



A Time for Prayer

by Michelle Stimpson

Do you know how to pray according to God's will? Are you in a season where prayer is particularly difficult? Do you spend more time being entertained than being edified through prayer?

If these questions gave you pause, you're not alone. Though Christians have long-recognized that prayer is an important part of our faith-walk, we spend relatively little time doing it. Facts: 83% of Americans identify themselves as Christians¹. Yet, the average person in the US spends only about eight minutes a day involved in spiritual pursuits². Compare that to the amount of time we spend watching television—2.83 hours per day!

Before I harp on what other people aren't doing, I must confess that my prayer life used to be quite scant, too. My prayer life was mostly a piecemeal attempt to keep my head above water every day. I prayed in response to things. Never boldly and proactively. Never with a strategy or a well-thought-out purpose aligned to Scripture.

While there is no "rule" about how many minutes or hours per day a Christian must spend praying or studying the Bible, the way we choose to spend our time should reflect our priorities. The key is to learn to optimize our prayers. As Priscilla Shirer says in *Fervent*, "If all we're doing is flinging words and emotions in all directions without any real consideration for the specific ways the enemy is targeting us and the promises of God that apply to us, we're mostly just wasting our time."

People of God, there is a way to pray with power and purpose. Learning to pray powerfully will take time and discipline. But trust me: Email messages, social media, and TV shows can wait. Your prayer life can't.

¹ <http://abcnews.go.com/US/story?id=90356>

² U.S. Department of Labor Statistics, 2014