

Do you find that attempting to have a good, quality, focused prayer life is a struggle? I've never conducted an official survey, but I think you would find that there are many who share your experience.

There is a lesson to be learned from one of the great prayer men in church history, George Müller (1805-1898). Müller was a great evangelist, whose resumé is too extensive to exhaust here. He was, though, known for evangelistic missions, building orphanages, and educating orphan children. He was a profound "mover and shaker" for the Kingdom of God in his lifetime.

While ago I read an excerpt in which he described how frustrating prayer life once was. See if his comments resonate with you. He said, "I would spend a quarter of an hour, or half an hour, or even an hour on my knees in prayer, conscious to myself of having derived comfort, encouragement, and refreshment of the soul, etc.: and often, after *having suffered much from weariness of the mind* for the first ten minutes, or quarter of an hour, or even half an hour, I only *then* really began to pray."¹[emphasis added] Wandering thoughts when you are trying to pray – I know what that's all about! Sometimes getting our minds to stop racing seems impossible. We know it is good to converse with the Lord, but getting ourselves to the point where He has our attention is a full-out battle.

When you describe your experience then you are in good company: many others have battled it too.

Müller made a discovery that radically changed his prayer life for the rest of his life. He can do the same for us. Instead of trying to start his day with a long prayer, he instead resolved to say a brief prayer asking for God's blessing and then gave himself to a time of reading Scripture and thinking (or meditating) on what he read. He said, "The first thing I did, after reading in a few words of the Lord's blessing upon His precious Word, was to meditate on the Word of God, searching as it were into every word, and blessing out of it...for the sake of obtaining food for my own soul. As a result of this practice, he found that by reading God's Word with care, he began to really think about what the Bible was saying. As his thoughts became focused on what he was reading, it was then easier for him to then turn those thoughts into prayer.

What was the result? I'll let Müller tell you himself: "The result of this practice is always a good deal of confession, thanksgiving,

¹ Ibid. S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 2000), 102.

supplication (personal prayer requests), or intercession (prayer for others), mingled with my meditation, and that my inner man almost invariably felt even sensibly nourished and strengthened, and that by breakfast time, on rare exceptions, I am in a peaceful if not happy state of heart."³

Making the Connection

What Müller discovered and passed on to us is what is not explicitly taught in Scripture. 1 John 5:14 says, "And this is the confidence we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to His will he hears us. And if He hears us...we know that we have the requests that we have made of him." This is very similar to what Jesus says in John 15:7, *that if we abide in His relationship between having God's Word in your heart and a good prayer life*. When we pray according to His will it is because *we know* His will is – and we find out what He wills by reading our Bibles. It's not until we discover *His* desires, promises, and plans. These are what enable us to abide on God's program instead of being stuck our often selfish, immediate demands-based prayers.

Far too often our prayers are driven by the tyranny of the immediate need: help on the job, someone is sick, the bank account is getting falling behind – and the result is that we find ourselves praying a "help me!" prayers while never pausing to pray for what God wants. We are seeking Him for. Now don't get me wrong: I believe that God invites us to bring Him our burdens, worries, and sorrows to Him in prayer. It is right for us to do that. The problem, though, is that many Christians talk to God about hardly anything else – and subsequently never receive the experience or know the power of a vibrant prayer life.

Taking Action

Let me invite you this month to commit to making it your discipline to open your Bible and listen to what God is saying as you read. Think about what is being said – what does the Lord say about Himself? What is God doing? What does He call me to do? What are the promises He has for His children? *Pay attention to what you read.*

And as you do this, see if that then becomes great material for praise and thanksgiving about. Praise God for who He is. Worship Him by saying back to Him what He says about Himself in His Word! Thank Him for His promises and those promises to Him expressing your confidence in His faithfulness to them! And yes – ask Him to help you, and strengthen you. But not through another day, rather that you would be the kind of faithful, worshipful person He has saved you to be.

Try starting with John 17:20-26 – Jesus' prayer for you
– Ross

The purpose of GBC (Graphite Bible Chapel) Connection is to encourage further study to facilitate a deeper connection between our Sunday teaching and your daily triumphs, tragedies, and toil that each of us face every month. Available online at www.graphitebiblechapel.com

³ Ibid.