

Practicing This One Thing:
How to Keep on Praying
Daniel 6:10-13

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Text Introduction: We are in the middle of a prayer challenge. We are calling our challenge “This One Thing.” This is not only guiding our times together on Sunday morning as we examine the Scriptures about prayer, but we are also challenging one another about our discipline and habits of prayer. And what a time it is to pray! I could not have imagined the importance of this effort when God birthed this in my heart early this summer. But, now, all of this makes perfect sense, right?

Some of you may be thinking that I am going to spend forever preaching on this subject of prayer. We are actually approaching the end. We will continue through this month in preaching. I do intend to keep the challenge of prayer before us forever.

As we begin to conclude, I think it is appropriate to think about the discipline of praying. That is, the discipline to pray assures that we will keep on praying.

We have a wonderful model in Daniel. Daniel’s setting is in the time of exile. The first six chapters are a mix of prophecy and real life stories of the faithfulness of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. The faith of these four young men is an example for every generation of perseverance in the face of any kind of difficulty.

Text: When Daniel learned that the document had been signed, he went into his house. The windows in its upper room opened toward Jerusalem, and three times a day he got down on his knees, prayed, and gave thanks to his God, just as he had done before.¹¹ Then these men went as a group and found Daniel petitioning and imploring his God.¹² So they approached the king and asked about his edict: “Didn’t you sign an edict that for 30 days any man who petitions any god or man except you, the king, will be thrown into the lions’ den?”

The king answered, “As a law of the Medes and Persians, the order stands and is irrevocable.”

¹³ Then they replied to the king, “Daniel, one of the Judean exiles, has ignored you, the king, and the edict you signed, for he prays three times a day.”

Introduction:

Knowledge is not the key to a deeper, more disciplined prayer life. A new plan is not the key. The key is solely in our own discipline. The Old Testament prophet, Daniel, is obviously a model of someone disciplined in his prayer life. Daniel is a great character to model. When looking for something to accuse Daniel of, his opponents lamented, “We will never find a charge against this Daniel unless we find something against him concerning the law of his God.” (Daniel 6:5)

The evidence of his passion and commitment to prayer is found throughout his story.

- Prayer was the habit of his life. “As was his custom” is one translation of Daniel 6:10.
- He was known for praying with discipline three times a day. (Daniel 6:13)
- He invited others to pray in times of crisis. (Daniel 2:17-18) This was his first response upon hearing of the king’s decision to execute all of the wise men of the kingdom, including Daniel and his 3 friends. He began his prayer by blessing the name of God.

What do we learn from the discipline in Daniel’s life?

Two Warnings about the Discipline of Prayer

1. Avoid either Extreme in establishing a disciplined prayer life.

- No Discipline—Obviously, we have to have some parameters of discipline.
- Legalism—To the point that it lacks the relationship. Prayer is not something we check off our list for the day.

2. Satan will go to the extreme in keeping you undisciplined in your prayer life.

You want some interruptions in life? Commit to praying. You want some unexpected busyness? Commit to praying.

Samuel Chadwick said, “The one concern of the devil is to keep Christians from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work, and prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks our wisdom, but he trembles when we pray.

Why Do We Need Discipline in our Prayer Life

1. Because we need to be consistent in our praying no matter how good things get. (5:29)

Sometimes the most tempting time to stop praying is when everything is going fine. We get to feeling that we don’t need God.

2. Because we need to be consistent in our praying no matter how bad things get. (6:1-9)

And then there are other times when we stop praying in the bad—maybe we struggle with our faith in God. Somebody might say, “I don’t feel like praying.” Those are the days when we need the pray the most and the hardest.

3. Because prayer should never be our last resort with God.

A consistent, disciplined prayer life is the best way to keep prayer from being a last resort with God.

"It is a common temptation of Satan to make us give up the reading of the Word and prayer when our enjoyment is gone; as if it were of no use to read the scriptures when we do not enjoy them, and as if it were no use to pray when we have no spirit of prayer. The truth is that, in order to enjoy the Word, we ought to continue to read it, and the way to obtain a spirit of prayer is to continue praying. The less we

read the Word of God, the less we desire to read it, and the less we pray, the less we desire to pray."
George Mueller

The Way to Pray with Discipline

Just like other disciplines, we might need a . . .

- 1. Specific Time**
- 2. Specific Place**
- 3. Specific Plan**

Ultimately, we must pray.

For the miracle of prayer to begin operating in our lives, we must finally do only one thing: we must pray. I can write about prayer, and you can read about it, and you can even lend my book to a friend. But sooner or later, we have to pray. Then, and only then, will we begin to live moment by moment in God's presence.

--Bill Hybels, Too Busy Not to Pray: Slowing down to be with God

And, we have to keep on praying. At Pentecost, as described in the Book of Acts, they prayed for 10 days, preached for 10 minutes, and 3,000 were saved. We seem to want to pray for 10 minutes and preach for 10 days. We have to keep praying.

When Daniel learned that the document had been signed, he went into his house. The windows in its upper room opened toward Jerusalem, and three times a day he got down on his knees, prayed, and gave thanks to his God, just as he had done before.

Let us do the same!