

Slowing Down to Pray—Week 3

Truth

Much of this lesson comes from *An Unhurried Life* by Alan Fadling.

The Fast Pace of Life

Fadling suggests four reasons why we are so hurried (11-13)

1. We have been trained that the faster we go, the more we can get done.
2. Our culture values speed, efficiency and quickness. Waiting is bad. Getting what we want now is good.
3. We avoid boredom and when we hurry, we are not bored.
4. Technology and speed: The technologies that promised increased leisure time has actually accelerated our pace of life, making our lives fuller and giving us less downtime.

How would you describe your 'hurried' life? 1. The constant high RPMs of a car, or 2. the Roadrunner? Why?



The Unhurried Life of Jesus-Our Example

“I believe that modeling our life according to the unhurried pace of Jesus’ life and ministry could be a healing and empowering vision for contemporary Christians” (11).

Read the following descriptions and notice the priority of prayer in the life of Jesus and how He intentionally slows down, then answer the following questions.

Mark 6:30-32 _____

Luke 4:22 _____

Luke 5:16 _____

Luke 6:12-13 _____

How often did Jesus seek solitude?

Where did Jesus go to pray?

With whom did He pray?

How long did He pray?

Alan Fadling remarks, “Jesus invited his followers, in the midst of a busy time of ministering, to withdraw—as he often did—to a quiet, restful place where they could spend time in communion with the Father.”

Henry Nouwen observes, “In the midst of a busy schedule of activities—healing people, casting out devils, responding to impatient disciples, traveling from town to town, and preaching from synagogue to synagogue—we find these quiet words: ‘In the morning, long before dawn, he got up and left the house and went off to a lonely place and prayed there.’ The more I read this nearly silent sentence locked in between the loud words of action, the more I have the sense that the secret to Jesus’ ministry is hidden in that lonely place where he went to pray...In the lonely place Jesus finds the courage to follow God’s will and not his own; to speak God’s words and not his own; to do God’s work and not his own. It is in the lonely place, where Jesus enters into intimacy with the Father, that his ministry is born” (*Spiritual Formation*, 20).

Read the story of Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42).

Respond to the following statement, “Martha’s worried words to Jesus exposed her hurried heart. Doing something good for him took precedence over listening to something good from him” (Fadling, 103). Are you a Martha or a Mary?

Equipping

Take a morning or afternoon together and go to a solitude place (e.g. Palmer Park) and spend an extended time in prayer. You can use the instructions provided by the Navigators. You are encouraged to set the time aside together for the accountability, plus you can share your insights with one another over a lunch or dinner. This activity takes planning and intentionality. So put it on the calendar today.

How to Spend Extended Time in Prayer

The idea of spending an extended time in prayer—a half day or more—can seem so difficult that we never do it. But the guidelines listed here can help you approach such a time with the right preparation and the right attitude, and to gain richly from the experience.

Five reasons

In *How to Spend a Day in Prayer*, Lorne Sanny give us these reasons for taking a break in our busy lives to spend a lengthy time alone with God.

1. For extended fellowship with God, beyond your morning devotions. It means just plain being with and thinking about God. God has called us into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1:9). Like many personal relationships, this fellowship is nurtured by spending time together.

2. For renewed perspective. Like flying over the battlefield in a reconnaissance plane, a day of prayer gives opportunity to think of the world from God's point of view.

Especially when going through some difficulty, we need this perspective to sharpen our vision of the unseen, and to let the immediate, tangible things drop into proper place. Our spiritual defenses are strengthened while we "fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For . . . what is unseen is eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18).

3. For catching up on intercession. There are non-Christian friends and relatives to bring before the Lord, missionaries on various fields, our pastors, our neighbors, our government leaders—to name a few.

Influencing people and changing events through prayer is well-known among Christians but too little practiced. And as the times become more serious around us, we need to reconsider the value of personal prayer, both to accomplish and deter.

4. For prayerful consideration of our lives before the Lord—personal inventory and evaluation. You will especially want to take a day of prayer when facing important decisions, as well as on a periodic basis. On such a day, you can evaluate where you are in relation to your goals, and get direction from the Lord through His Word.

5. For adequate preparation. If God has given us plans and purposes in these times alone, we will be ready when opportunity comes to move right into it. We won't have to say, "I'm not prepared." The reason many Christians are dead to opportunities is not because they are not mentally alert, but they are simply unprepared in heart. Preparation is made when we get alone with God.

Scheduling your time

Divide the time into three parts:

1. Wait on the Lord—to realize His presence, to be cleansed, and to worship Him.
2. Pray for others. Ask specific things for them. Use Paul's prayers in the New Testament to pray for them, and pray for them what you are praying for yourself.
3. Pray for yourself. Be totally honest with God, and yet not too introspective. (In many cases, a person will do better to pray for himself before praying for others.) As Lorne Sanny said, "You will end the day worse than you started if all you do is think of yourself and your own problems."

Making a worry list

While you need to heed Sanny's warning about spending the whole day absorbed in your own problems, you may find it helpful to follow the steps below in making a "worry list." This will help you pray more effectively for yourself.

1. Give some thought to current conflicts, problems, concerns, or frustrations, and write them down and number them. List anything that is "bugging" you. No matter how small an item is, if it is of concern to you, list it.
2. Every worry you have in the world should be on that piece of paper—it is all there! When you are satisfied that this is so, go on to step three. (It is not uncommon for a person to have 20 or more items.)
3. Go through the list item by item. On each item determine whether you can do nothing about it because it is beyond your control, or whether you can do something to resolve it.

Whatever your conclusion, pray about each issue. But if you feel you can take action about it, write down what you plan to do. (You will probably find many other things to add to this "do list" throughout your time of prayer.)

What to take with you

The essential items to have with you are a Bible, paper, and a pen or pencil. Other helpful items include:

- A clock or watch
- Prayer letters from missionaries and other Christian workers
- A favorite devotional book
- Your current prayer list
- Your quiet time journal
- A hymnal Scripture memory cards
- Notes from your last extended time in prayer
- Your family or personal budget
- A bag lunch and beverage
- A calendar

How to stay awake and alert

1. Get adequate rest the two nights before.
2. Change positions—sit a while, walk around, sit, walk, and so on.
3. Have variety in what you do. Read the Scriptures, then prayer, then write, and so on.
4. Pray aloud—in a whisper or soft voice if necessary.

Taking notes

Taking notes during your extended time in prayer will give you a record of the things the Lord is speaking to you about, and also help you keep your time organized.

In addition, when we pray we often have something come to mind that we feel we should take action on, or that we have forgotten to do—perhaps totally unrelated to what we are praying about. By keeping paper ready to list these things so we can act on them later, we can avoid prolonged distraction.

Toward the end of your time in prayer you will want to spend fifteen minutes or so writing down some conclusions. Summarize the major impressions of your time.

Keep these notes in a notebook and review them weekly for a while. This will ensure that you follow through on the things God has impressed on you.

"God bless you as you do this—and do it soon!"

This article appeared in the October 1979 issue of *Navlog*. It was adapted from *The 2:7 Series -- Navigator Discipleship Training for Church Laymen*.
<https://www.navigators.org/resource/spend-extended-time-prayer/>

Set aside 2-3 hours for an extended time of prayer with the Lord.

Accountability

Review your action points from the last lesson. What action points will you commit to in order to strengthen your prayer life in the next month?

When will you schedule an extended time of prayer?

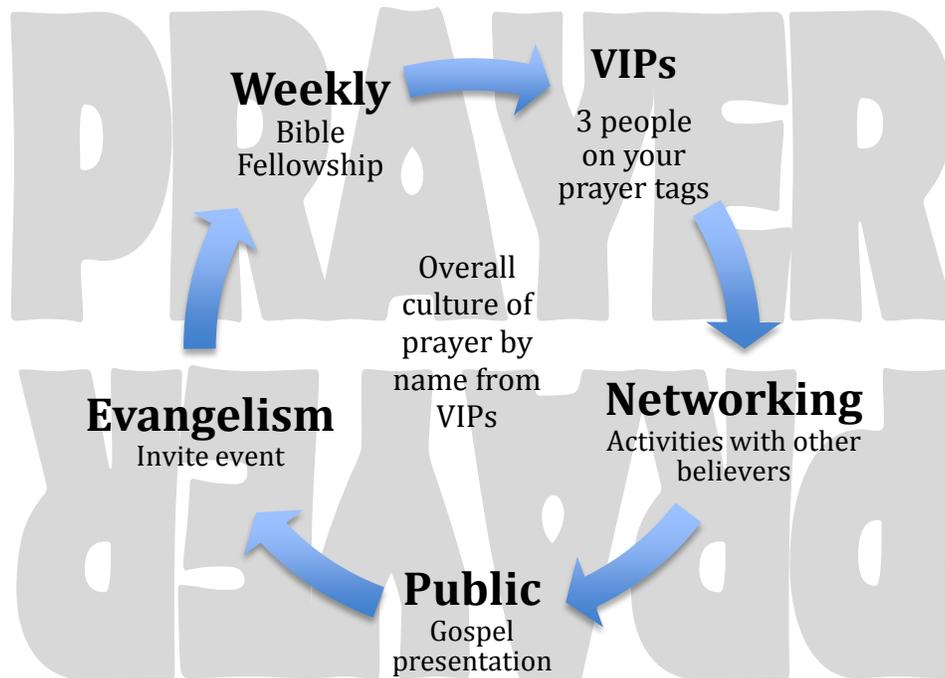
Mission

The *Invest & Invite* training at V7PC incorporates the diagram below. It shows that 'prayer' is at the heart of reaching out and proclaiming the gospel where we live, work and play.

How can viewing those you are praying for as your VIPs (Very Important People) instead of non-Christians or 'us' vs. 'them' change how you pray for them?

How can you use your extended time of prayer to deepen your relationship with your VIPs and give you insight for proclaiming and living out the gospel with them?

Where do you see each of your VIPs on this diagram? Explain.



Supplication

Share your prayer requests with one another. Space is provided below to write them down. Use this to help remind you what to pray for each other during the week. In addition there are a few questions to help you share requests.

Write out an index card for those in your group to pray for daily. Keep it up to date.

What are your prayer requests regarding the truth this week?

In light of the discussion this week what do you need to pray for?

What are your prayer requests regarding any situations in your life this week?

Prayer requests from others in the group this week