

Main Idea:

What does unceasing prayer look like from the place of daily bread, or in terms more familiar, daily discipline.

Romans 12: 9-21

9 Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. 10 Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. 11 Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. 12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. 13 Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. 17 Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. 19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." 20 To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Questions That Need Answers:

1. What is the great enemy of Daily prayer?
 2. How do we battle the three layers of distraction
 3. What are good practices of daily prayer that we can yoke to in discipline
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- We have spent the last two weeks talking about how to hear God, the importance of prayer, and contemplative prayer... Last week we talked about what unceasing prayer is from a place of consistent communion... but tonight I want to talk about unceasing prayer from a place of discipline.
- The challenge of Romans 12... is all these weighty behaviors that feel anti to most of who we are. But in the middle of this we see two importance pieces 1. serve The Lord 2. be constant in prayer.
- The challenge of a life of prayer, is that it works like the tide... the tide moves slowly more and more in and you never really notice it, until suddenly everything has changed.

"Prayer does not fit us for the greater work; prayer is the greater work."
— Oswald Chambers

- Now I think it would be fair to say to all of us, that we both want a greater life of prayer, and yet do not succeed in a greater life of prayer.

"Prayer is not learned in a classroom but in the discipline of practice."
— Richard Foster

- The problem is not often that we simply just don't pray, it more often is that we feel bad that we don't want to pray, so we don't do it anyway.

"The father would rather you bring your indifference to him, then spend your life away from him."

- So I want us to first talk about what is the greatest hinderance to your prayer life today, and the answer to that is simply distraction

Distraction

Today, a number of historical circumstances are blindly flowing together and accidentally conspiring to produce a climate within which it is difficult not just to think about God or to pray, but simply to have any interior depth whatsoever. ... We, for every kind of reason, good and bad, are distracting ourselves into spiritual oblivion. It is not that we have anything against God, depth, and spirit, we would like these, it is just that we are habitually too preoccupied to have any of these show up on our radar screens. We are more busy than bad, more distracted than nonspiritual, and more interested in the movie theater, the sports arena, and the shopping mall and the fantasy life they produce in us than we are in church. Pathological busyness, distraction, and restlessness are major blocks today within our spiritual lives

- Ronald Rolheiser

- The harsh truth for all of us, is not that we are unwilling to have lives of prayer, rather we are too busy to have lives of prayer.

*For many of us the great danger is not that we will renounce our faith. It is that we will become so distracted and rushed and preoccupied that we will settle for a mediocre version of it. We will just skim our lives instead of actually living them - **John Ortberg***

- **You see most of us unfortunately live lives of exhaustion, not atheism.**

Three Layers of Distraction

1. artificial significance

We must understand clearly, busyness is artificial significance

- Most of us fill our lives with things, not because we are dying to have more on the schedule but rather, because the thought of having nothing to do sounds scary. To have to sit and be with my thoughts, to examine maybe where my life is at the age vs where I thought it would be, to just have to sit and know that someone else is doing something fun and I am simply just here existing, or worse maybe we have drifted so far away in relationship with our spouse, the thought of just having to spend time alone with them sounds like a chore.
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2. Our Yes

- One of the hardest lessons I have learned in my own life is the power of my yes...
 - How often do we examine what we give our yes to?
- The greatest power we have in our ability to eliminate distraction is our NO. To say no to plans, to say no to activities, to say no to things that stretch us.
- Now does this mean we say no to everything? absolutely not. I personally think everyone needs a hobby, needs to value friendship and making efforts to keep those friendships, needs to value experience for your kids, needs to value making your kids do hard things. But we often

do is give out so many yeses, all these things become diminished in their value.

- So when things come up, we must examine our values, to determine our yes or no. For me it looks like this with me or my children

- **Something will get my no, if it cost me:**

1. **Our Spiritual Formation** - my ability to spend time with Jesus

2. **Me and my wife's peace or intimacy** - My ability to be connected with my wife

3. **The ability to rest** - my ability to reset and be the best me

4. **for my kids, space to be bored** - to teach my children that life involves inner thought

5. **Our finances** - my ability to not put my finances in danger due to giving out to many yeses.

3. Our Attention

- The greatest enemy we are facing from culture, is the battle for our attention.

“We live in an economy that trades in human attention. What you give your attention to becomes your master.” — John Mark Comer

*“The greatest danger of our time is the loss of an undivided mind.”
— Dallas Willard*

- Our attention is up for grabs, and we are beginning to believe the lie that healthy withdraw is actually bringing our mind and attention to something other than Christ.

- In the economy of our attention, the problem is not that we don't have time, its more that we invest incorrectly.
 - That is the lie of the enemy we are facing, its not that prayer or spiritual disciplines are non-beneficial, rather its that we simply don't have time for them.
 - The reason we don't have time for them is actually because, we are seeking artificial significance, not weighing properly our yes and nos, and choosing to invest our attention elsewhere.
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The only way forward is discipline

- Now that we are aware of distraction and its layers... what is the answer out? simply its discipline
 - What does your spiritual disciplines around prayer look like? If you examined your prayer life, what level of attention does our prayer life get? What yeses have we given other things that are costing us time in his presence, and what level of significance are we getting from other things?
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4 Spiritual Disciplined based on prayer

- 1. The Daily Office** - praying morning, noon, and evening.
- 2. Lectio Divina** - praying through scripture
- 3. The Daily Examine** - ending your day finding Jesus in it
- 4. Silence and Solitude** - time spent away from the world alone in presence

FINAL THOUGHT

Poet Mary Oliver states in her book *upstream* that **"attention is the beginning of devotion."**

- Discipline for all of us, is the only way forward to moving from a prayer life, into a life of prayer.

"The disciplines are activities of mind and body purposefully undertaken, to bring our personality and total being into effective cooperation with the divine order." - **Dallas Willard**

- Jesus says when you pray, pray for your daily bread, because the spiritual life is not found in mass consumption and long journeys, its found in daily bread and daily prayer. daily discipline and daily dependance, daily love and daily contemplation.

- **"The spiritual journey, is a daily one."**

Individual Practice:

- Work these set of prayer discipline into your weekly rhythms. It doesn't have to be all at once, but it can be.
 - This week, spend time alone doing an audit of your yeses and no. What has stretched you to thin? What is causing you to lose the peace and relationship you need with your family? Then ask yourself... is it worth it?
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