

Same Old You Week 4

Daily Rhythms

INTRODUCTION

Today we are continuing a series called; “The Same Old You.” This series is designed to challenge us to make positive changes that will not only ring in the new year but hopefully impact our lives for the long haul.

Today we are going to deal with two related issues. First is the issue of staying full of The Spirit each day and all day so that our activities are Spirit birthed and Spirit led. When we are in touch with The Spirit our activities will not wear us out like those things that are done in the power of the self and the flesh. The second point is how do we say “no” to the things that are pulling us away from our time with God and those activities that are birthed by and powered by The Spirit? Saying “no” to the things that God has not called us to will give us the energy reserves to connect with Him and follow through on His callings and directives. Let’s read some passages that inform our study. Let’s begin with how to stay full.

READING THE TEXT

Ephesians 6:18

praying **at all times** in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

Philippians 4:6

do not be anxious about anything, but **in everything** by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving **let your requests be made** known to God.

2 Timothy 1:3

I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my **prayers night and day.**

Daniel 6:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. **He got down on his knees three times a day** and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously.

PREACHING THE TEXT

Ephesians 6:18

praying **at all times** in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, **keep alert with all perseverance**, making supplication for all the saints,

This passage reminds us that we can be praying as we are carried along by The Spirit at “all times.” An illustration that has helped me understand this concept is the speaker phone. As we go about our everyday life we can keep our hearts on speaker phone mode so that a running commentary and conversation with God can guide us as we live our lives to His glory.

It also says; “keep alert” with all perseverance. And as you stay awake in the faith pray for the saint (aka other believers). Our greatest temptation is to begin sleepwalking through the faith and doing the motions rather than living by the faith and power of The Spirit.

Philippians 4:6

do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

We are not called to do more than obsess or think about issues that come up. Sometimes we can go long periods of time figuring out things but never stopping to pray.

STORY: I recall more than one occasion in which I had several complicated things to work out in my personal life, ministry and with strained relationships. As I brain stormed and sought a solution for several of these issues I recall getting so anxious that my neck disappeared. And my mind was racing like an overworked computer. But I just could not work out all the details. Then I realized that I was getting no closer to the solutions and I was stuck in a rut. So I calmed myself and went to God in prayer and the solutions I needed came to mind. The peace of God came over me.

Philippians 4 tells us the answer to anxiousness is to make our requests made known to God. Bring it to God. Don't just figure it out. Spend as much time discerning God's will as you do figuring it out.

2 Timothy 1:3

[Guard the Deposit Entrusted to You] I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day.

This is another passage that reminds us that prayers are not just for mealtimes or when we have a problem. This passage reminds us to take our requests to God both night and day (which means all the time).

This next passage helps us to see a daily rhythm that is not mandated but is an example of how men and women of God kept their heart full and focused on God all day.

Daniel 6:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously.

In verse 10 there is a reference to documents that Daniel knew were signed. These documents were put in place as a trap from those who were jealous of Daniel and wanted him removed. These people who were jealous of Daniel tricked the king into signing a decree that anyone who prayed to anyone other than the King himself would be killed in the lion's den. Here is the account;

Daniel 6:4 Then the high officials and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom, but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him. **5** Then these men said, "We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God."

6 Then these high officials and satraps came by agreement to the king and said to him, "O King Darius, live forever! 7 All the high officials of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an injunction, that whoever makes petition to any god or man for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions. 8 Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked." 9 Therefore King Darius signed the document and injunction.

OBSERVATIONS

Here are some observations and rules of thumb that could benefit any of us in the practice of our faith.

1. Daniel had a rhythm of praying three times per day and it was pretty systematic. It was on his google calendar.
2. This rhythm was so important to Daniel that he would not be dissuaded from it even by threats of life and limb.
3. For Daniel, it seems as if he is treating the idea of stopping his prayer rhythm with a denial of God Himself. A good illustration might be if someone threatened your life if you dare speak to your spouse and kids. That's just not going to work for us.

SUMMARY / CHALLENGE

We learned about ongoing conversational prayer with God. And we learned that whenever something comes up we can take our requests directly to God. Further, we learned that there is a helpful rhythm of prayer that helps us to stay full.

FULL IN THE MORNING, SQUEEZED DRY BY AFTERNOON

For me, I tend to get full of God's Spirit in the morning. But then it seems for some strange reason as if God's presence drifts away from my awareness and focus during the day. Life tends to drain me and by the afternoon I am often physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually drained. So I need a nap for my physical strength. I need to do something that builds up my mental strength and I also need to find a way to replenish my spiritual resources.

Physical Strength: Working out and resting (I need plenty of work here)

Mental Strength: Relax and quiet my mind or do some repetitive task that is enjoyable

Emotional Strength: Anything that connects you to another person(s) and fills your heart with joy

Spiritual Strength: To strengthen my spirit requires renewing my connection with God. Michael Warden has some very helpful guidelines in how to renew our connection with God throughout the day just like Daniel. Warden has a rule of thumb called a "Rule of Life."

According to Warden, a rule of life:

"is a collection of spiritual practices you commit to follow on a regular basis. A Rule of Life that includes regular rhythms of withdrawal and solitude with

God is as integral and essential to the role of spiritual leadership as rest is to the body.”¹

Following Warden’s Rule of Life, the following goals represent my attempt to establish a rule of life designed to form refreshing rhythms, resulting in a Spirit-powered life and ministry.

MY RULE OF LIFE PLAN

Daily:

- Begin with welcoming the Spirit, and stating to Jesus in your own words: “Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done...”
- Scripture study (one complete unit of thought)
- Pray for calendar events

Twice Daily:

- Prayer, devotion, or reading 10am and 2pm (spiritual snack for spiritual low blood sugar), taking 3 to 5 minutes to refocus. Schedule your scripture listening or reading early afternoon.

Weekly:

- Day of rest, recreation or enjoyable non-vocational work.
- Included in that day of rest could be extra sleep or rest.
- Visionary exercises seeking the Spirit’s guidance on work and personal health.

Monthly:

- A day away from civilization to step back from my routine to observe, pray, and focus on long-range objectives.

SAYING NO TO THE WRONG STUFF

With that said we may have to clear our calendar of things that we are not really called to do but we are doing anyway because of pressure or guilt or unobserved routines. Saying “no” to things that we are no longer called to do will clear up some time for us to connect with God and work under the power of The Spirit.

Here are either guidelines that will help us to say to things that are not helpful to our life.

8 strategic “no” questions

1. Does it directly move us toward accomplishing our Mission (or Noble Cause)?
2. Is this the best use of our time and energy toward accomplishing our Mission?
3. Is it in alignment with our ultimate vision for our life or our organization?...
4. Is it in alignment with our Core Values?
5. Does it align with Scripture?
6. Is it wise?

7. Do we sense the full endorsement of God's Spirit on this project?...
8. Are we fully surrendered to God's will on this matter? ¹

We have explored the practice of a "rule of life" which are daily rhythms that help us reconnect with God's heart and power. Then we explored saying "no" to things that may get in the way of our rule of life and our primary activities to which God has called us. Now let's take this home.

TAKING IT HOME

1. *What are some previous rule of life efforts you have undertaken in the past?*
2. *What was successful about your previous efforts?*
3. *What are some things that played into you drifting away from your previous rule of life practices?*
4. What is the first step God is leading you to take beginning tomorrow?