




Enjoy your prayer life

Michael Reeves





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Published by 10Publishing, a division of 10ofthose.com 9D
Centurion Court, Farington, Leyland, PR25 3UQ, England.
Email: info@10ofthose.com
Website: www.10ofthose.com

ISBN 978-1-909611-64-1

Designed by stevedevanedeign.com

Printed in the UK by CPI Ltd, Croydon



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www.uniontheology.org

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a division of **10**of those.com

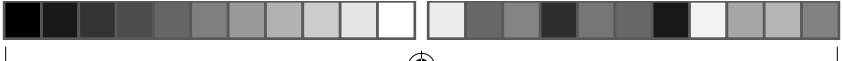




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“ Let Michael Reeves nourish and encourage your prayer life! I warmly commend this book to you. ”

PAUL E. MILLER - AUTHOR OF A PRAYING LIFE







THE PROBLEM WITH PRAYER

This is not a new revelation but sadly most of us are not good at prayer. That's the state of Christianity in the West right now, and it is concerning. Moreover, it seems even church leaders are not communing with God much. How healthy can their churches or fellowship groups be if this is the case? The fear is that parallels will slowly develop with the church in Corinth. There, through Paul's letters, you see the leaders of the church commending themselves, peddling God's word insincerely, and being fleshly not spiritual, proud, hypocritical and competitive. Their prayer-life was shameful, for clearly love

for Christ and dependence on him had been eclipsed by self-love and self-dependence. Prayerlessness always goes hand in hand with a lack of Christian integrity. This is even more so for Christian leaders – to put it bluntly, if they are not enjoying communion with God, then they are selling a product they don't really believe in. All that's compounded by the fact that – I

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know how easily – the importance and urgency of what they do can, ironically, collapse into self-sufficient busyness, causing them to be a bunch of Marthas (see Lk. 10:38–42). So as they groom themselves



to be successes at Christian life and mission, there's a vacuum when it comes to their actual communion with God. Now I stress strongly that I'm speaking as one failure to another. Nevertheless, in the light of this real concern about our prayerlessness, I hope this book will be a refreshment and a tonic – maybe even a kick-start! – for our prayer lives.



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WHAT IS PRAYER?

We need to think first about what exactly prayer is. This may sound silly, but I think confusion over it is a real cause of much of our difficulty. The reality is that it's very easy to think and speak about prayer as if it's some abstract exercise – one of those 'things Christians "do"'. And so we think: how can I get better at this thing called prayer? Now if you do think of prayer like that, as a thing on its own, the solution to a better prayer life is always going to be practical tips and techniques. So, for example, you sort out a prayer diary, get a prayer list app for your phone, use Operation World, try praying out loud, and



have your quiet time first thing in the morning. I specifically mention those things because I think advice like that is genuinely helpful ... in its place. However, that's not the heart of prayer. Furthermore, if those techniques are what hold together 'prayer' for you, then it's going to be a burdensome duty – or perhaps something that even veers towards magic, whereby you think you can get what you want by saying the right 'spell'. (And if you don't get the answer you want, you begin to question whether this magic 'formula' actually works.) The Lord says of Israel, 'These people come near to me with their mouth and honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me' (Is. 29:13). Thus prayer is not an abstract 'thing to do', for clearly you can 'do' prayer and get it all wrong. There is something vital underneath all the pragmatics. So what is prayer? It's never been put better than by John Calvin, who in his excellent little chapter on prayer in the Institutes calls prayer 'the chief exercise of faith'. In other words, prayer is the primary way true faith expresses itself. This also means that prayerlessness is practical atheism, demonstrating a lack of belief in God.

