

Spiritual Disciplines: Prayer

The Bible tells us prayer is important, but most of us struggle with it. What are the barriers to prayer? How can we overcome them? Why is prayer worth the effort?

The Discipline of Prayer

- **Why is prayer so difficult?**

- We don't believe it matters.

Hear my prayer, O Lord! And let my cry for help come to You. Do not hide Your face from me in the day of my distress. Incline Your ear to me; in the day when I call answer me quickly...I lie awake, I have become like a lonely bird on a housetop...You have lifted me up and cast me away. My days are like a lengthened shadow. And I wither away like grass. —Psalm 102:1-2, 7, 10b-11

- We are distracted.

- We feel (or we are) guilty.

So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you. Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood. Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean, remove the evil of your deeds from my sight. Cease to do evil. —Isaiah 1:15-16

You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered. —1 Peter 3:7

- We are prideful.

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. —John 15:4-5

For though the Lord is high, he regards the lowly, but the haughty he knows from afar.
—Psalm 138:6

- **Why is prayer worth the effort?**

- Jesus believed in prayer.

It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God. —Luke 6:12

In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there. —Mark 1:35

- Our battle is spiritual.

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.
—Ephesians 6:12

- God really listens.

Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years

and six months. Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.

—James 5:16-18

– Prayer draws us closer to God.

- **How can we grow in prayer?**

- Just show up.

- Follow a pattern (Matthew 6:9-13).

- Pray for God's priorities.