

# The Basics



The mastery of almost anything is about the basics. As human beings, we are fascinated with things that are new and different, special or extraordinary, the latest shiny, sparkly things. But almost all success and happiness in this world are born from ordinary things. We allow ourselves to be seduced by the spectacular, but the basics are where you find true and lasting treasure.

Success at almost anything rests upon this single principle: Do the basics, do them well, and do them every day, especially when you don't feel like doing them. It doesn't matter if it is football, marriage, parenting, personal finances, physical fitness, military operations, small business, big business, or prayer. This is one of the reasons most people don't become phenomenally successful. They lack the persistence to do the same things over and over again.

Mastering the basics is the secret to success. So as we make this journey together, resist the temptation to look beyond the basics. Throwing yourself into the basics day after day may get tedious from time to time, but the peace and joy that come from an established habit of daily prayer never do.

When it comes to establishing a vibrant daily prayer life, the basics are few and simple: what, when, where, how, and why.

## What:

Ten minutes a day in conversational prayer.

## When:

Most people believe it is most impactful to pray in the morning, but some of us are not morning people, and we don't want that to be the reason you don't persevere with this habit. You can decide on the time that sets you up to succeed, but pick a specific time, put it on your schedule, and stick to it. Make it a nonnegotiable part of your day, a sacred commitment. If something comes up and you need to move your prayer time, move it to earlier in the day; never put it off. Once you put it off, it usually does not get done.

## Where:

Find a place where you can be still and quiet, with the fewest possible distractions, a place that is available to you every day. Make any changes you need to make to that space to set yourself up to succeed (though you probably won't know the best way to set up the space until you have prayed there for a while). From time to time, I encourage you to stop by a church for your daily prayer. We read in the Bible about Jesus going to a place set apart to pray. Your church is a place set apart. More specifically, it is designed especially for prayer. This means it is usually quiet. In addition, God is present in a very unique and special way in our churches.

**How:**

Use the Prayer Process (and other tools provided in the book *I Heard God Laugh*). There are thousands of different methods and forms of prayer, but when you are establishing this powerful habit it is best to focus on just one. Develop mastery using this method of prayer before exploring other approaches. The famous martial artist Bruce Lee said, “I am not afraid of the man who has practiced ten thousand kicks once. I am afraid of the man who has practiced one kick ten thousand times.” The goal is to deeply ingrain the habit of daily prayer into you soul and life. This goal is best served with the practice of one form of prayer—in this case, the Prayer Process.

**Why:**

What people do is interesting, but why they do what they do is fascinating. As you enter into greater intimacy with God, he will encourage you to express your reasons and motives for many things you do. This exploration of motive can lead to incredible awareness, as well as to a life lived with laser-focused intentionality. When it comes to prayer, knowing our reasons plays an important role.