



Empowered by **Prayer and the Holy Spirit**

by Beth Jones

As wives and moms living in the 21st century, we lead very busy lives. Despite the influx of techno gadgets such as laptops and Blackberries to help make modern life faster, easier, and more convenient, we still battle time crunches to get everything done that we need or want to do every day. In the evening, as we fall into bed with items still not crossed off our to-do lists, we wonder how it is that we can work so hard and seem to get so little accomplished.

Often it's because we are trying to do things in our own strength, instead of relying on God. When we are empowered by prayer and God's Holy Spirit, we will get so much more done! More importantly, as we are seeking God's will first, we are building on the Rock of Christ (Matthew 7:24-28) and will bear much fruit that lasts for eternity! (John 15:5)

As Christians we know that we should spend time every day with God. Many times we don't pray in the morning because we're under the impression that to do any good, we need to pray at least 30 minutes or an hour. But this simply isn't true. You will be amazed at what just a few moments of prayer first thing each morning will do in your life!

You will have a strength and a sense of purpose that you have not experienced before. I saw an Embarq billboard on the highway the other day, and thought of it as being an appropriate advertisement for prayer: "We're all stronger connected."

Just take five!

Not everyone has an hour to pray, but we all can afford to take five, 10 or 15 minutes to pray. As our schedule permits throughout the day, we can set aside more time to pray and to study God's word. But begin today with five or ten minutes as your daily, morning goal. Keep this little phrase in mind: "Just take five!"

A fresh batch of mercy each day

Don't you just love the smell of fresh bread baking? Well, Jesus called Himself the "Bread of Life." (Mark 6:48-51) As soon as you awake, you can lay in bed and begin to pray, thanking God for a new day and His fresh batch of mercy for you (just don't fall back asleep!). Yesterday is gone; today is a new day of hope! Aren't you thankful that God doesn't remember our sins from yesterday (or remind us of them!), but they are as far as the east is from the west? (Psalm 103:12)

We can then devote the day to God, and ask for His wisdom, guidance, and protection over us and our loved ones. Ask God to fill you with a fresh anointing of His Holy Spirit. Without Jesus we can do nothing. (John 15:5) The Holy Spirit is our teacher, and His anointing teaches us all things. (1 John 2:27)

The Holy Spirit's empowerment

The Holy Spirit is the one who empowered the apostles to take the gospel to the nations of the earth and they changed history. (Acts 2:1-21) Maybe we won't go all the way across the world for God (I hope I DO!). God may want some of us to just witness to our neighbor, the cashier at the grocery store, or our co-worker! But we can't share the gospel effectively anywhere without the Holy Spirit's anointing helping us.

Even Jesus went up alone on the mountain to pray to be alone with God, and to be filled up with His presence. (Mark 6:46, Luke 6:12, John 6:15) How much more do we need Him!

The Holy Spirit is not some vague, skittish, anemic and unimportant branch of the Godhead. He is the Third Being of the Holy Trinity, a Person just as God the Father and Jesus the Son are. He's not impersonal and yin/yang like "The Force" in Star Wars; He's a real, holy, good, and loving Person, who comes to live inside of us to help us become more like Jesus, growing in the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). He convicts us of our sins. (John 16:7-11)

He is the one who gives us power to testify of the hope that is within us, pointing always to Jesus. (1 Peter 3:15) He is our Helper and our Comforter in time of need, so we will not be alone. (John 14:16)

He speaks to our hearts, and gives us prophetic revelation of things to come (John 16:13) He is always ready to help us, and to give us the strength and the wisdom that we need each day. He's the incredible power of God, surging inside of our bodies with limitless voltage, to help us fulfill the Kingdom of God on earth!

A Word from God a day

After we give the day to God and ask Him to empower us with His Spirit, we can take just a few minutes to read the Bible or a devotional passage. Oswald Chambers' book *My Utmost for His Highest, Streams in the Desert* by L.B. Cowman, books on prayer by Andrew Murray and Richard Foster, works by C.S. Lewis, and Joyce Meyer and Beth Moore books are all great choices for inspiration and daily encouragement.

As you read a passage of scripture or a portion from the devotional, you can stop and ask God for more understanding, thank Him for it, or reflect on it a few minutes for practical and relevant application for today. God is amazing the way He confirms His word. You will find throughout the day, and maybe even through your week, you will hear that same passage of scripture or devotional thought from somewhere!

For example, here is an excerpt from *My Utmost For His Highest*:

We think rightly or wrongly about prayer according to the conception we have in our minds of prayer. If we think of prayer as the breath in our lungs and the blood from our hearts, we think rightly. The blood flows ceaselessly, and breathing continues ceaselessly; we are not conscious of it, but it is always going on. We are not always conscious of Jesus keeping us in perfect joint with God, but if we are obeying Him, He always is. Prayer is not an exercise, it is the life." ~ Oswald Chambers, My Utmost for His Highest

Prayer is the life. Isn't that beautiful? That thought will lift us, and carry us through today's challenges.

Prayer is simply friendship with God

Some people use the “ACTS formula” for prayer: entering in God’s presence with first adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication. I don’t personally do this. For me, prayer is simply friendship with God. I talk to Him, and He talks to me. ☺ I’m not into rote, religious formulas. Thanksgiving and confession of my sins flow naturally out of my heart’s relationship with Him.

You don’t meet your husband or girlfriend for lunch, and start off by saying, “I thank you for meeting me here. I adore you. You are so worthy! And while I’m at it, I need to confess to you that today I got really irritated at the slow driver in front of me,” do you?

No, we smile at each other, hug, and then order the chocolate cheesecake (or grilled chicken salad with ranch!) – and we catch up with a heart-to-heart, share a funny thing our kids said, comment on the news, make plans to do something else fun. We just *enjoy* each other! It’s a relationship! And that is the way it should be with God, not a repetitive and empty ritual.

God is our Faithful Friend. God should always be treated with respect and reverence because He is a holy God, but we don’t have to approach Him through stiff, formal language or some type of prescribed and predictable routine, which can result in dead works. Prayer is simply us sharing our real heart with God, and Him sharing with us.

Wait just a minute!

As for this morning conversation with God, God has a still, small voice. We need to hear His instructions for the day, and we can’t do that if we’re constantly gabbing on the phone with others – or barking orders at our kids (or husband) and running out the door in the morning with a half-eaten, cream cheese bagel. We need to learn to *slow down* and *wait just a moment on God!*

God wants to hear our voice, too. Like Hannah pouring out her heart to the Lord. (1 Samuel 1:9-20) He is interested in every detail of our lives. He loves us, and He cares. He hurts when we hurt. He smiles when we smile. We are His joy and special treasure, and He loves to spend time with us. Song of Solomon says, “Let me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet and your face is lovely.” (Song of Solomon 2:14)

God and I take turns talking and listening. As I pray, I practice really listening to Him. That means being quiet and still long enough to hear Him. Tuning out all distractions, which come so easily. Turning off the noise. The radio, the t.v., the

blow dryer. Not picking up my cell phone and texting our daughter Heather, or going to my laptop the first thing in the morning to check email and tweet. But curling up on our den couch, with our worn, comfortable, “quilt-look” blanket, and taking a pause (Selah).

What is God saying to you right now?

It’s not easy to do this, especially in the morning. It’s especially hard on the mornings when I have to drop off my husband at work at 7 am. I am NOT a morning person (and cheerful morning people annoy me, lol. The thought of waking up even earlier than Ray to pray is...well, usually just a thought.) But it is important before you and I begin any type of morning routine (washing dishes from the night before, making coffee, putting on our face, homeschooling our kids, throwing in some laundry, etc.), that we give the day to God and take time to hear what He’s saying to us for today.

Discipline

It takes discipline, even to “just take five.” We are creatures of habit, and if we’ve been running on empty for years, it’s going to take retraining ourselves to change our lives. Like making ourselves exercise or drink more water, we have to establish new, good habits for a better life. The flesh will fight this new routine of being still and listening to God. The “list” will go through your mind. You might even think you are sitting there just wasting time, when you have so much to do already (at 8 am!).

You might be thinking, “Is just a few minutes of prayer going to do me any good at all?” Well, does exercising 10 to 20 minutes several times a week do you any good? YES! More time devoted to your physical fitness is even better, but at least DO SOMETHING!

We can learn from Martin Luther’s example: He said, “Tomorrow I plan to work, work, from early until late. In fact I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer.”

Of course, most of us don’t have three hours to pray. It’d be nice, and we’d probably be a lot more Christ-like if we did. But we DO have five to 20 minutes to set aside, to spend some much needed time hanging out with Jesus. If we can spend an hour on Facebook looking at all our friends’ pics, we can surely devote a few minutes to God every day! (Ouch!) It’s a matter of setting our priorities. Like Mary, let us choose the part which won’t be taken away from us. (Luke 10:42)

Pray with Passion

Five minutes of sincere, heart-felt prayer is better than an hour or two of I-have-to-pray, religious duty. But even five minutes of “forced” prayer is a dead work. Pray with passion and purpose. Tell God exactly what you’re thinking and feeling. He knows anyway! Pray with passion!

“I live and breathe God; if things aren’t going well, hear this and be happy; join me in spreading the news: together let’s get the word out. God met me more than halfway, he freed me from my anxious fear. Look at him: give him your warmest smile. Never hide your feelings from him. When I was desperate I called out, and God got me out of a tight spot. God’s angel sets up a circle of protection around us while we pray. Open your mouth and taste, open your eyes and see how good God is. Blessed are you who run to him.” (Psalm 34:2-8, The Message Bible)

Share your worries and concerns with Him, as well as your dreams and your goals. God wants to know everything about you. He wants to be intimate with you, and you with Him. As you dedicate the day to Him, tell Him what you would like to accomplish. He will help you to SUCCESSFULLY do it, or He may change your agenda to accomplish something even better! God will send divine appointments your way, and use you in INCREDIBLE ways that you can’t even imagine!

Sorry, you don’t get brownie points by praying!

We don’t have to edit our prayers to make them “acceptable” to God. We can pour out our hearts to God, laying them naked before Him. We can even tell God, “I don’t feel like praying this morning. I’m tired.” That’s ok. God knows you’re tired, bored, stressed, depressed, angry or whatever. Just tell Him, and let His Spirit minister to you in the silence and solitude. Usually in the early morning, when all around me is quiet, and I am still, that is when I feel God’s presence the most and hear Him speak.

You don’t have to read three chapters of Numbers or pray on your knees for an hour for God to like you more. You don’t get brownie points with God for praying. He loves you unconditionally, period. Just give Him your day. Quiet your heart before Him, and let Him just touch you with His love.

But intimacy with God is better than brownies!

In fact, you don’t even have to kneel to be able to pray. You can stand up, walk around the room or the block, run, do jumping jacks (I’ve never tried this one!), sit, lay down or whatever. It’s your heart’s posture that truly matters. I usually sit or lay in bed when I’m praying to God. But there are urgent times of need

when I fall flat on my face on the ground prostrate before Him, or on my knees by my bed, crying out to Him.

The main thing is cultivating that daily, intimate relationship with Him. Walking with God as Enoch did. (Genesis 5:24) Intimacy with God is even better than brownies! (and I LOVE chocolate brownies!)

As we pray and ask God to fill us anew with His Holy Spirit, we will receive the spiritual sustenance we need for the day. Just as the Israelites depended on God to feed them heavenly manna in the wilderness, we must rely on God each day for our daily bread- His word and the presence of Jesus.

God told Moses to instruct the people to gather only what they needed of the manna each day, and to not leave any of it for the next day. But some of them didn't listen, and it bred worms and stank. That is because God wanted them to get today's portion of manna only. (Exodus 16:17-20)

The protective shield of prayer

A fresh word for each day. Yesterday's manna won't work for today. As we dedicate each new day to God, He will give us that day's encouraging word that will be right on target and will be just what we need for the day's tasks. Prayer also helps to keep us in that place of protection from the enemy, satan, who comes to steal, kill, and destroy:

"These things add up. Every one of us needs to pray; when all hell breaks loose and the dam bursts we'll be on high ground, untouched. God's my island hideaway, keeps danger far from the shore, throws garlands of hosannas around my neck."
Psalm 32:6-7

The Bible tells us to put on the armor of God. (Ephesians 6:11) Our mighty weapons of spiritual warfare will do us no good if we don't have a shield, the shield of faith. The shield is part of our power, because it protects us. Likewise, prayer is a protective shield and helps to empower us against the enemy's fiery darts. (Ephesians 6:16)

Our confidence and power comes from God

David told Goliath that he didn't come to him with sling and stone, but in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel whom he had defied (1 Samuel 17:45-51) David was confident, not in his physical strength or military genius (although he became one of the greatest warriors there ever was), but his confidence was in the Lord whose presence was with him. With God on our side, we will be unstoppable by the enemy!

I want to encourage you today. Just take five! Begin your day with a few minutes of time, sitting at Jesus' feet, like Mary of Bethany. Devote the day to Him. Read a portion of scripture or a devotional. Give God your to-do list, your cares, your worries. Ask Him to refill you with a fresh anointing of His Holy Spirit.

As the day goes on, ask Him to give you longer periods of time to spend with Him, because God loves you so much and just wants to be with you! He wants to speak to your heart, and He wants to hear what's on yours. But be sure to at least take a few moments each day, being empowered by prayer and His Holy Spirit.

I will close with two quotes on prayer by E. M. Bounds:

“Prayer is our most formidable weapon, the thing which makes all else we do efficient.”

“The goal of prayer is the ear of God, a goal that can only be reached by patient and continued and continuous waiting upon Him, pouring out our heart to Him and permitting Him to speak to us. Only by so doing can we expect to know Him, and as we come to know Him better we shall spend more time in His presence and find that presence a constant and ever-increasing delight.”



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