

The **ENTRUSTED Leader's Workbook**
***“Barnabas”* Edition**

Seven Core Values that Impact Every Leader-to-Follower Relationship:
HEART-MISSION-APPROACH-STABILITY-LIFESTYLE-FORTITUDE-WORLDVIEW

Lesson Twenty: The Discipline of Prayer and Leading with Fortitude

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Lesson Twenty: The Discipline of Prayer and Leading with Fortitude

CORE VALUE: The FORTITUDE for leading built on the love and sovereignty of God and the discipline of prayer.

BIBLE VERSE(S): Mark 1:35

ONE SIMPLE TRUTH: A disciplined prayer life helps a person lead with fortitude.

APPLICATION: Adopt the discipline of prayer and make praying the number one priority in every opportunity to lead others.

Introduction:

Fortitude comes from prayer. The responsibility of leading others can leave a person feeling discouraged and alone. The old adage: “It’s lonely at the top” often rings true for the leader who faces tough decisions and adverse circumstances alone. A disciplined prayer life helps a person lead with fortitude because prayer connects a leader to God’s perspective and power. Prayer generates peace, courage, and the fortitude to lead others.

God does not intend for you to shoulder the burden of leadership solely upon the strength of your finite skills, abilities, and personality. God stands ready to help. A leader gains access to God’s infinite power through consistent and disciplined prayer. Boldly coming to God’s throne enables a leader to accomplish the good works which God purposed and prepared in advance for the leader to accomplish. The leader who neglects the opportunity of prayer essentially has ignored the surest resource of infinite power and wisdom available to help him or her guide others. Leaders don’t have to go it alone!

Effective leaders normally possess self-discipline. People who take ownership and responsibility for their own growth typically excel as a leader. Excellent leaders order priorities which improve their efficiency in leading others. They do whatever it takes to become the best leader possible. Excellent leaders constantly work to perfect their skills and abilities. They govern and control their own attitudes and behaviors. They set and live by standards far above the social norms. They pay attention to details and their work ethic remains second to none. They live orderly and organized lives. These self-imposed disciplines rule every area of an effective leader's life. For a leader who desires to emulate Christ, self-discipline should rule one's prayer life as well.

As a follower of Christ, disciplined prayers enhance a person's leadership efforts. God desires you to make prayer a daily priority. A routine of coming before the Lord in an orderly fashion yields much fruit. Make your requests known to God and wait expectantly for him to answer. A disciplined prayer life helps a person lead with fortitude. Wise leaders adopt the discipline of prayer and make prayer the number one priority in every opportunity for leading.

The noteworthy leaders of the Bible called out to God in prayer. They believed in the power of prayer. The saints of old trusted that God heard and answered the prayers of his leaders. No circumstance was too small or insignificant to pray about. These leaders prayed expecting to see God's hand move in response to their prayers. They so ordered their lives as to make prayer a priority in their daily routine.

The discipline of prayer can be broken down into two simple components: The priority of prayer and the expectation of prayer. The leader, who strives to follow of Jesus Christ, can benefit greatly by integrating these two simple components of a disciplined

prayer life into his or her daily routine. Read the following passages of scripture and answer the questions that follow.

“Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.” (Mark 1:35 NIV)

Questions of the Biblical Text¹ (Mark 1:35)

Where did Jesus go off to?

What did Jesus do when he got there?

What time of day was it?

“After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone...” (Matthew 14:23 NIV)

Questions of the Biblical Text (Matthew 14:23)

Where did Jesus go?

Who was with him?

What did Jesus do when he got there?

What time of day was it?

¹ Unless otherwise noted the questions listed in *The ENTRUSTED Leader's Workbook* are based on: *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996, c1984)

Questions of the Biblical Text (Luke 5:16)

Where did Jesus go?

With what frequency did Jesus withdraw?

What did Jesus do when he got there?

Commentary: The Priority of Prayer

Jesus routinely retreated from the crowds that constantly surrounded him to get alone and pray. He sought solitary places where he could talk to his Heavenly Father privately. Jesus started many days in the pre-dawn darkness talking to God. He concluded many days praying alone late into the night. Jesus made prayer and time alone a priority.

Modern technology, (cell phones, email, airline travel, etc) has accelerated communication, compressed time, and eliminated the lag time leaders use to have to sit and think before acting. People now expect instantaneous decisions in line with the rapid flow of information. The pace of the marketplace races at mind boggling speeds. The global arena never sleeps. Recognize that you lead in an environment that has surpassed most leaders' cognitive ability to keep up. To survive you must carve out alone time in your schedule and then protect with all diligence. Time alone with God must be a priority that every leader who follows Christ does not compromise.

The leader with good intentions to pray but no follow-through receives no benefits. Talking about prayer but failing to execute goes down as a waste of breath. Reading "How to" books on prayer leaves a leader still powerless unless he or she

implements what one learns. No amount of good intentions, talk, or knowledge about prayer can substitute for actually getting alone to talk to God. The leader who follows Christ must make prayer a priority on a daily basis.

Most leaders possess packed schedules. Leaders typically have more demands on their time than they can possibly satisfy. Busy leaders can list countless good activities that seem to demand a precedent over praying. It is very easy for a leader to believe that the to-do-list must be addressed first in a day instead of the prayer list. The urgency of the moment easily convinces one that prayer must come later, after present circumstances get resolved. Unfortunately, later rarely or perhaps never comes for such a leader, so prayer goes undone. Time alone with God in prayer must occupy the top priority of every leader who claims to follow Jesus Christ.

Leaders often rely on a high level of self-confidence and self-reliance. They typically believe in their own ability to resolve problems and get tasks accomplished. A “can-do” attitude permeates action oriented leaders and a belief that: “I can handle anything on my own!” Past experiences and successes create a false sense of being able to handle any situation. Confident leaders must remain careful, however, for the temptation exists to ignore prayer and turn to self first. Such leaders subtly adopt a feeling that no need exists to tap into God’s unlimited resources. Self-reliance can lead to an attitude of not needing to make prayer a priority; or not needing to access God’s supernatural power. Pride convinces leaders that they can handle adversity on their own and that they are too important and busy to stop and pray. An absence of prayer creates a subtle and deceptive trap that leaders who follow Christ wisely avoid.

Jesus made prayer a priority. Jesus routinely removed himself from others and talked with the Father. Jesus retreated from the hustle and bustle of a busy schedule and the crowds around him. What a mystery: Jesus the second member of the trinity, fully God and fully man, recognized a need to make prayer a priority. Any leader, who claims to follow Jesus Christ, must take note of the discipline and priority of prayer that dominated Jesus' schedule. If Jesus needed to pray how much more do leaders who claim to follow him?

The temptation to give in to a busy schedule and not pray is great. The temptation to believe we can handle things on our own without prayer is great. The weakening of a leader's life as a result of neglecting prayer is slow and subtle, but sure. The erosion of a prayer-less leader's strength continues until the day he or she wakes up to a problem too big to handle. Leaders who follow Jesus would be wise to follow Jesus' example and make prayer the top priority within the framework of a busy schedule.

Jesus "often" got alone with God and prayed (See Luke 5:16). Jesus routinely prayed. His prayer life indicated a sense of order, discipline and forethought. Jesus did not just react to circumstances, he prayed in advance for God's will to be done. Jesus did not wait to pray in the face of adversity and danger. Prayer regularly dictated Jesus' schedule. Jesus did not ignore time alone with God nor did he treat prayer as an after thought or add-on to his schedule. Leaders who follow Jesus must incorporate prayer as part of their regular daily routine.

Jesus expected prayer to make a difference. David also prayed with the expectation that he would see God's hand move in response to prayer. Read Psalm 5:1-3 and consider the following questions.

Give ear to my words, O LORD,
consider my sighing.
² Listen to my cry for help,
my King and my God,
for to you I pray.
³ In the morning, O LORD, you hear my voice;
in the morning I lay my requests before you
and wait in expectation. (NIV)

Questions of the Biblical Text (Psalm 5:1-3)

When did David go to the Lord in prayer?

What might a morning routine of prayer tell us about David’s self-discipline and priorities? How can you apply this same discipline and sense of priority where you lead?

(Insert additional pages in needed)

What did David “lay” before the Lord?

What did David do once he made his request before God? Compare and contrast “waiting in expectation” on the Lord to answer a prayer and rushing off to initiate actions based on one’s own wisdom and understanding of a situation.

(Insert additional pages in needed)

Do you really “expect” to see God’s hand move in response to your prayers? Are you willing to “wait in expectation,” or are you more inclined to pray then initiate your own action? Explain your answer.

(Insert additional pages in needed)

Explain the difference between asking God to bless your plan of action and moving forward compared to asking God to initiate his plan of action and waiting patiently.

(Insert additional pages in needed)

Commentary: The Expectation of Prayer

King David understood the benefit of going before the Lord Almighty in prayer in the morning. God stands ready to hear prayers every hour of the day, but the discipline of an early morning conversation with God allowed David to present his requests before the affairs of the day became a distraction. Like all busy leaders, surely David faced the temptation of getting his day started based on his own strength and initiative. David resisted this temptation, for David knew that the best use of these early hours in a day was to pray about the circumstances he faced before taking action.

Many of David's prayer are recorded in the book of Psalms. Very often his prayers focus on God and contain words of praise, worship, and thanksgiving. One such

example is Psalm 100:4-5: “Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.” (NIV) Starting a time of prayer with praise, worship, and thanksgiving tends to get one’s eyes off self and immediate circumstances and onto God and his faithfulness and provisions in past circumstances. Acknowledgment of the greatness of God reorients one’s mind and heart off self and onto God.

In Psalm 5:1-3, however, David’s focuses on his requests. With praise, worship, and thanksgiving as the entry into God’s presence, David puts his expectation that God will respond to his requests in the forefront. In this passage one finds David’s trust and faith in God’s love and sovereignty on display. David petitioned God in the morning and fully believed that God would hear his cry. David fully expected to see God’s hand move in response. David’s prayer was not some formal religious ritual; no, David cried out to God for help in the midst of adverse circumstances and fully expected help to come.

David did not simply react emotionally to a bad situation with a desperate cry for help. David ordered his thoughts and prayers and presented them to God at the start of the day. This morning routine of prayer suggests that David possessed self-discipline and a sense that prayer had to be the top priority starting every day. Leaders should take note of David’s discipline of prayer for this is an easy discipline to incorporate into one’s daily schedule. Leaders, who desire to follow Jesus, have the opportunity to apply David’s example and start every day with prayer. Leaders should make a simple list of items that they face and make praying the first activity of each day.

David said: "...I lay my requests before you..." (NIV) The New American Standard Bible translates this quote a little differently: "...I will order my prayer to You..." The Hebrew word for "lay" (NIV) or "order" (NASB95) is *arak*. Strong defines this term as follows: "...to arrange, set or put or lay in order, set in array, prepare, order, ...to arrange or set or lay in order, arrange, state in order, set forth (a legal case), ..." ² The word means to present something in an orderly and disciplined fashion. David approached his prayer life with a sense of discipline. David "lay" or "ordered" his prayers before God.

Once David presented his orderly prayer requests before God, he waited to see God move. The NIV says David would: "...wait in expectation." The NASB95 says that David would: "...eagerly watch." The Hebrew term for "wait" (NIV) or "watch" (NASB95) is *tsaphah*. Strong defines the term as follows: "...to look out or about, spy, keep watch, observe, watch...to watch, watch closely." ³ The root of this word carries the sense of a watchman looking out to the horizon for any evidence of approaching danger. David made his petitions to God first; then David stood as a watchman fully expecting to see signs of God's hand moving in his favor.

Leaders by nature constitute people of initiative and action. Most leaders feel so secure and confident in their ability that they do not hesitate to launch a course of action to meet a situation. Acting without the preface of prayer can lead one to rash and foolish actions. While taking initiative has its place, a wise leader lays his plans before God first

²James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible : Showing Every Word of the Test of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books, and Every Occurrence of Each Word in Regular Order.*, electronic ed. (Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship., 1996), H6186.

³Ibid, H6822.

and waits expectantly to see how God in turn will move. Leaders must remain patient enough to wait on God and not simply take matters into their own hands.

Waiting expectantly on God to answer prayer comes down to the objective of a leader's faith. Either a leader trusts in his or her own ability to handle circumstances correctly, or the leader trusts more in God's ability to handle circumstances and expectantly waits. A vast difference exists between formulating your own plan and asking God to bless decisions as you move forward and asking God to initiate action and standing as a watchman looking for God's hand and then joining in his plan. Do you really expect to see God move in response to your prayers? Or, are you quick to initiate your own actions and hope God blesses them?

Application

A disciplined prayer life characterized many great leaders of the Bible. The belief that God hears and responds to prayer bolstered the fortitude of these praying leaders. These leaders faced difficult situations and adverse circumstances with courage as a result of trusting that God's hand would move in response to their prayers. Their relationship with God developed such that they acknowledged the limits of their finite strength and cried out to the Lord God Almighty to bring his infinite power to bear on tough issues. Consider the following list of great praying leaders from the Bible:

- Abraham (Genesis 20:17)
- Isaac (Genesis 25:21)
- Jacob (Genesis 32:9-11)
- Moses (Exodus 8:30-31)
- Samuel (1 Samuel 8:6-7)
- David (2 Samuel 7:18)
- Solomon (1 Kings 8:22-23)

- Hezekiah (2 Kings 19:15)
- Nehemiah (Nehemiah 1:1-4)
- Daniel (Daniel 6:10)
- Jonah (Jonah 2:1)
- Jesus (Mark 1:35)
- Disciples (Acts 1:13-14)
- 1st Century Disciples (Acts 2:41-42)
- Stephen (Acts 7:59)
- Peter (Acts 9:40)
- Cornelius (Acts 10:1-2)
- Paul (Acts 26:29)

As a follower of Christ, adopting the discipline of prayer will lead to fortitude for leading. The first step involves making prayer a priority. I recommend starting every day with prayer. Avoid the temptation of diving into your to-do-list first and keep sacred a few minutes alone with God before you begin. Come before the Father in an orderly fashion with your prayers well thought out. I recommend committing them to writing in a notebook so they can be easily recalled and answers can be noted. Expect God to answer. Wait patiently and expect God to move. Watch for signs and circumstances that indicate God's hand at work.

Personal Application

In the space below, list several items to about which to pray and commit to start every day discussing them with the Lord and then wait expectantly and watchfully for God to move.

(Insert additional pages if necessary)

Conclusion

Fortitude for leading rests on the love and sovereignty of God. The discipline of prayer connects a leader to the Lord and produces peace and courage. A disciplined prayer life helps a person lead others with fortitude. Leaders who desire to follow Jesus should make prayer a priority in their schedule and wait expectantly for God to answer.