



**Relationship with God
through prayer
A Lenten message from
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My first years of ministry were spent at Canyon Lake UMC. My first year at Canyon Lake was Kent Millard's last. Now I could not have asked for a better place to begin ministry. Kent went on to serve as a DS, as lead pastor as Mitchell First and Sioux Falls First before being invited to serve St. Lukes UMC in Indianapolis, IN.

I learned so much from Kent about preaching, visitation, empowering laity, and advocating for just systems. The lesson I still remember most clearly was one about the importance of the spiritual life for those of us who are disciples of Jesus Christ.

There was a point that year when the sparkle dimmed in Kent's eyes and his step was less lively. His sermons were still good but something was missing. So Kent went away for a week with several good friends. When he returned the next Sunday, he apologized to the Canyon Lake congregation saying "This week I discovered that I've been trying to do the work of Jesus without the power of God."

These are words that have stayed with me. We disciples of Jesus dare not try to do the work of Jesus without relying on our God.

John Wesley taught that certain actions when practiced regularly have the power to bring us close to God. These actions Wesley called *means of grace*. During this Lenten season, your Dakotas Conference leaders will be sharing with you brief reflections on some of those means of grace. We share our thoughts and experiences in that hope that your Lenten journey will be one that helps live into and out of the power of God as you do the work of Jesus.

Prayer is one of the actions that Wesley called a means of grace. I understand prayer to be an opportunity to step out of the craziness of life for a time of rest in God.

At the time of creation God created human kind so as to be in relationship with us. Genesis 2 tells us that God was lonely. God created that first human to satisfy God's need for relationship. So hard wired into our human DNA is a need for communion with God. We need to be with God. We need to rest in God. We need to be known by God. Without these times we call prayer we run the risk of losing the twinkle in our eyes, the energy in our steps, and others sense something missing in us.

We can make the practice of prayer something so complicated that we intimidate others and ourselves. We can make the practice of prayer so simple that we run the risk of losing a sense of reverence and awe. Prayer will be different for each of us. My richest prayer times are usually time alone with God, with a passage of scripture or words written by a present day saint, and my journal. I begin to write a prayer and then often times a word wells up within me that seems to be a Word from God. Frequently the Word is nothing new—like a few words of scripture that have made their way into my heart or words spoken to me by another who I know to have my best interest at heart.

For you the times of prayer that help you rely on God's power while you are doing the work of Jesus may be times spent in nature, with a small prayer group, in times of corporate worship, or a time of personal retreat.

All of us experience times of dryness in our prayer life. Do not be discouraged. These times are normal but when a new period of communion with God arrives it will be sweeter.

My friends during this Lenten season do not succumb to the temptation of trying to do the work of Jesus without relying on the power of God. Take time to rest in God. Take time pray.



In the Words of Wesley