

# THE PRINCIPLES FOR OVERNIGHT PRAYER

## DEPTHS OF PRAYER SERIES

We are going to look for principles for overnight prayer. In Luke 6 verse 12, *“And it came to pass in those days that He went out to a mountain to pray and continued all night in prayer to God.”* One of first things we notice not only in this verse but also in many verses that Jesus seems to have a favorite place to pray. We know the Mount of Olives was one of His favorite places. The Garden of Gethsemane was another of His favorite places. In the gospel of John it tells us that He frequented that place and that was how Judas knows that he probably could find the Master there. So Jesus had certain places that He used to go to pray.

The first principle for overnight prayer is the environment for prayer. To Jesus an environment could mean going to a place, going to a mountain, going to a garden and Jesus seems to establish certain environments. He has His special places and this environment in itself has a reason for it. Environment means the climate is right and conducive. In the natural there is such a thing as environment. For example businesses all over the world are always centered on the nerve center of the nations. Added to that we find that there is such a thing as environment, that is conducive to produce certain crop of fruit. There are certain fruits and vegetables that we can grow here, which we cannot grow in other countries. So there is such a thing as an environment in the natural.

In the spiritual realm, there is such a thing as an environment that is conducive to prayer. That’s one of the reasons for an overnight prayer. It produces an atmosphere that is conducive for us to pray in the Presence of God. Of course Jesus had His natural environment to a certain extend, there is a natural environment conducive to prayer like a natural scenic place is very conducive. When you go to a high

mountain, it just stirs up your spirit within you to just bring praise and worship to God and just enter into a realm of prayer. So an environment is important. Together with environment there are reasons why Jesus went to the mountain because He separated Himself from the hustle and bustle of life. It's a different thing when you take a time out from your business, from your work, from your country, from your family. You separate yourself in order to move into a conducive environment. Even in our own home we realized that it might not be very conducive to pray deep groaning intercessory prayers. So we realize that there are natural conditions that we could sort of make a choice on.

We look at Luke 22:39 and coming out He went to the Mount Olives as He was accustomed. I would encourage you that we may not have the time to travel all the way to the Mount of Olives. We may go to the nearest to a high mountain for a different environment altogether. Now here Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. It was His custom. You could develop it into a custom such that the overnight prayer becomes a part and parcel of your life, just like it's a custom to fast on a certain day. There are certain spiritual habits that we can develop and Jesus seems to do it almost every night. Jesus prayed in the morning and He prayed in the nighttime. It was a regular habit with Him. When the disciples wanted to find Him, if He is in the area of Jerusalem, they probably know they can find Him in the Mt. of Olives. If it was in Capernaum, it's probably in a house somewhere.

The Mt. of Olives has a long history of prayer. You will notice that even in the time of Moses, there is a Mt. Sinai. Even before God appeared to Moses, the mountain there is called the mountain of God. There seems to be a lot of spiritual activities that's going on that has soaked into the very stones, the trees and there is an environment. We all know there's such a thing. Like for example, if you go to Las Vegas and go to the casinos there, it gives a different environment. There is a lot of people hustle and bustle, gambling and all kinds of environment there. If you were to go to Prayer Mountain in Korea where it's consecrated to God for prayer, even the very place itself inspires you to pray. If you enter into a prayer grotto, the very walls and place has been saturated and soaked with the prayers of many saints before you. Thousands of hours of prayers have soaked into the very walls. In the same way you could have your favorite chair where you could always sit on the chair and always spending your time reading the Word. So that chair absorbs some of the soul quality and it provides an environment too.

Here Jesus was accustomed to go to the Mt. of Olives. It provides an environment He needs for prayer and the purpose of an overnight prayer. One of the principles behind it is it provides an environment for overnight prayer. You try to pray alone overnight, you will find it more difficult than in a place that is already a place of prayer and worship. It's easier and freer when you are praying together in this place that has been used as a place of worship. The worship and the teaching of the Word have been going on every Sunday in this place. It provides a different environment. Conducive and inspiring to move into prayer and its far easier when you want to pray in the spiritual as in the natural. Just as in the natural if you want to go in a fast. It's easier to go in a fast if a food environment does not surround you. Its easier to go into a fast when you are isolated from people with hardly any food around than to go in a fast in a specialized restaurant that serve the best buffet and the air is filled with the fragrance of various food. What is the difference in the natural, easier?

The word, easier is the keyword. In the spiritual the word easier is the same key word. We are talking on the spiritual sense. There is such a thing as a conducive environment that makes it easier for you to move into the Spirit that makes it easier for you to enter with prayer. That is why we congregate together all with our heart and purpose to move into the depths of prayer. Spiritually, we make it easier for ourselves to move into prayer. In Luke 22: 40-41 *When He came to the place He said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed.*

Now verse 41, He was withdrawn from them about a stone throw. Why is it that Jesus must separate Himself from His disciples? In fact you notice that His separation was in different degrees. First He separated Himself from the other 12 disciples, and then of His 12 disciples He separates them into Peter, James and John. So only Peter, James and John went as far as He did to a certain place. Then the rest would have one camp there and here is another camp. Here is Peter, James and John, His inner circle of three closest disciples. He left them there and He went a little further, a stone throwaway. Why didn't He stay with them for that prayer environment? In an overnight prayer one of the main principles as we look into it. Its important for us to realize that there is a conducive environment.

The reason is under point one, sub-point A is easier, and sub-point B is that it helps us to concentrate without being distracted. For that reason we switch off the lights so that you could have the impression of being alone with God. You don't have to keep looking at each other. When the lights are switched off it helps you to give the atmosphere that you are a stone's throw away from others. We provide an atmosphere to move into the depths of prayer. Here that the fact that Jesus had to separate from His disciples means that He has to provide Himself and create an environment for Him to pray through something without the distraction of His other disciples. In the same manner we try as much as we can to provide an environment and it's good that we have such a huge place to pray all over and you need some solidarity place. Then you just go to one corner and concentrate on praying. If you feel that the battle is getting heavy then you come and sit next to someone who sound like a motorboat that helps to keep you awake. So there is an environment that we provide in overnight prayer. So notice that to a certain extent we are gathered together in one place. Yet within this big place, we could provide different environment. You could choose to sit alone in one corner all by yourself or once in a while you could come together just like Jesus.

You noticed what Jesus did. He prayed and then He came to his disciples. He expects them to be praying. Probably He could join them in prayer for a while but He found that they were not praying three times. He did. He prayed and then He came back again to His disciples. He is coming here to get their moral support in prayer. How do I know that He wanted them to pray with Him? He asked them to. "Why cannot you watch with Me one hour?" So apparently He wanted them to pray with Him. The sad story is that they were never helping Him at all. So we realize that an environment is important. It's easier to pray overnight as a group than to pray alone. The atmosphere is created and it also provides a sense of solidarity breakthrough. Sometimes people make a comment and say we want a corporate prayer that tradition churches used to pray. These are what I call too traditionally bound. We have to mix both. Unless you have a personal breakthrough, you cannot pray intercessory. How can you pray for others when you are burdened with your own situation? So there has to be a mixture. Unless you have the free liberty where your own burdens have been lifted to the Lord, then you can pray fully with another. How can you help another carry a burden when you have your own burden and that is why in an overnight prayer, we provide for

both.

There is a time when you have to breakthrough yourself. Sometimes it takes the first hour to breakthrough. Like we have said there is such a thing like quality prayer and quantity prayer. Sometimes for certain people their prayers don't have quality. They may be so distracted. Their concentration and their faith level are not there. Their Word level is not there and so their quality could be about 50% and then they prayed for an hour. There one hour prayer with a 50% quality in time, it is 60 minutes in quantity. So they achieve a certain amount of work. Another person who learns to concentrate and pray at a 100% level of quality, in half an hour achieve what the other person achieves and in the same one-hour achieve twice as much as the other person. What we want is not only quantity prayer but also quality prayer done in quantity. Another person who has a 25% quality in his prayer, prays one hour, his one hour is only equivalent to that first person who was 50% in quality, is only equivalent to ½ an hour of that guy. When compared to the other guy is even less. It's only equal to 15 min. So we see here that we need quantity and we need quality in our prayer. So there is a mixture.

Many times it may take the first hour or sometimes the first 2 hours depending on how your spiritual level is. If throughout the week you have not been spending much time in prayer and you come for overnight, it may take you 2 hours before you have a personal breakthrough and you can move into other things. If you are spending your regular time with God and you build your spiritual life, you may take 15 minutes and move into other things. It depends very much on that.

So as we gather as a group, how can we fix a rule and say by a certain time we will start praying on all these prayer items. The Spirit does not lead people, who say that. They don't realize that there are no such things as a rule in prayer. We have to be sensitive. On a certain day the real intercession may start in the morning at a certain time. At other times it may start at a different time. We have to be led by the Spirit and not by rules because weekly circumstances are different and based on the different circumstances and the different amount of time we spend with God every week. It makes a difference when we come for overnight prayer, we provide for a lot of individualism yet there is a corporate thing. You notice that we used to do it right towards the end when everyone had at least prayed some and broke through

some in the spirit before the corporate prayer can be powerful. If you try to do what we used to do right at the beginning, you will notice there's a difference. Unless there is a personal breakthrough, your effectiveness for corporate prayer is very much less in quality. So that is the first reason, the environment, Overnight prayer provides an environment that is conducive for personal breakthrough; for intercessory prayers to be made for whatever is in your heart and mind and it provides an environment for corporate prayer and seeking God separately on some common things that we all have to move in.

The second principle on overnight prayer is to realize that in an overnight prayer, you not only face a spiritual battle, you face a physical battle. It's your physical battle of your body. It's your body that you had to overcome. Let's look at Matt. 26:43 *and He came and found them asleep again for their eyes were heavy.* That's an overnight prayer because right in the early morning He was captured. The familiar word that says the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak is most true in an overnight prayer. But let's look at it from an enemy perspective. That if Satan was to confront you in an overnight prayer, what would be his technique? Like a chess player you have to find out what the other person wants to do. When you play chess, you cannot just think about your strategy. You cannot just think about your plans. You have to figure out what the other person's plans are and then you move accordingly. Otherwise you can't win. You have to do your best in deducing what that person is planning. The one who counters plan wins because his plan is bigger. His strategy could contain what the other is planning. The strategy with the most foresight wins the game. In the same way in spiritual battle we have to know how the enemy will work against us in such a meeting like this. Obviously, if I were the devil and I were to come to you and realize that you are going to attack me in the overnight prayer, I will attack you in 2 areas. I cannot touch your spirit because you're born again but I'll do my best to attack you on 2 areas. One is your body. The other is your soul. I'll do my best to send darts and send my demons on sleep, slumber, tiredness and weariness into your presence as much as I can. If they cannot come near because of the angels, then I would try to throw some darts of distracting thoughts to you. Try to remind you of earthly responsibilities. Try to bring to your heart and your mind distracting thoughts that would reduce at least the quality of your prayers.

So the second principle you have to see your opponent's strategy against us.

Definitely in an overnight prayer is to learn how to bring our souls and our body to harmony with what our spirit intends to do. There are techniques for doing that we realize and one of the sub-points that you could include is to avoid positions that are not conducive for prayer or rather too conducive for sleep if you are very sleepy. Avoid the lock style, that is, to lay flat back and pray. It will never work if you are sleepy. It will only work when you are perfectly wide-awake. The basic principle is if you are very sleepy, you got very limited choices in your posture, standing, walking, walk and pray. That's the only way if you are very sleepy. The most important thing you'll notice is that it does not last. There are natural ways you could overcome it. Sometimes instead of doing what people do, where they would sneak out to grab two cups of coffee and come back wide awake. Remember we used to have breaks in our overnight but now we realize that corporate break may not be conducive. If people need break, let them individually take their break. At least while they are taking their breaks somebody else is continuing. So on a corporate sense it's continuous. That may not be the best antidote. There are others much better natural ways, like for example if you just go outside take a walk right round the building and then come right up, your sleepiness may be gone because of the change of environment in the nature. So you must know some natural techniques. Avoid the lock style when you are sleepy. Avoid the kneeling on a chair. Avoid leaning on the floor and all those various styles are not conducive when you are really very sleepy. They may be okay while you are wide-awake but they are not harmony.

You will notice this that when you are very sleepy and you accidentally engage in conversation with someone and instead of prayer time, you started a fellowship time. The conversation is so interesting you lost your sleep. How is that possible? When you pray you were sleepy. When you talk you were wide-awake. Isn't it marvelous? Some people are very sleepy when they pray. When they take their break, they are very wide-awake. Then they go into prayer again, they began to feel sleepy. What's the reason? When you talk you began to engage yourself mentally. So we realize it's not just your body that struggle, there is also your mind. It's in your mind. The moment you accept the fact that you have not have enough sleep you get to fight your body. You have been working in your office and came straight from your office. You accepted the fact that you have only 4 hours of sleep. Sometimes you may be able to have a nap, not all the time. So we have to fight and bring our body into harmony.

The most important thing is in the mind. If your mind tells you any day that you didn't have 8 hours sleep, you're gone. Who said that any day that you didn't have 8 hours sleep the night before you are finished? You'll go about through the day like a zombie. Who said that? Why accept that fact in your mind? So it's more in your mind and partly in your body. But the mind is stronger than the body and the Spirit of God is stronger than the mind if we allow God to flow through our life. So the second principle, remember that in an overnight prayer, there are techniques that we have to develop to bring our mind and our body to harmony.

One of the reasons why we have you to write down certain items is so that your mind would be brought into a concentration on certain items that you are praying for. Remember that it may take ½ hour to bring your mind and your body into harmony before you could move into quality work. We all realize that there is such a thing as warming up. When you start your car in the morning, you will have to give your car a warming up. In the same way if you are doing exercises, you don't just straight away run a marathon. Bad for your body! A lot of people think that exercise is good. Yes, exercise is good but it must be increased gradually and then there is a certain scale. If you over do it, it will work against you. Beyond that it becomes a deterioration of your body in fact. So there is such a thing as an optimum. So in the same way we have to realize that there is such a thing as warming up when we start praying and during that warming up spiritually what we are doing is bringing our soul and our body into harmony. To move into the quality prayer, there is such a thing as quality time for study. In the spiritual sense, there is such a thing as when we pray. Usually it's in an hour when we bring our body and our mind to harmonize with us. Then we move into quality prayer.

Another technique physically in overnight prayer is to realize that your body needs to have some movement all the time. If you are kneeling down, you have to move into a physically rhythm. Rhythms are the spices of life. Music is rhythm. You put on the music. These are rhythms of airwaves hitting your eardrums. So there is such a thing as rhythm and what you would do is go into a rhythm in your prayer. Some of you have very unique rhythms. When you walk there is a rhythm. So in overnight prayer your body has to get into a rhythm in order to overcome fatigue and sleepiness and weariness. Get your body into a rhythm. If you are sitting down, your body could be moving, swaying rhythm. Of course you don't have to overdo



those things. You don't have to shake like an old Ford car or like some old buses when you get on them. They really jerk you. It's most important to conserve our strength. It's a different style when you adopt when you run 100 meter than when you run a marathon race. In 100 meter you perfect your technique very much. Every movement counts. A split second count is very important but a marathon race is different. You do not use the same technique. It's your ability to conserve your stamina. At a certain point you burst into high speed. At a certain point you conserve and especially towards the ending, you must have the last reserve tank. The final run is important. It's important to realize that there are different techniques involved. So get into a rhythm when you are sitting down.

If your body could get into rhythm, it's easy to go through something because rhythms are the spice of life. It's just a flow. There is a rhythm involved if you want to maintain something physically long for certain period. So you have to flow with your body. How can you get your body to flow with you in harmony unless you know your body? Your body works in rhythm. Your heart has a rhythm going on. So you flow along. You bring your body into a rhythm as you pray and you can combat the fatigue in your body and bring your body into harmony. Your mind needs to think on the right thought. At first it may be difficult. That is where the preparation of the mind is harder because what your mind is going to think depends on what you're going to do today and what you did throughout the week. If you have been living the wrong kind of life and reading the wrong things, when you come for this type of prayer, you will have a hard battle with your mind. So the preparation of the mind is hard to do right on the spot now but you should have been preparing.

But on the spot the minimum you can do is to get into areas of interest to you. The reason why your body is awake when you get into conversation is because the subject goes into the areas of interest. In the same way your mind is focused on interesting thing. If I were to tell you we are going to pray for the seals and the polar bears in the North Pole, I don't think you are going to last too long. But if you have a loved one who is not saved, you really have been praying for them, then your mind seems to be more burdened in that area. That is why we always tell you to write down things that you need to pray through onto the Lord. So that your mind could at least be brought on certain items and brought into harmony to flow with it. That's just the beginning but it had to start from there. It has to be areas

that are interesting to you. Then from there it breaks into the spiritual realm. If your mind is weighed down with too much anxiety, your prayers automatically become ineffective. Phil. 4 tells us, "Be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving and bring it before the Lord." Be anxious for nothing. So anxiety is not good.

What we need is to bring to God. 1 Peter 5:7, "*Casting all our cares upon Him.*" How do we cast our cares on Him by prayer? Visualizing helps the mind. Visualizing the things of God. Visualizing the answer to our prayer. Getting our minds into visions. That brings our minds into harmony. We can make a choice. Choose the right thing and it brings us into the right area. So in the second principle of overnight prayer is important for us to realize we have to have technique to bring our soul and our body into harmony in the spirit.

The third principle, for overnight prayer is to realize that in a long session of prayer that last many hours there will be waves of different things in the Spirit and sometimes there is a wave of a battle. In Eph.6: 12, "*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities, against powers, against spiritual wickedness in high places and wicked spirits of rulers in the darkness of this place.*" So there is a wrestling going on.

There are waves that you go through. A wave of prayer in tongues very loud. Then there are another waves of just building up. Then there are another waves of real heavy bombardment like Hitler just raining down the V2 rockets. There is sometimes a wave of sleepiness. You got to know what to do. Remember it does not last the whole night. They are only what I call periods. If you understand that there are periods that you go through the whole night, then you will be prepared. Just like you're traveling along the road. If you are going for a long drive to the countryside, you may have to go through the highway and maybe through a tunnel where there is no sunlight. This is a different experience altogether. So sometimes you experience the tunnel experience when you are praying long hours and the tunnel experience is like so difficult and every five minutes you seem to want to nod. Your eyes are very heavy. Your head is heavy. The wonderful thing is after that it disappears. It may last only for a period of time. There are waves that will last ½ an hour. There are waves that last one hour.

There are different types of waves in the Spirit realm in an overnight prayer. Just like sometimes when you are traveling there are places that you pass through that are very scenic. There are other times when it's just boring. Sometimes the road is narrow. Sometimes a lorry right in front of you and as you prayed through you will find it different now. Remember my experience that I shared. In a flat as I was praying, at first, it was easy. After sometime like I felt that a big fat lorry blocked me. The problem was not a big fat lorry you could see. The problem is these demons are invisible. So when they block your prayers for sometime, there's a spiritual battle going on. Those who have been traveling on a long journey will sometime be blocked behind a whole row of cars. But it's not going to be that way all the time. Then after sometime it slowly clear off. Then you're all alone on the road again and it's easy going.

Then when you come to a town, you got to shift gear because there are so many traffic lights. So you shift gears as you travel through the town area. In the same way as you pray in an overnight prayer, the different waves cause you shift to different gears. Remember it's not uphill all along the way in an overnight prayer. I have noticed that many times the enemies seemed to put on a heavier one between 4 am to 5 am. Since you are so regular in overnight prayer, you should know the enemy technique by now. For example, if I know the enemy is going to attack me at 4.30 every morning I am not going to adopt the praying mantis position that would help him. You would be even more prepared and say, 'Let's get ready for that.' The moment we know his favorite time to attack, that's when I am going to get into rhythm and get more actives but what people do is they walk and walk until 4.30 am. That's the best time the enemies come. That's the time they choose to change to the praying mantis position. Wouldn't it have been better if they had started as a praying mantis position and there are certain waves on the positive side?

When God seems to be doing something, God seems to be imparting something, get into it. Don't stand on the sideline and watch! The angels are active during that time and there you are, you still don't want to get into that area. When there is an anointing, you just get into the things of God and flow with the Spirit of God. There is a time for you to be alone in a corner. But there is a time when God is doing

something corporately. Sometimes people are not sensitive to the move of God. They don't move into that. Remember a spiritual highway lasts for only a certain time. You need to get into it. Get into the move of God. So there could be different waves. God can cause mighty waves. Sometimes the devil can cause waves of attack. So the third principle on overnight prayer is to be sensitive to the waves that God is flowing with. There's a time for individual building up. There's a time for flowing together. We need to be sensitive to the waves. It's important for each one of us to be motivated from the inside.