

Taking Time To Pray

by Beth Jones

What was the first thing on your to-do list this morning? Laundry? Write a new blog? Check email? Pick up a few things at the grocery store? Make a dentist appointment for your child? Or was it to pray?

If you're like me, you usually have a long to-do list every day! And by the time you get in bed at night, all of those things might not be done! It was Martin Luther who said, "Tomorrow I plan to work, work, from early until late. In fact I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer."

Not all of us have three hours to pray, but prayer is one of our most essential needs, just like food, water, and oxygen. Jesus said in John 15:5, "I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."

As women who have a passion for Jesus, we want to make a difference here on earth, to be history-makers. We want to do things that will make an eternal mark here, to leave a legacy for our children and our grandchildren. We don't want to waste our lives, building our homes on sand that can be easily swept away by the storms of life. (Matthew 7:24-35, NKJV) Our most important work here on earth is that of prayer.

If you are a wife and busy mom with children, it is really hard sometimes to set aside some time alone to spend with God. But we must take time to pray each day.

What are some practical ways we can use to create margin in our life so we have more time to pray?

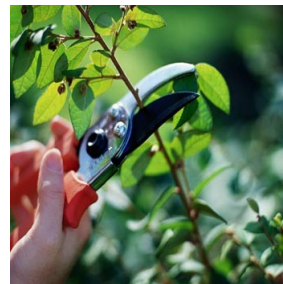
1. Write it down! It is amazing how this works. It's as if God and the universe are cooperating to help you to accomplish your goal once you write something down! Zig Ziglar, wildly successful speaker and writer, knows about the importance of writing goals down to achieve them.

He says in his seminar, *Goals: How to Set Them, How To Reach Them*, that he had only obtained his goals by writing them down, setting a date for them, listing the obstacles he had to overcome, identifying the people, groups, or organizations that he needed to work with, spelling out a plan of action, and identifying all of the benefits to him. So get out your DayPlanner®, calendar,



and/or notebook, and WRITE IT DOWN to pray daily!

2. Prune what's unnecessary. Let's face it. We all have "fillers" in our schedules - those things that are not really contributing to our fulfillment, success,



growth and maturity in Christ, or happiness.

Playing Farkle® or Mafia Wars® on Facebook might be fun, but it can take up valuable time that could be used for studying God's word a few minutes and spending time in prayer with Him.

Identify and eliminate obstacles and distractions that are keeping you from praying each day. Too many things on your plate? Is it oversleeping in the morning? Going to bed too late at night? Getting sucked into the Facebook or Twitter black hole of time? Running too many errands on too many days of the week? Cut out or cut down on time thieves that keep you from developing an intimate, daily relationship with Jesus.

3. Find your own "spot." Set aside a special place in your home where you can keep your Bible, journal and pens, concordance, and maybe "comforters" like soft pillows, a warm quilt, and a little table for your coffee or cold drink and a fragrant candle.

My spot is our den on the green sofa by our white brick fireplace, where my collection of Willow Tree Angels® are on the mantel. I love going there early in the morning or late at night when everyone is asleep and the house is



very quiet.

I also use our bedroom when Ray is at work or use our car as my prayer-mobile. Find your own spot where you can meet with God, even if it's a chair in the living room or a corner of your home. This place will encourage and draw you to meet with God every day.

4. Tell your family and friends that this IS a priority now. They won't take it seriously until you do. Our children have been trained to know that when I go into our bedroom to pray and/or worship, that unless someone is SERIOUSLY bleeding, they don't need to knock. They know that mom really *needs* her quiet time with God. I've GOT to have God!

Your family will see that when you begin having a regular prayer time, you will be more refreshed and relaxed, and more able to pour into them as God pours into you. And more importantly, you will be a godly example to your husband and children.

You can also pray WITH your children as you take a walk, begin your homeschooling day, eat meals, and throughout the day as prayer needs arise.

Of course, as soon as you make a decision to begin praying, the enemy satan will cause all kinds of distractions and irritants to keep you from doing it. William Cowper said, "Satan trembles to see the weakest saint on his knees." Just keep pressing through. Sometimes you have to fight the enemy for that



quiet time!

If you have qualms about letting voice mail pick up your phone calls because it might be an emergency, if it's a family member or friend who's calling "just to chat" when you begin praying, politely let them know you will need to call them back. It's really like working at home. Everyone will assume you just have time to talk, if you're not working at an outside job. Let others know this is your # 1 priority right now, and then do it. Set boundaries and treat this time as precious with the Lord, because it is!

5. Use time-savers to carve out more devotional time. The crock pot is a



WONDERFUL invention!

You can begin your family's supper first thing in the morning, slow cook it all day, and then be ready for a delicious, healthy meal by 5 or 6 p.m. It's very little clean-up, too. Have a

set routine and schedule for chores. A GREAT website to help you with cleaning and organizing your home is the Fly Lady. <http://flylady.net/>

Draft your children to help you clean and organize your home. I don't know about you, but if my house is dirty, I can hardly focus on anything else. What happens is that people often let things snowball, and then the chaos and clutter get out of control. If you and the kids pick up things every day, an orderly home will be more manageable.

When I was in Florida this past week babysitting and housesitting, (<http://www.bethjones.net/god-is-big-enough/>) I was amazed at how my friend Kim had trained all three of her children, ages 6 to 13 years old, to clean her house. When I asked laughing how on earth she motivated them to do their chores (without them griping or her having to plead or threaten them), she simply said she realized she could not do it at all and she just trained them from a young age to help her. If your children pitch in with the chores, this will free up more time for you to pray and to not be distracted.

Do all of your errands in town at one time, so you're not having to interrupt your prayer time, Bible study, or other important tasks at home to go pay



bills, pick up toilet paper, or drop off dry cleaning.

Keep groceries and staple items like salt, pepper, garlic powder, soups, milk, eggs, butter, napkins, detergent, cleaning supplies, etc., stocked up so you won't have distractions on your mind as you begin praying.

6. Pray on the go. You don't have to be on your knees with hands folded to pray. You can pray in your car, on a subway, on a walk, on an elevator, at work in your cubicle, in a waiting room at the dentist's, or at Walmart or the post office. God is more concerned with the posture of our hearts. Your altar to pray and worship God is wherever you go.

You also don't have to pray long prayers. In fact, Jesus warned us NOT to pray long prayers. "When you pray, don't talk on and on as people do who don't know God. They think God likes to hear long prayers. Don't be like them. Your Father knows what you need before you ask." (Matthew 6:7-8, CEV)

7. Commit. Let's face it, we all do what we really *want* to do. We're not going to pray unless we make a commitment to do it, and discipline ourselves to do it. Just as we establish daily habits of exercising, eating healthy foods, and drinking water (or not!), we need to make a *decision* to pray, and then like



Nike says, JUST DO IT.

We come up with all kinds of *excuses why* we're not praying and reading the Bible - I'm tired, I didn't have time today, I had to take the car to the shop, I needed to catch up talking to my friend who moved out of state several years ago, my husband needed me to pick up his prescription, I got sucked into my friend's beach Facebook pictures, the Bible is boring, I can't concentrate, I think God is mad at me, I forgot, etc. The truth is that it is not a priority in our lives. We do what matters to us.

Some of our best examples in the Bible of prayer is of Jesus going to the mountain or the garden alone to spend time with God and of Mary sitting at Jesus' feet as Martha was in the kitchen making preparations. When Martha fussed at Him and told Him to tell her sister to help her, Jesus commended Mary and said she had chosen the part that would not be taken away from her. Mary was doing the most important thing.

Mary had a hunger for God. She couldn't get enough of Him, and she was hanging on every word Jesus said. May God give us that kind of passion for spending time at Jesus' feet!

As we pray, God will give us a revelation of His love, forgiveness and mercy. His presence is so sweet. God just wants to *be* with us, and tell us how much He loves us! Prayer is just friendship with God. Talking to Him and listening to Him. Walking with Him as Enoch did, until he disappeared and walked straight into heaven! (Genesis 5:24)

In prayer you can be real with God. You don't have to pretend or put on any masks. He knows you and He loves you just as you are. You don't have to get cleaned up to come to God; He is the one who will clean you up by the power of Jesus' sanctifying blood. God is very good at it, too! God is the one who made you in your mother's womb. He knew you before you were even created. (Jeremiah 1:5) He also knows the final chapter of your life, and has you in



His hands forever. (Psalm 139:16)

Set aside some time today to pull away and be alone with God. Take time to pray. Push past all obstacles that are keeping you from cultivating an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. It will be so worth it! <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQVmR0jV52A>

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Tablet Of My Heart

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