

(clip) If You Don't Pray, You Won't Live

by John Piper

This sermon emphasizes the importance of disciplined prayer life, providing practical suggestions based on the speaker's personal experiences and insights from the Bible. The three key suggestions include setting aside a specific time and place for daily prayer, combining prayer with reading the Bible, and praying in concentric circles starting from personal needs to global concerns, all centered around honoring God's name and kingdom.

Scripture: Matthew 6:6, Philippians 4:6, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, James 5:16, Luke 11:1, Colossians 4:2, Ephesians 6:18, Psalm 145:18, 1 Timothy 2:1, 1 Chronicles 16:11

Topics: "Disciplined Prayer Life", "Honoring God's Kingdom"

Description

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Transcript

So let me give you a few practical suggestions. These are growing out of my life and out of my reading of the Bible. Just three brief practical suggestions because we're not doing as well as we should.

Now suggestion number one in your life of prayer for 2009. Set aside a time and a place each day and don't leave it to chance. Set aside a time and a place each day and don't leave it to chance.

The devil defeats most praying before it happens because we didn't make a plan. If you don't plan, believe me. Oh, I have been at this a long time and the devil hates me and my prayer life like you wouldn't believe how many good things keep me from praying.

Not sin. Sin does not keep me from praying. Righteousness keeps me from praying.

Answering holy emails and other holy things. Just checking out one more piece of relevant news to pray about at whatever news service you click on. It's not evil that keeps us from praying.

It's good things and he is shrewd to the bottom. So pick a place and pick a time and show up. Number two.

I suggest that you combine your praying with reading the Bible and that you take what you read in the Bible and you turn it into prayer. Because your brain, if it's a typical human brain, will have a very hard time holding a train of thought while you pray with no help from the Bible. Try it for just 10 minutes without your brain flipping out onto the dust you see on the venetian blinds.

Just try it. He is wicked in his goodness. Needs to be dusted.

Wouldn't be sin to get up and dust it. Would it? Use the Bible and turn the Bible into prayer. Read, pray, read, pray, read, pray, read, pray as long as you want to or can.

That's number two. Number three. I suggest that you pray in concentric circles.

You can either pray from the outside in or the inside out. And what I mean by concentric circles is I'm the most needy spiritual person I know. At least I know my sins better than I know anybody else's.

So I pray about me a lot. Have mercy upon me. Convict me.

Kill me. Change me. Guard me.

Humble me. Destroy those aspects of me. I pray about me a lot.

Because of how sinful I am. And then you move out from me to my family. Pray about Noel.

Pray about Talitha. All my sons. All my daughters-in-law.

All my grandchildren. That's another circle. Then I move out from there to the staff.

I can name the staff and the elders. And then I move out to you, the church. And then I move out from there to the wider movement of Christ around the world.

Our missionaries and the whole global cause of Christ. And then move out from there to the political, historical arena of the world. I generally don't pray about galaxies or anything like that.

But my universe, as far as prayer goes, stops pretty much at the planet. I don't pray for the devil or angels. I don't see any reason for doing that in the Bible.

Or you could go the other direction. Move from the outside in. Just whatever.

And at every one of those concentric circles, if you wonder, why do you put God at the middle? It's because he's in every circle. And the main point of every circle is, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done. And only then do you get to give me some bread today. Three big massive Your name, hallowed.

Your kingdom, arriving. Your will, on the planet, done. The way it's done in heaven and in my life.

Those are in every circle. That's why he's not anywhere in the concentric circles. So those are my three suggestions.

The hard truth is we Christians don't do very well. We've done some surveys over the years at Bethlehem. It's pretty sad when we do them.

I don't like to do them. I get discouraged. We don't pray very much.

Pray at meals maybe, unless we are still stuck at the adolescent stage that thinks good habits are legalism. We may whisper prayers before a tough meeting that we're walking into. We may throw him a kiss as we crawl into bed.

But we don't set aside significant regular daily disciplined time to pray in those ways much. And we don't think it's worth it to meet with others to pray by and large. And we wonder why is my faith weak? Why is my hope feeble? Why is my passion for Christ small? And meanwhile across these rooms the devil is whispering in your ear, some of you, the pastor is getting legalistic now.

He's moving into the legalistic phase of the sermon. He's starting to use guilt now. He's getting the law out now.

That's what he's saying. To which I say to hell with the devil and all of his destructive lies. Be free! Bethlehem.

Is intentional regular disciplined earnest, Christ-dependent God-glorifying, joyful prayer a duty? A discipline? Do I go to prayer meetings Tuesday morning Wednesday afternoon, Friday morning Saturday afternoon Sunday morning, Tuesday morning, Thursday afternoon Do I do that because it's a duty? Out of discipline? Well, you could call it that. It's a duty the way it's a duty for a scuba diver to put on his air tank before he goes underwater. It's a duty the way pilots should listen to air traffic controllers.

It's a duty the way soldiers in combat should clean their rifles and load their guns. It's a duty the way hungry people eat food. It's a duty the way thirsty people drink water.

It's a duty the way a deaf man puts on his hearing aid. It's a duty the way a diabetic takes his insulin. It's a duty the way Pooh Bear looks for honey.

It's a duty the way pirates look for gold. So you can call it duty if you want. It is like that.

I hate the devil. I hate the way he's killing some of you by persuading you it's legalistic to do regular, set-aside disciplined praying. I hate the devil and the way he's killing you.

Telling you that it is legalistic to be as regular in your prayers as you are in eating your food. In sleeping. In internet use.

Oh, we struggle with those, don't we? Legalistic to eat three times a day. I think it is. Sleep every night, for goodness sakes.

Mix it up! He is laughing up his sleeve at how easy he can take out Christians. The devil is. He is laughing up his sleeve at what suckers we are for his worn out legalism.

You should just look at him and say, I'm older than that. I'm not in fifth grade anymore. I've grown up a little bit.

Get out of my life. I've got work to do because I am a sinner in desperate need of talking to my king every day. And my sin inclines me to leave it over and over if I don't set a time and a place.

I'm a goner. Let's talk to the devil. Give him some information.

He might leave you alone for a while. Probably not. Folks, God has given us means of grace.

Know that phrase? God has given us means of grace. If we don't use the means of grace, like praying to the fullest advantage, our complaints against him will not stick. It's amazing to me how many people get in God's face with complaints when they haven't done it.

What kind of a courtroom is this? When God can be put in the dock by sinners who don't even use the means of grace He gives us. Amazing. If we don't eat, we starve.

If we don't drink, we die of thirst. If we don't exercise a muscle, it atrophies. If we don't breathe, we suffocate.

And just as there are physical means of life, there are spiritual means of grace. It's so simple. So many of you are trying to live your life without breathing.

Eating. Drinking. Exercising.

And you wonder, what's wrong? It's your fault. It's his fault.

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