

# Your View of Prayer Might Be Entirely Backward—This Is Why

This may be one of the strangest posts you read from “The Prayer Guy.” I wrote a book called *Enjoying Prayer*, and one of the main points was to give people ideas so they could create habits in their prayer life. Well, let me step back and say that maybe it’s time to cut some of them out.

Before you move on and think I have lost my way, hear me out. Why do we have spiritual habits or disciplines to start with? What is the goal of our prayer, solitude, fasting and other spiritual practices?

Let me first remind you of what is not the goal. The goal is not to master the habits. To quote from one of the legends of today in teaching on this subject, Richard Foster, “We are not supposed to master something that is supposed to master us.” He also said, “We want excellence, but it is not like getting an ‘A’ in solitude. Excellence is in the pursuit.”

If mastery is not the goal, then what is the goal of these activities and habits? The goal is that God’s grace comes in our life to build our friendship with Jesus. Prayer is to build our conversation with God. Solitude slows us down enough to be aware of God. These things are merely a method for us to encounter God’s grace, power and love.

I am warned by a story of the Israelites in the wilderness. God told them to build a snake that they could look at in order to experience God’s healing. Later in their history they needed to destroy this because they had begun worshiping it. The means and method to worship God had become the focus of their worship instead (2 Kin. 18:4).

That is why it is important from time to time to evaluate the specifics of our spiritual habits. To take from Mark

Batterson, our routines can become ruts that keep us from experiencing God. To paraphrase John Ortberg in his book *Soul Keeping*, we need to ask ourselves the question, "Is this practice still bringing grace into my life?"

An example from my life will help. In *Enjoying Prayer*, I share about my habit of writing down things I thank God for. The purpose was to remind my heart of all the good things God has given to me. Now this habit has become more seasonal in my life. There are periods of time when God will take me back to the habit. I also now use an online tool on my phone instead of paper.

Let me encourage you to take a moment to evaluate the habits you started with the purpose of knowing God and determine if they are now getting in the way of your journey closer to Jesus or need to be changed. Some you may even realize how much they are still helping you, and you need to add more of it to your life. Let's just make sure that our pursuit is Jesus. {eoa}

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