



THE BOLDEST PRAYER

Prayer: Our Foundation & Our Future | 7.19.26

Michael McKibben

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Michael McKibben 0:00

So as Steve said, I did start off as the comms director here, and I did jump into pastoral ministry. And I don't know if y'all have ever wondered this. Has anybody ever wondered, like, what's it like being a pastor? Yeah. Okay. Yeah. Well, I I will sit down and spend half an afternoon with you, explaining what it's like to be a pastor. But one of the best things about being a pastor is the weddings. Like you get to marry people, you get to see them grow and everything. And I love weddings. But one of my favorite things happens after the wedding ceremony in the reception called an anniversary dance. Anyone familiar with an anniversary dance? Show of hands. Okay, a lot of people in first service didn't know what an anniversary dance is. You need to get to know some more people that aren't married, so you can go participate in an anniversary dance. An anniversary dance is when the DJ or the band leader gets all the married couples out on the dance floor, and they do this dance. And what they do is they slowly whittle the couples down. It's always fun and cheeky because they're like, if you've been married less than one day, go and sit down. And the bride and groom, they go sit right, and hey, three years, five years, 20 years, 30 years, whatever, and they get to where there's one couple standing, the last couple that's married the longest. Inevitably, they ask this couple something to the effect of, "How on earth did you make it all this time? Because marriage is not the easiest thing in the world, right? And implied in that question is, hey man, there's seasons of harvest, there's seasons of famine, and how on earth do you make it all this time? What I want to do real quick is I want to do a bent tree anniversary dance. So if you're able, stand up. Let's do it. Come on, everybody, stand up. It's not optional unless you're not able, I guess. I just said, here we go. This is what we're gonna do. Those y'all first timers, I'm just gonna make it even more awkward for you. If today's your first day, go and have a seat. There we go. Thank you. Praise the Lord. Thank you for being here. This is an incredible church. I hope you come back. All right, one year or less. Go ahead and have a seat. All right, let's go three years or less. Three years or less at Bent Tree. Few. All right, it's going fast. Going fast. Five years or less. Go ahead and have a seat. Five years or less. Whoa, that one didn't get anybody. A decade. Who's been here 10 years or less? Okay, so everybody standing has been here at least 11 years. Wow, that's incredible! All right, 15 years, 15 years. Go and have a seat. Okay, took out a few, took out a few. I guess you guys met after Bentry because he sat down, but she's still standing. 20 years? Anybody been here 20 years? 20 years, 25 years. Come on, who's next? Is that Jen Howard? Oh my gosh! Hey, sister. Whoo! 25, 30 years. Who's been here 30 years or more? All right, you can stay up. You can stay up. That's all right. You're going down at 35 anyway. Okay, vassals 35 years. Oh my gosh, 35 years. All right. Who else is standing? Show of hands. I can't see my glasses. All right, 35, 40, 40 years. Watkins, my gosh, 40 years, 45. I do feel like auctioneer. 45, then 40, 46, 47, 48, or 9. All right. Is anybody? anybody standing besides this couple back here on the back? Oh, shout, shout loud! If I can't, who's that back there? Oh my gosh! How many years? 40-seven. Can anybody beat 40-seven? What's your name? Shout it out, Mike. All right, Mike. Mike, you've been here 47 years. You've seen some stuff, bro. You've seen some stuff. You've seen seasons of harvest, right? You've seen seasons of famine, have you not? Guess what, Mike? You're part of my story. I don't know you, but I praise the Lord for you, man. Go ahead and have a seat. I want to know. Last service we had the Giddens. They were a founding family, 50 years back there, and the Keiths back there.

Michael McKibben 4:12

I don't know what's with the risers with the the OGs, but man, thank you, thank you for for being there. Jennifer and I myself came across the threshold of Bent Tree in 1998, and what was fascinating about is we've been looking for a church for months, and we walked across the threshold and we sensed the Holy Spirit immediately tell us this is it. We hadn't heard a sermon, hadn't sang a song, but didn't even meet anybody. Literally paused, and we're like, wow, this is the place, and here we go. Dana Walker, are you in the room? Anybody know Dana? Where's Dana? If you're here, I don't know. I don't see him.

All right, he's normally back there. Dana Walker was instrumental in making sure that Jennifer and I continually felt connected here. If you serve in the hospitality or guest services, whatever you call it here, if you're on Paula's team. What you guys do is critical. Praise the Lord and thank you for that. Dana helped us feel connected. In my time at Bitree, I learned a lot. I learned a lot of things. One of the first things I learned when I met Steve Fursell is that he's a practical joker. He likes to have fun. Steve, one time I was taking a shower. I don't know if you know, there's showers over there by the gym. I was taking a shower after a workout. Next thing I know, the lights turn off. Like, ha ha, Steve, that's funny. I knew it was Steve, but what I didn't know is that he had taken my clothes and my towel. What is the guy to do? Fortunately, he left the towel just right around the corner, and then I had to walk through the hallway outside the gym on a scavenger hunt looking for the rest of my clothes. That's Steve herself. I also have learned that you do not speed in the parking lot of BitTree because those speed bumps are on a mission. Amen. Good night. Okay. I also learned that when I'm reading my Bible and I see what's up, girl. I see. Therefore, I ask, what's it there for? Yeah, sorry, I was just saying, hey, yeah. If you're reading the Bible and you see the word therefore, you always ask, what's it there for? I learned so much about leadership from people like Curtis Hoffman, Mike Wiltz, Paul Miller, Vonda Dyer. I learned what it means to follow Jesus and have a personal relationship with Jesus personally. Here, anybody else? Amen. I learned what it means to be a shepherd from Michelle Atar, Eric Willis, and Doctor, Pastor, Brother Livid Abraham. He's an incredible preacher, but if y'all don't know this. That man is a shepherd. He is an incredible shepherd, and you are blessed to have him. I also learned how to and developed my preaching gift here first from Mark Saunders all those years ago, who let me preach in the treehouse to a bunch of high school students, and Steve Pruitt and young adults, and ultimately Pete allowed me to preach up here before, and of course today because of living, I think one of the most important things that I learned, though, in my time at BitTree is how to pray. Learned how to pray, and there's all kinds of prayers, right? We're familiar with all these different types of prayer that we have. We have prayers of praise and adoration. We just did one. We open up the service with a prayer, a song of praise and adoration. We have prayers of confession, where we go to the Lord and confess our sins, and are met with grace, are met with compassion. Of course, we also have prayers of thanksgiving, where we thank the Lord for what He's done in our life. We just did that when we sang gratitude, and then. probably the most popular prayers of petition, right? Prayers of petition. When I got baptized over there in what's now the family theater in that freezing cold portable tube, yes. Whoever laughed knows you were in that thing, man. I had Philippians four six read over me as I was being baptized. Present your request. Be anxious to nothing. Present your request to God with prayer and petition and thanksgiving. It's biblical. We do this. We know this.

Michael McKibben 8:07

But I think there's another form of prayer that most of us aren't familiar with. We're very familiar with those prayers. They're part of our day-to-day rhythm as a follower of Jesus. Type of prayer I'm talking about is called intercessory prayer. It's called intercessory prayer-and that's the type of prayer that I want us to discover today to do a deeper dive on. Simply defined, intercessory prayer is speaking to God on behalf of others in the circumstances that they face, seasons of harvest, seasons of famine. Intercessory prayer is rooted in theology. It is mission focused by its nature. It requires that we take our eyes off of ourselves and we put them on others, facing outwards on the kingdom of heaven. It is this type of prayer I learned at Bintree from Joanne Hummel, from Julie King, from Kurt Baxter, from the late great Lois Han and Thomas Samuel. Intercessory prayer is all throughout Scripture. We see it, Old Testament, New Testament. In fact, I don't know if you know this, but Jesus prayed an intercessory prayer for us in the upper room. He prayed that we would be united with Him and that we would be united together as believers. This is a prayer that covers all followers of Christ over all time, all continents in the world. Intercessory prayer anchors us in our times of harvest, and it also carries us in our times of famine, our seasons of famine. And is in a season of tension between harvest and famine that the early church was experiencing. Where we find the text that we're going to look at today. If you brought your Bibles or have a Bible app turned on or navigate to Acts chapter four, if you can pick your translation in your app, I will be reading from the Christian Standard Bible, that is the CSB. If you want to read word for word what I'm saying, now in the CSB, the heading says the prayer for boldness. Does anybody say that? Do you see that? Prayer for boldness. Yeah, maybe not. Maybe you're not there yet. Maybe I didn't give you enough time. If if you've got a paper Bible, if you can write a note and it doesn't say boldness in there, put boldness in there because that is what this heading is. It's a prayer for boldness, but it begs the question: Why was there a prayer for boldness? Why? Why do they need to be bold? Bold. It's a weird word, right? It's just funny. Say it like bold, bold, bold, bold, bold, bold. It's just a funny-sounding word, and we don't really know what it means. I don't think because, at least maybe I don't know. Maybe it's me. Like when I hear "bold, I think like talkies, inflaming hot Cheetos, right? Like surely the early church was not praying simply for spicy snacks, right? What were they praying for? Was not spicy snacks. In order to understand what bold means, we have to understand actually another kind of funny word, and it's paresia. Paresia. It's a Greek word that is here in Acts chapter four that is translated throughout Scripture: bold, boldly, boldness. It what it means

is courageous, confident, willing to take risks, and it says in verse 29 that they were praying for all boldness, they were praying for all courage, all confidence, all willingness to take risks. Again, why? See, a fire had started in Jerusalem. It was a couple of weeks after Jesus' ascension, which means we're probably about maybe eight weeks after his resurrection. A couple weeks after his ascension, and the church is starting to grow. Pentecost has come. The church has grown from a few 100 to a few 1000 people, and there's no place for the church to meet. They don't have buildings. They, you know, they don't have life groups. Like before, the church was called the church. Before Christians were called the Christ ones. Before that, there was this movement called the Way. That's what the church was called in the first century. This predates that. There was no name. It was barely even yet considered a sect of Judaism, it was just a group of people that put their faith in Jesus, and they were trying to figure out what's going on.

Michael McKibben 12:48

And so, what they would do is they would gather regularly in the temple courts, and the temple was huge, big giant church, hub of activity, and the apostles were out there preaching. They were preaching the gospel in the name of Jesus, and it started to get crowds, crowds around people were like, "Hey, yeah, cool. They're hearing this and started raising a little bit of a ruckus. And as you might imagine, the people who led the temple didn't really like it. They didn't like it. As a matter of fact, the Sanhedrin, the people who were responsible for orchestrating Jesus' arrest and crucifixion, are the ones that subsequently come and arrest John and Peter for preaching, they say they put him in jail, and they're like, "Hey, don't preach! No more preaching in the name of Jesus. We got to take some time. You're going to spend the night in jail. We're going to figure this out. Okay? Can you imagine what it was like for the first believers, the early church followers, when the word got back to them? Peter and John had been arrested by the same people that orchestrated Jesus' arrest. How'd that work out for Jesus? Okay, it was great on Sunday, but that probably wasn't going to happen to John and Peter. People had to be thinking, like, bro, they are so cooked. Like, there's no way out. Sanhedrin met. They did actually let them out, but what they did is they threatened them more. Like, here's the deal. I'm gonna let you out, but you cannot preach in the name of Jesus Christ anymore. To which Peter was like, "Yeah, right. You know that's not happening, dog. So that's what happened. They get released from jail, and we pick up in verse 23. It says that they went to their own people. These are the followers. This is their close. Like for me and you, this would be our life group, our small group, or our Bible study. Yes, the church has grown to a few 1000 right now, but that's not who they went to. They went to their people, and they told them, reported everything to the chief priests and the elders that said to them. They spilled the tea, and I love the way the church responds when they heard this. Their people they raised their voices together to God and said, "Master, you are the one who made the heaven, the earth, and the sea, and everything in them. You said through the Holy Spirit by the mouth of your father, David, your servant. Why do the Gentiles rage and the peoples plot futile things? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers assemble together." Against the Lord, against His Messiah. For in fact, in this city, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, assembled together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed to do whatever Your hand and Your will had predestined to take place. And now, Lord, consider their threats and grant that your servants may speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand for healing. And signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus. This is no ordinary prayer. It is bold and it is rooted in theology and it is mission minded. I want to take a closer look at the theological foundation of this prayer, real quick. We see that they call on the God who creates, they call on the God who reveals, they call on the God who remains, and they call on the God who enables. Let's take a deeper dive into this: the God who creates, verse 20-four. They raise their voices. I love the posture here, real quick. You and I, when we pray nowadays, we typically just kind of bow our heads like that. Sometimes hands together. Sometimes, you know, you do this. Sometimes you do that. You know, and you know, mittens or whatever, and you interlock them. But we bow. That tradition started a couple 100 years after Jesus, probably about two, 300 current era. Prior to that, there were many forms and postures of prayer. We did that to recognize our humility before God as a fallen creation, humble way to go before our King.

Michael McKibben 16:33

Prior to that, when a situation like this, they were probably standing, arms outstretched, looking to the heavens, to God the Father in their prayer, kneeling did happen. We know Jesus knelt in the garden. We know that Solomon knelt at the dedication of the temple. So for big monumental moments, it was obviously common for people to pray. But in this situation, they would have been standing, eyes up, arms outstretched. You are the one who made the heaven and the earth. You are the creator of life. You are the creator of the heavens. You've created everything. You are the author of salvation. We are your creation. We come before you humbly. The God who reveals. You said through the Holy Spirit, you said, "How did God, the God who creates, how did He create? He spoke. He spoke, and it was there was nothing. He spoke, and boom,

God was creation was created. He spoke it into existence. God does not hide or hold back his plans. He reveals them to his children. He does not keep them hidden. Jesus did this with his disciples. The Holy Spirit does it with us today, as Mark talked about last week. And they're saying that God has revealed His plan through David, because what they're doing is they're referencing Psalm two right here. They're going back to Psalm two. What's fascinating about this psalm is it was believed for centuries that this was a psalm of David's where he's talking about his circumstances, and we are familiar with those, right? We see those a lot. But by the time Second Temple Judaism had come around, by the time Jesus was walking the earth, scholars believe that this was not merely a prayer about David's circumstances; it was a messianic psalm pointing to things that would happen in the future as it relates to the Messiah, who is Jesus. Why did the Gentiles rage and the peoples plot futile things? The kings of the earth make their stand against the rulers, and they assemble together against the Lord, against His Messiah. They're saying this is a psalm that is pointing to things to come, and we are seeing them unfold right now before our very eyes. When he talks about the nations, he's talking about Rome and their part in this. When he is talking about the people, it is the people of Israel. He's talking about God's chosen people, who unfortunately, in this very sad state of irony are now God's enemies because they are enemies of Jesus. When he talks about the rulers and kings, he's talking, of course, about Herod and Pilate. First believers were saying, "This is more than a little psalm about David's circumstances. This is something that is unfolding right now. This is something that unfolded right now. And historically, the Jews have gotten a bum rap from the church. They're the ones that tend to be completely blamed for Jesus' death. And what they are saying right here is, we look at Psalm. David predicted this, and everyone had a hand in it. Everyone, no one's hands are clean. This is what is happening. You are the God who revealed your plan. We see it unfolding right now. And after calling on the God who reveals, they call on the God who remains. Your hand and your will had predestined. This has begun because. You said it would. We're in a little bit of a power struggle right here. The Sanhedrin are like, "Hey, man, we're the you know sheriff in town, and you can't do this. And they're like, "No, no, we are calling on the one that is unmovable, whose hand cannot be shaken by the will of man, whose will cannot be changed by anything. We are calling upon you, the God who remains, the one who set this in motion 1000s of years ago before you, we are calling on you. They think that there is power. No, rulers and kings will come and go. God, you remain, you stay, you never change. Amen. The God who remains. I love the way Charles Spurgeon says this in his commentary on Psalm two. He has already done that which the enemy seeks to prevent. God's anointed is appointed and shall not be disappointed. That is what's going on with the God who remains, and they turn after that to the God who enables, let's go.

Michael McKibben 21:02

And now, Lord, consider their threats and grant that your servants may speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand for healing and signs and wonders performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus. I love the way that they respond. Their first reaction was not to complain. Their first reaction was not to fight the system. They didn't get politically involved. They didn't go on social media to roast people. No, their first response was to go to the God who creates, the God who reveals, the God who remains, the God who enables, and go to him in a bold intercessory prayer, saying, "Forget our circumstances, Lord. We want your kingdom to come, and your will be done. That is how they respond. Deeply theological, kingdom focused, y'all. People in the West don't pray like that anymore. I don't know why. I don't know if it's because, like Mark said last week, we're spoiled. I don't know if it's because the enemy has distracted us, pulled the wool over our eyes. I don't know why, but I can tell you right now: Carrollton, Texas; Frisco, Texas; Dallas, Texas-the United States of America needs more bold intercessory prayers. We pray like a dog with a tail between our legs. We ask, "Hey, take this away, get this persecution out of my life, Lord, or bring your judgment, your wrath upon them, Lord. Just bring peace to the situation. Would you just would you just settle it down? Just like bring the temperature down a little bit. Can we just simmer it down? That's not the way that they prayed. They prayed, give me confidence, give me courage, give me willingness to take risks in the face of those circumstances. That is how this church started because that's how the church started some 2000 years ago. Intercessory prayer is bold because it fixes our eyes on God's kingdom, not our circumstances. It's bold because it fixes our eyes on His kingdom, not what's right in front of us. When believers intercede, they're not protecting themselves or advancing personal interests, they're aligning their hearts with God's concerns and actively standing with others. That's bold. It is courageous. It is confident, and it is risky. It's prayers like this, rooted in theology, that force us to not look inward and start loving outward, seeing others. It's prayers like this some 2000 years ago, like I said, that started the church. It's prayers like this 50 some odd years ago with the Giddens in the Keys that started Bent Tree Bible Fellowship. 15 families being like, "Let's go meet the TCA. Let's do it because something God is calling us to the Bent Tree region of far North Dallas, it's prayers like this five years ago. A remnant of the Bentley Frisco campus is like, "Lord, you've got something in store for us in Frisco. What is it? We go before our knees. We call on the God who creates, the God who reveals, the God who remains, and the God who enables, and do signs and wonders through us. Speak through us, Jesus.

Why? So that the nations will come to know you-the Jew, the Gentile, everyone in between. Everyone. Intercessory prayer is bold because it fixes our eyes on the kingdom and not our circumstances. Some of the most precious moments of my life, some of my favorite memories are times at Bintree when people interceded on my behalf. I will tell you right now, this church prayed my children into existence. I would not be here if it weren't for the intercessory prayers of people before me, and I want to give you an opportunity to receive intercessory prayer today, because some of you, you're in a season of harvest. Praise the Lord, and you need wisdom and discernment to anchor you in this time. And some of you are in a season of famine, and you need intercessory prayer to carry you through it. Some of you, you kind of in both. You feel like something's shifting. You don't know where it's going. I'm going to ask Dane to come out here and play on the keys. I'm going to ask our intercessors from Bentry and from Frisco Community Church to come down below, so you can receive prayer. Y'all can go ahead and do that now.

Michael McKibben 25:44

And what I want to encourage you to do is simply come up here and tell the prayer team who's ready to pray for you. I'm in a season of harvest. I'm in a season of famine. I'm in both. And let the intercessors, by the power of the Holy Spirit, pray over your circumstance. You don't need to get into it. The Holy Spirit knows. Let the Holy Spirit speak through and pray over and through you by them. Some of you may not feel led to come down here. That's great. Guess what? I want you to intercede. I want you to call on the God who creates, the God who reveals. I want you to call on the God who remains and the God who enables. And I want you to pray for the future of this church. You just pray for the future of their church. Last 50 years, the next 50 years, you can pray for our church too, Frisco Community Church. I humbly ask, I would love you to do that. Pray for us too. I'm not going to lie. Frisco Community Church seems like we're in a bit of a season of famine right now, we would cherish your intercession. Go ahead and do that now, and I'll be back up in a few minutes. If you're receiving prayer, that's fine. Go ahead, prayers. Keep praying. If you're in line, keep praying. We will continue this as long as necessary. I want to tell you one more thing about intercessory prayer. Intercessory prayer is expectant. As we call on the God who creates, as we call on the God who reveals, as we call on the God who remains, and we call on the God who enables, we are reminded of the works that He has done in the past. We are reminded that what He's done, He can do again. We trust and hope that He will do it again. That He will enable us. That the good work that He started and prepared in advance for us to do, He will see through. We are expectant of His activity. That is one of the beauty, one of the most beautiful things about intercessory prayer, it says in verse 30-one of chapter four of Acts, when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled was shaken, and were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God boldly. I don't know that we're going to have an earthquake in Carrollton right now, but I would love for everyone to do. If you're able, again, if you're not in line praying, stand. We're gonna look and fix our eyes to the heaven with our arms outstretched and our palms out wide. As I pray for the future of this church, as I pray for the future of Frisco Community Church. I was in New York last week with my bride at Trinity Church in Lower Manhattan. You've seen it in movies, I'm sure. That congregation has been gathering for 600 years. I believe that Bent Tree can and will be here in another 600 years, and it is built and it is founded on intercessory prayers, like we just studied today. Like the founders started and prayed, and when they planted it, TCA all those 50 years ago. Let's go to the Lord. Great are you, O Lord. The Creator of the heavens and the earth, Lord, we are thankful today. We are thankful for 50 years, Lord. We are thankful for the Giddens and the Keiths, the founding members of this church that are still here. Their faithfulness. Thank you for their prayers that have impacted us today, right now. Their prayers for this church that we are a living testimony of, Father God, Lord, I thank you for the loved ones that we've lost, just even this year, Sheila and Patty. We miss them dearly. We thank you for their contribution, Father God, we thank you for every pastor that's come through this door, every staff member, every volunteer who has had an uncountable impact on your kingdom. Jesus, we thank you for that. And now, Lord, we turn our gaze to the next 550 500 years of this church. You may come back before then.

Michael McKibben 36:01

We don't know, but we are going to be praying, Father God, that you would give your servants a spirit of all boldness, Father God, that we would go confidently, courageously. We be willing to take risks as we speak the truth of your love and your gospel. We engage people with compassion. We show them your grace that people's lives would be transformed. They would come to know your Son Jesus Christ as a result of the ministry of these two churches, Father God. Lord, I pray for every single person in this room who knows you that you one day will sit down with them at the bema seat of Christ, and you look them in the eye, and you tell them, "As tears well, well done, my good and my faithful servant. Jesus, we expect you to finish what you started here, and we know that we will go through seasons of famine. We know that we will go through seasons of harvest. I pray that you would give this church leaders for generations. I pray for Frisco Community

Church that you would give leaders for generations to lead and shepherd us through those seasons, and that we would anchor our ministry on your word and your will, leading by your Spirit. Jesus, let nothing happen that is outside of your will in these two churches. I pray your prayer protection. Do not let the enemy have a foothold. Protect our leaders. Protect living. Protect the elders, Father God. Guard their hearts and their minds. Prevent them from stumbling. Lord Jesus, we love you, and we cannot wait to meet you. But until then, use us to share your love, your message of hope, your message of life transformation, with everyone that we can, boldly, courageously, and willing to take risks. I ask all of this in the resurrected, powerful name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.