

Where are we going next? | How did prayer go this week?

Lately I have been doing sit-ups, push-ups, pull-ups almost everyday

- It won't last...

Before that I was eating only organic, nothing processed or refined, no preservatives, no additives

- It didn't last.

Before that I was running about 4 miles every other day

- It didn't last.

There was the time I was going to surf every day no matter what

- Failed on day 2

There was the time I started a stretching regimen

- Stiff as a board

Why is it we have such a hard time doing things that we know will be good for us?

These things are called *disciplines*

- People that maintain them are called *disciplined*

There is a reason for that

- There are hard to keep up
- They are good... just hard to maintain

There are certain things in Christian spirituality that have come to be known as *spiritual disciplines*

- They are good... so good
- But hard to maintain
  - Things like:  
Bible reading and study, meditation, worship, service, submission, giving, fasting, **prayer**

All of these are difficult to keep up from time to time... but perhaps the most challenging is **prayer**

Why?

There are very few of us here who would say: I pray enough

No one on his or her death-bed says: I prayed too much

- Or in heaven for that matter

In fact, no amount of prayer can be too much, or even enough

- 1 Thessalonians 5:17 = **Pray without ceasing**

This only makes it harder—we are defeated before we try

Jesus realized this would be difficult for us

- Luke 18:1  
Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart.

The disciples realized it was difficult

- Luke 11:1  
It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray..."
- It is the only thing they ever asked Him to teach them!
- How profound is that?

The disciples proved it was difficult

- Garden of Gethsemane
- **This is our story—where we have failed, Christ has prevailed**
  - But my point today is—they failed

But the very fact that they ever even asked Jesus to teach them to pray (exclusively) reveals that they recognized:

1. **The power of prayer**
2. **The problem of prayer**

If we realize the power... why is there a problem?

- **Prayer | Why don't we do it?**
- All I want to accomplish in this sermon is to get us thinking about prayer
  - Why don't we do it more? Really?
  - Lots of reasons...

I think it comes down to this (to simplify the matter—in pairs):

- **We are distracted**
  - **We are not devoted**
- **We are selfish**
  - **We are not servants**

## We are distracted, not devoted

- Worldliness
  - James 1:27  
Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.
    - NIV = Keep oneself from being polluted by the world
    - NLT = refusing to let the world corrupt you
- Busyness
  - My last 10 weeks
  - The staff
  - The church
  - The return
  - Hebrews 13:21  
"Lord, equip me in every way to do your will. Work in me that which is pleasing in your sight. Do it through Jesus and in such a way that He gets all the glory. Amen"
  - The early church got it!
    - Acts 2:42-43  
42 They were **continually devoting themselves** to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.  
43 Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.
  - **devoted**  
**Greek:** To persist in a thing, apply diligently to it; to be strong or firm towards anything, to endure or persevere in or with, to be constantly occupied or engaged  
  
**Oxford Dictionary:** To give all or a large part of one's time or resources to something
  - **continually devoting themselves**

## We are selfish, not servants

- Praying for ourselves
  - We want instant gratification
  - We are a culture that refuses to wait (Cf. Micro-waves and high speed internet)
- Praying for others (most Biblical)
  - We lack empathy and compassion

So what do we do with something like this?

1. We recognize the problem
2. We repent of prayerlessness
3. We re-commit to prayer
4. We really actually do something about it

**The strange things about disciplines:** The more you do them, the more you do them!

### Corporate Prayer

- San Francisco Prayer Tour Prayer (Tuesday @ 6am)

### On your own

- Spanish Ministry
  - VBS
  - Youth Group
  - Friday Night

= being on mission with Christ