

RESPONDING POWERFULLY TO HIS CALL

10 August 2025

Summary:

This Message emphasizes the importance of prayer as the foundation for spiritual growth and effective ministry. Bruce discusses the concept of "IMPACTERS," individuals committed to living out their faith and sharing the gospel. He stresses that prayer is not merely preparation for ministry but is the ministry itself, where God shapes character and aligns believers' wills with His own. The Message highlights the need for "habitation" - living in constant awareness of God's presence within us - as the source of true spiritual power and fruitfulness.

Key Points:

- Prayer is a response to God's initiative, not something we initiate ourselves
- The pattern of God's call is: He calls, we seek Him, then we obey
- Prayer is changing our attitudes and thinking to fit into God's will
- Habitation is learning to stay in God's presence, knowing He dwells within us
- Expansion without deep spiritual roots is unsustainable
- Success in ministry is measured by faithfulness to God's call, not visible results
- Mary MacKillop's example of relying on God's presence in all circumstances

Scripture Reference:

- John 15:4-5 - "Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me."

Stories:

- Bruce mentions Mary MacKillop's life and ministry as an example of relying on God's presence in all circumstances, including poverty and opposition
- A story about a woman who started a women's ministry with 200 attendees after being inspired by Rosemary Downes nine years ago
- An anecdote about people at Mass who enthusiastically share the sign of peace, demonstrating awareness of God's presence within them

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

(For Individual Reflection)

- How does the concept of 'habitation' - God dwelling within us - change the way we approach our daily lives and spiritual practices?
- In what ways can we cultivate a deeper awareness of God's presence, as emphasized in the message, rather than constantly asking God to come to us?
- How might our approach to prayer and mission change if we truly embraced the idea that 'prayer is the work' rather than just preparation for ministry?
- What are some practical ways we can 'align our hearts with God's will' in our daily decision-making and long-term life choices?
- How does the example of Mary MacKillop challenge our understanding of success in ministry and personal spiritual growth?
- In what ways can we protect and nurture our 'inner life' amidst the busyness and distractions of modern living?
- How might our faith communities be transformed if we focused more on 'how deep are our roots' rather than how fast we can grow?
- What does it mean to live 'in the overflow' of God's presence, and how can we cultivate this in our lives?
- How can we balance the call to seek God through prayer with the imperative to act and serve in the world?
- In what ways can we, like Mary MacKillop, make prayer, Eucharist, and scripture 'non-negotiable' elements of our spiritual lives and leadership?

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SMALL GROUP GUIDE

Opening Prayer:

Pray the IMPACTERS prayer together as a group. Ask God to open your hearts and minds to His message and to guide your discussion.

Key Takeaways:

1. Prayer is a response to God's initiative, not something we start ourselves.
2. Habitation means living with constant awareness of God's presence within us.
3. Seeking God through prayer should precede obedience and action.
4. True spiritual growth comes from deepening our roots in God, not just external expansion.

Discussion Questions:

1. Bruce mentions that "God stirs and then reveals." Can you share an experience where you felt God stirring something in your heart before revealing His plan?
2. How does understanding prayer as a response to God's initiative change your approach to your prayer life?
3. The message emphasizes the importance of seeking God before taking action. How might this principle apply to decision-making in your daily life?
4. Discuss the concept of "habitation." How can we cultivate a greater awareness of God's presence in our everyday lives?
5. Bruce mentions that "expansion that outpaces habitation is a disaster waiting to happen." What are some potential dangers of pursuing growth or success without a deep spiritual foundation?
6. How does the image of the vine and branches (John 15:4-5) help you understand your relationship with God?
7. In what ways can you be "fiercely protective" of your inner spiritual life, as Mary MacKillop was?

Practical Applications:

- Commit to participating in the 9-day Novena prayer, either individually or with a group.
- Set aside time each day this week to practice "habitation" - simply being aware of God's presence within you.
- Before making any significant decisions this week, pause to seek God's guidance through prayer.
- Identify one area of your life where you may be pursuing "expansion" without sufficient "habitation." How can you address this imbalance?
- Start a prayer journal to record moments when you sense God stirring or revealing something in your life.

Closing Prayer:

Thank God for His presence in your lives and ask for His help in deepening your awareness of Him throughout the coming week.