

# Nothing Happens Overnight

## Prayer

Mark 11:22-25

February 2, 2020

We're launching into a new series of messages that will help all of us get into the kind of spiritual work out that is designed to help us build our spiritual muscles and become more spiritually mature. There is a desire God has for all of us to continue growing in our knowledge of who God is and how we live as godly people. We are called to right living and a deep spiritual life that has a rich connection with God. The promise of Jesus is that He would send the Spirit of God to live in those who believe so that we would have God with us 24/7. Our task, that can prove challenging at times, is to connect with the Spirit in us and to work on that connection as part of our ongoing spiritual workout. Because, if we're honest, we're all a bit spiritually weak and need to get in better spiritual shape.

We get out of shape physically and we can get out of shape spiritually. It often comes with neglect or avoidance or just a lack of understanding what it would take to get in shape. So, all last month, to start 2020 off on the right foot, we spent time talking about where we should all start on this spiritual fitness plan. We spend all of January talking about stretching and warming up as a way to get ready for the real work out. Stretching is what we're supposed to do before we work out so that we don't hurt ourselves, right. So, we took a look at what a stretch would look like for each of us. Every one of us is different. Our backgrounds are different, our family of origins are different, our spiritual upbringings are different, our experiences are all different and so our spiritual workouts are going to need to be fit specifically for where each of us is at. If we were to put ourselves on a spiritual continuum you would need to mark where you are right now and where you want to be by the end of the year. Here's **our goal, to raise up a group of spiritually developed, spiritually mature believers who can change the world.**

So, where are you on the scale **[Pic Spiritual Growth Continuum]** of spiritual maturity? For example, you might say that you are a spiritual person – by the way, all of us are – but you have zero spiritual practices in your life that would identify you as a spiritual person. If the benchmarks are: daily devotions and prayer, weekly worship and tithing, and a yearly mission engagement of some kind...then where would you be on this line? Would you have to say that you're at the end that says you're just not there yet. You don't have any of those practices in your life – at least not right now? Or are you somewhere in the first quarter, or the first half of the scale? You've got some things but not all of them. Or would you say you're in the third quarter somewhere? You got some of these practices down pat and you just need to do a little work in one or two areas. Where are you on the scale?

Most people in America today would say that they are spiritual but not religious and honestly, I totally agree that that's where I'm at. And what I've discovered about being spiritual is that it takes work. The idea that we can be spiritual beings without paying attention to the spiritual part of who we are is like saying that we own a car but, never drive it or maybe we don't even have a driver's license but, we own a car. **Being spiritual** takes more than just recognition of the spiritual side we all have, it **takes effort on our part.** For some people, being spiritual means, you like to go hiking and enjoy the beauty and grandeur of nature. And while that can be spiritually uplifting, it is not the definition of being spiritual. Others believe being spiritual means being sensitive toward others. And while people who are spiritually mature are sensitive to the needs of others it is not the definition of spiritual maturity. The definition of spiritual maturity is: ***being a person who is able to connect with that which is spiritual and in turn have that connection guide, direct, influence and control their entire lives.***

So, how do we get there...to a place of spiritual maturity? Well, let me first say this. Spiritual maturity is a lifelong journey, not a destination achieved. One of the signs of spiritual maturity is being able to say that there is so much more for me to learn. Socrates states that he knew he was intelligent when he got to the point where he realized he knew nothing. Spiritual fitness is one of those things that the more you get into it the more is revealed – the more there is to know, the more there is to do and be.

But, we need to start somewhere, right. So, let's start with what is a very basic yet challenging aspect of a fit and healthy and mature spiritual life...prayer. If we can use a rather base definition, prayer is a conversation with the divine. Prayer is, at its core, a spiritual event. One must trust that there is more than we can see – there is a spiritual realm - and that there is a higher power, a supreme spiritual being with whom we can communicate. In the biblical book of Mark, a guy who wrote what we call a Gospel, or a telling of what he saw about Jesus, this guy named Mark writes down what Jesus says about prayer. In chapter 11, he tells us: ***22 Then Jesus said to the disciples, "Have faith in God. The start of our prayer lives*** and a serious part of our spiritual lives ***is having faith in God***. It is believing that God is out there, that God is listening, that God is attentive to the people He created and is interesting in staying in touch with us. One of the first and most power steps everyone can take in this spiritual journey is the step of belief. Jesus says to His disciples that the first step is to trust and have faith that God is going to do something because God cares and loves us.

Secondly, is seeing prayer as a limitless thing when it is based on faith. Jesus says to us that we are to bring both the great and maybe even the extreme as well as the daily and the average stuff to God as well. The foundational aspect of prayer that God lays out for us is a prayer life filled with expectation that is based on belief. If God is for us then what ever we bring to God is something God is interested in. So, a key part of our spiritual journey is taking this first step of establishing a purposeful prayer life and second is bringing everything to God in prayer. Doing so will create for you three key things in every spiritual workout.

The first is refreshment. When we go to God in prayer, we can lay down our burdens and allow God to refresh our hearts and souls. Prayer that is daily and intentional becomes a time when we can breath...breath in and breath out. It is a coming home in a way that restores and refreshes us. It is a spiritual renewal that we all need. The world we live in will tap our spiritual lives and if we are not purposeful about refreshing what has been drained out, we will end up living our lives on empty. And let me say this, you cannot give good things to others when there is nothing left in your spiritual well. You go down into that well for something spiritually refreshing for someone and all you come up with is muck...not good. A purposeful prayer time refreshes us.

The second thing a purposeful, daily prayer time does is connects us to the source. Most of us believe that we are not the source of all things nor are we the source of the things we have. Most of us pretty openly admit that there is a God out there who is doing good things in and for all of us. Prayer connects us with the source of all things. I was once asked the question by a child if God had a birthday. The answer is no. That God is the source of all birthdays. God has been around forever so God doesn't have a birthday. But, we do, we have a birthday because the source of life gave life to us. And prayer connects to that source.

Thirdly, prayer connects us to the ultimate resource. This passage in Mark says that whatever we ask for in faith will be ours. Now, let's be clear...I am not getting the Bentley I asked for. Okay, I know better than to ask for a Bentley but, you understand what I mean right. That if we believe and live according to who God is and what God wants – then our prayer lives will be in line with what God wants as well and because of that, we are connected to a resource that is unlimited and capable of making the miraculous happen.

Alright, so, it's time to start today. As we start putting into practice the spiritual fitness tools, we need to develop a spiritually healthy and mature life, we need to commit to a time each day when we are going to talk with God. The best way to do that is to set a time that you're going to pray each day and to make a – for lack of a better term – a prayer list, a list of things you want to pray about. If you're having trouble coming up with a list, try these things: spouse, children, parents, neighbors, local school, church, pastor, nation, government, - okay, you get it, right.

**So, keep it simple, make a list and pray every day.**

**Communion...**