

The Morning Watch

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala's sermon encourages believers to establish a daily prayer habit to deepen their relationship with God and experience transformative change in their lives.

Duration: 32:06

Scripture: Psalm 5:1-3, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 14:23, Mark 1:35, Mark 6:46, Luke 5:16, Luke 11:1

Topics: "Prayer"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of daily communication with God. He compares it to forming a habit, where one act repeated over and over becomes a habit. The speaker shares personal anecdotes, such as being yelled at by a coach to look up while dribbling a basketball, to illustrate the need to be aware of our surroundings. He also mentions the importance of drawing a line in the sand and putting our faith in Jesus for salvation. The speaker highlights the promise of peace and guidance from God for his children.

Transcript

How many would like to have an absolute new 2016, but even starting like tomorrow? How many are looking forward to change, positive change? I don't care if you're a deacon, I'm lifting my hand because I need it. So if we'll take in what I'm about to say, everything in your life will change. Oh, that sounds very boastful, no, no, no.

Everything in your life will change. Everything. We're recommending something that will help you, streams in the desert, why? It drives you to the word of God, because you need faith.

And how do you get faith, more faith? Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. You don't get faith by trying to have faith. Faith is produced by the seed of the word.

You don't have to hope a rose bush will grow, you put the right seed in, and it produces rose bush. But there's something else that goes with it. This is the missing element in a lot of Christians' lives.

The Bible tells us that you don't become a Christian by being a Catholic, or being a Protestant, or coming to the Brooklyn Tabernacle, or by buying the books of some favorite writer, minister. The only way you become a Christian, and have your sins forgiven, and know where you're gonna spend eternity, is by having a relationship with Jesus Christ. You confess your sins, because you get convicted of them, as you

hear the gospel, the good news.

You realize you're undone, that God so loved the world that he sent Jesus to die, why? Because we needed an atonement, we needed someone as a substitute to take the punishment that is due all of us, for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. When you put your faith in Jesus, you are born again. When you have that experience, when you draw a line in the sand in your life, it happens in a moment, you pass from death to life, spiritual life, from darkness to light.

That's too humbling for a lot of us, but that's the way God has laid it out. You don't try to live a good life. People who live a good life don't go to heaven.

People who have put their faith in Jesus go to heaven. Who have been forgiven, and have mercy shown them. And then there's the promise of peace and joy, the blessing of God, the shalom of God.

There's guidance promised by God to all his children, not to everyone, but to his children, he promises peace, not like the world gives, but a supernatural peace that no matter what's rocking and rolling around us, he says, I'll keep you steady, I'll give you peace. Movie stars, athletes, millionaires, billionaires, they don't have peace automatically. They have financial security, which can be gone in a second.

But peace, only Jesus gives that, he's the prince of peace. He promised us joy instead of depression. Instead of agitation, anxiety, he promised peace.

Instead of depression, he's promised us joy. He's promised to lead us and guide us so we make decisions in 2016. We won't be doing it by our limited intelligence, which never knows what's around the bend.

You know, life has a lot of surprises. God knows the beginning from the end, he can guide us. Don't you want to be guided by God in the new year, not make wrong decisions? Don't you want his blessing on you? Well, the fact of the matter is that a lot of Christians who go to church on Sunday are born again, they have been forgiven, their life has been transformed, but they're not living with 110th of what God wants for them, that's a fact.

Some are lukewarm, some are cold, some are just filled with formalism, go to church, but that early vibrancy they once had, it's petered out. So we live way below our privileges. We're the child of a king, but we live like paupers.

We can have all the things that are promised us in the Bible, instead of rivers, we just got a little spigot and we're trying to wait for a drop to come on our tongue. Why? Well, many of us are away from the word of God, we don't read the word of God, we don't study the word of God, thus faith fails. Our faith gets thin, gets weak, not vibrant, not strong, because we think, well, you just have an experience with the Lord, receive him, then you go to church whenever you can on Sundays, and then it should all work out but it doesn't, because life isn't live Sunday by Sunday, it's live day by day.

And church is not a gas station where you go in, you fill up, and now you're, you know, todo machando bien for the next week. No, it doesn't work that way. Now, when you study the word of God, you find out that that great element that makes men and women stand out in the Bible, and then carries on into church history, all the outstanding men and women of God, they were from different countries, different colors, believed doctrinally a little bit different, weren't agreed on every nuance of doctrine, but one thing for every man or woman that ever influenced a lot of people was they were people of prayer.

They were people of prayer. Nobody ever has been used by God who wasn't a person who practiced prayer, talking to God. And because they did, they drank in much more than the next guy down the block.

Because the word and prayer, prayer and the word are the two foundations once you become a Christian where you, they're called means of grace. All the things that God has for us come through these channels, the word and prayer, prayer and the word, and they're to be meshed together. So, if I recommended the book, Streams in the Desert to you, which we're gonna read together, which will drive us to the word of God every day, let's talk about the other.

David, of course, is known as a great man of prayer because most of his Psalms are prayers of some kind or another. They're not teachings, they're prayers. He's talking to God.

Paul prays in the New Testament, and the clincher of what I'm gonna say is not just that David prayed, and Paul prayed, and D.L. Moody prayed, and General Booth and Mrs. Booth prayed, and all these people that God has wonderfully used, but Jesus prayed. Jesus got up every morning and he prayed. Enough said, the Son of the living God, with no fallen nature like you and me, no selfish tendencies, sinful tendencies that you and I have inherited all the way down from Adam.

Jesus, the Son of the Father, the one who God said, this is my beloved Son in whom I'm well pleased, he prayed, and the disciples never said to him, Lord, teach us to preach, teach us how to study the word. No, but what did they say to him? Lord, teach us to pray. They knew that something about his time with the Father was the key to whatever was going on.

So now we're gonna look at a daily kind of prayer that I wanna see us do every single day starting tomorrow. Starting tomorrow, I want us to open our hearts now and say, just like the word of God is important, I wanna take a departure now in my spiritual walk. Show me how to do it, Pastor Cimbala, from the word of God, because you need it too, Pastor Cimbala.

I do, amen. So let's look at it. Psalm five, I have it first in the Good News Bible.

Listen to my words, O Lord, and hear my sighs. Listen to my cry for help, my God and King. I pray to you, O Lord.

You hear my voice in the morning at sunrise. I offer my prayer and wait for your answer. This psalm is attributed to David, and it's called a morning psalm, and it's also called by some versions a prayer for deliverance or protection.

Notice the urgency that's in it. Notice how he talks now to God. Notice there's no preamble, there's no religious verbiage.

It's let's get to the point. Listen to my words, O Lord, and hear my sighs. Listen to my cry for help, my God and King.

I pray to you, O Lord. You hear my voice in the morning at sunrise. Same word as in the morning.

They just changed it for variety. You hear my voice in the morning at sunrise. I offer my prayer and I wait for your answer.

Now look at the NIV, same three verses. Listen to my words, Lord. Consider my lament.

Hear my cry for help, my King and my God. For to you I pray. In the morning, Lord.

You hear my voice in the morning. Notice that's emphasis in the Hebrew. Whenever a word is repeated, that means emphasis.

Like we would put italics or put it in caps in the Hebrew poetry and language, repetition is for emphasis. In the morning, Lord, you hear my voice. In the morning, I lay my request before you and wait expectantly.

So let's see what the secret was so we can learn for ourselves of this special man of God, David. How did he pray? Just three things and we leave. Number one, notice that he prayed with urgency.

He prayed from his heart, not from su cabeza, from su corazon. He prayed from his heart. Notice the words.

I cry to you. Consider my, King James has it poorly, meditation. It means groaning or sighing.

It's a Hebrew word that means have you ever felt so overwhelmed by something that you couldn't even verbalize it? You just kind of brooded over it? You saw your daughter in trouble or your son or a grandchild sick and it was so moving on you, you're just kind of like, oh. So this is no nice, neat, clever presentation to God of some sentences. This is from his guts.

All prayer that's effective has to come from the heart. When we pray with our heart, we reach the heart of God. Heart touches heart.

I sigh, I cry to you. Hear my groaning. I cry out loud to you.

You'll hear my words. Notice his whole being is into this. So this is important for us.

When we pray, it's gotta come from our heart too. But let's go on before we apply it to ourselves. He prayed with urgency, why? If you read the rest of it, people are after him.

He has enemies. So as he goes before the Lord, he kind of opens his heart and he searches and he says, so what's really facing me today? You know, every day is different. Some days Brandon has, it's cool, it's fine.

He's got needs, we all have needs every day. But then there's other days when the roof comes in. The bottom falls out, am I correct? We hear news that breaks our heart.

That's different that day. But whatever the day brings, David is before the Lord and he's looking at his priority needs and he's bringing it before the Lord and he feels what he's praying. He's not making it up in his head.

He's not going through prayer by rote. He's not copying how somebody else prayed. You can't copy anybody else's praying.

You gotta pray yourself. Number two, notice that he did it every morning. It was a habit.

He's saying in the morning, you're gonna hear my voice. In the morning, I'll order my requests before you. The word there is the same word that's used for the priest who in the morning, some commentators believe, it's a reference to that.

In the morning, in the tabernacle, there would be the wood arranged early, early. Why? Because the sacrifice was gonna come. The morning sacrifice, which was prescribed by God.

So that word, the priest would order the wood and put it in a certain way, like in Argentina where I've been 30-some times in my life, they have something called the asado where they cook a half a cow or a quarter of a cow. And they arrange the wood in a certain way. The gauchos, the wood is on the fire and they put sticks and now the meat is there and they turn it.

It's like a science. You just sit there and drink mate and watch them cooking the beef for hours. Done that so many times.

But it's all careful. David is saying, in the morning, every morning, not one morning, every morning, I'm gonna arrange my requests before you because every day is a little bit different, isn't it? So he prayed with intensity and urgency about things that he really felt, not just here. Number two, he did it every day.

He made a habit of it. How do you make a habit? How do you break a bad habit? How do you make a good habit? Habits are part of forming character. Listen, an act, repeated enough, becomes a habit.

Good habits combined change your character. How do you get a habit? You do it once, then you do it again, then it's still a little strange, you do it the third time, then you do it the 10th time, then you do it the 20th time, by the 30th time, when you wake up in the morning, you have to do it now, it's a habit. I could no more make it through a day without opening the word of God than I could lay on a bed of nails.

Why? Because I've developed habits over the years. Every single day, I'm in the word of God. Why? Because at the beginning, when I didn't have that habit, I did it, then you repeat it, then you repeat it, then you repeat it.

Now it's a habit. Did you know I have the craziest habit? I just noticed it the other day, lighting a candle for my wife. When I was in the fourth grade, fifth grade, or some place, someone showed a film, I can see myself as a little kid, and they said that if you light a match and you don't make sure it's out, and you throw it, it could look like it's out, but then it could become combustible and change, and then get on fire in the garbage where you put it, right? So the person said, the teacher said, you know, when you light a match, you should run it under some water.

That thing got in me that to this day, I can light a match and candles, I love nice smelling candles, I can light a match, there's no way I could throw that in the garbage. It could be out for 10 minutes, I still can't put it in the garbage. I'm gonna go to the sink and I'm gonna run water on it, I cannot physically do that.

I have formed a habit. And you can have bad habits, how are bad habits formed? You do something that's not good, then you do it again, then you do it again under the same circumstances, still not a habit, then you do it again, and down the road, now it's a habit. Now it'll grip you for good or for bad.

So David had this godly habit. Like Jesus said, when you pray, go into your closet, make that a habit, get alone. David is saying, every single morning, you're gonna hear from me, because I need you and I'm gonna lay before you what I need.

Lastly, David says, not only do we see urgency, not only do we see habitual, regularity, every single day, remember, the Christian life can only be lived on a daily basis. I don't care if an angel came to your house today, sat down and had a meal with you. The next day, you're gonna need Jesus again.

You can call all your friends tonight, I don't believe it, an angel came, sat with me, what an experience. By the time you wake up the next morning, you need the Lord. That's why the Lord taught us to pray, give us this day our what? Not our weekly bread.

Many of us are weak and frail and miss out on blessings because we don't live daily, we live weekly, monthly. Some people come to church twice a year, imagine their life. They never open the word, they never, but what happens if you did that to your body? What if you just ate once a week? None of us are gonna eat just once a week.

Why? Because no, I need my food today. Some people, unless they have coffee in the morning, you do not wanna talk to them, am I correct? Why? Because daily, we live daily. Last thing, David says, with urgency, I'll pray regularly, and then I will look up, and I will be expecting the answer.

How few of us do that? The word that's used there is the same word that was used for a prophet, who would go and get a loan to wait to see what the Lord would say to him. Prophets were called seers, S-E-E-R-S. And they would get a loan someplace and go, and they would say, no, I gotta leave all the people.

I gotta leave them. I gotta go up and see what God will say to me. God's gonna say something to me.

God's gonna help me. I gotta look up and wait now for God. So David says, every single morning, I'm gonna pray.

I'm gonna do it from my heart, not my head only. I'm gonna pray regularly, and then I'm gonna be expecting you that very day to answer the thing I brought before you. Because Jesus said, when you pray, believe, have faith, expect it.

So let me close. Can we start to do that? I enjoin you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, don't you want everything he has for you? Don't you want blessings and power and peace and joy? Don't you want to discover callings and gifts that you don't even know are on your life? They're gonna come by this kind of practice that David gives us here. So tomorrow morning, this is practical now.

I'm gonna talk like a teacher. Tomorrow morning, I'm not telling you when, but you know what, you gotta do it first thing. You gotta do it first thing.

You know, there's a saying among people, great men and women of God, they always talk to God before they would ever talk to anybody else. That's not a bad practice. How many are with me? Talk to God before you talk to anyone else, because no matter what that person says to you, won't be as important as what you're talking to God about.

Before you read the newspaper, before you text anybody, before you check your emails. See, everything in our world now works against the thing that I'm talking about. Because we get up, ding, ding, I talk to people, I read about people who are so addicted to their phones, they sleep with them.

They sleep with their phone. Oh, that got conviction here. Some of you are sleeping right with that phone, right there, right? That's your little baby.

No, sleep with God, don't sleep with your phone. So listen, before you check anything, what's more important than what we're talking about? I don't care who texts you. I wouldn't care who emailed you.

Let's take time, how much time? Well, you decide that. And it'll be decided by God if you'll just start to do it. What do I mean by that? I'm not telling you that if you don't spend an hour with God, you're not praying.

That's all legalism and fake spiritualism. Person has to do it with their heart. You can't do it just to do it.

But you take time, and what you do is you lay before God. Sometimes what I do, and I encourage you, what are you facing that day? Let's say there's no super emergency, but you're gonna have to face people, go to work. Do you need traveling mercies? You're going on an interview? You gotta make decisions? You gotta get along with that co-worker who just drives you nuts? Oh God, give me patience.

The other day, I sat down for a dinner with someone. Within 30 seconds, I wanted to get up and leave. That's the truth before God.

And there was such a bad vibe at the table, I said, I am out of here, because I was exhausted. The Lord reminded me, love is patient. And I sat down, I had to pray for his grace.

But can't we all sit down and say, Earl, what's facing us? Do you have a wayward daughter? You got a wayward son? You're concerned about changing jobs? Have you lost your job? Do you got a family member who's sick? What are the things that affect you? What are the things on your heart? You gotta take time and survey the land, and not be rushing and just praying, and Lord, help me, and Father, good, hallelujah, praise God, because you're on the throne. God praise God, amen. That's not praying.

That's just religious verbiage. Wait, and talk plain. Don't copy anyone.

Don't use thou, what is thee, who inhabits the corridors of eternity. Don't worry about that. Just talk to him.

Come on, are you with me? Can we put our hands together? We talk to God. We're gonna talk to him. How about your children? How about your grandchildren, right? Come on, who's in your heart? Who do you care about? You care about a sick child? You care about somebody who you know is in trouble? Oh my goodness.

Just get quiet and survey your life, and then start bringing it to the Lord from your heart, and talk to him, and if you have nothing to say from your heart, then be quiet and just wait. He might bring something to your remembrance, but whatever it is, tell him about it. Talk to him about it, and you don't need a lot of introductory words.

Just God, hear me today. I praise you, I love you. I mean, David prayed with confidence because he said, you are my God and my king.

That's all he could say, but we are able to say, our Father which art in heaven, you're not just my God and my king, you're my Father. What father wouldn't care about his children? What father would not listen to his children? Well, I'm not in the place I ought to be. What father turns away a child because they've been naughty or disobedient? No father, no mother.

In fact, you give them even more love when they've messed up. You have mercy on them. So don't let the devil get these ideas in your head to keep you away from the morning watch, going before God and saying, God, this is what I'm facing today, or this is what's on my heart, and it'll change because things change.

I had a great friend who's an author and preacher, and he used to tell me, he was president of a Bible school at one time, and he told me every morning he would pray through his day. You know, he had an agenda for the day, who he's gonna meet, how to raise money, how to go here, how to prepare that, how to talk to the students, and he would just pray through the whole day. All right, God? So this afternoon at three o'clock, oh, God, I gotta speak at the convocation.

Oh, Lord, help me there. Give me the word that you have. Listen, just talk to God about what you're concerned about.

Number two, do it every day. Do it every day. Now, that'll be hard for some of us, but remember how a habit is made.

One act, repeat it, another act, repeat it, and act, and act. It's still a little strange, it's still a little, you know, then act, and act. I remember I could see myself now in a gym.

How old was I? And I was the point guard, and the coach would yell at me, look up when you're dribbling, see who's free. And I would sometimes, it was little, I'd be dribbling and I had my head down, but the problem is when you're dribbling and your head is down, you can't see who's open all around you because you're looking down. So he'd say, look up, and he'd yell at me, yank me on the sideline, make me do pushups.

I told you to look up. Then he actually got glasses that were plastic on the bottom, so you couldn't look down. And he would make me dribble, and the other guys dribble, and we dribble up and we couldn't look at the ball because it was blocked, you could only look up here.

And then you're going back this way with your left hand and you're dribbling and you're doing all of that. My goodness, after doing that for a week, I never looked down at a basketball again in my life. Why? Because you make a habit.

A repeated act over and over becomes a habit. And then the first thing in the morning, you can't wait to get along with your father. Oh, father, do I have to talk to you about a lot of things this morning? That's all it is.

Talking to your father about what you need. Not, you gotta pray. No, we have the privilege.

How many counted a privilege that we could talk to our father? And he's the one who invites us as I close. He's the one who says, call upon me in the day of trouble. Listen, ask and you shall receive.

Seek and you'll find. Knock, it will be open. In the day of trouble, call upon me and I will show you great and mighty things that you've never heard.

Jesus said, men ought always to pray and not give up. Do it each morning. Talk from your heart.

And then, I'm telling you, just this week, I have seen God, as I was preparing for this message, I said, God, you gotta take me deeper. I've been looking up and expecting, now God, you're gonna do what I'm asking. You know, in football, at the end of the game, they throw a pass and they call it, disrespectful really to people of a Catholic faith, they call it a Hail Mary.

In other words, you just throw a pass and you hope maybe somehow, you know, you throw it 60 yards and maybe something good will happen. But prayer is not supposed to be Hail Mary, let's hope this works. It's supposed to be, Father, thank you for hearing me.

I know you're gonna help me today. The very things I've talked about, now I'm waiting to see what you're gonna do. And then, peace and joy and guidance and blessings that you've never known.

Past simple, I'm not sure about that. Thank you for being honest, then why don't you do this? Try it, you'll like it. Try it.

If you think I'm full of hot air, I've given you God's word. Try it tomorrow. And if the devil fights you, for sure I told you the right thing.

Because if anything the devil hates, try it in your own life. He didn't like when we read the Bible, but how many know when we make a mistake, and we make up our minds we're gonna talk to God, all hell breaks loose. You'll be distracted tomorrow, you'll sit down, and you'll have thoughts come in your head that you hadn't had for a week.

How many have ever had that happen, right? Distracting thoughts, the phone will ring, just shut off everything. Just mush it all up. And just say, I'm gonna get alone.

I'm gonna get alone, and I'm gonna talk to my Father. Close your eyes with me. You know what, some people can't wait till tomorrow.

I'm gonna dismiss you now, but for some, you can't wait till tomorrow because you got some heavy things on you, robbing you of peace and joy. You gotta talk to Jesus right now. I must tell Jesus.

I must tell Jesus. If you would like, as I dismiss this meeting, to just spend a few minutes here in the front with me, just get out of your seat right now. Just one person, two people, five people.

Just, Pastor, that was for me because I'm carrying this thing, and it's too heavy for me, just absolutely too heavy. It's too heavy. Just get out of your seat and come here to the front.

Thank you. Come down from the balcony. I just wanna say a prayer over you, then we'll dismiss together.

But we're all gonna make a covenant here with the Lord today by his grace. Everybody in the building, stand. And because we all need this, join hands with the person next to you.

Just reach out, left and right. First, I wanna pray for everyone in general, for all of us, starting with me. Let's pray together.

Father God, I ask you today to take these words in Scripture and put it in our hearts that we might imitate those who imitate Jesus. Oh, Jesus. Oh, Jesus.

You got up to pray. You laid your needs before the Father. You looked up with expectancy.

You walked with confidence and peace and spiritual equilibrium because you had spent time with the Father. Nothing could rattle you because you had been with your Father. I pray that you'll help all of us, Lord, that starting today, tomorrow, new habits will be made.

this special habit of starting the day with you, laying out our needs to you, praying from our heart, giving you the hard things, giving you the big things, the little things, all the things. Give us grace to do that. We know we're in a spiritual battle, warfare is going on, but even in Ephesians, Lord, you told us after all the armor is put on, and then pray at all times with all kinds of prayer, and pray in the spirit so that we can be

strong in you and in the power of your might.

I pray for my friends that are in the front. I reach out my hands over them, and I pray in the name of Jesus that you will meet their needs. They're laying it out before you now.

They're telling you what they need right now, Lord. You know that main thing that they need, that heavy burden thing, Lord, that thing that breaks their heart and weighs them down. I pray now in the name of Jesus, Father, that you will lift that burden and begin to make a way where there's no way.

Open the door that nobody can shut, and shut that door that should not be open. Get rid of it. Get rid of those people that pull them down.

Get rid of that wrong relationship. Get rid of that. Break that habit now in Jesus' name.

We ask that bad habit to be broken, and for you to instill in us by your grace godly habits. Godly habits. Now we ask your blessing on all of us this last Sunday of 2015.

Thank you for all your blessings, but boy, God, we are looking forward to the new year. We're looking forward to today, tomorrow. What great things you're gonna do.

We're looking up. We're not looking down. We're not depressed.

We're optimistic. We're full of faith. For the best is yet to come in all of our lives.

If you believe that, put your hands together. Let's clap them real loud. I love you all.

Turn around and hug somebody and say happy new year to them, would you, right now? God bless you.

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