

**Topic: The Value And Importance of Prayer**  
**Sermon 6 on Prayer**  
**“Obstacles to Answered Prayer, #4”**

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**"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand." Romans 5:1-2**

**The 4th obstacle to answered prayer:**

**For God to answer prayer, prayer can not and must not regularly be rushed into if it is to be effective.**

**The Gospels emphasize the personal and private deliberate, schedule, planned, prayer life of Jesus.**  
**Luke 5:12-16.**

**"The lifestyle of most Christians is fast-paced. We never have enough time to accomplish all that we need to do, so we omit prayer with the thought 'I'll get to it later.' However, that time never comes.**

**We must make prayer a priority. Scripture reminds us several times concerning our need to get alone with God in prayer. With the busyness of this life, it is easy to become distracted. Therefore, a place alone with God each day is important." Tom Shelton**

**Look at Mark 5:30-46.**

**Look at Mark 1:29-39.**

**Look at Lk. 6:12-16.**

**"Not too long after experiencing God's salvation, it became clear to me that there was something wrong with my Christian life. I was restless and discontent. My Christian walk was characterized by uncertainty. God's will was always something remote, always over the horizon; it never seemed to involve current activities. ... I continued in this confused state for several years. Then God began to address this disquieting and dangerous attitude by focusing my attention on prayer.**

**The Word of God is clear that the people of God make prayer a top priority of their lives. They spend time on prayer before they spend it on anything else. Through examples in the Bible I began to see that prayer should have a much higher priority in my life. I usually prayed while I was driving to and from work, but now I realized that God was not satisfied with this discourteous manner of prayer.**

I could sense how God felt. I imagined how my wife would feel if every time I spoke to her I was busy mowing the lawn or fixing the car. I realized that worship and prayer must precede even the most urgent tasks, not simply accompany them. Through examples from Scripture with men like Noah, Moses and others, God was teaching me that even busy people of God stop frequently to pray.

God also used the life of Noah to illustrate to me another important principle about prayer. He not only wanted to change the priority I gave to prayer, but also the manner in which I prayed. My prayers almost exclusively focused on me and my world rather than on God and His Kingdom.

Through reading Scripture, I began to see that men of God are constantly before the Throne of Grace reminding themselves of God's power, the beauty of creation, the wonder of God's love, the joy of salvation and his personal intervention in their lives. ...Noah, Moses and Solomon were men of praise and adoration at the Throne of Grace. Meditating on these things, I sensed that God wants His children today to pray in a similar way. I resolved to change the entire orientation of my prayer life. Worship of God would come first in my prayer life, and my needs and interests would come second.

I set four specific goals for my prayer life to help me get started. The first was to dedicate a fixed and substantial amount of time each day to private prayer and conversation with the Lord. Having long ago banished television from our home, and with early bedtimes for our children, I saw no difficulty in setting aside a reasonable portion of every evening to be with the Lord and yet not neglect my wife and family.

A second goal was to spend my lunch hour each day with the Lord. Prayer would have priority over food.

Third, I committed myself to rise for prayer any time that I awakened during the night.

Finally, my prayer would center on praise and adoration. Previously I found it too easy to pursue God with wrong motives. I wanted to seek God because He was God.

As prayerful Christians know, the results of practicing regular worshipful prayer are immediate and overwhelming. The most important result of regular prayer was a sure and certain confidence that I was in the center of God's will. Restlessness about my life quickly disappeared. Regular times of prayer and adoration gave me the assurance that God was in control. If he desired to change the course of my life, he could and would. Time at the Throne of Grace confirmed this in my heart and mind. Just being in His presence brought patience and a desire to wait on God. I didn't want any circumstance to change unless God changed them. I was confident that I was talking with God.

I was startled by these immediate and exciting results of prayer, particularly since I had sought nothing of God and he had answered no specific request. It was evident that simply being alone in His presence can have a tremendous effect on the attitude and spiritual well-being of the Christian. A Christian entering the presence of God is analogous to a sponge being placed under a fountain of running water. After the sponge is removed, it continues to experience the benefit of having been under the fountain. It remains moist and useful.

...At the close of the year, I was able to say that it was the best year I had ever experienced as a Christian.

Copied from, "The Year I Learned To Pray" by Thomas Goulding

"For years I struggled with inconsistency in prayer. There would be times when it seemed a habit was developing. I felt motivated and fulfilled by the rewards of praying. Then, without realizing it, the consistency slowly but surely began to deteriorate. It wouldn't be long after this that either through reading or hearing a message I would again be confronted with the privilege and importance of prayer.

In time it became more difficult to respond positively. My hope of being an effective man of prayer had been deferred so many times that my devotion drifted in other directions. But I've discovered I can only rationalize my lack of consistent prayer for so long. In time Jesus begins to faithfully and graciously deal with me.

I began to ask the Lord to reveal my problem when it came to prayer. I felt the answer come: 'You don't do it.' As usual, He was direct and to the point. The Lord doesn't seem to leave any room for excuses or blameshifting.

Continuing my quest for special revelation into my situation, I asked the Lord, 'Why don't I pray more regularly?' I wasn't ready for the answer He gave. Expecting an insight that I had yet to hear in all my study of the subject of prayer, the replay came, 'You're lazy.'

Jesus doesn't stop with pointing out our sin though. He will go on to point out the way of deliverance. On a subsequent day, my wife and I were having lunch with some missionary friends of ours. They were telling us about another missionary couple whom God had used greatly. They told us that this missionary couple rose early each day to pray. I jokingly mentioned that I had trouble getting up early. With a smile on his face, my missionary friend told me that my problem wasn't getting up early, it was going to bed late.

What had begun as a casual time of fellowship with our missionary friends, had shifted to God speaking to me through them. My missionary friend went on to expand on his insight. He shared how humanistic attitudes can so easily enter into our thinking when it comes to our evenings. We see that time as ours. It's a time to relax and be entertained. We feel that we have a right to this time after serving the Lord so faithfully all day long. He said, 'We are part of a modern generation who stubbornly refuses to crucify its night life and who views leisure time as belonging to us and not to the Lord.

This requires discipline by us. In our soft and pampered culture, discipline is a dirty word. Sadly it can be the same in the Christian community. But let's be clear that without discipline we will not make progress and fulfill the call of God to our generation. Arthur Wallis states it incisively, 'Most of us have godly desires and ambitions that are beyond our spiritual discipline.' He goes on to say, 'The tragedy of the Christian life is power bestowed and not released.' Why? Because of willful rebellion? I don't think so. 'The spirit is willing,' Jesus said-and that's good news; 'but the flesh is weak.' Laziness, lack of discipline, not lack of desire, is the problem."

**I Peter 4:7, "Be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray."**

**"We need to determine never to get in such a rush that we fail to take time to get spiritual power through prayer. But unless we set a definite time for prayer each day, we will let other things crowd it out.**

**When we begin to pray as God's wants us to, something will happen in our prayer life. Instead of not wanting to take time to pray, we will look forward in anticipation to our quiet time with God. We will get to know Him better, and He will become more real to us than any earthly friend. We will discover the joy and peace of mind that He wants us to have. We will have victory in our Christian life, and the devil's darts won't take effect." Lillian Guild, "How's Your Prayer Life?"**

**"Today most Christians feel their greatest spiritual deficiency is the area of prayer. If you are to be a spiritually healthy Christian, you cannot afford to neglect this aspect of the Christian life. Your spiritual life will never rise above the level of your praying, and your prayer life will never rise to stay above the level of your personal, regular, daily meeting with God. Regular contact with the source of spiritual life, Jesus Christ, is absolutely necessary.**

**However, maintaining a consistent prayer life is hard work. Prayer is difficult because it is one of the activities Satan wants to remove from your daily schedule. Through prayer you receive guidance and provision, but you also become a channel for God's power. God's power is necessary to succeed in the spiritual warfare in which you are engaged. Most Christians fail in their prayer lives because they do not set apart a definite time and place to meet the Lord daily in prayer. ...You will never be successful as a growing Christian apart from a personal, regular, daily meeting with God." J. Gordon Henry, "Early Will I Seek Thee."**

**Deliberate, planned, structured, corporate prayer is taught also in the NT.**

**Acts 2:42**

**Acts 3:1**

**Acts 6:4**

**Acts 16:13**

**Ben Peterson says, "Prayer is always getting nudged aside, neglected or perfunctorily performed. I believe that this casual attitude toward prayer is one of the most subtle and pernicious forms of worldliness in the church today. This simple truth alone explains why so many workers in the church find themselves exhausted, stretched to the breaking point, and burned out."**