

Sermon – September 27, 2020  
“Spiritual A.D.D”  
Crown of Life Lutheran Church  
Pastor Dave Schilling

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father, and from our resurrected Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen

"And now Lord, open my mouth so that I can speak. Open our ears so that we can hear. And open our hearts so that we can change ... and truly experience peace through your grace, Amen."

Many years ago there was a short-lived situation comedy where the late Danny Thomas played a doctor. There was a particular scene in one of the shows where a nurse overhears Thomas' character praying.

When she comments on it, the doctor vehemently denies it. "I was not praying," he argued, "I was talking to God."

How sad it is to think that prayer has become, at least in the minds of some, something that is separate and distinct from conversing with God.

Frankly, the very fact that we can converse with God is testimony to the fact that we have a relationship with the living Lord.

Many years ago, I heard a good life-lesson regarding prayer. A dad was teaching his 4-year old son to pray at mealtime. So, one night the family held hands, bowed their heads and the dad was about to begin praying. When his son asked if he could offer the prayer.

Of course, the answer was yes. So, we all bowed our heads, but instead of hearing words of a prayer, the family heard nothing, and was about to ask the boy to begin again, when the dad heard a very faint sound coming from the direction of his bowed head.

Finally, a very hardy "Amen" was uttered, and the little boy looked up with an expression that was looking for a good job comment.

Before the dad could say anything, his mom asked him to say the prayer again, because she could not hear a single word of anything that he had said

What happened next drove home the lesson ... the little boy simply said, "But Mom, I wasn't talking to you, I was talking to God!"

I call this general frustration of learning how to better communicate with God ... Spiritual A.D.D. Attention-Deficit Disorder (A.D.D.) is a group of behaviors that cause problems with focus, lack of self-control, and excessive activities, which sounds a lot like our behaviors when it comes to reading the Bible and praying

I believe we all want to talk to God, so desire is not the problem. The issue is more in the "how."

Last week, we talked about how God wants us to grow in spiritual maturity. He loves

us just the way we are, but he doesn't want us to stay just the way we are.

As we look through the Bible at the lives of some godly people, by far the most-used spiritual disciplines are reading the Scriptures and prayer. While this definitely can and should take place in community, there is something good about spending quiet time with God. Here are a few examples...

“Early the next morning Abraham got up and returned to the place where he had stood before the LORD.” Genesis 19:27

“Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.” Daniel 6:10

“About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray.” Acts 10:9

“Very early in the morning , while it was still dark, Jesus got up , left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.” Mark 1:35

Obviously these guys and so many others over the past 2,000 years have found spending time alone with God to be necessary and helpful.

A "quiet time" is a daily time set aside to be alone with God, to get to know Him through the Bible and prayer.

This spiritual habit is crucial because we were created to have a relationship with God. This is where we receive our marching orders from God for the day. And nobody modeled this better than Jesus.

At the most intense time in his life, the night before he would be crucified, Jesus went out to have a “quiet time” in the Garden of Gethsemane. Listen to part of his prayer...

"My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."

We could say ...

- time with God drains us of our own weakness and fills us with God's strength,
- time with God drains us of our own will and fills us with God's will, and
- time with God drains us of us and fills us with God.

So, we are going to get little practical on how to overcome Spiritual A.D.D. through a more disciplined approach to reading the Bible and conversing with God through prayer.

There are numerous verses where God commands us to be in His Word. I picked one where God command this to Joshua...

“Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.” Joshua 1:8

I want to share a simple acronym that is a great tool to help you read and better understand the Bible and how to apply it to your life. The acronym is...

### S.O.A.P.

As you begin your quiet time, have a sheet of paper handy and write the letter S on it.

The S stands for Scripture. Write down the passage of Scripture you are going to read that day. For example, you might write down Ephesians 2:1-10. Then write down the letter O.

The O stands for Observation. As you read the passage, just write down anything that you observe.

The observations don't need to be deep; just include stuff that comes mind. For example, Ephesians 2:1 says we were ALL at one time dead in our transgressions. Write that down. Then, it says in verse 5 that God made us alive in Christ. Write that down too.

There is no rule as to how many observations you make ... some days there could be ten, other days two ... just write down what you observe. After you finish writing down some observations, write the letter A.

The A stands for Application, which simply means, "So what are you going to do with your observations?"

The Bible is not just for our information but for our transformation. It's not so much about going through Ephesians 2, but about Ephesians 2 going through us.

For example, you could write, "Because God made me alive in Christ, I'm going to (1) thank God for that,  
or (2) tell someone what I learned today,  
or (3) pray for a friend who I know has not been saved by Christ yet."

The more specific you are, the better. If it is not something you can honestly know whether you did or not, it's probably not a good one.

Don't write, "I'm going to be more loving." While that's nice, it's so general you probably won't ever do anything with it.

After you have written down an application, write down the letter P.

The P stands for Prayer. We want to respond to what we just learned from God by talking about it with Him.

I find it very interesting that the disciples never once said to Jesus, "Teach us how to do a miracle", or "Teach us how to share our faith," but they specifically asked Jesus, "Teach us how to pray."

Several of Jesus' statements about prayer start with "and when you pray, DO NOT..." There are ways to pray poorly. God just wants us to approach prayer with a right attitude.

And as we heard in our Gospel, Jesus answered their request by teaching them how to pray, using what we call today, The Lord's Prayer. However, Jesus never says WHAT you should pray. I don 't think it was ever God 's intention to give us a script of the exact words he wants us to say to him.

Instead, in the Lord's Prayer, He is giving us a model to follow to help us truly connect with Him when we pray. Let's look at some of Jesus' prayer in Mathew 6...

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name."

It's important to start our prayer time with...

### Praise.

There are two primary ways we can praise God : (1) through ADORATION, where we praise God for who he is, and (2) through THANKSGIVING, where we praise God for what He has done.

Think through your past 24 hours and thank him for all the blessings he sent your way. If you've just read some Scripture, praise God for what it SAID about Him. Start your time by raising Him up.

"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

Here we commit ourselves to doing God 's will. We place our focus on God's purposes - not ours. Thus, we create a Plan.

A PLAN of how God's will could be done in our family, in our church, at work, in our neighborhood and in our city, nation and world.

Although we never say it out loud, we too often live life praying for "MY kingdom come" instead of "THY kingdom come."

This is a time where you can remind God and especially ourselves that it's not about Him JOINING us, but us JOINING Him.

Notice in the first two verses of Jesus' prayer the word "Your" is mentioned three times, while the word "my" is not mentioned once.

"Give us today our daily bread."

So, this part of the prayer is asking God to Provide for the things you need in this life.

I love to pray for everything on my to-do list and all my meetings/appointments.

I have found that the more specific I make my prayers, the more specifically God answers them.

For example, if I just run through my day and pray, "God bless my staff meeting, bless my meeting with Tony, bless my sermon preparations ... "

I believe He will indeed bless all those things, but I'm not sure I'll even notice if he does. However, if I pray more specifically, "God, what do You want to accomplish in each of the things I'm involved in today?" It CHANGES everything.

If I'm meeting with Tony, and I'm unsure whether he has a personal relationship with Christ, then I'll pray for an opportunity to share with him. Then, when God answers that prayer, it is clear that God deserves full credit and praise for it.

If I'm work on my next message, I pray for a moment in my preparation where God blows me away with something He reveals to me from Scripture. When that happens, I take a moment to praise God for answering that prayer. Pray specifically and thank God specifically.

"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

Here we ask God to forgive our sins. We call this part Pardon.

I think through my past 24 hours and ask God to reveal any things I did, said or thought that I need to repent of.

Here a great verse is Psalm 139:23-24, "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting."

Nothing combats pride in my life better than a daily time of confession to God. Just when I begin to think that maybe I have finally figured out this whole church thing, God reminds me that I still have a long way to go.

We also pray to forgive and pardon other people.

It's really important to make a list of the people you want to pray for ... perhaps family members, friends, leaders in your church to ensure you in fact do pray for them.

"And lead us not into temptation..."

Finally, I pray for spiritual protection.

Whenever God wants to build, Satan wants to battle. If you really start spending time in Bible reading and prayer each day, you are going to become more and more of a threat to the enemy. He will do whatever he can to distract you from living out God's will for your life.

He will try and discourage you and make you give up. If he can't tempt you with something bad, he will trick you with busyness. You need to pray each day for God's protection on your life and those close to you.

This is obviously not the only way to pray, but it's one way. What if for few weeks, you made a commitment to spend a few minutes a day walking through these five parts of prayer?

My guess is you would be amazed how fast your prayers would not be something that you endure or something that exhausts you, but a conversation that energizes you.

Now, let me get even more practical for a moment as we close our message for today.

Here are two things I believe you will need to decide right away IF you are going to start living out the daily spiritual habits of Bible study and prayer.

First, recognize that you should be at your BEST when you decide to spend time with God.

If you just spend time with God when you're not busy, you will miss most days because let 's be honest ... we are busy people.

You also need to decide on a time. Most examples in Scripture are of people getting up early in the morning for prayer, but really what's most important is a TIME when you can give God YOUR best.

Secondly, select a place.

In the opening passage, we read about Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. Listen to how it starts ... "Jesus went out AS USUAL to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him."

"as usual" ... obviously this was not the first time Jesus had been to this garden to pray. The same principle should be true for us.

Select a room in your home or an area where you know you can be free from distraction and spend time with God in silence.

Just to make sure we are on the same page, your living room with a sports contest or HGTV on in the background is not a good place or time.

So, here is my challenge for you today. Would you for the next few weeks, test this whole thing out? It says in Psalms 34:8, "Taste and see that the Lord is good."

If you just went through a Bible reading and prayer plan for the next few weeks, I think you'd be blown away with all God would do in and through your life.

Nothing else has come close to helping me draw near to God than practicing my daily time with Him. As your pastor, if I could get you to add one habit to your life, this would be it.

I pray each of you will add Bible reading and prayer into your daily routines. Amen