

*Spiritual Disciplines
for the Christian Life*

Spiritual Disciplines

- Week 1: Introduction
- Week 2: Bible Intake,
Part 1. *Ways to receive* the
Bible.
- Week 3: Bible Intake,
Part 2. *Ways to retain* the
Bible.
- Week 4: Prayer



Spiritual Disciplines

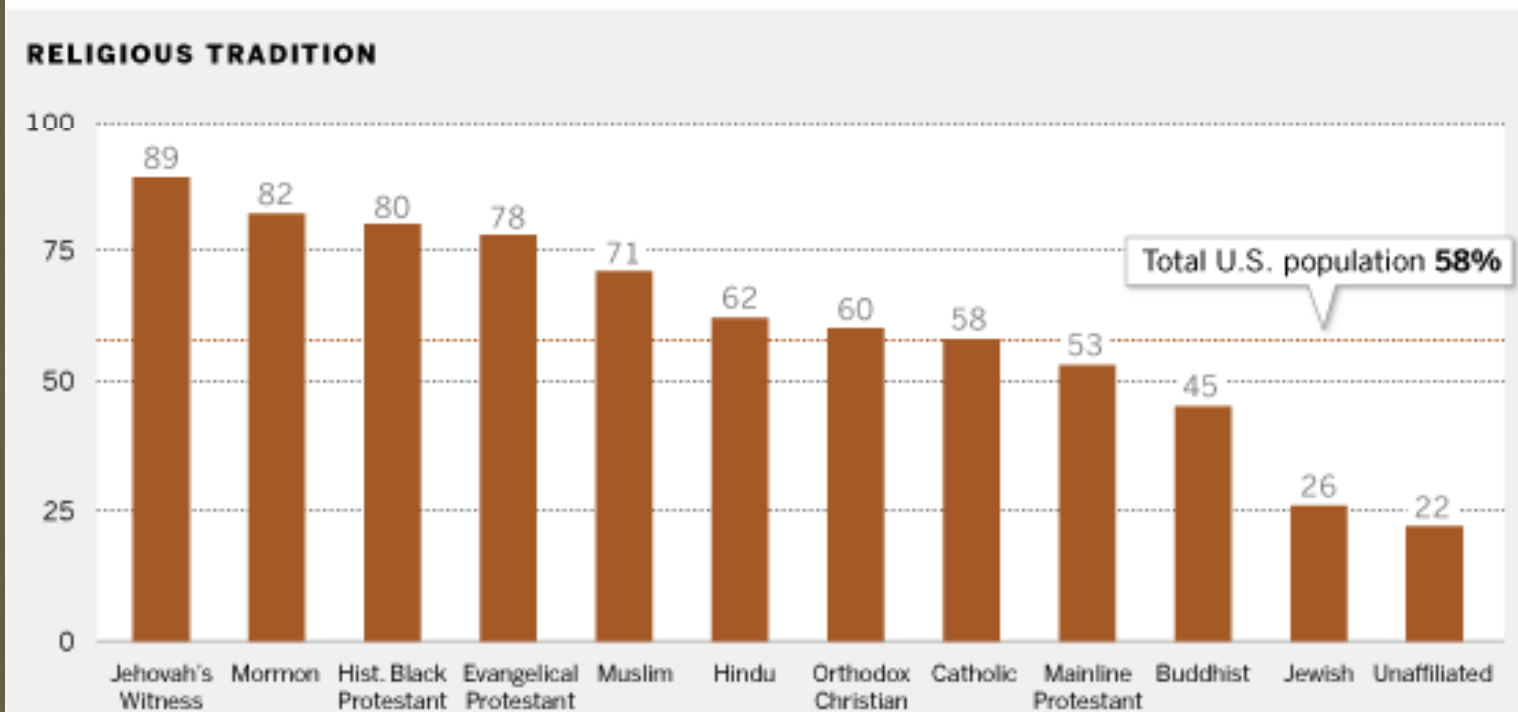
- A foundational assumption: regeneration
- Regeneration is God's instantaneous and supernatural work of imparting spiritual life to the spiritually dead (Titus 3:5; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23).
- The phrase "born again" is a term commonly used (John 3:3, 5).
- Romans 8:9
- Galatians 5:25
- "We have said that the end of regeneration is, that the life of believers may exhibit a symmetry and agreement between the righteousness of God and their obedience" (John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2:614).
- "The first point we must make is that it is impossible to even begin living the Christian life, or to know anything of true spirituality, before one is a Christian" (Francis Schaeffer, *True Spirituality*, 3).
- Prayer assumes access to God, which our sins have obstructed (Isaiah 59:1-2).

Spiritual Disciplines

➤ Who prays in America?

Prayer in the U.S.

% who pray at least once a day, by...



<http://pewforum.org/Prayer-in-America.aspx>, April 22, 2010, accessed October 20, 2010

Spiritual Disciplines

- How long do Americans pray?
- “Participants [195 people from a diverse sampling] indicated an average prayer length of 6.27 minutes...With an average range of 1 minute to 20 minutes” (Ralph L. Piedmont, ed. *Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion* [Leiden: Brill:, 2007], 18:216).
- Five minutes per day for people attending a prayer seminar; seven minutes per day for pastors and their wives (Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 62).

Spiritual Disciplines

- If it's true that many Americans and perhaps even many Christians pray for less than ten minutes per day, what drives the absence of prayer?
- How do you know when you haven't been praying enough?

Spiritual Disciplines: Prayer

- Why do we not pray more (Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 65)?
 - Lack of discipline.
 - Don't plan for it.
 - Lack of faith.
 - Don't believe God will answer.
 - Lack of communion.
 - Don't sense a nearness to God.
 - Lack of awareness.
 - Don't recognize the needs all around us.

Spiritual Disciplines: Prayer

➤ Three features of prayer :

- Prayer is expected
- Prayer is learned
- Prayer is answered



Spiritual Disciplines: Prayer

- “Prayer is second only to the intake of God’s Word in importance” (Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 62).
- There is a dynamic relationship between the Word and prayer.
- Acts 6:4, “prayer and to the ministry of the word.” Prayer is listed first.
- M’Cheyne: When we turn the Bible into prayer, we *feel* the Bible. Example: Psalm 1.
- George Whitefield recounted that he was delivered from austere asceticism when, “I began to read the Holy Scriptures upon my knees laying aside all other books and praying over, if possible, every line and word.”

“The Word of God is a great help in prayer. If it be lodged and written in our hearts, it will form an outflowing current of prayer, full and irresistible. Promises, stored in the heart, are to be the fuel from which prayer receives life and warmth, just as the coal, stored in the earth, ministers to our comfort on stormy days and wintry nights. The Word of God is the food, by which prayer is nourished and made strong. Prayer, like man, cannot live by bread alone, ‘but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord.’ Unless the vital forces of prayer are supplied by God's Word, prayer, though earnest, even vociferous, in its urgency, is, in reality, flabby, and vapid, and void. The absence of vital force in praying, can be traced to the absence of a constant supply of God's Word, to repair the waste, and renew the life. He who would learn to pray well, must first study God's Word, and store it in his memory and thought”

(E.M. Bounds, *The Necessity of Prayer*, 55-6)

Spiritual Disciplines: Prayer

- **Prayer is expected**
 - Jesus expected it
 - The Bible commands it
- Jesus expected prayer from His disciples
 - Matthew 6:5, “And when you pray . . .”
 - Matthew 6:6, “But when you pray . . .”
 - Matthew 6:7, “And when you pray . . .”
 - Matthew 6:9, “Pray then like this . . .”
 - Luke 11:9, “And I tell you . . . Ask . . . Seek . . . Knock . . .”
 - Luke 18:1, “And he [Jesus] told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not to los heart”

Spiritual Disciplines: Prayer

- Matthew 21:13, Jesus called the Temple, “A house of prayer” (cf. Isaiah 56:7).
- Jesus not only expected prayer but also modeled it:
 - Matthew 26:36, “Sit here, while I go over there and pray.”
 - Mark 1:35, “And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.”
 - Luke 5:16, “But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray.”
 - Luke 6:12, “In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God.”
 - John 11:41-42, “And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said . . .”
 - John 17:1, “[Jesus] lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said . . .”

Spiritual Disciplines: Prayer

- **Prayer is expected**
- Prayer is expected in the same way a wife expects her husband to call while traveling (love) and a commanding officer expects his platoon to communicate with each other (spiritual warfare).
- The Bible commands it:
 - Colossians 4:2, “Continue steadfastly in prayer . . .”
 - The verb translated “steadfastly” is also found in Mark 3:9. We should always be ready to launch out into waters of prayer. “Steadfastly” has the idea of determination, with the resolve not give up. Pressing on is spiritual conditioning.

Spiritual Disciplines: Prayer

- 1Thessalonians 5:17, “pray without ceasing”
 - “So praying without ceasing means you never really stop conversing with God; you simply have frequent interruptions”
- 1 Timothy 2:1, “First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people”
- Cf. 1 Samuel 12:23, “. . . far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you . . .”
- The early church placed a major emphasis on prayer: Acts 1:14; 2:42; 4:24; 6:4; 12:5; 13:3; 14:23.

Spiritual Disciplines: Prayer

- “And if you are late at your prayers you offer to God the prayers of an idle, slothful worshiper who rises to prayers as idle servants rise to their labor” (William Law, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*, 91).
- Recommendation: It is ideal to begin your day with prayer.

Spiritual Disciplines: Prayer

- **Prayer is learned**
- It's very good to learn how to pray and how to pray better.
- Luke 11:1-2, “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.’ [[2] And he said to them, ‘When you pray, say:’”
- Are you matriculated in the school of prayer?

Spiritual Disciplines: Prayer

- **Prayer is learned**
- By praying
 - We learn by doing.
- By meditating on Scripture
 - Meditation is a bridge between Bible intake and prayer (Puritans: Richard Baxter, John Owen, Matthew Henry, Thomas Manton, William Bridge)
- By praying with others
 - Jesus' disciples wanted to learn to pray after hearing Jesus pray (Luke 11:1-2). The value of corporate prayer.
- By reading about prayer
 - Biblical prayers, E.M. Bounds, biographies of Brainerd and M'Cheyne, Horatius Bonar, *Words to Winners of Souls*, "Time for Everything but Prayer," *The Valley of Vision*.

Spiritual Disciplines: Prayer

- Prayer is learned
- Suggested pattern: ACTS
 - Adoration
 - Confession
 - Thanksgiving
 - Supplication

Spiritual Disciplines: Prayer

- **Prayer is learned**
- Suggested mechanics for children:
 - Hands folded
 - Bodies still
 - Head bowed
 - Eyes closed
 - Mind focused on God

Spiritual Disciplines: Prayer

- **Prayer is answered**
- Psalm 65:2, “O you who hear prayer”
- Matthew 7:7-8. Has the Word of Faith movement caused us to shy-away from embracing the promise of this passage?
- James 1:5-8
- 1 John 5:14-15
- “I cannot imagine any one of you tantalizing your child by exciting in him a desire that you did not intend to gratify” (Charles Spurgeon in Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 75).

Spiritual Disciplines: Prayer

- Since prayer is learned, will you learn to pray?
- Since prayer is answered, will you persistently pray?

Spiritual Disciplines: Bible Intake

- Spiritual exercise for the week:
- Pray
- Pray before you start your day
- Pray what you read



Spiritual Disciplines

Questions/
Comments