

CRESTVIEW BIBLE CHURCH

Week of Prayer 2019

Prayer: The Rhythm of Spilling Your Guts



January 6-12, 2019

Message from Pastor Phil

“What a man is on his knees before God, that he is, and nothing more.” – Robert Murray M’Cheyne

This year, for our Week of Prayer, we’ll be exploring some insights from the chapter “The Rhythm of Spilling Your Guts (When You Realize You’re the One Giving the Silent Treatment)” from pp. 99-116 of Jared Wilson’s book *The Imperfect Disciple* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2017).

He opens this chapter lamenting how “the pace of life in industrialized America whispers insistently every day, *Hurry up!*” And continues, “Because of my naturally busy heart and the abnormally hectic pace of daily life, I find it increasingly difficult to be still. Advertisements tell me to “Act now!” as Facebook and Twitter keep me up to the minute on what everyone else is doing or thinking, and fast-food restaurants encourage me to procure and eat food quickly. My email inbox and calendar always remind me of my obligations and assignments. Television news bombards me with boxes and banners and tickets, a continuous feed of several ever-morphing headlines at once. They just want me to be informed.”

“I am drowning in noise and it all makes me anxious. Chances are it has the same effect on you.

“One little verse in the Bible cuts through the clutter, the noise, the stress, the dutiful obligations, the mismanaged priorities, the rushing, and the busyness and offers me an antidote to what ails me: “But He would withdraw to desolate places and pray” (Luke 5:16).

This week, we're inviting you in to this kind of space. Would you begin this year seeking out a desolate place and giving some time to pray? I know you're busy. We're all busy. There are all kinds of things that can pull us away from the important stuff. But, this year, let's start off with some time devoted to prayer. We're looking forward to great week together.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Phil', written in a cursive style.

Pastor Phil

Begin this week using this short space here to write a prayer to God, expressing what you hope would happen in your life in the coming year.

Monday, January 7

Hurry Sickness

Jared writes: “Pastor and author John Ortberg writes, “We suffer from what has come to be known as ‘hurry sickness.’ One of the great illusions of our day is that hurrying will buy us more time.” Ortberg goes on to define clutter, superficiality, multitasking, and speeding up daily activities as causes of hurry sickness. One of the symptoms of hurry sickness, he warns, is the diminished ability to love those to whom we have made the deepest promises. Hurry sickness makes us too tired and too distracted to love well.

“Do we slow down enough to think about what this may be costing us in our relationship with God? Are you too busy ‘living’ to enjoy abiding in Christ?

“God is calling us to rest in Him regularly. But we cannot hear His still, small voice (or even His booming, declarative voice) because the volume on our routines is turned to eleven. We are too busy listening to the gods of the world. Nor do we think to speak to Him in much more than sound-bite prayers. We can’t think to do so, because we don’t make the time to think of much more than sound bites to say.

Consider the questions above and ask God to “search you and know your heart! To try you and know your thoughts! See if there’s any grievous way in you and lead you in the way everlasting.”

Tuesday, January 8

Intentional Prayer

Jared writes, “In Colossians 4:2, Paul commands, “Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful with thanksgiving.” There are two aspects to this verse that are crucial to a proper rhythm of prayer: 1) continuing steadfastly in it and 2) being watchful in it.

“Continuing steadfastly in prayer speaks to commitment, to routine, to practice, to endurance, and even to duty. Being watchful in prayer speaks to focus, clarity, and awareness. You can be neither devoted to prayer nor alert in it if you do not commit to a time where you are doing nothing but praying. This practice is called intentional prayer.

“Now, prayer is never really accidental; neither should it be incidental. Followers of Jesus need to commit to times of intentional solitude, with all artificial noises blocked out and adequate time to focus on talking to God scheduled in. As busy as we think we are, none of us has as large a burden placed on us as Jesus did. And even though Jesus was perfectly sinless, He still needed to disconnect, detach, and devote solitary time to the Father.

“Nobody can say with any integrity that they do not have time to do this. Nobody can say that they truly can’t afford to do this. In all honesty, you **cannot** afford not to do it. Jesus apparently engaged in intentional prayer “very early in the morning, while it was still dark” (Mark 1:35). But maybe for you the best time is during a lunch break or in the evening. Let’s not be legalistic about times or time frames but let’s be devoted to prayer, to staying alert in it with thanksgiving.

“Jesus Himself commands this in Matthew 6:6: “But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

How might you be more disciplined in the coming years? Brainstorm a plan and ask God for help.

Wednesday, January 9

Spilling Your Guts

Jared Wilson's *Imperfect Disciple* continues: "I think one of the primary reasons Christians do not make quality time for prayer is that they have been trained to think of prayer in terms of legalistic duty... Over time, the religious expectation of quiet times doesn't compel us to seek them out but rather tempts us to bristle under their burden. Even fifteen minutes, a blip on the radar of our day, seems too long and unwieldy for prayer, because we approach it as pure duty, not pure desire... In essence, we chuck prayer because the results of prayerlessness are not immediately felt or seen.

"If there is a God of the universe (and there is), and this God of the universe loved you and wanted to be in relationship with you (and he does), wouldn't it be stupid not to talk to Him? To put it more nicely, if the God of the universe is in control of our days and loves us enough to provide comfort and power for those who seek him, wouldn't prayer be the most important part of our day?

"Our life places our self at the center of the universe. As we juggle our obligations, complete our tasks, run through our schedules, and consume, consume, consume, we begin to think that we are God. And when that happens, prayer to the real God who covers us and cares for us seems superfluous. What's the point of telling God about things you've already got covered right? Of course none of us explicitly says or believes this. But we believe it and say it with our actions and attitudes toward prayer. The duty of prayer becomes heavy and burdensome because we see God as an absentee landlord or a pleasant grandfather or a last resort.

Spend some time praising God for His character. Think about how unlike you He is and set Him apart as your God.

Thursday, January 10

Toward a Definition of Prayer

Jared Wilson writes, in *The Imperfect Disciple*, “When we think of worshipful prayer as a duty, we can easily lose our taste for it. But when we think of duty as a worshipful prayer, the tables get turned on the entire concept of obligation. Prayer in its essence is simply that: daily explicit worship of the one who loves you more than anyone else does and saved your life as no one else could... Intentional prayer is the daily, private worship service of those who are awake to the amazing greatness of the Gospel.

“Look, prayer is spilling your guts. It doesn’t have to be pretty. It doesn’t have to be tidy. It doesn’t have to be particularly eloquent or even particularly intelligent. But the Bible is how God speaks to us and prayer is how we speak to God. These two rhythms form the dynamic of our friendship with the God of the universe. You can’t be good friends with someone you don’t listen to, and you can’t be good friends with someone you don’t talk to. So we go about our personal devotions by studying the Bible to hear what God would say to us and then praying to God that He would forgive us for our hard-heartedness against his Word and empower us to understand it better and make it resonate more deeply in our hearts. Spilling our guts in prayer is how we process God’s words to us. Prayer is how interact with our friend Jesus. He’s more eager to listen than you are to speak. He’s listening. Open up.

What would it look like for you to get more honest with God? Take some time right here, right now to do that.

Friday, January 11

Pray Like This

Jesus famously teaches us how to pray in Matthew 6:9-13 – “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.”

Jared Wilson comments in the *Imperfect Disciple* – “Of course, this prayer does not preclude any of the other examples of prayer or commands to pray found elsewhere in Scripture, but this particular snapshot communicates to us nonnegotiable content for kingdom prayer. If we prayed according to the kingdom of self, for instance, we’d be concerned about our reputation and recognition, not God’s. Our daily life communicates where our hope and trust is placed; we are actually ‘praying’ with our words and deeds every day. Many of our prayers look like this:

My self on earth,
Awesome is My name.
My success come and My will be done.
Give Me lots of things I want (but think I need).
Don’t even think about debt (unless it’s someone else’s).
Don’t worry about giving in to temptation,
because you deserve it.
Deliver Me from guilt anyway.
For this life is Mine, and the world revolves around Me. Amen.

“Okay, so that’s pretty silly. But don’t we live like that, or at least fight the temptation to live like that all the time? Instead, Jesus models for us prayer that acknowledges our dependence and

weakness but largely takes our self out of the equation. It is a prayer of emptied ambition and full hope, which makes sense knowing that it is a kingdom prayer and that the way into the kingdom is denying self and embracing crucifixion. What the Lord's Prayer is, then, is taking the oars out of the water and raising the sail in anticipation of the sure wind of the gospel of the kingdom.

“That is how you find rhythm of the kingdom in a consumer culture: by seeking the humility that comes from rejection of independence and admission of dependence and embracing the confidence that comes from God's acceptance of you through Christ.

“In prayer, we take on the right spiritual proportion—needy, helpless, dependent, faithful—that the glory of Christ might more fully fill us.

Kingdom prayer is centered on God. How might your typical requests benefit from being turned God-centered? List some things that burden you and pray about them with God at the forefront.

Saturday, January 12

Becoming Friends With Jesus

Jared wraps this chapter in *The Imperfect Disciple* asking, “Can’t think of what to pray, how to pray, when the pray, or what to pray for? The Holy Spirit has you covered, just as the Son does. Paul writes, “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” (Romans 8:26). There is no cause for frustration, guilt, or shame in prayer. The good news is that our Father loves us and knows our weaknesses. He sees our hearts, whether they are inclined to him or not. And the gospel tells us that Christ died for hearts not inclined toward him. Now that we are reconciled to the Father, despite our sin and stupidity, the Son and the Spirit pray for us even still, pleading the blood of Christ on our behalf for all time.

“The gospel of prayer is that we need not pray to earn favor with God but rather to enjoy God’s favor already given to us in Jesus. And the good news about prayer is that this favor is applied by the Trinity praying within itself about and for us. Isn’t that amazing?”

“What I want is to truly know Jesus, to be actual friends with Jesus. We don’t get that way by happenstance. We get that way by God’s grace, by the power of the Spirit. We get this by listening to God and spilling our guts. Get off the treadmill of routine religion and find the rhythms of the kingdom and you’ll be good friends with Jesus.”

Wrap up this Week of Prayer by spilling your guts to your Father, knowing that both Jesus and the Spirit are helping you to pray.

Pray for Crestview Through Your Week:

DAY OF WEEK:

SPIRITUAL REQUEST:

MONDAY:

Give thanks to God for the blessings of this past Lord's Day. Praise Him for those who served you and ask for application from yesterday.

TUESDAY:

Pray for the International Partner of the Week. Ask God to bless them with spiritual fruit and encourage them in the labors.

WEDNESDAY:

Pray for effectiveness in the Wed PM programs of the church. Ask God to open hearts and minds to the truth of the Gospel.

THURSDAY:

Pray for the lost people that we encounter day in and day out. Ask God to provide opportunities for us to share the Gospel with them.

FRIDAY:

Pray for the health of marriages and relationships within our congregation. Ask God to deepen families in unity. Also, ask God to satisfy singles in their current life status.

SATURDAY:

Ask for God to prepare hearts for His Word tomorrow. Pray for a focus and a heart devoted to worshipping God alone.

SUNDAY:

Pray for those who minister the Word. Pray for effectiveness on their part and receptive hearts on the part of the hearers.

H2Go Partners:

Bill & Kathy Bacheller – Brazil

Ben & Emily Cornish – International Teaching

Rick & Tracy Cornish – International Teaching

Joe & Denise – Central Asia

Vivek & Anne Jones – Marg

David & Julie Stickel – International Students at UNC-Chapel Hill

Luke & Julie – India (as well as Satya Shiksha Seva)

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