

7 Commitments of a Forerunner

I. PRAY DAILY: CONNECTING WITH GOD WHILE CHANGING THE WORLD

- A. Prayer has different expressions, such as *devotional prayer* (includes prayer-reading the Word and fellowshiping with the Spirit to grow in intimacy with God), *intercession for revival and justice*, providing *prayer covering* for individuals, and *praying for the sick*. By praying in these different ways, we can encounter God, do the works of the kingdom, and change the world.
- B. A consistent prayer life is essential to the forerunner ministry—only through a lifestyle of prayer can we receive the fullness of what God has provided for us. Prayer is essential, because it causes our spirit to be energized, releases God’s blessing on our circumstances, and results in real changes in the Church, the nations, and society.
- C. Prayer connects us with God. It empowers us to love God (first commandment), causing us to overflow in love for others (second commandment). We love others better as we encounter God.
- D. We can strengthen our prayer life in three ways: set a *schedule* for regular prayer times, make a *prayer list*, and have a *right view* of God. A schedule establishes “*when*” we will pray. A prayer list gives us focus on “*what*” to pray. A right view of God causes us to “*want*” to pray.
- E. I use several prayer lists: *Ten prayers to strengthen our inner man: F-E-L-L-O-W-S-H-I-P; Fellowshiping with the Spirit: T-R-U-S-T; What to do in our personal prayer times; How to meditate on the Word. For these free notes and resources, see www.mikebickle.org.*

II. FAST WEEKLY: POSITIONING OURSELVES TO FREELY RECEIVE MORE FROM GOD

- A. We must cooperate with the Spirit so that we may walk in the intimacy and power that the Scripture promises. One way to do this is to fast weekly. Fasting is, by definition, abstaining from food. See *The Rewards of Fasting* by Mike Bickle and Dana Candler for more on this.
- B. Jesus said, “When you fast,” implying that fasting occurs regularly in a disciple’s life.
¹⁷When you fast... ¹⁸your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. (Mt. 6:17-18)
- C. Jesus promised that the Father *rewards* fasting. This proclamation alone makes fasting important. Some of the rewards are *external*, as our circumstances are touched by God’s power. Some of the rewards are *internal*, as our hearts encounter Him in new depth. The idea that fasting changes us internally is new to some. It tenderizes our hearts. God gives grace to fast to any who ask.
- D. I urge people to fast at least one day a week. Two days a week is better. It is a false notion that fasting is extreme Christianity and is optional. Fasting is basic to the Christian life. There are exceptions: those pregnant or who have health problems should consult a doctor before fasting.

III. SEVEN TYPES OF FASTS IN SCRIPTURE

- A. We fast to experience more of ***God's power in our ministry***. When the disciples could not set a demonized boy free, Jesus told them that that kind of demon could not go out except by prayer and fasting (Mt. 17:21). Many who led revivals fasted regularly, e.g. John Wesley, George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, and Charles Finney. John G. Lake (1870–1935) sought God with much prayer and fasting. God released powerful miracles through him. In South Africa, within a five-year period, he witnessed 500,000 healings and led many thousands to Jesus.
- B. We fast for ***prophetic revelation of the end times***. Daniel sought God with fasting and prayer and received prophetic insight into God's end-time plan (Dan. 9:1-3, 20-23; 10:1-3, 12-14).
- C. We fast for the fulfillment of ***God's promises to our family, city, or nation***. The Lord has plans and promises for each family, city, and nation. We contend in prayer and fasting for their fulfillment as Daniel did for the fulfillment of God's promise for Jerusalem (Dan. 9:1-3; 10:1-4).
- D. We fast to ***stop a crisis*** (individual/national). Mordecai and Esther called a fast to cry out to God to reverse a national crisis—the imminent destruction of the Jewish people (Esth. 4:1-3; 16).
- E. We fast for ***protection***. Before Ezra led a group back to Israel to help rebuild their nation, he fasted and prayed to God for protection on the journey because of the danger (Ezra 8:21-23).
- F. We fast for ***direction***. Throughout the NT, the church fasted for supernatural wisdom and direction. Paul and others fasted and prayed for direction for their ministry (Acts 13:1-2).
- G. We fast to grow in ***intimacy with Jesus*** (we refer to this as the Bridegroom fast, Mt. 9:15). Jesus said that after His death the apostles would mourn His absence and would fast out of desire for Him. This fast is motivated by the desire to encounter Jesus, rather than for power in ministry.
¹⁴Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?" ¹⁵And Jesus said to them, "Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast." (Mt. 9:14-15)
- H. Fasting before our Bridegroom God is a catalyst to speed up the depth and the measure in which we receive from the Lord. Fasting positions our hearts to be expanded as we encounter Jesus. Our spiritual capacity to receive from God increases. We do not fast to motivate God to love us, but to receive the affection that He already has for us—it is not to move His heart, but ours.
- I. Fasting is always voluntary. The level at which a person fasts from food should be determined according to age and with regard to various physical limitations. Those with an illness or with any history of an eating disorder should not fast except in consultation with their doctor. Minors are discouraged from fasting food. Minors who desire to fast are encouraged to consider non-food abstentions, such as TV, movies, internet surfing, video games, and other entertainment.

IV. LIVE HOLY: LIVING FASCINATED IN THE PLEASURE OF LOVING GOD

- A. Holiness equips us to enjoy life together with God. We must not approach it in a negative way. The call to holiness is a call to the ***superior pleasures of being fascinated*** by the revelation of Jesus. I present two foundational truths and three practical principles in our pursuit of holiness.
- B. ***Foundational truth #1:*** Being preoccupied with the superior pleasures of the gospel. God is the author of pleasure. He created us to enjoy physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual pleasures. The greatest pleasure we can know is the spiritual pleasure of ***God revealing God*** to our spirit. We are fascinated most when our hearts are captivated by the revelation of God as our holy Father and of Jesus as our passionate Bridegroom King (Phil. 3:8).
- C. God's personality is filled with joy and pleasure. His throne is the epicenter of joy and pleasure for the universe. Our God is a happy God with happy holiness.

¹¹In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forever. (Ps. 16:11)

1. God created us with a longing for the pleasure of being fascinated, of being filled with marvel and wonder. Our longing for pleasure is part of our created design and must be satisfied; it will not go away. It is a significant part of the way God created us. We will either satisfy it in God or in darkness. The Devil tempts us with "counterfeit" pleasures that are outside God's will.
 2. The secular entertainment industry has identified and targeted this human longing. They have exploited this God-ordained craving to their profit and our ruin.
 3. We are liberated from the ***inferior pleasures*** of sin by experiencing the ***superior pleasures*** of the beauty of Jesus. Without having a sense of awe in our relationship with God, we will live spiritually bored, and will be more vulnerable to Satan's tactics. A spiritually bored believer is weak. A fascinated believer is strong and has no need for things like pornography.
- D. ***Foundational truth #2:*** Setting our heart on 100-fold obedience releases a dynamic in our spiritual life that enables us to have a vibrant heart.
1. The pursuit of 98% obedience has a limited blessing. The last 2% is what positions us to live with a vibrant heart.
 2. There is a "spark" of the Spirit in our heart when we seek to live in 100-fold obedience. God created us with a desire to be wholehearted for Him. It is necessary for our emotional health and satisfaction. Our heart does not function properly without this. Without something to die for, we have nothing to live for.

V. VICTORY OVER SIN: 3 PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES (ROM. 6:11-13)

- A. Principle #1 ***Knowing Principle (Rom. 6:11)***: We must know who we are in Christ and what we have received in Him as well as the truth about God's heart as a Father and Bridegroom. We reckon or see ourselves as ***alive to God***—that is, to see that we are enjoyed by God, indwelt by the Spirit, empowered to use the name of Jesus, and commissioned with a divine assignment
¹¹Reckon [see] yourselves to be...alive to God in Christ... (Rom. 6:11)
- B. Principle #2 ***Resisting Principle (Rom. 6:12-13a)***: We resist sin, Satan, and sin-provoking circumstances. We resist the inward prompting of sin and the schemes of Satan. Paul's emphasized self-denial. God chose the denial of our lustful desires as the arena in which we express our love to Him (Jn. 14:15, 21-23). We refuse circumstances that inflame sinful desires. We do not go to places, buy items, or look at or talk about that which stirs up sinful passions.
¹²Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. ¹³And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin... (Rom. 6:12-13a)
- C. Principle #3 ***Pursuing Principle (Rom. 6:13b)***: We serve and relate to God and people in love. We present ourselves to God, and our bodies as His instruments that He may use to bless others. Our first call is to love God with all our heart as worshipers of Jesus. We are to cultivate His presence in our life (intimacy with God). This includes fellowship with the indwelling Spirit and being preoccupied with the superior pleasures of the knowledge of God. We express love to people by offering our bodies as vessels for the Spirit to use to bless them.
¹³But present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. (Rom. 6:13b)
- D. ***Summary***: We must ***know truth, resist darkness, and pursue God and people***. None of these principles can be omitted. We love God and people as we resist sin, Satan, and sin-provoking circumstances while knowing who we are in Christ and God's heart as a Father and Bridegroom. Some pursue God at prayer meetings without knowing who they are in Christ or resisting sin.

VI. DO JUSTLY: BEING ZEALOUS FOR GOOD WORKS THAT EXALT JESUS (TITUS 2:14)

- A. One very important commitment for a forerunner is to do works of justice. We are all called to be workers of justice and lovers of mercy with a spirit of humility. Works of justice include activities such as feeding the poor, taking care of orphans, widows, and the homeless, and addressing oppression related to abortion, poverty, racism, employment, public services, etc.
⁸He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God? (Mic. 6:8)
- B. Isaiah 58:1-12 gives us practical ways to do works of justice with mercy in a spirit of humility. Isaiah points out the error of seeking God without helping others (Isa. 58:1-5). They felt satisfied with the appearance of seeking God, without embracing works of justice (v. 1). Seeking God must be accompanied by practical actions. Passion for Jesus must result in zeal for works of justice. God will give us creative ideas on how to help the oppressed, if we will ask Him.

VII. LEAD DILIGENTLY: TAKING INITIATIVE TO MINISTER TO OTHERS

- A. Forerunners should take initiative to serve in, support, and/or lead in practical ways in ministries like weekly prayer meetings, Bible studies, outreaches, or discipling younger believers.
- ⁶Having gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith... ⁸he who leads, with diligence... (Rom. 12:6-8)*
- B. The definition of diligence: “The constant and earnest effort to accomplish what is undertaken with persistent exertion.” Diligence includes zeal to invest our energy and time in serving, taking risks, and developing our God-given skills. It is important to serve with diligence and with a happy spirit. The mark of a good leader is humility and godly character, even more than skill.
- ²⁴Hand of the diligent will rule... ²⁷Diligence is man’s precious possession. (Prov. 12:24, 27)*
- C. Ask for insight into God’s plan for how you can serve in winning your campus or city to Him. Ask God where your harvest field is in your campus, neighborhood, marketplace, or a distant land. Start by serving God where He puts you and embracing small tasks that others will not do.
1. Disciple younger believers: one practical way to do this is to meet with a few on a weekly basis to discuss the same books, articles, or Bible study notes that the entire group studies together. Also, talk about how each one is doing in their life-management.
 2. Help start ministries: Start prayer meetings and outreaches on your campus, in the marketplace, or your neighborhood. Leaders take responsibility to start or strengthen a ministry. They do not wait to be asked.
- D. Do tasks that need to be done: Ask two very different questions: What needs to be done in the ministry that you are a part of and what do you want to do? As we show ourselves diligent in what needs to be done, doors will open for us to be able to do what we want to do.
- ¹⁶A man’s gift makes room for him, and brings him before great men. (Prov. 18:16)*
- E. Some wait for years to be asked to serve in a ministry. They are praying that a leader will “discover” them sitting idly in the congregation. They confuse the humility that waits to be asked to be promoted with waiting to do work.
- F. I only ask people to take a leadership position after they have taken initiative to serve for a season without being recruited. This is what separates real leaders from lazy dreamers.
- G. Many wait for a platform leadership position to open before they serve. I started out small by leading daily prayer meetings while waiting for IHOP–KC to start.

VIII. GIVE EXTRAVAGANTLY: THE JOY OF FINANCIAL POWER ENCOUNTERS

- A. One of the forerunner commitments is giving extravagantly to the kingdom, especially to the works of justice that flow from prayer. This implies giving beyond our tithe. What we do with our money is one measurement of our love for Jesus, and commitment to justice.
- B. To tithe is to trust God directly with 10% of our money by giving it to His kingdom. God will release financial blessing on all who tithe. When we give 10% of our income to God, we discover that 90% with God's blessing will go further than 100% without God's blessing. Some say that they cannot afford to tithe. The truth is that we cannot afford not to tithe.
¹⁰“Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this,” says the LORD of hosts, “if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.” (Mal. 3:10)
- C. There is great joy in giving financially in the awareness that God's eyes are upon us with pleasure. There is a cause and effect dynamic that God intends us to understand. His power is manifest as much in releasing finances as in healing the sick. He wants us to believe Him for a supernatural release of finances as much as we are to believe Him for supernatural healing.
³When you do a charitable deed... ⁴your Father who sees in secret will...reward you openly. (Mt. 6:3-4)
- D. At age 18, I committed to live a simple lifestyle to give extravagantly to the kingdom. At age 22, my wife Diane and I committed to double tithe and to seek to increase our percentage of giving. We committed to reduce our lifestyle before we reduced the percentage of our giving. We determined to have a smaller house before we gave a smaller percent away. I do not accept the “American dream” ideal that says I am supposed to have more, while giving less.
- E. We set our heart to be content with food and clothing and to live a simple lifestyle. Kingdom simplicity is not about lacking financially, but about giving extravagantly. We do not live on less because we have less, but because we give more. There is a great difference between a spirit of poverty and a spirit of generosity. Poverty is a curse and generosity is a godly virtue.
⁸Having food and clothing with these we shall be content... (1 Tim. 6:8)
- F. At age 27, I formalized my financial commitments in Cairo, Egypt, in September 1982. By way of equality, we sow our finances to those who labor in the kingdom in poor countries.
¹⁴But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may supply their lack, that their abundance also may supply your lack—that there may be equality. (2 Cor. 8:14)
- G. There will be a transfer of wealth as God manifests His ownership over the silver and gold as He shakes the nations in the end times. He will finance the end-time harvest and prayer movement. If He releases wealth to us, we must not consume it on ourselves but build His kingdom with it.
⁷“I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory... ⁸The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,” says the LORD. (Hag. 2:7-8)

- H. The psalmist wanted to be blessed so that he could use wealth to make the Lord's fame known. God will release great wealth to the right people, at the right time, and for the right reasons.

¹God be merciful to us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us ²that Your way may be known on earth, Your salvation among all nations. (Ps. 67:1-2)

- I. God gives power to get wealth to establish His covenant by bringing more people into the benefits of covenant relationship with Him. He gives us wealth so that we can promote the gospel. There are those who have gone through a radical paradigm shift related to money. When they see money, they see souls, intercessors, and being able to help the oppressed, etc.

¹⁸It is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant... (Deut. 8:18)

- J. We can determine some of the measure of how far we will go with God in giving. We are all developing our personal history with God in the area of giving financially. Giving extravagantly is based on the percentage of our finances that we give, not the amount (Lk. 21:3-4).

⁶He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly... (2 Cor. 9:6-7)

³⁸Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over...For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you. (Lk. 6:38)

- K. Determine what amount of the money that God has entrusted to you is “seed” to sow in the kingdom and what amount is “bread” to eat, or to use for your personal life. Many have a pocket full of seeds, but lack fruit because they do not sow the seed.

¹⁰Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness... (2 Cor. 9:10)

IX. SPEAK BOLDLY: BEING A FAITHFUL WITNESS

- A. Jesus' first title in Revelation emphasizes His public teaching as a faithful witness of the truth (Rev. 1:5). He did not hold back from speaking truths that were unpopular. He spoke without fear of the consequences. Some only proclaim positive things to make people happy with them.

³⁷For this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. (Jn. 18:37)

- B. The Lord is calling His people to be faithful witnesses with allegiance to Jesus' heart, words, and purposes. Being a faithful witness implies speaking boldly what we see, without drawing back in fear. This is the most difficult of the forerunner commitments because it affects our relationships and future ministry and reveals our true motives, etc.

- C. To be faithful in our witness of the truth, we must be:

1. Biblical: We must stay within the boundaries of Scripture in all that we say.

2. Clear: We must speak in a straightforward and precise way.

3. Bold: We must not be intimidated by rejection or by false sentimentality.

4. Tender: We must speak without bitterness or anger, seeking the benefit of our enemies.

5. Humble: We must not be motivated by a personal agenda or seek to win an argument.