JM Jason Mayfield

SERMON OUTLINE FOR PASTORS

27 MINUTES TO CHANGE YOUR LIFE

Fifteen Minutes in the Bible, Seven in Prayer, Five in Worship

> Twenty-seven minutes a day in the Bible, in prayer and in worship builds the library the Holy Spirit draws on and the reserves of power we need when life demands a spiritual response.

MAIN TEXT
Mark 9:29

FIRST PREACHED
November 9, 2025

SERIES
We're Rooted in the Bible, Week 4 of 6

BY
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AT A GLANCE

THE MESSAGE

1. The Bible and the Holy Spirit are not warring entities to be balanced against each other; they are in concert, and level two of hearing from God is the Spirit drawing Scripture out of your memory.
2. Read the Bible for 15 minutes a day: you do not need to understand it to read it, expect good days and bad days, and plan on three full passes (cover to cover, chronological, then any way you want).
3. Pray for seven minutes a day using a short list: thank God for one thing you actually care about, then name three to five measurable things you want to see God do in your own sphere.
4. Worship for five minutes at the end, choosing songs that magnify Jesus rather than songs about yourself, so you finish strong and come back the next day.
5. The 27 minutes work in aggregation, building reserves in the secret place so you can respond in the Spirit and in power when a situation demands it, which is what Jesus points to in Mark 9:29.
6. Hearing from the Lord has levels and requirements, and holding preachers and believers accountable to those requirements keeps a church from tolerating nonsense dressed up as the spiritual.



WATCH IT PREACHED

youtu.be/QCWtefmMXLw



READ THE ARTICLE

jasonmayfield.com/messages/27-minutes-to-change-your-life

PREACHING NOTES

Before You Preach

This is the fourth message in a six-week series on being rooted in the Bible, and it continues the four levels of hearing from the Lord. Last week was level two: the Holy Spirit bringing Scripture back to our remembrance. This week is the practical follow-through: how to store up the Scripture He draws on.

Tell people up front that this is less a sermon and more a workshop. Ask them to write things down. The content is simple on purpose. The church has hidden daily time with God behind a veil, and this message pulls the veil back: 15 minutes reading the Bible, 7 minutes praying, 5 minutes worshiping.

Read Mark 9:29 at the top and leave it hanging. You come back to it at the end, and it is the payoff.

Introduction

> MARK 9:29 ESV
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> [29] And he said to them, “This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer.”

Have the congregation say it: “I need a word.” Everyone needs a word from the Lord, and this series is about how you can hear from heaven yourself. Today: 27 minutes to change your life.

THE BIBLE AND THE SPIRIT ARE IN CONCERT

Many believers feel a conflict between being led by the Holy Spirit and reading and obeying the Bible, as if the two were warring against each other. But Jesus named the two ways God makes Himself known, side by side:

> MATTHEW 22:29 ESV
>
> [29] But Jesus answered them, “You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God.

The Scriptures, the Bible. The power of God, the Holy Spirit. People often try to balance the two: “Be led by the Spirit, but the Spirit will never tell you anything contrary to the Bible.” Now we are policing the Holy Spirit with the Bible. If what we are hearing contradicts Scripture, the real question is whether we are hearing the Holy Spirit at all.

The Holy Spirit and the Scripture are not in conflict. They are in concert. You do not have to be a peacemaker between the Holy Spirit and the Bible.

LEVEL TWO NEEDS A LIBRARY

Last week: at level two, the Holy Spirit speaks by drawing Scripture out of your memory (John 14:26). Level one, preaching, needs a preacher. Level two is where you begin to hear from the Spirit on your own. When you are seeking guidance and Scripture suddenly comes to mind out of nowhere, pause and pay attention. That is probably the Holy Spirit.

Illustration: Bumblebee. In the movie *Transformers*, the yellow robot Bumblebee cannot talk, so he communicates through the radio, tuning in to things already said. There is nothing broken about the Holy Spirit, but at this level He works in a similar way. He tunes you in to what has already been said in Scripture and gives you specific instruction for your life and situation.

The Bible never says the Spirit will download Scripture into your brain. You have to encounter the Scripture for Him to have something to draw on. **Take in less Bible, and you give the Spirit less opportunity. Take in more Bible, and you give Him more.** Today is about building that library, the vocabulary the Holy Spirit will use to speak to you. It takes 27 minutes a day.

1. Read the Bible for 15 Minutes

It takes roughly 12 minutes a day to read the whole Bible in a year. Why 15? Because some of us need an extra three minutes.

Here are several thoughts. Have people write them down.

You do not need to understand the Bible to read the Bible. This is the biggest misconception that keeps people out of Scripture. Imagine a science teacher saying, "Don't open this textbook until you can pass the test." You need to read the Bible to understand the Bible.

You probably will not understand it the first time. The first time through, you will mostly find verses you have already heard.

Illustration: "Where is Noah?" A woman who came to faith later in life decided to read the Bible, and someone told her to start in Matthew. Halfway through John she threw up her hands: "Where is Noah? This is the same story on repeat."

Expect good days and bad days. We talk about "daily bread" as if every time you open the Bible it will be a spectacular spiritual experience. It will not. One week Pastor Jason had a bad Monday and quit early, a breakthrough Tuesday, and normal days the rest of the week. You will get the Mondays, the Tuesdays and the Wednesdays.

Eat the elephant one bite at a time. The Bible is around 750,000 words. It is an elephant of a book.

READ IT THREE TIMES

Manage expectations: you will probably need to read the Bible three times before it really starts making sense. Nobody says this. Fifteen minutes a day will change your life, but maybe not for three years. Do

not be discouraged. You are tilling the ground of your life, your soul and your spirit, and on the back end of it the Holy Spirit will speak to you in ways you cannot yet imagine.

Moses received the Ten Commandments three times.

- **First,** God spoke them in the hearing of all Israel (Exodus 20:1-17; Deuteronomy 5:22). That is the preached word, level one.
- **Second,** Moses went up the mountain because he wanted more of the Lord, and God gave him the tablets: "The tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God" (Exodus 32:16). Moses came down, saw the people worshiping an idol, and broke them (Exodus 32:19). So transformed by his time in the Word that he threw a temper tantrum.
- **Third,** Moses had to cut the stones himself, but God still did the writing: "Cut for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and I will write on the tablets" (Exodus 34:1). This time Moses came down with his face shining so brightly that the people were afraid to come near him, and he put a veil over his face (Exodus 34:29-35).

The glory of God got on him the third time. There is something about getting through the Bible three times.

It is not that hard. It is written in English. Even when you do not know what it means, you can read the words on the page.

A PLAN FOR THREE PASSES

Get on a Bible reading plan. Think of a puzzle.

- **First pass: cover to cover,** Genesis to Revelation. You lay out all the pieces and see where everyone is: David here, Moses there, Elijah over here.
- **Second pass: chronological order.** Search online for a chronological plan. The Bible is not arranged in the order events happened, and reading it chronologically is like putting the edges of the puzzle together.
- **Third pass: any way you want.** The pieces start to fill in, and you see the full picture of Scripture.

Faster is better. One year for a pass is good. If you can do each pass in six months, even better.

Two tips: Get a physical Bible. There is nothing sacred about paper, but it helps. And if you are not a strong reader, or mornings are hard, add an audio Bible. The YouVersion Bible app has many free audio Bibles, and you can read along with the narrator.

2. Pray for Seven Minutes

Why seven? It is less than ten and more than five.

It is surprising how many people who pray zero minutes roll their eyes at seven. Seven minutes a day is a little over 42 hours of prayer a year. Would you want to mess with someone who prays 42 hours a year?

Start with a prayer list. Like a reading plan, you need something to help you through.

Thank God for one thing. One thing, not fifteen. We sometimes pile up thanks to twist God's arm before we ask. And if you are new to prayer, you may not be that grateful a person yet, so a long gratitude list turns into thanking God for things you do not even care about. That is not gratitude. That is pretense. Thank Him for one thing that actually matters to you.

Then list three to five things you want to see God do in your life.

- **Make them measurable.**
- **Keep them in your immediate sphere.** God hears every prayer, but pray first for what you will see: your children, your home, your work.
- **Pray in a way God could let you down.** Many of us pray so vaguely that if things work out we say God answered, and if not, nothing was really asked. Give God an opportunity. If you are praying for someone with cancer, take it to the throne and ask God to heal. When God answers specific prayers, He sets Himself up for great glory. He does it because He loves you and because of the cross, and Scripture makes a strong case that He also acts for His own name's sake.

Seven minutes takes practice. Starting out, you may run out of words two minutes and fifteen seconds in and find yourself reading your light bill to the Lord.

Two ways to grow your prayer time:

- **Pray in the Spirit.** Partner with the Holy Spirit and pray in tongues. (A series on the Holy Spirit is planned for the beginning of the year.)
- **Pray the Scripture.** Open to the Psalms and pray what is written. For example:

> PSALM 45:1 ESV
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> To the choirmaster: according to Lilies. A Maskil of the Sons of Korah; a love song. [1] My heart overflows with a pleasing theme; I address my verses to the king; my tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe.

"Lord, I thank You that I can come boldly before the throne of grace because of the finished work of Jesus Christ" (see Hebrews 4:16). Now you are not only saying things about God. You are saying things to Him. Praying the Scripture can take you from seven minutes to thirty in no time, and there is a lot of boldness that comes from the secret place (Matthew 6:6).

3. Worship for Five Minutes

Bible for fifteen, prayer for seven, worship for five. Why five? Most worship songs are about five minutes long.

There are two reasons to end with worship.

It makes worship personal. Pastors and worship leaders are often working during the church's worship time, alert and thinking about the service. Ending your own time with worship makes it more than the opener for the preaching. It is a time to make much of Jesus.

It helps you finish strong. When you are starting out, your Bible reading may not make sense yet, and your prayer may last a minute and seventeen seconds. At the end you get to do what preachers do and call the band up. Turn on a song that helps you magnify the Lord, lift your hands in your room or your car, and call in the reserves. You will end strong and encouraged, and when you end well, you come back the next day.

Choose songs that magnify Jesus, not yourself. The church has come through a season of singing about ourselves: some services sing about us the most, the devil second, and Jesus gets honorable mentions.

Illustration: "Songs about the Lord." At a previous church in North Alabama, Pastor Jason gathered the seniors around a piano to sing. Beforehand an older woman told him, "I just love it when you sing those old songs." Expecting a complaint about drums and guitars, he asked why. She said, "I just like being able to sing songs about the Lord." What a verdict on the state of our worship. Thankfully, many newer songs are talking about the Lord again. We showed up to make much of Him.

4. Power Is Built in the Secret Place

All of this works in aggregation: small parts coming together to make a whole. Return to Mark 9:29.

Set the scene (Mark 9:2-27). Jesus comes down from the Mount of Transfiguration with three of His disciples. He walks into an argument: the other disciples, the crowd and the scribes in a shouting match. The disciples could not drive a spirit out of a boy. Once things calm down, Jesus speaks to the spirit, "come out of him and never enter him again" (Mark 9:25), and it comes out. That is all He does.

Later, in the house, the disciples ask Him privately why they could not cast it out.

> **MARK 9:29** ESV
>
> [29] And he said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer."

Some Bibles read "prayer and fasting." The most reliable early manuscripts do not include "and fasting" here, and they do not include the matching verse in Matthew either (Matthew 17:21).

Here is what is fascinating: Jesus' answer does not mirror what He did. He says this kind comes out only by prayer, and He did not pray. He just spoke. Jesus is not a "do as I say, not as I do" leader. **What He is telling them is that there is power you can only operate in if you have a history in the secret place.**

In the secret place you are charging your battery, building up reserves for the moment circumstances demand that you respond not in the flesh but in the Spirit, and at times in power.

Twenty-seven minutes a day is a little over 160 hours a year with Jesus, almost seven full days. And Bible reading, prayer and worship are not three separate things. Together they are one whole: time in the

secret place with the Lord.

Some will think, “That’s it?” Yes. And it may be the single most important thing some people ever hear. Pastors have confided, “I don’t pray, I don’t read, I have no time with the Lord behind me. I’m dying out here,” because everyone else had put it behind a veil. Churches talk about praying and reading the Bible without ever teaching how, and then wonder why people depend only on Sunday morning for spiritual growth.

Conclusion: There Are Levels

This rhythm is helpful for level two. It is crucial for level three, which is next week. And it is required for level four.

Why insist on levels and requirements? Because churches, and some pulpits, have let people talk about having a word from God and prophesying with no accountability at all. Some preach without knowing the Bible. There is a well in your own backyard; you do not have to drive to Iowa for water. Getting this foundation right up front means the church will not have to chase down silliness later. We are not going to be the church that tolerates nonsense. “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16). Let us use the Bible that way.

We do not have to romanticize the spiritual when we can actually have the spiritual. And the spiritual is usually less dramatic than people want it to be. Pastor Jason was underwhelmed by his own baptism in the Holy Spirit. It was natural and normal. Every breakthrough he has seen has been natural and normal. God moves in powerful, practical, ordinary ways.

Often you do not even notice it happening. You spend time with the Lord, you come out, you live life, and like Mary, you treasure these things up in your heart (Luke 2:19).

Close with the word Pastor Jason sensed that week for the church and the city: **Jesus makes life better for anyone.** The assignment is to help people improve their quality of life through Jesus Christ, and these 27 minutes a day will dramatically improve yours.

Close in praise: if you love the Lord and appreciate the Word, give Him praise.



ABOUT

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Pastor Jason Mayfield is the Senior Pastor of Citylight Church in Saraland, Alabama, an author, and the creator of POWER 27. He has given more than 20 years to the local church and helps pastors and ministry leaders lead BIG.

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