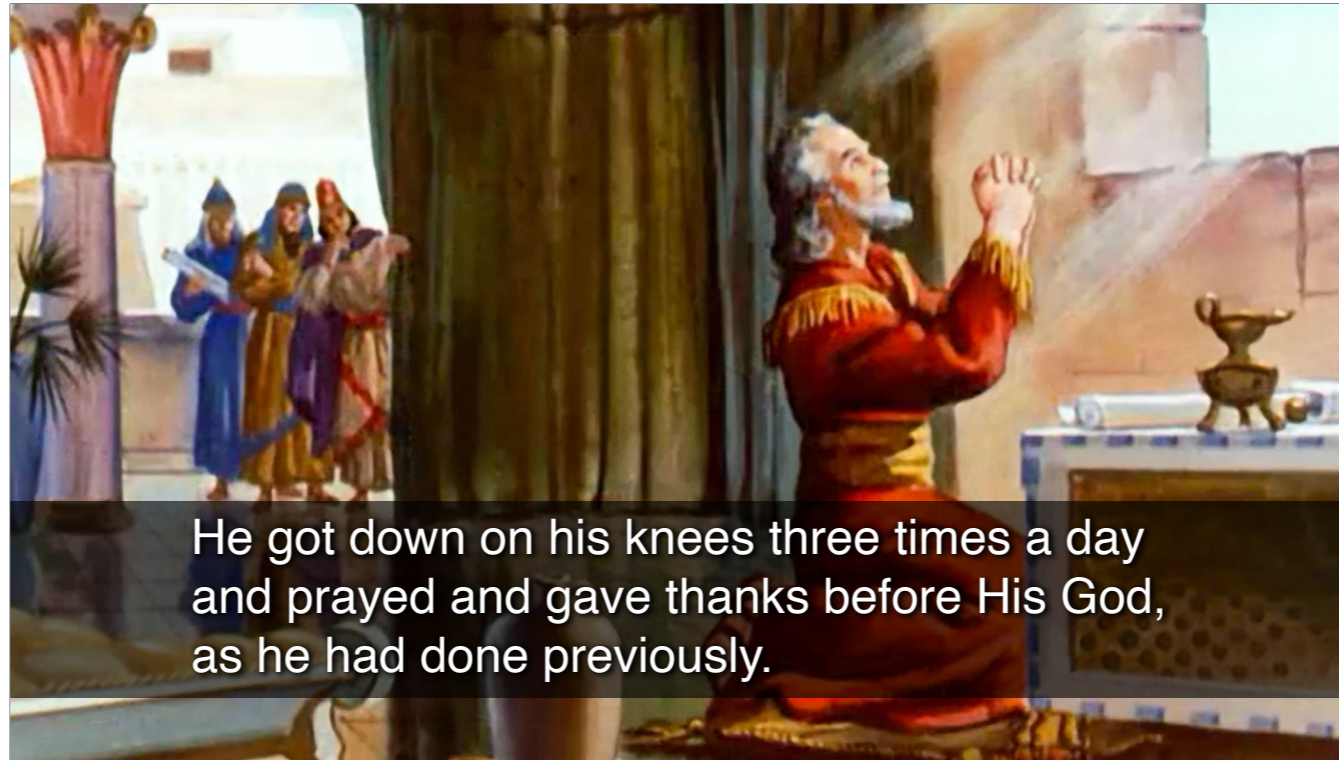


- In modern warfare, what is usually the first target?
 - Communications!
- In Satan's battle for your heart and soul, what is his first target?
 - Communications!
- Prayer, communion with God
- James Houston: "Prayer is ultimately a battle of the will"
 - Jesus in garden: "Not my will be done, but yours"



He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before His God, as he had done previously.

- Why did Daniel pray when it was against the law? Daniel 6.10
 - Daniel 6:10 (ESV) 10 When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously.



- Why Do We Struggle with Prayer?
 - There's always something on: radio, tv, podcast
 - Things to think about, worry about
 - Talking to spouse, children, friends

Why Do We Struggle with Prayer?



- Complacent
 - Health: ride bike, exercise, diet: all for sake of our bodies' health
 - Professional skills: expensive education; read journals; study: all for the sake of our mind and wealth
 - Entertainment: seldom to see the latest movie, play newest games
- Complacent about prayer
 - We refuse to **MAKE TIME** for our souls.
- Communication with God has become a lost art and a rejected relationship



- I'm too busy to pray.
 - Desert Followers (a protest movement against worldliness in the early church) spoke of busyness as “moral laziness”
 - Busyness is an addictive drug; we get used to being busy; expect it, enjoy it, make excuses for it.
 - Reality: we are determined not to “miss out on life”
 - We are viewing life as an event; not a journey to be like Jesus and go to heaven with Him.



- Prayer is a low priority
 - None of us are too busy for the things that we regard as priorities
 - We need to grow into prayer; to begin a journey with a few small steps
 - Value our relationship with God
 - Value our communication with God



- Prayer reveals your relationship with God
 - How do I think of God: do I appreciate His majesty and wisdom and love?
- It is a mirror of our soul: we see ourselves most clearly
 - How do I see myself before God?



- Prayer begins with our appreciation of God
 - It is a mirror of our soul: we see ourselves most clearly
 - Contrast of the pharisee and the publican: Luke 18.10-14
 - Pride prevents us from prayer
 - Humility is moral realism
 - understand the reality of my sin v. the righteousness and holiness of God
 - must come from the heart



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Prayer Reveals Your Relationship with God

I don't know how to pray.



- Between the Pharisee and the Tax Collector are a lot of possible struggles
- I don't know how to pray (really pray).
 - Luke 11:1 Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples."



- I don't think I'm righteous

- James 5:16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.
- Proverbs 28:9 (ESV) 9 If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination.



- I'm not worthy of praying to God.
 - Why would God listen to me?
 - He listened to the tax collector!



- I don't know what to say: grief, guilt, burden, too much
 - Romans 8:26-27 (ESV) 26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. 27 And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.



- A lot of our struggle with prayer is based in our misconceptions about prayer.

Misconceptions about Prayer

Prayer is “*magic*”.



- As Magic
 - a magic device we use to get our own way
 - Health and wealth
 - Prayer is a formula we use to control God; use His power for self (like a genie in a bottle)
 - Avoid responsibilities: “I’ll pray for you” instead of doing something.

Misconceptions about Prayer

Prayer becomes a *custom*.



- As Custom

- Prayer fits our societal traditions: Prayer before congress; before meals; before bed; at church
- It is said by rote; because we are supposed to; it is vain repetition.
- Real communication with God is more than just mouthing words: sounds without meaning



- Something we do
 - Pray as a duty, or an interesting hobby
 - approach as a 'how to': like "How to Ski" or "How to Fix Your Plumbing"
 - Pray because it makes us feel good, feel healthy
 - the FEELING becomes the end in itself
 - Absorbed in techniques: forget WHO we are praying to; and RELATIONSHIP with Him.
 - Praying to placate others in their troubles (say we will, anyway)



- Something we do for God
 - In order to honor Him, show respect for Him
 - An emergency, look to God for strength and aid in need
 - Pharisee: technically correct: but HEART was far from God
 - Publican: a posture and attitude before God: not just doing the correct things
 - Prayer cannot work “automatically” when we say the right things; push the right buttons.
 - Psalm 130.1: “Out of the depths I cry to you, O Jehovah!”

Changing our Perspective



- Focus on God
 - the focus of prayer is not praying, but God
 - focus on Him, not myself
- Prayer can be the most forbidding, daunting obstacle of our spiritual lives.
 - Jesus' prayers: all night long; early in the morning
 - "Great" preachers: devoting hours each day in prayer
 - The focus of prayer is not prayer: it is God
- Don't pray because "it is there" (like the proverbial mountain climber)
 - Increase your relationship with God
 - Jeremiah 29.13: You will seek me and find me. When you seek me with all your heart,

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Changing our Perspective

Aligning my will
with God's will.



- Focus on aligning my will with God's will
 - We are in Christ
 - John 15:5-7: I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. 7 If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.
 - Matthew 26:39: And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."

Changing our Perspective

Aligning my
life to God's
righteousness.



- Must not isolate prayer from the rest of our lives: James 5.16
 - The effective prayer of a righteous person has great power
 - Too often we expect that we can live as we want and in our times of need turn to God in prayer.
 - Army trains in all aspects of warfare to prepare for battle.
 - God wants all of me...

Changing our Perspective

Aligning my
life to God's
righteousness.

Bible Study



- Bible Study:

- Matthew 4:4: But he answered, "It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.""
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17: All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God [1] may be competent, equipped for every good work.

Changing our Perspective

Aligning my
life to God's
righteousness.

Fasting



- Fasting:

- Acts 14:23: And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Changing our Perspective

Aligning my
life to God's
righteousness.

One another



- One Another (community)

- James 5:16: Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.
- Ephesians 6:18-20: praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, 19 and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.



Are you struggling
with prayer?

Strengthen your relationship
with God

Change your perspective
of prayer

Choose to live righteously

- Strengthen your relationship with God
- Change your perspective of prayer
- Choose to live righteously

**We implore you on
behalf of Christ,
be reconciled to God.**

2 Corinthians 5:20

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Are You Struggling with Prayer?

Synopsis: Repeat lesson requested by Helga (from 2008). We sometimes find ourselves struggling with prayer. In this lesson we'll examine some reasons for our struggles and consider how to change our perspective about prayer.

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“Let all that you do be done with love.”