

**ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S ANGLICAN PRO-CATHEDRAL IN THE TOWN OF TONAWANDA**

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Scripture: Various

***"Becoming a Prayer Warrior for the Lord" (2)***

**THE FUNDAMENTAL IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER**

We are doing a series on ***"How to be a prayer warrior for the Lord."*** Last week we say how our prayer life is key to everything else in life. And that is because our prayer life is the key to developing a healthy relationship with God. And it will not come without a struggle. In fact, it is like life. It will not be easy. It will be a fight against the flesh, the world, and the devil - hence the warrior imagery.

We also saw that if we are to be grounded in this fight we need to not only know what prayer is but we need to know the four components of daily prayer. The acronym, *ACTS*, is a good way to help us remember: Adoration – praising God; Confession – dealing with our sin; Thanksgiving – developing an attitude of gratitude; and finally Supplication – asking for help. We also saw that asking for help is not just praying for ourselves but actually praying for others. This is what is meant by "intercession." The ACTS in our prayer life is not only important in our relationship with God but also in our relationship with other people. Put those into practice in how we deal with others and we will be letting Christ's love shine through.

Finally, we were reminded of Paul's words in **Ephesians 6:18-19** which close with the admonition, ***"With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, 19and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel."***

Today, I want us to look at how we can get spiritual fit or more specifically, how our prayer life can get us spiritually fit. But first I want to talk about how one gets physically fit. There are five things that are necessary for physical fitness, whether you are running, weightlifting, or getting better in a particular sport.

**FIVE KEYS TO PHYSICAL EXERCISE**

What are the five things necessary?

**1) Fuel** – you need water and the right minerals and nutrients in order to train. Without them you won't be able to do anything.

**2) A Daily Regimen** – you need a consistent plan for training that includes goals as well as the steps to accomplish those goals, and a tracking of what is being done in the meantime.

**3) Rest** – you need time to rest your body. The rest needs to be consistent. It can't be haphazard. During the rest periods is when you body recharges and when the cells actually get stronger. Otherwise, you will over train.

**4) Accountability** – you need to be held accountable. This takes three forms. 1) If you have a workout or running partner or if you are on a team with a coach or other teammates they will keep you accountable. They will let you know if you are not pulling your own weight, over doing it, or being lazy. But if you don't have any partners then 2) your body will keep you accountable. You might be able to fool the mind but you won't fool the body. It won't respond if we don't do what we need to do just like if I don't cut calories and want to lose weight it won't matter what I think. Our bodies keep us accountable. But also 3) competition and measuring our gains keep us accountable. Such things will let us know if we are on the right track.

**5) Willpower** - Finally, there is will power. We must have a desire to do it. Nike has the slogan “*Just do it.*” We also know the saying “*there is nothing to it but to do it.*” If I don't decide to put my body in motion, nothing will be accomplished. And there will be times when I will feel like giving up or quitting but we all know that to truly be successful we must push through it. Any runner will tell you there is always a point while running or in a race where you feel like stopping but continue and you push through it. Same at stress points in a game and even in the monotony of training.

These five keys to physical fitness are the same five keys to spiritual fitness and are necessary in our prayer lives if we are going to be able to fit the battle of life. Of course, they concern the spiritual not physical realm.

### **FIVE KEYS TO SPIRITUAL EXERCISE AND GROWTH**

Please turn with me to **1 Tim. 4:6-9**. The Apostle Paul is addressing Timothy, a young leader in the Church. He admonishes him to contend and grow in his relationship with the Lord. How? Paul tells us: “***In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following. 7But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; 8for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. 9It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance.***”

Paul likens godliness (the practice of being like the Lord in how we think and live) to the physical exercise of the athlete. Such physical discipline is profitable for a little time – our time on earth. It has value but its value is temporary. That is the implication from the Greek. Paul is not dismissing physical fitness but is showing us that spiritual discipline has even greater value and should be our number one priority. In fact, let's now see the parallel between the two.

This is how we get prepared to be a prayer warrior for the Lord.

**1) Fuel** – What is our spiritual fuel? **The Word of God**. We are to be “***constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine.*** Not just the words of Holy Scripture but a right understanding of the Bible. This comes from reading, studying, and understanding God's Word. And we should be doing this every day if we are going to have the fuel to engage in the spiritual battles of life.

**2) Daily Regimen** – Daily Devotions! We need to have a plan for our prayer life with a time for reading God’s Word, expressing our desires to God and for others in our prayers, and even having a prayer journal to keep track of what the Lord is showing you in His Word and how He is impacting your life. In the Anglican Tradition, we have the Prayer Book to serve as a guide and way to pray. In fact, there is what is called the Daily Office with set devotions for Morning, Noonday, Evening, and Compline (before bed) that one can pray every day. Bottom line – we need a daily routine of spending quality time with the Lord in His Word and prayer.

**3) Rest** – How do we rest spiritually? By getting in the habit of **Prioritizing**. Looking at what we do and why we do it. Are we too busy for the Lord? Then we are too busy! Do we have enough time for Church, for prayer, for His Word, and for others? We need to continually look at our schedules and activities to make sure they are truly reflecting Kingdom Principles. The truth is we are always busy in this society! We fall prey to the tyranny of the urgent, losing sight of the big picture – God’s perspective. There is a reason why the Lord declares in **Psalm 46:10**, “***Be still and know that I am God.***”

**4) Accountability** – this comes from the conviction of the Holy Spirit. It is God’s Spirit who will keep us on track and hold us accountable. Paul writes in **Galatians 5:16**, in that if “***we walk by the Spirit we will not carry out the desires of the flesh.***” Jesus said in **John 16:8** that when the Holy Spirit comes “***He will convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment.***” And for believers Jesus said in **Jn. 14:26**, “***But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.***” There is a reason why we feel guilty when we aren’t doing the things we should – it is the conviction of the Holy Spirit who lives in us! The more we spend time with the Lord the more we will sense His presence and perspective on things, and the more we will be motivated to do right.

But we also are held accountable by the Body of Christ. We are members of the Church, not only to serve together but to grow together. God has not designed us to live the Christian life alone but within a community of faith. That is where true love grows and is experienced. And true love means keeping one another accountable. That doesn’t mean we become over critical of each other but it means that we are as **Hebrews 10:24-25** says, “***to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.***” One of the reason some believers avoid Church is they don’t want to be held accountable!

**5) Will power** – just like you need to have a desire and determination to get physically fit, we need that same mindset to be spiritually ready and get spiritually fit. We have to make that decision and stick to it. Waiting on the Lord, persevering through trials, being patient in adversity, and being persistent with your spiritual training is necessary for spiritual growth. If you lack will power, than pray (like the man who had little faith but prayed to the Lord, “***Help my unbelief!***”) “Help my will power!” “Increase in me Your motivation, Lord!”

Only then will we be ready for the battle set before us. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, AMEN!