

INSIDE OUT

Becoming the people God calls us to be, inside and out

Introduction

For the next few weeks we will explore how “spiritual disciplines” are God’s path to spiritual growth and vitality. We are starting with the transformative power of prayer.

Read Matthew 6: 5-15

Most Christians know the prayer by heart in their own language, and it is used today by every Christian tradition, though there are sometimes minor variations in the wording. It has a place in every Anglican act of worship, and forms a pattern for prayer for Christians.

Share with one another how significant this prayer has been for you. Do you still use it today as a framework for prayer? How?

The great Psychiatrist C.G. Jung once said: “Hurry is not *of* the Devil; it *is* the Devil.” Similarly, in his book “Celebration of Discipline,” Richard Foster says “in contemporary society our Adversary majors in three things: noise, hurry and crowds. If he can keep us engaged in “muchness” and “manyness” he will rest satisfied. In 1 Thess. 5: 17 we are called to pray without ceasing. If we are constantly being swept off our feet with frantic activity, we will be unable to be attentive at the voice and guidance of God through prayer.

- How do you make space for prayer?
- Do you have a format?
- What has been helpful/unhelpful over the years?

In Lk. 11, we have a shorter version of the “Lord’s prayer” and some additional thoughts about asking and receiving. The chapter starts with the disciples’ request ““Lord, teach us to pray.”

We are all learners for the rest of our lives. Often we are discouraged because we sense a “lack of prayer.” Rather than flagellating ourselves for our obvious lack, we should remember that God always meets us where we are and moves us along into deeper things. An occasional jogger does not suddenly become an Olympic marathon runner. It takes time, training and perseverance.

How liberating is it to know that we are all learners?

What small steps could you take right now to strengthen your life of prayer?

Other thoughts for discussion

Do you know the communal “activities” of prayer at St James, across the town?

How high is prayer on your agenda, in your cell, in your family, etc.? What changes could you make?

Practical:

- Find a place of quietness, free from distraction.
- Use of scripture, art, pictures, imagination
- Posture, actions (raising hands, palms up/down, kneel, stand, etc),
- Rituals (light candle, wash face, wash hands, etc)

