



The following is a recent devotional written by Justin Rizzo of the International House of Prayer. You may remember Justin from leading worship at our Encounter Buffalo Conference and/or Good Friday Service a few years ago.

Having a desire to pray and connect more with God is a great first step to deepening your relationship with Him.

But I've found that getting an actual game plan in place to connect with Him more is vital to making it happen.

Communing or talking with God is a huge part of fulfilling the greatest commandment to love Him with all of our hearts (Mt. 22:37). Loving God with all of your heart isn't just evidenced by your outward actions or by abstaining from sin (though those are important); just like with any relationship, it is the time spent in communion and fellowship that truly builds and strengthens the bond you have with someone.

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I've found that having a set plan including "talking points" is important to help us begin to dialogue with the Spirit because the concept of 'talking to God' or 'communing with the Spirit' is so simple that it's really easy to overlook it and rarely end up actually doing it.

I suggest that your starting goal should be to set aside 2-3 minutes 4-5 times a day during which you intentionally and purposely stop what you're doing, quiet your thoughts, and focus on the Spirit and the glory of God dwelling within you.

Here are 5 phrases (using the acronym T-R-U-S-T) to pray during those 2-3 minutes:

### **1. Thank you Holy Spirit**

Stop and recognize the Spirit's presence in you by simply thanking Him for it. "Thank you Holy Spirit, for Your presence in me. Thank You for the presence of Your love, peace, patience, and self-control that is in me" (Jn. 15:5, Gal 5:22-23).

### **2. Reign in my life Holy Spirit**

Ask the Holy Spirit to rule or lead your life, including your job, finances, strategic alliances, and new ideas and opportunities in all areas of your life. "Spirit, lead me into my full destiny, grant me divine opportunities and show me the way to Your purposes as You lead me away from Satan's traps (temptations). I love Your leadership. Help me run with You as You establish God's order in my home, job and ministry" (Song. 1:4, Mt. 6:13, Lk. 19:17, 27, Rom 5:17).

### **3. Strengthen me Holy Spirit**

Ask Holy Spirit for His strength in your emotions and ask Him to activate the power that is already in your spirit. "I love Your presence in me. Apart from dialoguing (interacting/connecting) with You, I can do nothing." (Jn. 15:5) "Thank You for warring against my flesh and guarding my speech" (Ps. 141:3, Gal. 5:17, Eph. 3:16).

#### **4. Teach me Holy Spirit**

Ask Him to teach you the truth about God, His Word, and His ways. “I love Your ways and thoughts. Reveal the knowledge of God and Your Word and ways to me” (Jn. 14:26, 16:13).

#### **5. Use me Holy Spirit**

Ask the indwelling Spirit to use you more by giving manifestations of His gifts of power to minister to others. “Thank you, Spirit, for releasing Your gifts through me” (1 Cor. 12:7). When I’m communing with the Spirit, it helps me to picture one of two things; I either picture the Holy Spirit burning like a flaming fire within me (Song. 8:6), or I set my mind upon the throne of God in heaven (Rev. 4). I encourage you to go very slow as you pray these 5 phrases. Say one or two sentences, then stop and listen to the Spirit. Then say several more sentences, then pray or sing softly in the Spirit (tongues), and then stop and listen again. This will be a challenge at first, but it will get easier to focus as the days and weeks go by and you continue to do it 4-5 times each day.

After doing this for a few days, I guarantee that you will feel a shift on the inside of you and begin to feel changes in your mind, your will, and your emotions. You’ll see changes because you’re fellowshiping with the ever-present unchanging reality of perfection and love on the inside of you, God Himself. He is alive, He never changes, He is dwelling within you, He is always in a good mood, and He longs to speak and have fellowship with us even more than we long to fellowship with Him. (Mt. 13:17).

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even more than we long to fellowship with Him.

### ***Winter & Spring Events & Happenings***

**ENCOUNTER** will be held every Tuesday from 7-8:30pm in the sanctuary. Bring your Bible and a notebook for this time of prayer and worship.

#### **VINEYOUTH EVENINGS (GRADES 6-12)**

Join us this Sunday evening from 6-7:30pm in Baldwin Hall.

#### **VINEYOUTH**

Feb 18 - 9:00 am - NO Class in the morning due to combined 10am service.

#### **CELEBRATION SUNDAY**

Sunday, March 4, 9&11am, we will be celebrating the great milestones of the Christian faith. We have a few ways in which you may want to participate. If you would like us to follow up with you regarding child dedication, circle **DEDICATION** on your connection card on Sunday morning. If you have interest in being baptized or would like to learn more about baptism, circle **BAPTISM** on your connection card on Sunday morning and plan on attending our baptism class on Thursday, February 18, at 6pm in the Ministry Center.

#### **WORSHIP SERVICE AND CELEBRATION OF DOWNSTAIRS RENOVATION**

Please join us Sunday, February 18, for our worship service at 10am with special guest, Pastor Joey Jennings. A reception to celebrate the downstairs renovation will follow. (Please note that 10am is the only service that morning.)

#### **FIRST IMPRESSIONS MEETING**

On Tuesday, February 20, 7pm, in the Sanctuary our First Impressions Ministry will be having a meeting for all current ministry partners and for those who would like to find out more about the First Impressions Ministry. If you are not currently serving in the church, this is a perfect place

to begin. The First Impressions Ministry serves in these areas: usher/greeter, welcome center attendant, refreshments host, baker/snack provider, coffee maker, medical team, and security team.

### **MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL**

Vine Members, if you haven't returned your postcard yet, please do so this week or renew your membership today at the Welcome Center.

### **FEBRUARY BREAK FUN!**

Wednesday, February 21, Get Air & Watch a movie/Play Games. Meet at Get Air (3637 Union Road) at 11:45 am. Kids will jump from 12-2. We will transport students back to church for movie (Big Hero 6), 4-square, ping pong, board games, snacks and dessert. Pick up your kids at 5 at the church. **Please let Pastor Tammy know if your child is coming by this Sunday because reservations must be made.** Cost is \$15 plus \$3 for jump socks if you don't have them already. If we get 15 kids to sign up, the cost will be \$10 per student plus \$3 for jump socks. (Bring a friend!)

### **REFRESHED WOMEN'S MINISTRY BREAKFAST**

Ladies, our next Women's breakfast will be held Saturday, March 17, 9am, in Baldwin Hall. Please join us for food, fellowship and an inspirational message from Melissa Kreuzer. Circle **WOMEN'S BREAKFAST** on your connection card on Sunday morning and please bring a breakfast dish to share. We will be collecting non-perishable items for the food pantry.

### **MORNING PRAYER**

The first Thursday of each month, 10-11am, please join Pastor Tammy in the Prayer Room to pray for our church and region.

### **CHURCH CALENDAR**

Check out our Vine calendar <http://vinewc.org/calendar/> for more upcoming events.