

# (True Disciple Conference) Ministry & Your Prayer Life

by Paul Washer

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*Paul Washer emphasizes the critical role of prayer and communion with God in the life of a minister, urging them to prioritize their relationship with God above all else.*

**Duration:** 41:07

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Mark 1:21-35, Mark 5:30, John 4:6

**Topics:** "Prayer Life"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of having a passion for the things of God based on truth. He mentions the example of John Piper, acknowledging his influence but also cautioning against blindly following any human leader. The speaker highlights the idea that when a pastor filled with the Holy Spirit ministers according to their gifts, virtue and power go out from them, which can be physically and emotionally draining. He uses the example of Jesus healing the desperate crowds to illustrate the intensity and urgency of ministering in the power of the Holy Spirit.

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## Transcript

Let's go to Mark chapter one, verse twenty nine, and immediately after they came out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John. Now, Simon's mother-in-law was lying sick with a fever and immediately they spoke to Jesus about her. He came to her and raised her up, taking her by the hand and the fever left her.

She waited on them. When evening came after the sun had set, they began bringing to him all who were ill and those who were demon possessed. And the whole city had gathered at the door.

And he healed many who were ill with various diseases and cast out many demons. And he was not permitting the demons to speak because they knew who he was. In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went away to a secluded place and was praying there.

Simon and his companions searched for him. They found him and said to him, everyone is looking for you. I understand that we have ministers here in the congregation.

Also, those probably young men who would seek to be ministers. And there are some things that I feel like I preached a lot this morning. I won't preach quite as long.

I'd rather be very sharp with a quick word about something that's very important. It is so easy to grasp and can even feed the flesh to grasp the theology of the Puritans. To grasp the theology of Charles Spurgeon, of Edwards, of Whitfield, of David Brainerd.

It is quite another thing to imitate their lifestyle. Imitate their lifestyle. If I could look back and say, point out one thing that I see in common with men and women of God.

It is their willingness to be shut up to God. When I felt like the Lord had showed me that I was to preach. I went to my pastor who was at that time in Austin, Texas.

He was a very wise man, old school. Kind of a cross between a Wesleyan holiness and a Baptist. Wasn't Calvinistic, but he believed in the power of God and salvation.

Kind of the old school Ravenhill type. And he looked at me in his office and this is what he said. He said, boy, can you be alone? And I thought that what he meant at the time was, if you preach the truth, men will hate you and you will be alone.

But that's not at all what he meant. He went on to explain, there's every sort of minister out there. And every sort of little boy wanting to be a minister.

And they'll group together and have their fellowships and their retreats and their conferences and all sorts of things. But he says, very rarely will you find a young man, or even a man of God, who will separate himself from all his playmates and just be alone with God. And that is so true.

The need to be alone with God. Now I want us to look at some things here that are very, very important, that is so important. Because if you're a minister of the gospel, you do care about people.

If you don't care about people, you shouldn't be a minister of the gospel. I hear these guys all the time saying, you know, I do things for the glory of God. Well, they're just talking about the first commandment.

It is the first commandment, and it's the primary commandment. But there's a second commandment that follows it. We do things for the glory of God, but we do things also because we love people.

Jesus died for God, that is true. But Jesus also died for you. He loves people.

It's not a faint positional love or just some decree. He loves people. If you're a minister of the gospel, you love people.

But there's a problem. In our love, we can become unbiblical, reactionary, and we can allow an uneducated love to draw us away from the thing that the people need most from us. In this world today, in a pastor, people don't need a friend.

That's not the primary thing they need in a pastor. And they don't primarily need an educator or even an expositor. Now, I know that many would disagree with me on this.

The primary thing that a church needs out of its pastor is for him to be a man of God, who belongs to God, who spends most time with God, whose thoughts are of God, who seeks to hear God, who separates himself to be with God. And not just through intermediaries. Not just through good books.

Not just studying men who were alone with God. But getting alone with God. Here we see that, first of all, if we look into chapter 1, Mark is an amazing book.

Mark, if you read Mark correctly, this is my opinion, I think it's right. If you read Mark, the whole book, correctly, you will be panting and wore out at the end of the book. You literally will.

Just read Mark at one setting. And when you're finished, you'll literally have your tongue hanging out. Because it's like these quick, rapid snapshots of Christ just jumping from one thing to another.

It will literally wear you out. And that's what's going on here in chapter 1. We see him, he's preaching. He's calling the disciples.

He's teaching. He's casting out demons. He's doing all sorts of things.

And news about him in verse 28 is spread everywhere into all the surrounding district of Galilee. And then it says, immediately, this is a word that's quite frequent with Mark. It says, and immediately they came out of the synagogue.

And after that, well, they didn't linger around. Immediately after they came out of the synagogue, they go into the house of Simon and Andrew. And there is Simon's mother-in-law.

She's laying sick. He heals her. He raises her up.

After that, in verse 32, evening came after the sun had set. They began bringing to him all who were ill and those who were demon-possessed. Now, before we get to the evening, we understand that the Messiah, being the Christ, being God in the flesh, was still in the flesh.

And he was wearied at times. He slept at times. He sat there at the well in John 4. And he was weary.

Now, there's something that you need to understand. Maybe you've never thought of it this way. But when a pastor, filled with the Holy Spirit, is ministering according to the gifts that God has given him, I believe that virtue goes out from him.

Just as the King James describes it in the life of Jesus. The woman touched him and immediately he noticed that virtue went out from him. Power went out from him.

When we are ministering in the power of the Holy Spirit, it will literally wear us out. This is not just some psychological thing. I've heard people say that psychologists have determined that preaching one hour passionately is like working eight or ten hours a day.

Well, I don't need psychologists to tell me that. Because you know if you have preached, there have been times when you've probably noticed just a special empowering of God on your life. And you felt when you were in that pulpit like literally you could kill a she-bear with your bare hands.

But then immediately after you step out of that pulpit, you're wore out. I mean, you literally feel like you've died. Or you've been in a counseling session where it's been very, very hard, but you've noticed a special empowering of the Holy Spirit to help you.

And after it's over, literally you can't even answer the phone. We've all experienced that. I think the New Testament makes it quite clear of how our Savior, being this vessel, being so used of God, that the power

went out from Him.

As Baptists, we are always defending the deity of Christ. And that is so important. If you're going to look for a place where the cults are going to attack, it's going to be there.

The deity of Christ. But in our defense of the deity of Christ, I don't think that we give enough attention to the humanity of Christ. That this was Christ, the Man, who did what He did in the power of the Holy Spirit.

And He is wore out. He comes to this point, it's evening, He's already done 20 days of ministry in the afternoon and morning. So He comes to the evening and it says, When evening came, after the sun had set, they began bringing to Him all who were ill and those who were demon-possessed.

And the whole city had gathered at the door. And He healed many who were ill with various diseases and cast out many demons. And He was not permitting the demons to speak because they knew who He was.

Now, this is evening. If we want to be really strict about it, we could say 6 o'clock, probably a little bit later. This is evening.

Now, the whole town shows up. Now, to try to give you an idea of what this might be like, I was in a place called Santa Rosa, about probably 40 kilometers from Ayia Baca, which probably doesn't mean a whole lot, in the Andes Mountains. A place I'd preach there.

There's about 1,500 believers gathered and we would preach there. And they'd stay all night, stay all day, stay three, four days. You'd preach outdoors to all these people, no microphones, day in and day out.

Absolutely wonderful. Well, one day, I went to Ayia Baca for this great big conference and I brought a doctor with me, a doctor. Now, these people, most of them had never ever seen a doctor.

Suffering from every kind of ailment you could ever imagine. No one knew the doctor was coming. And then all of a sudden, I show up and there's probably several hundred people there.

And the news got out that I had brought a doctor and that he had medicine. This is an Andean town, village of mud huts that never had the chance to go to a doctor. A baby gets a small ailment, it dies.

The people went wild. Ten hours a day, I translated for that doctor. There were lines of people standing out.

Probably in the end, probably 1,500 people or so, standing out in lines and some of them waiting a full 24 hours. Now, in the midst of that, the time for the conference is drawing close. People know, you know, I've been waiting here two days.

This doctor is going to leave. He can't see me. I mean, we couldn't go outside of the house at night.

People would try to grab him at line start. People would even get desperate and angry, maybe pushing and shoving. I mean, it was just literally a battle zone.

And that doctor literally thought he'd never recover. That's what's going on here. I want you to see that.

This is not some trite Catholic painting of Jesus sitting on a stone and one by one a few people come up to Him to be healed. These are desperate people. Have you ever seen people in a time of catastrophe, time of war, time of terrible crisis? What happens? There's rioting, there's fighting, there's looting.

They're desperate. Absolutely desperate. And there is one man among these thousands upon thousands of people who every time he's touched somebody who was blind, they receive their sight.

There's a father there trying to get his son through that crowd and is willing to fight hell itself to do it. It is a madhouse. And they are pushing and they are shoving and they are fighting and they are trying to get to Him.

And He is healing their diseases. He is casting out demons. He is giving sight to the blind.

He's doing all this. After an entire day of already fighting hell itself. Now, how long did this go on? Do you think that those people said, well, it's 10 o'clock.

It's time to go. The only thing I try to figure out in this passage is I believe that He had to exercise something of His deity here just to get out of the house in the morning. I guarantee you, if I know anything about human nature and what I've witnessed out of this same thing, there's people sleeping all around that house.

People standing on guard waiting for just a window to crack or a door to open. So this goes on almost probably all night into almost the wee hours of the night. And He is ministering, He is ministering.

And He is absolutely wore out. So what would be the best thing for Him to do? Sleep. Sleep.

Sleep all the rest of the morning. Sleep the rest of the day. Maybe wake up sometime in the evening of the next day.

And I don't want to stand against the need for sleep. Sometimes we need to sleep. But I want you to look at something here.

I don't want you to think of this as Jesus, God incarnate, alone. But Jesus, the man, filled with the Holy Spirit. Deity, yes.

But still true humanity. And after all those hours of ministering, look what it says. In the early morning while it was still dark, they came when it was dark.

He ministered to them through the night. And so while it is still dark, how much did He sleep? An hour? A half an hour? Two hours? But look what He does. In the early morning while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place and was praying there.

Was praying there. You see, we have physical bodies and they need physical sleep. We have physical bodies and they wind down.

And sometimes it's good to sit on a dock or walk through a field. Or even, yes, take up some sort of hobby, I suppose. But if you ever think that you need that in order to recharge your batteries, you're wrong.

From where does all life flow? From the throne of God. From where does power, spiritual life, flow? From Him. He's the only inherent source.

For the rest of us, we all depend upon His life. And what I want to share with you most of all is that I've seen so many pastors and preachers and even myself become convinced by other people that the way to recharge your batteries is to go play golf or the way to recharge your batteries is to do that, do that.

Almost, no, you don't need to pray.

You've been doing enough spiritual stuff. You need to get away from it all. What they're really saying is you need to get away from Christ for a while before He wears you out.

The thing you most need is not to get away from Christ, but to run to Him. To be there with Him. Now, I want you to look at something that's very important.

Simon and his companions searched for Him and they found Him and said to Him, everyone is looking for You. Now, Pastor, listen to this. It's almost like they're saying something like this.

Don't you care about these people? Don't you care about these people, Jesus? Everyone's looking for You. There's all these sick people, demon-possessed people, needy people, and you're out here in a secluded place praying by yourself. Don't you care about these people? Pastor, isn't that a great problem that you have to deal with? This constant tug of, well, I need to take care of the needs of the people.

I need to be there for the people. I need to do stuff for the people. And the devil, I can assure you, will be behind a lot of that.

Those people need a man of God above everything else. And you are a man of God to the degree that you are in the presence of God. And again, I want to say this, not just reading good books, and I want to say even this, not just reading the Bible or studying it, but being alone with God in prayer.

To speak to Him, to hear from Him, to meditate upon Him, to commune with Him. One of the problems I have with the Reformed movement in America is this. We are so afraid of all the folly and vanity of the charismatic movement that we've come to believe that the entire Christian life and our relationship with God is nothing more than correct exegesis.

And that's why. There is a sense of dwelling with God, of being with God, being in the presence of God, knowing God, speaking God, yes, even experiencing God, even though we hate that word. But I will not let anyone take it from me.

Jesus was a man of prayer. Did He care about the people? No one cared about the people like our lowly Jesus. What's the greatest thing that He can do? Remain in His communion with the Father.

Be a man of God. Politicians are known to be a man of the people. We are not to be a man of the people.

We are to be a man of God who goes to the people. That's the difference between church growth and preaching. Church growth goes out there and takes all kinds of studies on people, their desires, their wants, and everything else, and then they take God's truth and they conform it to the wants and desires of the people.

Preaching in the prophetic ministry of the preacher doesn't ask the opinion or wants or whims of the people at all. He dwells with God and finds out what God wants the people to know and then goes and tells them whether they want to hear it or not. That's the difference.

To be a man of God. He dwelt alone with God. And He dwelt alone with God in the times when He was most busy.

And when all pragmatism and practicality would have said, you don't have time for this today, maybe some other day you can pray more and catch up. I think it was Martin Luther who said, I have so much work to do today that I must pray at least three hours or I'll never get done. That is so different from us today.

Now, when I speak about prayer, I want you to know something. Many people, when they think about prayer, the only thing they think about is intercession and lists. Because in all those discipleship notebooks we have, we've got lists of things that we're supposed to pray about.

My dear friend, intercession is extremely important. But intercession is not the same thing or is not all there is to do with prayer. Intercession is maybe a small thing of what prayer really is.

Prayer is communion with God. It is a desire to be with God. And yes, at times that can mean reading a wonderful thing written by John Bunyan and meditating in it, but be careful.

Why? Because pretty soon, many times, because our flesh somehow sees that as easier, would rather have us sit there and learn something from John Bunyan than just sit there and be quiet before God. Prayer. There is a sense in which we should pray continually, Paul tells us.

But there is also a sense in which I should be with my wife continually. But that does not mean that I do not separate special times to be with my wife primarily and to direct all my focus upon her. We talk about David Brainerd.

I mean, my goodness, if we had a saint in evangelicalism, it might be him. But look at his life, not just his theology. And also wonder, do you have his theology? If it does not create in you the same thing it created in him.

Here is a man who would lay himself out on a log in a deep snowfall and cry out to God all night. You see, any little boy can read a book by John Piper and begin to start preaching on the glory of God. But have you earned the right to preach on that? Has the glory of God become a reality in your life? Anyone can say, I have the same theology as Jonathan Edwards, but does it cause you to tarry with God as Jonathan Edwards did? I can teach parrots reform theology.

I can teach parrots all these magnificent truths. I suppose that a parrot could, you know, learn amazing grace. But that does not make any of that a reality in his life.

In our fear of being led by the subjective, in our fear of not being biblical, in our fear of looking like charismatics, I think we have truncated our relationship with God and turned it into nothing more than correct theology, correct thinking. But is it not Jonathan Edwards himself and other great scholars of the Puritan faith who had such experiences with God that they thought that their life would be taken away? That they prayed and asked God to hold His hand off of them lest they die? That they broke forth with such joy unspeakable? You see, there's a relationship there and it's a supernatural, real relationship with God. Do you realize that God at this moment is present in all His fullness in this room? But God could manifest His presence in this room to such a degree that every one of you would be laying on the ground weeping over your sin.

Or every one of you literally overcome with such joy in the grace of God. Do you realize that? Or has your Christianity just become correct thinking? Jesus was a man of prayer and it wasn't just intercession. God is not some cosmic slot machine that if we pull at His lever enough times we're going to get what we want.

Prayer is not just duty. It's not just something I do because it's the right thing to do. Someone asked me one time when I got home from... They said, what are you going to do, Brother Paul, when you get home from Romania? I said, I'm going to kiss my wife.

They said, what are you going to do next? I said, I'll put my luggage down. But if I walked up to my wife and I come home on Monday and I walk up to her and I kiss her, give her a big hug and she says, well, what's that all about? And I pull out this book and I say, well, in manual, page 32 of the Good Husband's Manual, it says that directly upon meeting with my wife after a long journey, I should give her a kiss. She's going to take that manual and she's going to feed it to me.

She does not want my bare obedience to a right thing to do. She could care less about my morality at that stage. And you need to understand something.

The Christian life is not morality. It's not just a bunch of right things we do to be a right group of people. Christianity is about passion.

Well, yeah, we need to pray, Brother Paul. We need to intercede. No, that's not what I said.

I said we need to pray. I didn't say we needed to intercede. Yeah, we need to cry out to God.

He'll bring revival. No, maybe we just need to tell God how much we love Him. Maybe we need to walk out there and look at that corn and say, God, it is an amazing thing.

You can make these colonels do what they do. I always tell the young interns, I say, when you're walking through a field and you can look down at a mud puddle and see a bunch of tadpoles swimming down around in that mud puddle, and it causes you to fall on your knees and worship God with reverence, you're walking with God. He was a man of prayer.

And I think it's very, very important here that it doesn't tell us about how He prayed, just that He was praying there. I think the emphasis here is that He departed from men. He departed from the ministry.

He departed from even the need. And He went, not necessarily to resolve some specific purpose. He went to be with His Father.

How did I know that I wanted to marry my wife? Because I just wanted to be with her. I didn't have to do anything. I didn't have to go anywhere.

There didn't have to be a purpose or a plan or a program. I just wanted to be there. Isn't it amazing? When was the last time you thought, I just want to be with God? I just want to be with Him.

I don't even necessarily want to learn anything. I don't necessarily want to learn a deep truth that I can go back and preach in some conference so that everybody knows how smart I am. I don't want to learn something flashy.

I just want to be with God. Isn't that amazing? We talk so much about a relationship with God, don't we? Always. Relationship with God.

What does that mean? Well, it means to know Him. Does that word just mean factually to know Him? Is that what Jesus meant in John 17 3? This eternal life, that they might know Thee? That they might have correct data about Thee? The word know, we all know this. Not necessarily in the Greek, but the Greek

carrying over from the Hebrew, it's a word meaning intimacy.

It's a word used to even describe sexual intimacy. To know a woman. To know a man.

To know God. You see, theology is not an end in itself. It's a means.

We need truth as a foundation. We need to know Him so that we can know Him. And this is one of the places where I think that what's going to happen to all this Reformed truth is probably what happened to it last time.

You have certain men that are not passionate about Reformed truth. They're passionate about God. But then sooner or later that trickles down to no longer being passionate about God, but passionate about what we know.

And then it just becomes dead. That's why in many ways Dr. Piper is very, very refreshing. Because he's a wild man.

He just loves God. He's not right all the time. It's unbelievable.

Some of you guys, I think if Piper dressed up like a chicken and jumped off the San Francisco bridge, you guys would do it. Because you'd think, man, Piper does it, I'm doing it. Now I love Dr. Piper, but the point of the matter is it's not about him being right all the time, but you do sense something there.

A passion for the things of God. Based on truth. But truth is not the end.

It's the means to a greater end. And what is that? God. God.

Now, like I said, this is going to be rather short. I want us just to look at one other thing here that I feel is so important. And it's very, very convicting.

It's in Luke chapter 11. It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after he had finished, verse 1, one of his disciples said to him, Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples. And I said, well, Brother Paul, what's amazing about that? Well, if I wanted to learn how to play basketball, I thought, who could teach me how to play basketball? I'm going to Michael Jordan.

Mr. Jordan, would you teach me how to play basketball? Now, why am I asking him to teach me to play basketball and not asking him to teach me how to do quantum physics? Because what does he excel at? Of all the things that are outstanding in his life, what is the one thing that most excels in his life? I'm going to recognize that one thing. And when I recognize that, if I ever want to know how to do it, I'm going to go to that guy because of one thing in his life he most excels at that. Basketball.

Isn't it amazing? The disciples never came to Jesus and said, teach us how to preach. They never came to Jesus and said, teach us how to walk on water. Now, that's a pretty amazing thing.

Lord, teach us how to cast out demons. But when they looked at the full course of his life, casting out demons, of raising the dead, healing the sick and the blind and the lame, I have to believe that the most magnificent aspect of the life of Christ that those disciples witnessed was his prayer life. Teach us how to pray.

Now, this is very convicting for me. I've had young guys come up and say, teach me something about conversion. I've had people come up and say, teach me about this or that.

I've had people come up to me and say, teach me how to shoot a longbow because there probably aren't five men in the world that can shoot as good as me. I'm just kidding. But when do I have someone come up to me and say, Brother Paul, I've heard you pray.

Could you teach me about prayer? Pastor, has anyone ever come up to you and say, Pastor, of all the things I've seen, teach me to pray. I know you're a man of prayer. Teach me to pray.

I know a man, he's Wesleyan Holiness, lives up in Iowa. If he knew I was going to mention his name, he'd be sick. He's sick.

He runs a gravel pit. He's without a doubt the most Christ-like man I've ever met on the face of the earth. As a matter of fact, I can hardly even talk to him without weeping.

It's probably in his 80's. I've never met a man like him. And I've never met a man who could pray like him.

It's like Leonard Ravenhill said one time talking about a man of prayer. Leonard Ravenhill walked in on him while he was praying and Brother Ravenhill said, when I saw him pray, I backed out of the door like this, because you don't turn your back on royalty. If Leonard was to get up in the pulpit right now here, before he even got the word Jesus out, he'd be weeping.

And before he finished, you'd all be weeping. Now, I know all my Reformed guys, they'd say, well, it's not important. The emotion of this whole thing is just, did he correctly exegete the text? Well, it is important that he correctly exegetes the text.

But is that all preaching is? Is that all the Christian life is, is either correctly saying something or correctly believing something? Or is it bigger than that? Oh, those two things are absolutely essential. Don't anyone twist my words. But is that all it is? Can you not even yourself note the difference in men and be able to distinguish when a man has been with God and when he hasn't? These are things that are also lost among us.

They're lost. We need to be men and women who walk with God. Not just knowing right things.

Not just doing right things. But knowing Him. You know, Spurgeon constantly prayed for, I want to put it in this type of language just to kind of get under people's skin, for more and more of the Holy Spirit.

Now, he did not mean the Spirit was a person that could be divided or that you got more and more of Him. But greater and greater manifestations of the working of the Holy Spirit in his life. Martin Lloyd-Jones, the same thing.

Great author of those commentaries in Romans and Ephesians, spiritual depression, everything, those wonderful books. Toward the end of his life, saying, I wish I had prayed more. The testimony about listening to some of those men.

You can go and listen to a perfect exegesis of a text and you walk out. Someone asks you, how was the sermon? Man, he perfectly exegeted that thing. Or a guy that might not be quite so eloquent, quite so powerful in knowledge and everything.

And when you walk out and someone says, man, how was it? My heart burned within me when he spoke. I think that's what Murray said about Martin Lloyd-Jones. My heart burned.

What am I saying? Well, let me conclude. I know we're going to do some questions and clear some of this up maybe. Men, you are called primarily not to wait upon other men.

You are called primarily to wait upon God. You are not at the beck and call of other men. You are at the beck and call of God.

You are to be in a way like those seraphs, those burning ones that stood there before the Lord and Isaiah. In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord high and lifted up and His train filled the temple and above Him stood the seraph, each one having six wings. Two they covered their face with two they covered their feet and with two they did fly.

The six wings are, I think in a way, if they had been in any other situation, it would recognize how rapidly they were ready to go out and do God's will, to serve Him at any moment. They were burning. They were not burning with their own flame.

It was a reflection of the fire of God. They had their feet covered and they had their faces covered in honor and in shame. But they were ready at a moment's call to be sent out from Him.

That's the way you are to be. You are to dwell enough with God so that when you go to men it is always going to men from God. Spend more time there, men.

And although good reading is important, extremely important, let me share with you, nothing matches the reading of Scripture. Nothing matches the reading of Scripture. It is a delight to learn something from Jonathan Edwards.

It is a greater delight to learn something from Scripture and then read the great mind of Jonathan Edwards and realize that God taught you the same thing. Now that is a joy. So, be men.

Can you be alone? Just some practical things. One of the greatest enemies to pastoral piety is the TV. Want to get along with God? Probably need to throw that thing away.

It doesn't hurt your wife as much as it does you, Pastor. Realize that you belong to Him and use your time for Him. Let's pray.

Father, I pray, Lord, that You would use this small word to help Your people, especially to help Your men. Lord, with the demands on our life, we can so easily, I myself, Lord, so easily be distracted by good things and miss the most excellent things. Father, please help us all.

And we will be helped. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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