

A Few Short Words...

by Pastor Phillip Short

have a confession to make.

I hope that this opening line grabbed your attention. We usually love confessions, don't we? People admit some rather scandalous things during confessions. Here is one of my confessions ... I struggle to maintain a consistent prayer life. I am not very proud of this. I have a way of thinking that prayer is something *I have to do*. Thus I tend to think of it as an obligation. Thus I tend to put it off for the things that I have to do, or, worse yet, would *rather* do. Thus prayer life is intermittent and not well-disciplined. Thus my spiritual life can be rather lackluster. I wonder if you are like me? I frequently resolve to pray more. And I do. I've learned to give prayers for all occasions. But the type of prayer that I *could be* and *would be* enjoying is rather evasive.

So what is the answer to my plight? I know! I could go to prayer meetings. But if you are like me, the words "prayer meetings" conjure up less that positive and inspiring images. To be brutally honest, they bring up notions of being confined, claustrophobic, and indescribably bored. It reminds me of the prayer meetings of my childhood when well meaning church members would pray on and on and fill the air with the droning sounds of their own voices but never really say anything.

Certainly God has something far better in mind when He calls us to prayer. And it is great news that He does have something better for us!

Lest you have some low opinion of my spirituality as a result of my honest confession of my prayer life, please allow me to continue in my confession and admit that I have known seasons where there have been "breakthroughs" in prayer.

During these seasons, God seems ultra close. His presence and His love are palpable. His guidance cannot be missed. During these times, prayer isn't something I have to do, prayer is something I get to do. During these seasons, the time spent in prayer seems short. During these seasons prayer isn't something you avoid, it becomes something that you want to seek out. Prayer is far from stale or boring. It is just the opposite. It is fragrant, engaging, active, exhilarating, and exciting. But back to brutal honesty again ...

As wonderful as I have found it to be, I can still get distracted from the everyday stuff.—I am thinking about starting a blog. I even have a potential name for it. I will call it: "Confessions of the A.D.D. Contemplative."

I'm dropping my mask, going forward, and making the conscious decision to the exciting type of life and spirituality. Prayer ceases being a discipline and becomes a delight. Some of the most admirable Christians lived this way. Brother Lawrence was known to live this way. So was George Fox. So was St. Francis of Assisi. And so are some of the believers that live right here and worship among us here at the Stuart First United Methodist Church.—This type of spirituality is not reserved for the spiritual superstars, it is available to everyone.

How do we get there? Well, if you've read about yourself in the midst of my confession, you've taken the first step. You've gotten honest. But then we ask Jesus to teach us how to go deeper into His presence and into His truth.

Our Prayer Ministry Team is here to help too. They will be offering the "House of Prayer" gatherings in the sanctuary on Thursday evening, September 24th. There is a great chance that these gatherings will be continued on a regular basis.

Torch and I are also teaming up on a series of sermons that are on the theme of prayer. They promise to be honest, transparent, practical, and applicable to everyday life. These sermons will be preached throughout the months of September and October. You will want to catch them. Should you miss one, you can always hear a recording of it on the church's web page at www.stuartfumc.org. Find the tab that says "Listen to Sermon" and then select the one that you missed.

I've got some challenges for you. I challenge you to get honest. I challenge you to drop any of your old perceptions or hang-ups about prayer and spirituality. I challenge you to anticipate what God can, does, and will do through prayer. I challenge you to be open to what He has for you and for our church. I challenge you to be present at the "House of Prayer" gatherings and be willing to try your wings in prayer.

>> Love!
Pastor Phillip