

How to Win Within

Sermon Graphics package

<https://pixelpreacher.net/series/how-to-win-within/>

If you want to learn how to speak Spanish, you can enroll in class. If you want to figure out how to change the blades on your lawn mower, you can YouTube the instructions. And if you are looking for ways to improve your wardrobe, you can download a fashion app. Our world is full of Master Classes, and self-help TED Talks that could potentially improve our lives. From better toothpaste to better work out routines, we have tons of information to help us win- on the outside. But where do we go for help on the inside? Where can we go to grant us a heart full of peace and joy? In this new sermon series, we will explore ancient disciplines that are designed to help us bring calm and order to our inside world. We will do this by observing people that actually practiced the discipline, looking for clues as to how these actions may help us. What we will discover is that following these practices can help reduce stress and open our minds to new insights.

You can become a winner on the inside. And if the Bible is correct, this could change everything about your outer world as well.

So, how do we begin? We must recognize the tyranny our digital devices have over our souls.

To win the war, we must damage the bridge that traffics right into our hearts.

Sermon #1 A Restful Heart,
Proposed Date: April 16, 2023
Main Verses: 1 Kings 18, Matthew 11

Elijah the Prophet lived in a stressful time. He was the prophet to the Northern Kingdom of Israel. He had the prickly task of confronting King Ahab and his wife, Jezebel. And even though the nation was in a challenging spot Elijah had a string of successes (raising the dead and calling fire from heaven). And yet, even with all of these successes, Elijah found himself in a despondent place contemplating suicide. As we journey with Elijah through victory and defeat, we will uncover how Elijah found the strength he needed to carry on.

Consider the following:

Karoshi is the Japanese word for death by being overworked.

Here is how one article described this:

The pandemic has triggered widespread concerns about the physical and psychological toll of prolonged stress, sleep deprivation and social isolation. A landmark study by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Labor Organization published earlier this month found that 745,000 people died in 2016 from stroke and ischemic heart disease as a direct result of having worked at least 55 hours a week. For the first time on a global scale, long hours at work have been established as responsible for about one-third of all deaths. Frank Pega, WHO's technical lead on the study, says that despite clear evidence linking overwork to death, for 20 years "we had overlooked this risk factor". Wired Magazine 02.06.21

Americans are the biggest offender. Each year Americans work on average more years than other developed countries:

- 137 more hrs/yr than Japan
- 260 more hrs/yr than the British
- 499 more hrs/yr than the French

Overworking Risk factors include:

- You are not getting enough sleep.
- You are not eating well.
- You are not exercising.
- You are neglecting relationships.
- You are self-medication.

Today's test case for rest comes from the life of Elijah. This prophet was powerful, respected and highly successful in his role. And he also faced burnout. Let's see if we can understand his burnout and then look for clues about restoring a healthy balance back into our lives.

1. Success can create even more stress and less rest.
 - a. Elijah was at the center of the national crisis (1 Kings 17:1, 18:1)
 - b. Elijah raised the widow's son (1 Kings 17:22)
 - c. Elijah called fire down from heaven (1 Kings 18:36-39)
2. Here are some ways that stress can manifest itself.
 - a. You've done much work, but things don't seem to change (19:1)

- b. You feel afraid when we hear of a verbal threat (19:1-3)
- c. You lose confidence you once had (18:15, 19:3)
- d. You avoid your tasks (19:3a)
- e. You check out of relationships (19:3b)
- f. You desire to just quit it all (19:4a)
- g. You don't want to live any longer (19:4b)
- h. The most successful and godly people can be anxious, afraid, and depressed.

3. It's at our lowest point that God speaks to us:

- a. Never underestimate the power of some good food, something to drink and a nap.
- b. You can't do this on your own strength (19:8-9)
- c. God finally speaks, but only after Elijah stops running.
 - i. If God is not speaking to you, stop running.
 - ii. If God is not speaking to you, get quiet.

Application:

Reflect on how you are doing in these three categories.

- Rest (and exercise)
- Recall your purpose (v. 15)
- Remember you're not alone (v. 18)

Bonus Material

You know it's true. You spend too much time on your phone. But limiting our time on our screens seems like an impossible discipline to master. So here are few apps that can help you and your family curb your phone addiction and bring some balance back into your life.

<https://everydayeyecandy.com/10-apps-that-limit-your-screentime/>

Sermon #2 A Prayerful Heart

Proposed Date: April 23, 2023

Main Verses: Luke 11:1-4, (also Luke 5:15-16, 6:12, 9:18, 9:28-36)

Jesus' life was centered around his prayer life. His entire ministry was geared around moments in prayer with the Father, and then moments of fulfilling the Father's will. And when we examine Jesus' prayer rhythm, we must admit that most of us have much room for growth. Today we will examine some reasons why we don't spend time praying and then explore how Jesus inspired his disciples to live lives full of prayer. Perhaps this will challenge you to invest more in the precious resource available to all of God's children.

Discuss:

What words would you use to describe your prayer life right now?

Interrupters to Prayer

- Our Cell phones (the small moments of time we use to have, are now being gobbled up by this digital monster)
- Our Money (It's more challenging to see our need for God when we have wealth)
- Secularism (The scientific world view is in the air we breathe)

Jesus' pattern of prayer made an impression on his disciples. They were so moved by this focused discipline that they felt compelled to ask, "Jesus- teach us to pray." Jesus didn't hesitate. And from

this conversation we have a template for prayers of all Jesus followers ever since.

1. Jesus starts with the notion that God is our Father.
 - a. Jesus doesn't start with our wish, wants, or needs.
 - b. Jesus is relationship with the Father.
 - c. We too are in relationship with the Father and Jesus and others.
 - d. Jesus wants us to primarily view God as a Dad more than:
 - i. A Cosmic Cop
 - ii. A Busy CEO
 - iii. A Force
 - iv. What you think of when you think of God will dictate you committed you are to prayer
2. God is in Heaven (which is closer than you think)
 - a. Heavens (οὐπανός) means the air, sky, and stars.
 - b. God's presence is often associated with sky and clouds.
 - i. Psalm 97:2, Job 26:9, Nahum 1:3, Ezekiel 1:28
 - ii. Acts 17:27-28
 - c. God is closer than you think.
3. Hallowed be your name:
 - a. Hallowed means, holy, set apart and unique. The word also connotes beautiful in special kind of way, not ordinary.
 - b. But what is holy is God's name- a direct reference to God's holy authority.

- c. God is Dad, but he is also in charge.
- 4. Pause: Here what we have so far
 - a. God is my Dad, he is close by, and he has special place in this universe.
- 5. Our requests:
 - a. Daily bread:
 - i. Indicate a continual reliance on God's resources.
 - ii. Trust God for what lies ahead.
 - b. Forgiveness
 - i. Since we are in a Dad/Child relationship, I must recognize how my actions disrupt this relationship.
 - c. And help us to avoid temptation.
 - i. We are to turn to our Dad at the very moment of temptation.
 - ii. Feeling an urge to disobey God is the right moment to turn to God.
 - iii. God understands what it is like to feel the impulse of sin.

Application:

Commit to memory this prayer.

Use it as a model in your prayer time.

Ask for forgiveness.

Reach out to God the next time you are tempted to sin

Sermon #3 A Controlled Heart

Proposed Date: April 30, 2023

Main Verses: Neh. 1-2:6

The average American adult sees almost 4000 advertisements per day. Companies spend billions of dollars to stir up our dissatisfaction. Their goal is to maintain a steady diet of consumption and there seems to be no limit to our desire for stuff. Some economists estimate that almost 70% of the entire US economy is fueled by consumer goods (as opposed to fuel, housing, and transportation). We seem to be machines programmed to want more and advertisers are locked into this wiring of our brains.

Consider this graph that charts what happens online every 60 seconds. Every minute, of every day.

Consider the following:

- We possess Infinite Desire + We exist as Finite Human = This results in restlessness
- Thomas Aquinas once asked himself what it would take to satisfy the soul. His conclusion, one human would need to experience everything.
- Song of Solomon put it this way- The eye is not satisfied with seeing
- Mick Jagger- I can't get no satisfaction.

Desires

- Power/Control/Influence/Notoriety
- Money/Consumerism/Display of Wealth
- Pleasure/Entertainment/Leisure/Sexual Experiences

How do we manage this churning surge of infinite desire when an entire ecosystem has been built to keep pump out the waters of temptation?

Fasting.

Fasting is mentioned around 30 times in the Scriptures.

Why this infinite desire- because we were made for the infinite.

Desire is infinite partly because we were made by God, made for God, made to need God, and made to run on God. We can be satisfied only by the one who is infinite, eternal, and able to supply all our needs: we are only at home in God. When we fall away from the God, the desire for the infinite remains but it is displaced on things that will certainly lead to destruction.

Dallas Willard

What Fasting is not:

- Getting God's attention through suffering
- A weight loss program
- A legalistic standard to gain holiness.
- Not always results oriented.

Fasting is God's powerful reset button. Anytime a leader was at a critical juncture we see that fasting was involved as a preparatory step. Fasting helps us prepare our minds and bodies for what is next.

Here are the Examples:

- Jesus began his ministry with fasting (Luke 4:1-2)

- Moses fasted before receiving and sharing the 10 Commandments (Ex 34:27-28)
- Elijah returned to ministry after a season of fasting (1 Kings 19)
- Antioch sends out Paul on his first missionary journey after fasting (Acts 13:2)

Fasting interrupts our small world of pleasure and comfort helping us see a bigger view of God's plan.

1. Nehemiah had a position of prestige and significance while living in relative comfort.
 - a. He lived in the *citadel* – this was the royal enclosure (1:1)
 - b. Nehemiah lived in the safest part of the safest city in the most powerful country in the world.
2. Nehemiah opened himself up to the plight of his fellow brothers and sisters.
 - a. Nehemiah initiates the question (1:2)
 - b. Nehemiah interrupted his normal routine to know of about others suffering.
 - c. He discovers that things are horrible.

Encountering other people's pain places us in a unique position.

Do we go back to our normal citadel life, or do we dive in to help?

3. Here's how Nehemiah handled this:
 - a. He paused.
 - b. He prayed and fasted (He interrupted the cycle of pleasure and comfort)
 - c. In his prayer:
 - i. God is still good (v. 5)
 - ii. He recognized his position as a servant (v. 6)
 - iii. He confessed sin (interrupting our cycle of pleasure and comfort can help us better see our imperfections), (vs. 6-7)
 - iv. He based his prayer on Scripture (v. 8-9)
 - v. He made a clear request (vs. 10-11).

If your default decision is to always return back to the citadel of comfort, then you will not experience the thrill of what God wants to build through you.

Impacts of Fasting

- Helps us absorb the challenges of those in pain.
- Helps clarify how we can help (v. 1:11)
- Gives us courage just at the right moment (2:4-6)

Sermon #4 A Studious Heart

Proposed Date: May 7, 2023

Main Verses: (2 Timothy 2:15, 3:14-17)

The goal of studying the Scripture is not to fill our heads with a bunch of Bible knowledge (information). The goal of studying the Scriptures is so we can live out what we learn (transformation). But to be transformed we must first be informed. And this is where studying the Bible can help. Additionally, there is a risk that comes along with an over-emphasis on knowing the Bible – pride. Being prideful can bring conflict and resentment in our relationships. This is especially true when we attack people online from prideful positions of certainty and self-righteousness. Fortunately, the Bible helps us with this reality. And today we will see how Paul instructed a young pastor to regulate his own life through the discipline of studying the Bible as well as handling critics with whom he disagreed.

Today:

We will examine the connection between studying *the Scriptures* and *dealing with those who oppose us*. For Paul teaches Timothy how to deal with people with whom he has a big disagreement with on a sensitive topic. His approach requires us to unplug for a time from the digital world around us.

Paul's Letter to Young Timothy

- What to Avoid (because it's a distraction)
- What to Embrace (because it brings focus)

Key Word-

μάχη (quarreling) – to fight, to take arms into battle, to pursue strife against an opponent.

1. Avoid all talk that is not helpful.

- “... warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value and only ruins people who listen...” (2 Tim 2:14)
- “... avoid *godless chatter*, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly...” (2 Tim 2:16)
- “... don’t have anything to do with *foolish and stupid arguments* because you know they produce great quarrels ...” (2 Tim 2:23)
- “... and the Lord’s servant *must not be quarrelsome* but must be *kind to everyone*, able to teach not resentful...” (2 Tim 2:24)
- “... opponents must be *gently instructed*, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to the knowledge of the truth...” (2 Tim 2:25)

2. Embrace [handle] the *word of truth* correctly (2:14-15)

- Historically accurate
- Culturally Nuanced
- Grammatically sensitive
- Gospel focused.

3 Respond by personally continuing in the Scriptures (3:10-17)

- Do you read the Scriptures in such a way that its message is:
- Teaching you?
- Rebuking you?
- Correcting you
- Training you in Righteousness?

Application:

Got a Sensitive Issue (2:23-26):

- Stop Attacking
- Be kind.
- And Teach (without resentment).

Sermon #5 A Meditating Heart

Proposed Date: May 14, 2023

Main Verses: Psalm 1

Meditation focuses the mind to orbit around a single idea.

Exploring the contours and details of a mental concept until the meditator is fully familiarized with various aspects. Meditation suspends a final judgement until all facets of an idea can be pondered. This takes time. And this cannot happen when we are multi-tasking. But the results can be better decisions and fewer regrets.

Clear Concept:

When I'm not paying attention new dangers can cross my path and I crash into my biggest regret.

Key Question:

Have you ever made a rash decision and regretted it later?

Have you ever just gone with flow and then regretted it later?

MEDITATION:

- It helps slow life down (Psalm 4:4-6, 3:6, 119:148)
- It helps me focus on what is truly important (Joshua 1:8)

Psalms is Israel's book of prayer. This important work that was at the center of a nation's worship begins not with a typical Psalm—but word of warning about going with the flow. And the one key

way to disrupt the cultural tide pushing against us is through the power of meditation.

1. Be forewarned about a growing alignment with evil influences (Psalm 1:1, Prov. 13:20).
 - a. Walking in step with the wicked (convicted criminal)
 - b. Standing in the way of sinners (morally wrong)
 - c. Sits in the seat of scoffers (mocks, pokes fun at, scoffs)
 - d. The people who fill your head will shape your heart. And the people who shape your heart will influence your destiny.

Growing Influences that can short circuit our walk with God.

- The glorification of political ideologies
- The glorification of science as the only source of truth
- The glorification of self as the final authority

2. Enjoy the Scriptures by meditating on them (1:2).
 - a. Meditating on the Scriptures follows studying the Scriptures.
 - b. You cannot meditate on that which you have not first studied.
 - c. Mediation assumes you have reached some definite conclusions about the teachings of scripture.
 - d. Mediation is the critical, but often missing step before application.

3. Here are the results (1:3)

- a. -You have access to an internal source of sustenance
- b. -You will have results in the appropriate time
- c. -You will have an sustainable approach to life

Application

Answer who is influencing you right now?

Are they leading toward the blessed life?

Sermon 6: A Worshipful Heart

Proposed Date: May 21, 2023

Main Verse: Psalm 142

Before David assumed the official position as King of Israel, he was attacked by King Saul. Saul was extremely jealous of David's talents and popularity. So much in fact that he tried to take David's life. David's response to this stress is surprising- he worshiped God. But not in the way that we commonly think. He writes out his thoughts in a Psalm that charts out how to respond when we feel attacked unfairly. Following this guidance will keep us from being distracted by unfair attacks.

Have you ever felt attacked?

While the definitions of cyberbullying vary from source to source, most definitions consist of:

- electronic forms of contact:
- an aggressive act
- intent
- repetition
- harm to the target

Rates of Incidence

Rates of cyberbullying victimization range from 5% to 74% (Hamm, Newton, & Chisholm, 2015).

15.5% of high school students and 24% of middle school students were cyberbullied in 2015 (Center for Disease Control, 2015).

The percentages of individuals who have experienced cyberbullying at some point in their lifetimes have nearly doubled (18% to 34%) from 2007-2016 (Patchin & Hinduja, 2016).

Boys are more likely to be cyberbully perpetrators and girls are more likely to be cyberbully targets (Hamm, Newton, & Chisholm, 2015).

When we feel attacked, we tend to:

- Retaliate
- Aggravate
- Hibernate
- Or - Over Medicate

1. You can come to God no matter what kind of jam you find yourself in (and you can get specific) (Psalm 142:1-4, 6, 7).

- “I cry aloud to the LORD...” (1)
 - Be fully honest with your emotions before God
- “I pour out before him my complaint...” (2a)
 - Be completely transparent before God
- “Before him I tell my trouble...”(2b)
 - Be completely alone in front of God

David’s Complaints

- “When my spirit grows faint within me...” (3a)
- “People have hidden snares for me...” (3c)
- “no one is concerned for me...” (4b)
- “I have no refuge...” (4c)

2. God, and God alone will provide the safety that I need. (5)

- God will take you to places that mean the very end of your strength.
- God does this so you will depend upon him.

3. Worship prevents us from charging in to do things our way
(142:6-7, Samuel 24:16-22)

- This act of worship and dependence upon God set David up to receive a rich blessing
- This act of worship and communication from God actually put David in the position to receive what he really wanted- to be king

And this verse proved to be true. God is enough. (1 Samuel 24:16-22)

Application:

- You must be Honest with God
- You must be dependent upon God
- Both of these help you practice the presence of God