

# The Christian To-Do List: Communicate w/ God

***Disclaimer: Everything I say today is a direct lesson to myself and really nobody else. I need to hear this more than anyone.***

Do you have any actions that you regularly write on a to-do list but seem to never check them off?

Communicating with God seems like an obvious point on a Christian's to-do list - but is it so obvious that we forget it?

This seems to be the one aspect that's easy to take for granted, overlook, and ultimately fail at doing. It's one aspect that we continue to harp and hammer on in our classes and from the pulpit.

"READ YOUR BIBLE" is posted everyday in different ways by a certain Facebook group.

"Praying" is written in comment after comment when somebody expresses bad news or is in need of help.

Is this such a common phenomenon that we trivialize? Yes, it is.

If it wasn't, I think we'd all agree our study and prayer lives were on point.

## **A Two Way Street**

Communication is a two-way street. It's important to have a genuine conversation - talking and listening (more listening as we'll talk about later). In this case the listening comes before the talking.

## **Be Still**

In order to listen, we have to learn to be still. I tell Adaline all the time - be still and look at me. That lasts for all of 3 seconds and she's squirming away and doing everything she can to barely keep her eyes "looking" at me. Of course, she's doing all of this and not listening at all. When she's still, I can see her actually paying attention.

We as a society and even we as a church seem to constantly be "busy." We may not get a lot done, but boy we're going to seem like we're changing the world and wonder aloud that we just can't figure out why we're so exhausted.

In the grand scheme of things I feel like we're just fidgeting. We take our kids here and there, we work late for our jobs, we have to do this and keep up with that - but how much of it, when you're 100% honest with yourself, actually matters?

"Be still and know that I am God. (46:10) Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord! (27:14) But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. (1:2)

I took three passages in Psalms and strung them together. It highlights three things we aren't very good at:

Being still, waiting, and meditating.

Before we can listen and read the word (much less meditate on it) we must be still and have the courage to stop what we're doing that seems so important.

## Forming a Habit

When we've finally calmed our minds long enough to realize the need to study and feel like we're going to act on that, how do we even put that into practice?

I'm once again bringing up "Atomic Habits" by James Clear. It really is a great book if you want to understand and begin to take control of the things you do - even the ones you don't realize you're doing.

The first thing goes along with "being still" - and that involves choosing our identity. Who are you?

Are you someone who labels themselves as "busy?"

Do you label yourself as your job?

I'm sure we'd get around to saying that "We're Christians" even though that very rarely is the first descriptor we give to folks.

But what does being a Christian mean? What does that mean to you? Is it too broad?

When it comes to the habits that we want to instill in ourselves, I would say it can be.

There are two folks that are trying to quit smoking, they're offered a cigarette. One says "I'm trying to quit." The other says, "I don't smoke." The latter isn't just speaking to the one who offered, but they're speaking to themselves. They are adopting an identity of who they want to be.

For us, how can we adopt the identity of being still, meditating on God's word, and having a prayerful life? Identifying as a Christian, should be enough, but does that truly change your life and habits?

Maybe we need to dig down further. "I'm someone who reads the Bible every night." "I'm a prayerful person."

It all sounds like the self-help section of Barnes & Noble, but the truth is, what we believe we are, we strive to be.

*I'm still working on that by the way, and I'm trying to put these ideas to work.*

We then need to be specific in how we put that habit into practice.

Many people think they don't have the motivation to do things, but really, they're just lacking clarity.

Use this template sentence:

- I will [BEHAVIOR] at [TIME] in [LOCATION]
- I will read the Bible for 5 minutes at 9pm on my living room sofa.

This narrows down the action so that we know explicitly what we're going to be doing, when and where.

Our brains are funny things. You can go on to read about habit stacking and other tricks, just follow the link on the website to grab the book on Amazon, or you can grab the audiobook from the local library app, Libby.

### **So back to the idea of identity.**

If we're going to identify as a Christian, if that is going to be our fundamental self - then how do we know how to act as one if we don't read the manual? Sure, we're preached to and we hear good lessons in class (not necessarily including mine in that category). But how can we know first hand what it is to take on this identity?

## **Profitable for Approval**

### **2 Timothy 2:15**

Study (as the King James says), Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

### **2 Timothy 3:16-17**

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

We are to be complete. We are to be approved.  
This is by handling the word of God, and handling it correctly.

We talked in the series about light how the word of God is like an x-ray or other internal scan. I liked how Keith Kasarjian put it on Mission Sunday - "The Bible is a mirror, not a magnifying glass." What you read should show you who you are.

### **Hebrews 4:12**

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

### **Jeremiah 23:28-29**

Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let him who has my word speak my word faithfully. What has straw in common with wheat? declares the Lord. 29Is not my word like fire, declares the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?

What is the Lord saying through Jeremiah? His word shouldn't leave you without effect. It's fire. It's a hammer that breaks you. It's a transformer.

### **Romans 12:2**

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

We have to be completely different than the world around us. Jimmy Allen says in his commentary on Romans:

"One reason salt preserves is that it is different from the meat on which it is placed. Light can illuminate because it is different from the darkness around it. Samson was strong because he was unlike others. When Christians lose their uniqueness, they will no longer be the world's salt, light, and strength."

We cannot be transformed unless we are broken and reshaped. Your heart and mind aren't renewed unless they can be reached by the word of God. >>>

Psalm 19 is a beautiful description of what the Word should be in our lives.

### **Psalm 19:7-11**

The law of the Lord is perfect,  
reviving the soul;  
the testimony of the Lord is sure,  
making wise the simple;  
the precepts of the Lord are right,  
rejoicing the heart;  
the commandment of the Lord is pure,  
enlightening the eyes;  
the fear of the Lord is clean,  
enduring forever;

the rules of the Lord are true,  
and righteous altogether.  
More to be desired are they than gold,  
even much fine gold;  
sweeter also than honey  
and drippings of the honeycomb.  
Moreover, by them is your servant  
warned;  
in keeping them there is great reward.

### **Ears Open - Heart Open - Mouth Open**

Now that we've started to listen, we can begin to talk as well - and that comes by prayer.

You know how words just become so weird or lose their potency once you've said them several times?

Prayer, Pray - We say this so often, but what is it?  
Do we believe it is what we say it is?

So if we are going before the creator of the universe, and if we understand that he hears us, what on earth are we to say?

### **Telling the Truth**

The first thing we need to do is tell the truth and be honest in our prayers.

You might be saying, "Wait, what!? Of course I'm honest in my prayers."  
You might be right. But I think it's very easy to deceive ourselves and have a severe bias about what we pray about.

When we pray, we're talking to ourselves just as much as we are to God (goes back to identity). How many times have you been able to think through issues or begin to understand a problem more clearly when you pray? God doesn't have to have your prayers to know what you need.

### **Matthew 6:7-8**

"And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. 8Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Empty phrases get you nowhere because that's not getting to the truth, and it's not allowing you to reflect on what you are bringing before the Almighty.

## **Make It Constant**

### **Romans 12:12**

Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

### **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

I believe those you talk to the most are the ones you rely on most. If we have access to God and we believe His power and His willingness to listen - shouldn't He be in our constant conversation?

## **Summary**

Everyday we have things to do and everyday we will do something. What we instill as our habits will largely determine who we are, who we identify ourselves as.

If we identify as a Christian - we place the name of Christ on ourselves. What do our actions and habits look like? What do we place on our to-do list?

While what we've covered is not a full list, we must:

**Practice gratitude** - acknowledging the blessings we've been given from God (in good times, in bad times, and the mercy he gives in the ugly times).

**Surround ourselves with mission-driven people** - we are the average of the 5 people we surround ourselves with most - we're also an influence as one of someone else's 5 and especially an influence on our kids. They will be a snapshot of us and have our habits ingrained within them.

**Communicate with God** - we can only be transformed into who we need to be by being broken down and reshaped by the word, and we need to be honest in our prayers so that we can fully understand our reliance on our creator.