

CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER – MIKE BICKLE

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Session 2 Introductory Principles to Contemplative Prayer, Part 1

INTRODUCTION

2 Corinthians 3. We're going to talk about some introductory principles to contemplative prayer. This is an imperfect science. The term "contemplative prayer," as I said yesterday, isn't a biblical term. It's an idea; it's a biblical principle, but when you talk about it, because there's no place where Paul the apostle said, "Contemplative prayer means this," different ones throughout church history defined it differently. That's fine to do. When you read different books on contemplative prayer, don't be surprised that one of them describes this aspect of the prayer life of the Holy Spirit in you, and another one describes another facet of the Holy Spirit's prayer ministry in you.

Don't be confused when I see "contemplative prayer" in a book and I buy it. I have maybe thirty, forty, fifty titles, closer to fifty of those in my home. If I see any book on contemplative prayer, I buy it. I don't even look through it; I buy it and look through it later. If I don't like it, I give it as a gift to one of my friends. Anyway, no, that's just a joke. I buy them, and I have bought a few bad ones. I say, "Ugh." First it confused me, because one person talked about it so differently than the other person, and it took me a few years to figure it out that there's no clear, infallible definition. It speaks of a realm of reality and experience that has many facets to it, so when you read different books, keep that in mind. They're going to define it a little differently.

INTERCESSION, SUPPLICATION, AND CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER

Three categories of prayer. Of course, you can define prayer in twenty different categories. For our purposes today, I will talk about three categories of prayer. If I was talking about another point of emphasis, I might have five or seven categories of prayer; it just depends on the place where I want to go.

The first one is intercession—the prayer for breakthrough. We love intercession. IHOP-KC has a lot of intercession in it. International House of Prayer, lots of intercession. It isn't all intercession, but a lot. A lot of you are embracing intercession.

Then there's supplication: prayer for personal circumstances. I have different things there. I don't want to go through that. You all know about that.

PRAYER THAT FOCUSES ON ENJOYING INTIMACY WITH GOD

Contemplative prayer. You have the notes there. Contemplative prayer is prayer that focuses on enjoying intimacy with God. That's my definition of contemplative prayer. In intercession, there have been different heroes; I use the word *heroes* in a soft way. All my heroes are wounded heroes. All the healers are wounded healers. That's how it's supposed to be. There's only one real Hero, and His name is Jesus. I have men and women throughout history who have inspired me in each one of these different areas.

WHAT ARE THE LIVES THAT HAVE INFORMED AND INSPIRED YOU?

I want to ask you a question that hopefully can convict some of you. Some of you, you'll have the answer I'm looking for. My question is this: who are your spiritual heroes in each of these three areas? Not that you're supposed to have heroes; I'm using that word in a soft way. What are the lives that have formed and inspired you in these three areas?

The real reason I'm asking it isn't because you should have a thousand biographies. My real point is this: most believers I know don't have any heroes in intercession, because they don't even think about intercession and they've never read anything about it. That's why they don't have any heroes. It tells the state of the Body of Christ today.

There are a number of phenomenal examples of intercessors in history, and people like us ought to know who they are, and they ought to be impacting our lives through the written page. If you can't think of anyone who has impacted you dynamically in intercession through history, then say this. Don't put yourself down, but say this: "I guess that's an area I have totally neglected." If you care about intercession and you have a fire for it, you'll inevitably go to people who have gone ahead of you, who have excelled in the grace of intercession. Learn from them.

Why reinvent the wheel? Why not learn from those who have done it for fifty years? How about supplicated, personal prayer? How about contemplative prayer? Again, most Protestants I know say, "Contemplative prayer? Huh?"

I say, "Who are the heroes, who are the people who have formed your thinking? Who are the people who have inspired your life? Give me five names." Of course, I don't really say this; it's a made-up conversation.

Their face would go blank, "Contemplative prayer? Never thought about it, never did it, never read it, don't know any of the names. Huh. I know about intercession. I read that one book by Rees Howells. I have that one down."

You don't have to do this, but I'm a fanatical reader. I believe in buying books and reading books. I'm a fanatical reader. Not all of you will do that, but some of you will. The reason I'm a reader is because I'm a student, and I want to learn from the people who have excelled before me. I don't want to take time to learn it all for the first time myself. I want to learn from those who have done it for fifty years. I want to encourage you to get literature from the history of people who have lived their entire lives in these realms of the grace of God. Study them. If you go home to your personal library and you have the books on this, this, this, and this, but none on the deeper life, say, "Hmm. Something has to change around here. I have to spend my time differently. I have to start cultivating an appetite for these subjects."

Of course, you wouldn't be at this conference if you didn't have an appetite for it, but coming to a conference isn't enough. I'm not trying to be negative or scold anyone, but some people come to a conference and say, "OK, I did the contemplative thing at the conference I went to last year."

That's not the same thing as "doing the contemplative thing." Our goal in this conference is not to get you to say that you came; our goal is to see you establish a vision to go deep, deep, deep for five, ten, fifteen, twenty, and thirty years, at a marathon pace. You're going to need resources to do it. The Protestant world is really, really, really narrow on the resources of contemplative prayer. I've searched them out for twenty years.

DAVID BRAINERD: AN INSPIRATIONAL INTERCESSOR

In terms of intercession, my first great intercessory hero was David Brainerd. You can hardly find anything on him. We get a little in our bookstore and we always run out. I don't think we have anything now. David Brainerd was the missionary to the Native Americans in the 1730s and 1740s. Jonathan Edwards edited *The*

Diary of David Brainerd. Oh my goodness! He died at the age of twenty-nine, but that man walked in deep waters. He was one of my first true spiritual heroes back in the 1970s. I read about him in a book by Leonard Ravenhill. Leonard Ravenhill wrote a chapter in one of his books about all the great lives who were set on fire from *The Diary of David Brainerd*.

I said, “David Brainerd?”

Leonard Ravenhill was one of the great intercessors of the twentieth century; he just went to be with the Lord a few years ago. He wrote all these books on prayer. I said, “If he says David Brainerd is something, he must be.” I had never heard of the man. He talked about all these lives that were ignited by the fire of David Brainerd’s story.

So I went to ten or fifteen bookstores. They all looked at me with big eyes: “David Brainerd? Never heard of him. We’re modern charismatics; we don’t know about the men who went deep. We don’t have books like that.” I found bookstores so frustrating. It isn’t about health, wealth, and happiness at a superficial level. You can’t find it anywhere.

I said, “Never heard of David Brainerd? Well, neither did I; I just heard about him through this book I read.” I went to the next bookstore, and nope, nope, nope, nope, nope. I asked everyone. Nope.

I went to a seminary library and they said, “Yeah, no one has checked out that book for twenty years. Here it is.”

I Xeroxed it. I bound it. I asked their permission. I started reading it. The first twenty, thirty pages were horrible, to be honest. I said, “Ugh.” But somehow I pressed through, and oh my goodness, the depth that man lived in. I know why Jonathan Edwards, the revivalist of the first Great Awakening, so esteemed the diary of David Brainerd.

Now, all of my heroes have a few substantial, significant errors in their life and doctrine. Every ten years, I look back and say, “Boy, I wish I could get rid of those tapes.” We all kind of think we’re the one group that doesn’t have serious deficiencies. Then a few years go by and we say, “Oh, ouch.” David Brainerd’s profound error in my opinion was his exaggerated, over-the-top negativity about himself. It’s amazing that he kept pressing on and didn’t give up. His view of the glory of God and his anointing in intercession and his abandonment to God was second to nothing I had ever read at that time in my life, but he had a couple of errors. I don’t want to go into that really heavily.

JOHN G. LAKE: STANDING IN THE GAP BETWEEN GOD AND BROKEN PEOPLE

Another great intercessor is Rees Howells. We know about Rees Howells, the great intercessor in England during World War II. It’s more of a biography than it is teaching, like Brainerd’s book. Then you have E. M. Bounds, who wrote maybe ten classic books on prayer. He was a great man of prayer in the late 1800s; one of the great intercessors who captured me who kind of hurt me, but I moved David Brainerd down to second place on my all-time favorite list when I ran into the teaching of John G. Lake, who died in 1935. I put him in the realm of the intercessor. He wasn’t so much an intercessor in the sense that he went to a prayer meeting like we do at IHOP-KC for revival, but he was an intercessor who stood before people with sickness and demons and diseases and laid hands on them and labored and labored in intercession until they got free. He had an incredible

healing anointing, John G. Lake. He saw hundreds of thousands of healings of an unusual order—many blind eyes, paralytics, tremendous works of power. I put in him in the category of intercessor, though not in the classic sense of praying for revival, but interceding, standing in the gap between God and broken people.

KENNETH HAGIN: A MAN WHO TAUGHT PEOPLE HOW TO TAKE HOLD OF GOD

There are many more. Under the subject of supplication, one of the men whom God raised up and began to give a real profile across the earth in the 1970s related to personal supplication, is the man named Kenneth Hagin. Kenneth Hagin was a man who came out of nowhere. He wasn't well-known before that—just a little ministry out in Oklahoma and Texas in the 1930s and 1940s. He began to teach people how to get hold of God for themselves, how to touch God for themselves, and how to believe the Word.

Lest you're nervous, I understand some of the deficiencies in the faith movement. I'm not a classic "faith movement champion"; I'm not in that camp, if I had to be in a camp. I tell you one thing: I'll read anything where people touch God in power and try to learn from it. There's been a whole army of teachers and preachers who were raised up in the "faith camp" who have gone on to commit abuses, but there are many who haven't. I don't even know that much, and I don't care, but I know this: I know that some of Kenneth Hagin's writings teach people how to move in and get hold of God for themselves. Again, people add to it a little of this and a little of that, and some of the things he says, I would say differently, but I can't find anyone I totally agree with. I can't even totally agree with myself ten years later. I've given up on making certain they're perfect before I buy into whatever they say. That's a burden. If they have to be as perfect as you are, doctrinally, before you buy into anything, you're never, ever going to grow.

THE GREATEST OF ALL THEOLOGICAL ERRORS

You want me to tell you what the greatest error is, in my opinion? It isn't the errors of John G. Lake, and John G. Lake had a few big errors. It isn't some of the errors of David Brainerd, one of my heroes. It isn't the errors of Kenneth Hagin. It isn't the errors of some of the contemplatives or mystics in history. They all have errors, in my opinion. The most profound error is to have all their I's dotted and T's crossed, but no anointing to do anything.

"I understand theology of prayer."

"Do you have an authority of prayer on your heart?"

"No."

"Do you pray?"

"No, but I understand the concepts."

"You don't have a tender heart? You don't actually spend hours in prayer?"

"Well, no, but I *have* read the books and I know all the issues pretty clearly..."

"That's interesting, but you don't pray?"

“Well, I wouldn’t really say I *don’t*, but technically I don’t. I have the healing doctrine down!”

“How many cancers have you commanded out? How many demons have you rebuked that left?”

“Well, I don’t do that, but I have it clear and I know the issues; I know the bad stuff and the good stuff. I can teach a class.”

“How many demons have gone out at your word in the last twelve months?”

“I don’t do it, but I have clear doctrine.”

“Fasting? Do you fast? Or do you just understand all the pitfalls of legalism, but you never, ever do it? You never, ever give yourself to abandonment.”

WE DON’T HAVE TIME TO LEARN IT ALL OURSELVES; WE HAVE TO LEARN FROM OTHERS

To me the great heresy is the heresy of omission—the conservative, evangelical, charismatic world is steeped in the heresy and the falsehood of having all their I’s dotted and their T’s crossed with nothing moving on the inside of their hearts. That’s the ultimate heresy of the hour. I’ve talked to a lot of friends coming and going who are concerned about the things that are off about one group or another, and I’m not afraid of the groups that are a little off because they’re moving somewhere forward.

I believe I have enough understanding and discernment; I have enough people connected to me around the Body of Christ; I’m committed enough to the Word of God that I can handle some of the excesses and the abuses of some of these camps. I want to move forward, and I want to be inspired by people who are actually moving things in the Spirit—not laying it all out and having an argument, but never doing anything about it except for arguing about the people who do it wrong.

When they stand before the Lord, they may be shocked when the Lord says, “You know, your brilliant theology doesn’t impress Me at all because your heart was so cold, so unmoved by everything.”

I unashamedly celebrate what God is doing in different camps all over the Body of Christ, even camps I don’t fully want to jump into, but I tell you, I’ll borrow from them in a heartbeat. Why? Because I’m desperate; I want to go somewhere, and the people in my camp don’t have it all together. We just don’t have it all. We just don’t have fifty years to do everything intensely; we have to learn from all over history.

I’m not just giving a defense for loving these different camps; I’m actually making a point. It’s essential that we get over our phobias in the Body of Christ of people who are a little extreme on a few points. We have to get over this. We don’t throw our discernment away, but we don’t live in this incestuous, little circle of people exactly like us who are all protected from error, but our hearts are locked in spiritual barrenness and death. It’s, “Me, my, and mine, but at least we’re true or accurate.”

I look at that and I say, “Error! Heresy! Heresy of the worst kind!”

CHRISTIAN HISTORY DID NOT BEGIN WITH MARTIN LUTHER

It's what Jesus said to the Laodiceans: "You think you have it all together, and you're so totally disconnected from reality" (Rev. 3:17, paraphrased). We have to get over this paranoia.

In my zeal for these different ones, I don't try to make light of their errors. I don't look at some of my heroes and say, "They were great." No, they were really off on those two points, but boy, they were really right on these ten points. I can throw away the two bad ones and keep the ten good ones. Can't you? I don't have time to learn it all myself; I have to learn from others. We have to study and become students of contemplative prayer. The Protestant church must become students of contemplative prayer, and to do that, you have to go across that great, horrible divide, and you have to drink from Catholic history.

You're doing it anyway. All truth didn't start with Martin Luther; he borrowed lots of it. There's so much fear of doing that. "Now they're going to make me worship the pope and do funny things with Mary." They're not really going to do that. They're really not.

I've read these books for twenty years and no one made me do anything. I walked in saying, "OK, they're going to get me." No one has got me yet. It's been twenty years. I say, "OK, OK." No one made me do anything. I was anti-charismatic for a number of years. I was sure they were going to get me, grab my tongue and wiggle it, and make me do something crazy. I went into those meetings and said, "You're not getting me. I don't care." The first time I raised my hands in a big auditorium, I thought everyone was looking at me. I was freaking out, sweating, my hands were raised, I was the center of attention, and no one cared. No one cared. We're in pursuit of Jesus.

OPENING OUR HEARTS TO THE HISTORIC UNDERSTANDING OF THE CHURCH

I really don't know of Protestant writings on contemplative prayer. I just don't know of any. Richard Foster has done the best job that I know of, but even then, he's drawing significantly from Catholic history. I just don't know of contemporary or even historical Protestant writings that go into this reality. It's almost nonexistent. Beloved, we can't stop here. We have to go where the historic church has gone in the contemplative areas. We don't have to buy into some of the abuses and extremes and errors of different centuries. Some of those errors aren't errors that are inherent in different institutions; they're errors that are inherent in the time of history in which they lived. A lot of people in the 1200s had strange ideas. I read these and I throw away a lot of stuff, but, oh, there's so much good.

HISTORICAL CLASSICS OF CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER

Contemplative prayer—here are some of the classics. You're going to have to open your heart to Teresa of Avila. There's a process: I don't know the whole process, but I've read a little about it. She was declared a "Doctor of the Church" by the Catholic hierarchy. There are only two women in history who have been declared "Doctors of the Church," where they establish their doctrines as orthodox: Catherine of Siena and Teresa of Avila, the only two in all of history. They've looked at her doctrine of prayer and said, "There's nothing like it."

Now I can't prove this next point, but I've read it in three or four sources. However, it's such an astonishing claim that I'm sceptical, though I've read it repeatedly. Teresa of Avila was a young, single woman in Spain, in a poor country, in the 1500s. In 2001, her writings are the most sought-after, read, and purchased books in all of Spanish history.

I've read that several times. I say, "That can't be. Surely there's some old man who wrote about how to get rich and famous and sold more books than Teresa of Avila." I'll check that out more, but I've read in three or four sources that she's the most celebrated Spanish writer in history. She was this young, single woman in a monastery, with no money, no fame, no education, who learned the Bible herself. She had no formal training.

If you're going to go deeply in prayer, I want to encourage you to look at Theresa of Avila. Some of her theology is downright confusing, and some of it's just off, but a lot of it is stunning, stunning, stunning. It isn't either/or. It isn't as simple as being purely right or wrong. She's mostly right, but partly wrong, but that's the only option we have. Do we want the totally right or the totally wrong? That's way too simplistic. She's mostly right, but she's still wrong. When I look at some of the ways in which they viewed suffering in the 1500s, I think, "No way." Some of it's right, some of it's wrong. Again, every time I think I have it down, ten years go by and I say, "Oops. I missed that one."

DON'T GIVE UP ON BOOKS BECAUSE THEY MAKE YOU THINK

Then there's her friend and contemporary, John of the Cross, who was also from Spain. He died when he was forty-nine years old; she died when she was sixty-seven. They were partners, and their whole life mission was to experience and bring others into the deep things of God in prayer, in contemplative prayer.

I have a number of terms; I define it very differently than they did. They even define things differently than one another, but that's OK; as long as you know it and you're reading it, you can sort it out. It's worth the hassle.

Someone says, "I read the first couple of chapters and I didn't get it, so I laid the book down."

I say, "No! Get rid of this idea that if it takes a little effort, you should just call the whole thing off. Put some effort into it. So what if there's some work involved? We're talking about going deep in God." It doesn't have to be a sixteen-thought book that's nineteen pages long. If it actually had depth in it that you don't grasp in the first ten pages, there's nothing wrong with that. It doesn't have to have pictures.

My point is this: we're going hard after God. I don't care what it looks like; I want to go somewhere.

I read that stuff and I say, "Confusing, confusing, wrong, wrong, oh! Ouch! Oh! Ah! Ah! Oh! What? Confusing, confusing, wrong, oh!" I go through all kinds of ups and downs.

Someone asks me, "What do you think about that?"

I say, "I didn't get some of it, but boy, the part I got really changed my life."

Are we going to be a people who can read more than ten pages without quitting because there are a few new terms? Yes, we are. If I don't know it, do you know what I do? I study books with a dictionary next to me because I don't understand the words. I do; I have a dictionary right there next to me. I was pretty smart: I was in the top third of my senior class, almost. I didn't do the dictionary thing, so I have a dictionary there. I don't know what half the terms mean. I write inside the book. Then I name-drop those words later and my friends say, "Whoa!"

Contemplative prayer? I didn't have a clue what that was.

I said, "Contemplative prayer? What's that?" John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila are the two bright, shining lights of contemplative history. A Catholic priest named Thomas Dubay, who's probably one of the best-selling Catholic writers in America, wrote a book called *Fire Within*. We have a couple of his books; I don't think we have that one anymore, but get it at your bookstore. Look at it; again, it takes work.

He's one of the renowned experts on the life of Teresa and John of the Cross, and he has made a synthesis; he's brought together the key points of their life and their teachings. It's brilliant. You read it and you say, "Where are books like these today?"

Again, there are a few points I wouldn't agree with at all. There are even some points where it seems to me like he contradicts himself, but I'm sure if I talked to him he would say, "No, no, you didn't read carefully." My point is that we don't have to "worship" them to receive from them. We can think they're a little off and still be inspired by them. People like you and me, we're off a little but we can still inspire one another. Madame Guyon is another one.

"TRANSFORMED INTO THE SAME IMAGE FROM GLORY TO GLORY"

Contemplative prayer: we're talking about enjoying intimacy with God. Contemplative prayer: beholding God's glory. I'm reading from the NKJV; I have it right here in your notes, so you can just look down and read along.

"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18)—take that phrase "as in a mirror" and set it aside for a moment—"are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord."

It's the supernatural release of the activity of the Spirit inside of us. I would add another verse here; I would add the verse we sang so much this morning, Psalm 27:4 when King David said, "This one thing: I behold His beauty" (Ps. 27:4, paraphrased). Beholding the glory and beholding the beauty is the same thing.

IT EXHILARATES OUR SPIRIT TO ENCOUNTER THE GLORY OF GOD

Not that you have to pick the most important, but probably the most important contemplative verse that I know of in the Bible is 2 Corinthians 3:18. By beholding, by gazing into the glory, we are transformed. It's called gazing into the glory, beholding it, encountering it—encountering, gazing, waiting before the glory. That's a little abstract. There's plenty in the Scriptures, plenty in history, to show us how to go forward in this.

I have here three different ways that we behold the glory of the Lord. By the way, the key word for contemplative prayer is the word *enjoy*. We want to enjoy God. When we behold the glory, we can say we enjoy the glory. It fascinates us; it exhilarates our spirit to encounter the glory of God.

LIVING IN A FEAST OF THE THEATER OF GOD'S GLORY

We behold His glory externally, like David said in Psalm 19. "The heavens declare the glory of God" (Ps. 19:1). We look around and see the glory. I tell you, that's powerful, and again, we mostly have to turn to the contemplatives throughout history to really develop that—St. Francis of Assisi; St. John of the Cross.

I believe this is true; again, biographies are always a little exaggerated. The biographies are typically written by someone enamored by the person, so they always throw in that extra little jazz. “And they never failed. They were always faced like an angel!” They throw those little “always” words in. When you read their stories, these men had this fascination with creation. I don’t mean they worshiped it; I don’t mean the counterfeit. They would stare at a flower, or something, and behold the glory of God. In other words, they didn’t just study it scientifically in and of itself, but they thought on the fact that there was a real mind, heart, passion, and genius that worked on this, that created it, and there was life coursing through its veins, so to speak. They looked at a little leaf and cried. When you consider this little, plastic leaf—oh, these are the real ones; they’re wilting. OK, I didn’t realize that. It’s wilting. When you consider this leaf, there’s so much of the glory of God going on here. Of course, it takes time to quiet down.

The point is, some of these contemplatives throughout history would see the stars and the animals and the plants and they would say, “God, You’re absolutely awesome. This is incredible.” They would live in a feast of the theater of God’s beauty because they knew how to connect with it.

Thomas Dubay’s book, *The Evidential Power of Beauty*, is a classic. Thomas Dubay shows how science is proving the beauty of God in creation.

He’s a radical worshiper of Jesus. He’s not into worshiping creation in some false way. He hits all that really brilliantly. We don’t think much about the external form of contemplation. We understand the concept, on a stressed-out day, of going out for a long drive and looking at the ocean, or going to see a mountain, or going to see this or that, or taking a vacation for a day or two, but these men spent their entire lives gazing on the glory. It wasn’t just a four-day vacation where they dialed down and did it; it was a lifestyle of gazing on the glory in order to be transformed. They knew they would encounter beauty and it would move them; it would change their emotional chemistry.

JESUS, WHO SITS AT THE RIGHT HAND OF HIS FATHER

Number two: we gaze on the glory in the eternal realm. This is just fantastic. I have a lot of teachings on the beauty of God, and most of them are centered around the topic of the throne of God, the great scene around the throne in Revelation 4. I want to talk about that at one of the other sessions—how to meditate, contemplative prayer, gazing on the throne. I won’t go there now, but it’s this loving dialogue of meditating on the Word. When I read the Scriptures, many times I turn them into a loving conversation with a man on a throne. His name is Jesus, fully God and fully Man. He sits at the right hand of His Father, and I’m taking the Scriptures and I’m talking to the Man Christ Jesus, fully God, fully Man, and to His Father.

It’s extremely immature, even now, but I spent years developing the revelation from the Scriptures of what the throne of God looks like. You know that song we sang, Psalm 84, “How lovely is Thy dwelling place” (Ps. 84:1, paraphrased)? Let me tell you, God’s dwelling place is really lovely. When we sing, “How lovely is Thy dwelling place,” it means where His anointing is present, but it means more than that. It’s the jasper brilliance of God on a throne—the emerald rainbow with the sea of glass. That’s a dimension of contemplative prayer. We’re beholding the glory: we’re using the Bible, whether we’re speaking it from the Scriptures or singing it in a worship song; we’re using the Bible as the mode that brings us into dialogue with Abba. We’re beholding the glory and our hearts get transformed.

BEHOLDING THE HOLY SPIRIT DWELLING IN OUR SPIRIT

There's a third, very powerful dimension of contemplative prayer. It's beholding the glory internally—the Holy Spirit dwelling in our spirit. He's like a river of fire living on the inside of our being. This is where the Protestant church is, not 100 percent negligent, but 99.9999% negligent, with a few exceptions. We do a teeny bit of the external, but not much. We do a little of B; B is what we do mostly, but most Christians don't pray, so they don't do B, either. B is the one we do when we're in a pinch, and C is the one that's almost totally neglected by Protestants.

A PLACE OF ENJOYABLE COMMUNION WITH THE TRIUNE GOD

There's a vast world of reality on the inside of your being; He's the third person of the Trinity, and His name is Holy Spirit. He lives in you like burning fire. Even in the charismatic church, we believe in the anointing on us to pray for the sick, but we haven't connected with the anointing in us to bring us into deep communion with God's heart. We know a little about the anointing in us, so we get a small amount of revelation. I don't mean just as a source of revelation of Scripture; I mean as a place of enjoyable communion with the triune God.

THE BEHOLDING OF HIS GLORY RELEASES DYNAMIC INWARD TRANSFORMATION

This is what Madame Guyon and Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross were all describing. There are hundreds of books on these. They're brilliant.

Again, there are a few paragraphs you look at and say, "No." It's the internal gazing on glory that's the true, classic sense of the mystic realm. It's when the unusual things take place. I tell you, this is the most dynamic pathway into Ephesians 3:19, the fullness of God. God wants us to experience His fullness. The way into the fullness is through beholding in all three ways, but number three, the internal beholding of His glory, releases such dynamic inward transformation, the changing of our emotional chemistry.

THE INNER HEALING MOVEMENT NEEDS COMMUNION WITH THE SPIRIT

I can't wait until the inner healing community in the Body of Christ—I mean the real ones; there's the counterfeit inner healing, but there's also the real inner healing ministry that's profound in the Body of Christ—gets into connection with more than God as our Father and Jesus as our Bridegroom.

That's the first thing that has to happen before the inner healing is going to work. We have to behold the Bridegroom God and the Father God, and some of them do, but there's more than that. When they take the brokenhearted and lead them into communing prayer where they actually live in communion with the indwelling Spirit, with the Holy Spirit who lives in them, inner healing will take on a whole different look.

I look at a lot of the inner healing, and I'm glad for it because it didn't really exist ten years ago or twenty years ago, so at least we're inching forward. We've got to get the Father-God revelation, and the Bridegroom revelation, and then we have to get contemplative prayer. Then, inside of contemplative prayer—I'll distinguish it in a minute—communion prayer, and then we have a chance to get them healed on the inside. Then, after we lead them into that, we have to convince them that if they don't have anything to die for, they don't have anything to live for. We have to get them abandoned, because their heart only flows like a river when they're abandoned to Christ Jesus. We have to tell them to get rid of all their self-protection and abandon themselves to lives of prayer. I tell you, that inner healing room will be successful. But the inner healing room without abandonment, without communing or contemplative prayer, without the Father revelation, without the Bridegroom revelation, leaves me discouraged. Then we throw in faith; then we throw in the healing anointing, the prophetic anointing, and a few other things. The Lord is moving the Church forward on all of these fronts. It

isn't like He's making one part of it mature; they're all moving forward and He's going to bring a synergism on all these fronts.

He's establishing this front of inner healing; I'm convinced of it. It won't work as it is in most places right now, in my opinion. The Lord says, "Be patient, little man. I'm not done. I'm setting them up. Just give them a break. They're doing what they're told to do. I'm setting it up and I'll bring it all together later."

AMBUSHED BY THE LORD WITH THE COMMUNION OF THE SPIRIT

Go ahead and turn the page. "Communing prayer." This is where I get the term. It's my term; I don't mean I own it. By the way, you know our copyright is the right to copy. Any tapes, literature, all the stuff on the website, you can have it. You can do anything you want with it. It's yours. I call it communing prayer because of this verse: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Spirit" (2 Cor. 13:14). We're communing with the Holy Spirit. It's my own little term, and I've used it for years. It isn't in itself some kind of official theological term.

I first read Madame Guyon's book in 1981. It was in the summer of '81 that I was really ambushed. The Lord was setting me up, just as He's setting you up. He's always ambushing, He's always setting us up for something, isn't He? I was so desperate in 1981. Again, I had prayed for three or four years. I read stories of people who went on long fasts. I didn't even know why I wanted to go on one, to be honest. I just said, "I want to try one once. I don't want to go on two of them; I just want to go on one, one time in my life."

For three or four years, I asked the Lord for that. I said, "Lord, I want to go on a really extended water fast. I want to see how this thing works." I read a bunch of books on fasting and I never could make it past day five. I did the old "banana split" thing on day three. Sounds like I'm not the only one who did that.

Anyway, in 1979, 1980, and 1981, I said, "Lord, I want to do one of these, one of these days." The reason I mention the fasting part is because fasting sensitizes you. It makes you so vulnerable to the Spirit. It doesn't have to be a water fast, but in my opinion, the water fast sensitizes you more profoundly. It's a more intense, sensitizing dimension in a short amount of time. It doesn't matter what kind you go on; that's not my point. When you go on a long fast, it makes you so vulnerable to new things in the Holy Spirit. You don't even have to be open to it; it just gets you. You're sort of docile in your spirit. You're thinking, "Whatever, Lord, I'll take anything."

It was during that extended fast in the summer of 1981 when one man gave me Madame Guyon, and another man gave me a few books on John G. Lake. On the first reading, you couldn't imagine any books that were more opposite. Madame Guyon was talking about suffering with smallpox so that her beauty would be destroyed, so that she would be ugly, so that she could be godly. Yet she had this gentle, deep, silent inner world. I said, "Whoa."

I would read that from 10:00am to noon and take a little nap. Now it was 1:00pm, and I was reading John G. Lake from 1:00pm to 4:00pm. He basically said, "If you go to a doctor, it's of the devil. I will never submit my body to human physicians, and devil come out or I'm coming in after you!" He had kind of a violent aggression in this healing anointing that wouldn't take anything less than perfection in the power of God. I would read that from 1:00pm to 4:00pm, take another nap, wake up, and read Madame Guyon again.

I did this for weeks. I only read it because I was too tired to read my other books. They just came to me, and I know it was the Lord now, but it was a setup. I walked out of that period of time dizzied. I warned the church I was pastoring in St. Louis; I said, “Watch out, I’m full-blast reckless and you’re warned right now. I’m ready to cast out every devil. I’m ready to go deep in contemplative prayer. I don’t know what they mean. I hate the way the church is. I don’t like my ministry, I don’t like the way you guys are living, I don’t like the way I’m living. Everything is changing. I’m warning you, I’ll start today.” I was only twenty-five. My main virtue wasn’t getting on the long-term vision plan. I wanted it today. I said, “I’ve been backslidden, you’re backslidden, and we’ve got to change this thing. We’re passive about sickness. We’re prayer-less.”

Anyway, I just went on and on and on. One of the elders said, “Why don’t you go back and fast some more? Get out of here.”

I was all confused about those realms, because one was this violent, John G. Lake aggression that’s so awesome, and another one this passive, receiving anything that came, and going deep in her spirit with God. I just went back and forth. I couldn’t sort it out. I preached every other Sunday on the other one. I’ve preached that church down a little, I admit. Someone had to pay the bill for my schooling, so they did.

Twenty years later, I look back at it now, and those are two of the lives that have impacted me the most. It isn’t like I hear Him saying it, but I’m imagining Him saying something like, “I was setting you up for a lifelong journey. I want them both to go together.”

Then just a few years later I ran into Bernard of Clairvaux. I mean, I ran into his book. I didn’t have a mystical experience. Don’t worry, I’m not there. That’s not where I am.

I ran into the life of Bernard of Clairvaux, and he put John G. Lake and Madame Guyon together and lived in fasting and prayer and signs and wonders, and was absolutely lovesick on the Song of Solomon. Then, just a few years after that, I encountered Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross and others.

THE MOST POWERFUL, MOST EFFECTIVE FORM OF WARFARE

I thought, “I’m a fiery intercessor. I’m a revival man. I want revival in our cities. I’m a warfare revival man. I’m not the kind of person who just sits in his room and cries.”

And the Lord said, “Maybe you’re both.” I think they’re both two sides of the same coin.

In the last decade or two, I’ve come to understand that the most powerful form of warfare is to connect with God at the heart level and to be abandoned to God in the Spirit in your inward life. That’s warfare—drawing a sword, ready for trouble in the kingdom of darkness, when there’s might in our spirit.

Like one man said, “It’s the shout that has clout. The problem today is the shout has no clout.” People shout and scream and get hoarse. “Jesus, I know, Paul, I know, but who are you guys?” is what the demon says (Acts 19:15, paraphrased).

WALKING TOGETHER IN THE TENSION AND HUMILITY OF EMBRACING DIFFERENCE

I think we have to put it together, along with a few other areas that I don’t understand, but I know these are just a few of the areas. The years will come and go and the Lord will say, “You didn’t have it clear in 2001. You

had a couple of really important components, but there's more. There are other members of the body, there are other traditions in the Church, and you have to go further with others, hand-in-hand."

Isn't it great that you don't have to have it all together? Isn't it great that our peanut little brains don't have to comprehend it all? That we, together in love, hanging onto each other, can have different emphases in one Body of Christ, even in the context of one team? We have different people on our team who have some really extreme theological positions, directly opposed to one another. I said, "You know what? Better than having everything perfectly together is that we walk in love in the tension and humility of embracing some differences. That's even better." It keeps us honest.

Look at the next verse on the notes: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Spirit" (2 Cor. 13:14). I first learned this phrase in the NASB, where it says, "Fellowship of the Spirit." Then, about fifteen years ago, I changed Bibles from the NASB to the NKJV, and I lost my favorite term, "fellowship of the Holy Spirit." I opened my NKJV to 2 Corinthians 13 while I was preaching on the fellowship of the Holy Spirit and it wasn't there. I said, "Ah! What happened?"

The people said, "We think he's breaking down. He's in a crisis." There was no fellowship of the Holy Spirit in the NKJV. It said, "Communion of the Holy Spirit". So I changed my term from "fellowship of the Holy Spirit" to "communing prayer." "Call it what you want," is the real point I'm making.

COMMUNING WITH THE WORLD OF REALITY ON THE INSIDE OF US

The other key verse is John 14. Jesus is teaching about the Holy Spirit, and in the NASB it says, "The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you" (Jn. 14:17, NASB).

These three verbs, *receiving*, *beholding*, and *knowing*, intrigued me. It must have been Madame Guyon's book that first taught me this; it was so many years ago, I can't remember, but maybe I got it from her. I'm not sure. But I put John 14 and 2 Corinthians 13 together, and they said, "Beholding Him, beholding the Spirit."

How do you behold the Holy Spirit?

Jesus said, "You'll behold Him because He will be in you."

I started thinking, "Beholding the Spirit?" Again, maybe I read it from the books and then forgot about it. I came to my own conclusions, but I said, "Beholding the Spirit? How do you behold and how do you know the Holy Spirit?"

What we end up with is that we know Him through analytical, scientific observation. When God is healing someone, we know that's the Spirit. No. It isn't talking about analytic ability to scientifically dissect the operation of the Spirit in the healing process. That's not what it means by, "Know the Spirit." To know the Spirit means intimate friendship, communion, fellowship, deep partnership with a person.

Again, I didn't hear this, but the Holy Spirit might say something like, "Where do you think you behold Me and know Me? I live inside of you."

There's a world of reality on the inside of us. We behold, receive, and know the Spirit. One of the ways you behold the glory is by beholding the indwelling Spirit. You behold the glory of God in creation, by looking at a leaf and crying. You behold the glory of God eternally at the throne when you meditate and worship, but we behold the glory in our own spirit. We behold the Holy Spirit. We know Him.

I was reading these books and was getting really excited. Again, I was more of a David Brainerd revivalist, in the line of Charles Finney and Jonathan Edwards. I said, "Beholding the Spirit? I don't have a clue what that means." I had no experience with this at all, but I said, "Count me in, Lord."

Again, when you're on a long fast you're just so vulnerable; you're sort of open to anything if it's in the Word. Then we get strong again and we put our defenses up and then we explain the Word away. You know what we do? When we get strong again, we find ways to explain the Word in such a way that it doesn't mean what it says that so we can live our carnal lives and never, ever face the reality that we're not as abandoned as our friends tell us we are to God.

I found that a lot of people, as long as they live in the reputation that they're abandoned to God, and their friends think it and they talk about it, actually believe it, and that settles it for them. Whether they're abandoned to God, whether they're totally radical to God, isn't the critical point. What matters to them is that they have the image and reputation before others. That means nothing. The issue isn't settled because people think I have passion for Jesus, because I put that title on the book. It doesn't mean anything to God's heart at the end of the day. We need to know Him. We have to go after this.

I'll quit right now. We'll take this up tomorrow, because I want to give a little clinic time on beholding the Spirit and communing prayer tomorrow. I think we've covered enough. You can look at some of the notes on Teresa's book *The Interior Castle* and some other things here.

MINISTRY TIME

Amen. Let's just end it with that. We will pick this up. Bring these notes tomorrow if you will. Put them in your Bible. We're going to have a clinic time on communing prayer, contemplative prayer. Remember, contemplative prayer isn't just the communing, inward fellowship of the Spirit. Contemplative prayer, in my opinion, is all three dimensions. You can define it any way you want. Let's stand.