, I could do an hour, I could do three hours, I don't know how to pray for the stuff I need to pray for. I'm limited. I'm finite. I don't know everything. But look at this. Verse 27 says, "And he who searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." So even though you don't know, the Holy Ghost knows what to pray for. Here's what I find interesting. We quote this all the time and it's like we don't see the context.

So we're talking about praying in the Spirit. Verse 28, you'll know this, "And we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose." It's hard for me to look at that and

not make the connection that's right there in the concept of praying in the Spirit. When you want things to start to go well for you or start to line up for you there's a power in praying in the Spirit. And I think it's great that we come into the church house and everybody wants to give a little shundai here and there.

Fine. But there's something about I'm alone, I'm in my house. I am more spirit-filled when none of you are around than when we're in this room. Now, I ... The anointing flows in this room, the power flows in this room, and I hope some of y'all have started to see, because I know when I got here, there were some folks who were kinda like, "Well, why is he not doing any of this stuff?" Well, because when I give an altar call, stuff happens. Amen. I don't do it for fun. I don't do it because it's on the order. When I do one, something's gonna happen. Why? Because if not, if it ain't flowing, it ain't flowing But at home, I'm kick stuff over Pentecostal.

At home I'd just be throwing something on the ground 'cause I gotta do something. You just gotta have a reaction, you just gotta, man, you ought to just try something. We were praying this morning that some of y'all would spill your coffee in worship. Amen. You get so everybody, all these pastors get upset about coffee spilling and I want the coffee spilt everywhere. Catch the Holy Ghost and burn your neighbor. Amen. That's what we say around here. Amen So you pray in the Spirit. You pray in the Spirit. There's a connection to things working out well for you.

If you're gonna pray, I give you these two, tips. One, you need a list. You need a list. You need to write things down. If you need a Bible reading plan, you need a list. The other one is change your posture. I talked about getting down on my face. The reason I do it is I try to remember who I'm talking to. I talk about God a lot, as an occupational hazard. I talk about God a lot. I'm very, whatever this personality type is, I got a lot of it. Amen. And I can be the ... So I always wanna remember when I'm gonna talk to the Lord, even though I can go boldly before the throne of grace, I wanna temper my boldness a little bit and I never wanna get talking to the Lord like I'm his boss.

> **HEBREWS 4:16** ESV
>
> 16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Now, I can hold him accountable to his word, but I'm not gonna be ugly to the Lord, 'cause at the end of the day, we're gonna remember God is like God. Okay? So I wanna manage that. So I do, I get down in the chair, and that's how I remember. If I get to feeling good in prayer, I'll get up and I'll start to walk around. But that's not all the time. I don't always get down in the chair. If my physical body don't feel like doing it that day, if I'm hurting from the way I slept. How many of y'all get injured when you're sleeping at night? Amen. So if I wake up, something happened to my body or whatever, I might not do it, but I, for the most part, that's kinda my go-to area.

Okay, the last thing that you do, last five minutes, is to worship. This is kind of the off-ramp from the secret place. By the way, what I've given you up to this point is 23 minutes. 23 minutes. That 23 minutes could be 90 minutes, like that, depending on what's happening. It ... Now, I don't normally spend tons of time in prayer. It would be nothing for me to run up an hour in Bible reading time. Like I, especially if I'm at the desk. If I'm in the chair, I'm a little more ... But if I'm at the desk and I'm looking and I'm I can run the time up there. And by the way, if I read the Bible a lot probably not gonna pray a lot.

If I pray a lot, probably didn't read the Bible a lot. Like, there's an ebb and flow. Like, you got things to do. You'll notice the people who talk about praying three hours a day, they're traveling ministers they have nothing else to do. If you're a

plumber, that guy needs you at the house. He's got toilet water all over the floor. He needs you to come now. He doesn't need you in prayer for five hours, but you need 30 minutes. You need an hour. You need whatever the time is that you need in the presence of the Lord. So you need that, but there, we still have to get moving on.

So the, worship is kind of the off-ramp here. So you spend five minutes. This is a very powerful way to end. First of all, worship is just generally powerful. It's just powerful to worship the Lord, 'cause he's like the Lord. Amen. And so you can finish with worship, and this is what I do because if if you're early enough in the morning, even if you're good at this stuff Like, for me, there's certain schedule things that can make me not have a good time in the morning in prayer and Bible reading. But if you're new to it, it's gonna be a little clunkier in the mornings, right?

And if that's the case, worship's gonna be real helpful to you because it's gonna help you with some of the clunkiness 'cause you're gonna be able to end confidently with a win, with some power under you. You'll be able to actually end with some, a win under your belt. So, what I do is basically I get to the end, whether it be on a stereo. I like to use headphones 'cause I wanna turn it up. I'm not... I'm Pentecostal. That translates to every area of my life. I ain't trying to, "Lord, we bless your name." I wanna shout, somebody. I wanna have a good time.

So I'll throw my headphones on so I don't kill everybody in the house. Amen. And so I can turn it up and have a good time and worship the Lord. And what I do is I just do these two things. I sit there and I close out with a song, and, I pick songs this way. This is the, this is the criteria. I pick a song that is Jesus-focused, 'cause not all worship songs are. Now, this might be your favorite worship song, and I love you, and you can it can still be your favorite worship song when you leave here. But there's a song, I don't even know what it's called. I don't know how the rest of it goes, but it says something about you got a lion inside of your lungs.

I don't need to talk about what I got. I don't care what I have. If I, if what I had was so great, I wouldn't have been showing up for this anyway. Amen. I need what the Lord has, so I try to sing some, I, some Jesus-focused things that focus on the blood. We've been singing that. At the end of Wednesday night I sang, "Thank you, Jesus, for the blood applied." I wanna sing something like that. And, but Jesus exalting. And then I also wanna make sure it's a song that blesses me. So I'm not singing any of the songs we sing in this church- 'Cause these are not my songs.

These are the songs we sing because these are the songs of this generation in this hour to reach the kingdom at this time. These are not my songs. No, I wanna go back to the enemy's camp. Come on, sir. I need you more. I wanna pour out my heart. I want the holy and anointed one to show up. I-- That's the stuff I'm gonna sing. Some of y'all don't need to sing with headphones on in a worship song. Some of you need to grab a Glorious Hymns of Praise. All right. And you need to come to the garden alone- ... while the dew still sits on the roses. Amen. Amen. Because He walks with me, and He talks with me, and He tells me I'm His own.

And so you need to-- You gotta find something that blesses you but that magnifies Him and makes much of Him. And so I'll do that. I'll be sitting there in the morning and I'm gonna, "Draw me close to you. Never let me go." And I'm gonna have a time for five minutes. And if you didn't pray good, and you didn't read the Bible good, I've got great news. The bass player and the drummer and the worship leader and the choir are about to come into your headphones and help you out. Amen. 'Cause you might not know what to pray. You might not know what you're reading.

But these people are gonna help you have a little bit of time right here before you enter the rest of your day and experience the presence of God right here in the secret place. Do you believe it this morning? Hallelujah. And I wanna emphasize above all that the bass player will help you out. Amen. Don't listen to those drummers. Drum guy. They

don't know what they're talking about, amen. Hallelujah. I don't know. I actually think when the drummer and the bass player come together there's something about that. When two come together and they agree.

> **MATTHEW 18:19** ESV
>
> [19] Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven.

Don't need a guitar player.

No. Don't need a keyboard player. No. If they wanna join in, but we're ready to go. They're just accompanying. They're just around. One would wonder why we even have you up here right now. Amen. Come on. Barry, if you'll come to the drums. Wouldn't that be tough to close the service with? Amen. Just, hallelujah. I don't know. I'd be kind of ready to see what would happen. My pastor used to, when he'd close services, he'd say, "Would somebody please come to the instrument?" And we were always tempted. Go to something inappropriate. Just go over to them congas and just... Praise the Lord.

Well, hey, one more thing I want to tell you, and then we're gonna close. Has this been helpful to you today? I know it's not preaching preaching, but this'll help you. Last thing I just want to let you know, you can download the Power 27 app. I think we have a slide for that. You can download the Power 27 app. And it's actually not a download yet. You use it online. We've got it in the Apple Store waiting for approval. We're gonna do Android after that. so any day it could come back from Apple and be ready, but it's power27.app. If you go in there, it walks you through the 27 model.

It will help you a ton. at the end of the day or at the end of your time, it will recommend a worship song for you that I have personally approved. Amen. So I think they're good worship songs for you. And then we're also gonna have-- We just ordered them. We have, for those of you that are not app savvy, we have brochures coming with the reading plan that you will be able to use next year when we do this starting on January 4th. How many of you are ready to pray in 2027? Amen.

02

Preaching Notes

Before You Preach

This message is a demonstration more than a sermon. It was taught sitting in a brown leather chair, with a small lap table, coffee, several Bibles and pens within reach. If you preach it, bring the props and let people see how it actually works.

Two cautions. First, people will hear this as a rule. It is a model, offered the way a keyboard company shows you what a keyboard can do: use what helps you. Second, keep the Bible section from swallowing the prayer and worship sections. Reading is the cornerstone, but the people in the room also need the seven-minute prayer model and the off-ramp of worship.

Introduction

This morning I want to do something I have never done in a service. I want to take you into my time with the Lord.

I got saved around the time I was 12 years old. Almost as soon as I got saved, I heard people say you need to pray and you need to read the Bible. But I never saw anybody do it. I went to intercessory prayer meetings with the lamp and the boom box and 50 people walking around doing their own thing, and I could never translate that into my own personal time with the Lord. I saw preachers with Bibles, but I never saw them in them.

So over the years, as I built these systems for myself, I kept thinking: let me open up the curtain and show people what this is.

A STONE'S THROW

> LUKE 22:41 ESV
>
> [41] And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed,

Here is the principle I try to follow. Jesus was close enough for the disciples to see Him pray and far enough to keep what He prayed. You can perceive enough of what the experience is like, and I can still protect what I am praying for.

A USER DEMONSTRATION

> 1 CORINTHIANS 2:1-5 ESV
>
> [1] And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. [2] For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. [3] And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, [4] and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, [5] so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

There are two ways to read "demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Corinthians 2:4). One is the demonstrative kind, the kind you picture when people fall down at the altar. But there is another idea of demonstration that we lack in the body of Christ: a user demonstration.

Illustration: the keyboard. When a company comes out with a new keyboard, they show you a demonstration of everything it can do. At the end of the day I am going to use my keyboard the way I use my keyboard. But if they show me enough, I can say, "Oh, I could do that."

That is what I want to do this morning. I want to give you a user demonstration of spending time with the Lord.

1. The 27-Minute Model

The model is very simple:

- **15 minutes** reading the Bible.
- **7 minutes** in prayer.
- **5 minutes** in worship.

2. Start with Your Prep

Before you do any of that, you have to prep. Under the old covenant, the high priest had to bathe before he went into the Holy Place (Leviticus 16:4). That is not what I am talking about. I am not talking about a time to confess sin and get right with God before you read and pray.

I am talking about getting up, going to the bathroom and brushing your teeth. You have to get up and get going.

Illustration: my morning. I get up, go to the restroom and brush my teeth. I put on black sweatpants, a black sweatshirt and brown house slippers. I start my coffee from an app on my phone while I am still in the bathroom. It is store-bought coffee; I am easy. I pour it in a yellow cup, which is the reason our church has yellow coffee cups. Then I go sit in the same brown leather chair. In our house it is called the brown chair of meditation.

Most of this is not spiritual. Most of this is just go do it.

YOU ARE BUILDING TRIGGERS

What you are doing is building triggers that prepare you to go into the secret place and receive. This is not a Christian book, but *Atomic Habits* by James Clear is probably the best book about spending time with the Lord that has nothing to do with spending time with the Lord. He talks about how one trigger sets you up for the next thing.

I have done this so long that when I get my coffee in the morning, a trigger is already carrying me through my time with the Lord. When I put on that black sweatshirt, it is like putting on an ephod. It is not supernatural. It changes my mind.

Illustration: the Bible at the business meeting. When I used to meet with business owners, I always took my Bible. If I am going to talk to you about QuickBooks with a Bible in my hand, I am going to talk to you about QuickBooks under the anointing. It is a trigger.

Illustration: same Bat-time, same Bat-channel. I grew up watching Adam West's Batman, and every episode ended by telling you to come back at the same Bat-time on the same Bat-channel. Prayer works really well that way. Same time, same place. There is a reason it is called a secret place: you need a place that is yours.

3. The First 15 Minutes: Read the Bible

You can read the Bible in an average of about 12 minutes a day and get through it in a year. Spend 15 minutes.

Bible reading is the cornerstone of your 27 minutes. If you do not pray, read the Bible. Do not try to fix your prayer first. Go read. A word will set you up for more success than prayer will. People who pray but do not know the Word will sometimes see powerful things happen, but to go pray a bunch of ignorant mess for two hours has no merit in it. You need to know the Word so you know who you are talking to, what He is going to do and how to address Him.

WHAT BEING ENGAGED WITH THE BIBLE MEANS

- **Read at least four days a week.** If you read four days a week, you win the week, because four is more than three.
- **Read through the whole Bible at least every 18 months.**
- **Repeat.** The Bible is not a one-time book. It is a lifetime book. The more you read it, the more you will see, and the more you will grow.

The Center for Bible Engagement has reported from surveys that people who read the Bible one, two or three days a week show about the same results in their life and faith as people who read it no days a week. At four days a week, those measures rise sharply, and from four to seven days a week there is little further change.

I am well above 30 times through the Bible, and about a week ago, feeling the pressure of being a pastor, I walked into the little library room in our house, started reading and saw something I had never seen before. It does not matter how many times I have read it. There is going to be something for me today. And if there is nothing for me today, there is going to be something the day I need it.

Illustration: the verse I could not find. I was teaching a class at a church in Michigan and wanted to add a verse, and I could not find it anywhere: not on Google, not in my Bible software, not on Bible Gateway. I had skipped my Bible reading that morning. I looked all day. The next morning I opened my daily reading, and it was in the first three verses. I fully believe the Lord did me dirty on that the day before, so I would understand the value of coming to the Scripture every single day. It was in my morning time with the Lord waiting for me, and I chose not to show up.

A well-known motivational speaker recently tried to dispel some beliefs of Christianity because he read the Bible once in four days. I do not care about you reading the Bible one time. I am past 30 times, and I am still trying to figure stuff out. You better show up and repeat.

4. Find a Physical Bible You Like

The more you like to hold the Bible, the more you will hold the Bible. The more you hold the Bible, the more you will read the Bible. The more you read the Bible, the more you will walk in revelation.

Show the Bibles you use: a thinline that is easy to carry, a wide margin Bible you can write in, a floppy Cambridge wide margin. If you have never read the Bible, a black pen and a yellow highlighter will get you as far as you need to go right now.

Three guidelines:

- **You like it physically.** If it is too heavy or sits funny, you will not like it. A small lap table goes a long way if you read in a chair.
- **You can read the translation.** I recommend three: the **NLT**, when you need a Bible you can understand at 4:00 in the morning, though it is less word for word; the **NIV**, a little more word for word and easy to comprehend, which my wife uses every day; and the **ESV**, a good academic Bible, which is what I preach from and use every day.
- **It helps you reach the goal.** A larger print is easier to glance at in a chair. I like a tighter print at a desk. In my experience, the tighter the print, the more my brain shifts into gear to focus.

The New King James has very good footnotes, and I am partial to the New American Standard from 1995. But read one of those three and it will get you where you need to go.

5. You Need a Plan

Ready, aim, fire is not going to work in Bible reading. You need something that takes you day by day. You can find Bible reading plans in the Power 27 app at power27.app.

- **Thirty days is too fast.** You are reading too much to get what you think you are getting.
- **Ninety days is the fastest** you should read it for it to still make sense, and that takes about an hour a day.
- **A chapter a day is too slow.** It takes more than three years, and the context disconnects from itself.

- **Eighteen months is the slowest.** Read in a rhythm of 90 days to 18 months.
- **Do not get stuck in topical plans.** You need "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). There is stuff hiding in the Bible waiting for your situation that you are never going to find if you just read on peace every day.

Illustration: Psalm 23. My grandmother, bless her heart, read Psalm 23 every day. I think she got about everything she was going to get out of it after the second week. Do not buy into some superstition that keeping the Bible will protect you. You need the Word.

Do you need to read the Old Testament? Yes and no. It is valuable and it is helpful, and I recommend reading the whole Bible. But if you get into Isaiah and you cannot do it anymore, go read Romans. The New Testament will get you where you need to be.

You do not need a study Bible. Just read the Scripture. It will explain itself.

Illustration: Isaiah. I had been through the Bible more than 20 times, and Isaiah was white noise every time. Then I opened to Isaiah 1 in this Bible, sitting in my chair, and all of a sudden the book opened up. Every page had something on it. I started writing in the margins. Twenty-plus times through before it happened.

MANAGE YOUR EXPECTATIONS

Your goal is not to understand the Bible. Your goal is to read the Bible. I know people with PhDs who do not get it all the time. Everybody has a bad day reading the Bible. I do not get something every day, but it compounds over time.

We have been taught to go to the Scripture for our daily bread, and we should pray, "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11). But you may not get a word today. I got an insight 14 or 15 years ago sitting at my kitchen counter with Honey Nut Cheerios, and today it shapes my life. If you can get one gem, one treasure, you will pay what it costs. Jesus said the kingdom is like a man who, on finding "one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it" (Matthew 13:46).

TWO TIPS FOR STAYING ON TRACK

- **Use an audio Bible.** Read along with the text. When I read the Bible in 90 days, the narrator of my audio Bible has spent more time with me in prayer than any other human being in the world.
- **Try binaural beats.** With headphones, a tone in each ear helps me focus when I read. I use an app called brain.fm.

6. Pray for Seven Minutes

The best base model I have ever seen is this one. It is not super spiritual, and this is all it takes:

- **Thank God for one thing, and mean it.** Not "Lord, we thank you for the day." If you have stage four cancer and the doctor says it is gone, that deserves more than a day on the thank God list.

- **Ask God for three to five things you actually need. Write them down and track them.** The Lord wants to bring glory to His name. Keep a record of what you asked Him to do.

Do not pray "just be with" prayers. I do not pray, "Lord, just be with Ashleigh today, and just be with Jocelyn, and just be with Ali." I know them too well for that. I can pray specific things over them, because I either want something to happen for them or I want them to behave a certain way in my house.

That will take up seven minutes. You may do it in four minutes the first day. Talk it out with the Lord. Treat Him like three things:

- He is above you, so honor Him.
- He cares, so tell Him how you feel.
- He is the one who approves the check.

Illustration: the $2,000 check. I once drove four or five hours through fog at 4:00 in the morning to preach at a church, and on the way I prayed, "Lord, I need to reap something off of this." They gave me a $200 check, and I was thankful. I got home, checked the mail on the way to Publix, and there was a $2,000 check. The Lord gave me the honorarium through Blue Cross Blue Shield.

EXPANDING YOUR PRAYER TIME

Pray the Word. Toward the end of prayer I go to the Psalms and scan until something catches. Turn the verse into prayer.

> PSALM 85:1 ESV
>
> To the choirmaster. A Psalm of the Sons of Korah. [1] LORD, you were favorable to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob.

"Lord, I thank you that you are favorable toward your people. You are going to restore my fortunes. Anything I have lost, you are about to bring back. You will put me in a position where, like Solomon, if I have a problem, money can solve it." Solomon wrote that "money answers everything" (Ecclesiastes 10:19).

> PSALM 84:1 ESV
>
> To the choirmaster: according to The Gittith. A Psalm of the Sons of Korah. [1] How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts!

"Father, I thank you that I can just spend time in your presence today." That takes nothing to pray.

Pray in the Spirit. Seven minutes is my baseline. Then I pray in the Spirit, and I partner with the Lord over a few targets: my finances, or something going on in the family that I do not know what to do with. People always ask how to start praying in the Spirit, but they never ask when to stop. I stop as soon as I start thinking about what is coming out of my mouth, because now I am not in the spirit, I am in the mind.

> ROMANS 8:26-28 ESV
>
> 26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. 27 And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. 28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

I do not know how to pray for what I need. I am limited. But even though you do not know, the Holy Ghost knows what to pray for. And notice what comes right after. We quote verse 28 all the time and miss the context. It is hard for me to read it and not make the connection to praying in the Spirit. When you want things to start to line up for you, there is a power in praying in the Spirit. I am more spirit-filled when none of you are around than when we are in this room.

TWO TIPS FOR PRAYER

- **Keep a list.** Write things down.
- **Change your posture.** I often get down on my knees with my face in the crack of my Bible. I do it to remember who I am talking to. Even though we can "with confidence draw near to the throne of grace" (Hebrews 4:16), I want to temper my boldness a little. I can hold Him accountable to His Word, but I never want to talk to the Lord like I am His boss.

7. Five Minutes of Worship

Worship is the off-ramp from the secret place. What I have given you so far is 23 minutes, and that could run to 90 minutes depending on the day. Some days I read a lot and do not pray as much, and some days it goes the other way. There is an ebb and flow. If you are a plumber, that guy with toilet water on his floor needs you at the house. He does not need you in prayer for five hours, but you need your time in the presence of the Lord.

If you are new to this, the mornings are going to be clunky. Worship helps, because you get to end confidently with a win under your belt. I use headphones so I can turn it up.

How to pick the song:

- **It is Jesus-focused.** Not all worship songs are. I do not need to sing about what I have. I need what the Lord has. Sing about the blood.
- **It blesses you.** The songs we sing on Sunday are chosen for this generation. In the morning, sing what blesses you, whether that is a newer song or "In the Garden" out of an old hymnal.

And if you did not pray well and did not read well, I have great news: the bass player, the drummer, the worship leader and the choir are about to come into your headphones and help you out.

Conclusion

Here is the whole thing:

- **Prep:** same time, same place, simple triggers.
- **15 minutes** in the Bible: four days a week, through the whole Bible at least every 18 months, and repeat.
- **7 minutes** in prayer: thank God for one thing and ask for three to five.
- **5 minutes** in worship: Jesus-focused and a blessing to you.

The Power 27 app at power27.app walks you through the model, and at the end it recommends a worship song.

Do not wait until you feel spiritual. Go do it.

03

Scripture List

Every passage read, cited or alluded to in the message, in the order it comes up.

Read

Read aloud in the message.

LUKE 22:41	41 And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed,
1 CORINTHIANS 2:1-5	1 And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. 2 For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. 3 And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, 4 and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.
PSALM 85:1	To the choirmaster. A Psalm of the Sons of Korah. 1 LORD, you were favorable to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob.
PSALM 84:1	To the choirmaster: according to The Gittith. A Psalm of the Sons of Korah. 1 How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts!
ROMANS 8:26-28	26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. 27 And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. 28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Cited

Named or quoted along the way.

JOHN 3:16	16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

PSALM 23:1-6	A Psalm of David. [1] The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. [2] He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. [3] He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. [4] Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. [5] You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. [6] Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.
PSALM 103:1-5	Of David. [1] Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! [2] Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, [3] who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, [4] who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, [5] who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Alluded to

Drawn on without naming the reference.

LEVITICUS 16:4	[4] He shall put on the holy linen coat and shall have the linen undergarment on his body, and he shall tie the linen sash around his waist, and wear the linen turban; these are the holy garments. He shall bathe his body in water and then put them on.
ACTS 20:27	[27] for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.
MATTHEW 6:11	[11] Give us this day our daily bread,
MATTHEW 13:44-46	[44] "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. [45] "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, [46] who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.
ECCLESIASTES 10:19	[19] Bread is made for laughter, and wine gladdens life, and money answers everything.
HEBREWS 4:16	[16] Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.
MATTHEW 18:19	[19] Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven.



Pastor Jason Mayfield

SENIOR PASTOR, CITYLIGHT CHURCH

Pastor Jason Mayfield is the Senior Pastor of Citylight Church in Saraland, Alabama, where he and his wife, Ashleigh, lead a church devoted to Building Lives on Jesus. His preaching is rooted in the Bible, full of hope, and grounded in one conviction: an incredible life is built on the finished work of Jesus Christ.

For more than 20 years, Pastor Jason has given his life to the local church. He has been credentialed with the Assemblies of God for 21 years and ordained for 14, and he has led revitalization in churches that went on to rank among the Top 100 Fastest-Growing Churches in America. He carries a deep conviction that the church can be both excellent and supernatural, and a passion for revival.

He is an author and the creator of Tear Up Your Bible and POWER 27, a daily rhythm of Bible reading, prayer and worship. His resources have helped more than 100,000 people go deeper in the Scriptures. Above every title, his greatest joy is seeing people meet Jesus, be filled with the Spirit, and grow into everything God has called them to be.

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