PETERTAN.NET
The Spirit Word Ministry of Ps Peter Tan


PRAYING IN THE SPIRIT SERIES

CONSISTENCY AND DISCIPLINE IN PRAYER

Prayer is a discipline and a habit we should develop. It should not be something where we wait for a crisis. Or we are in a desperate situation and then we start to pray. Perhaps most people are the desperate type. They may never go to something like an overnight prayer unless they are in a real crisis. I think this kind of Christianity is not worthy of our Lord Jesus Christ. We come to Him only when we are desperate. We have not moved into the discipline of prayer that God wants us to have. Well at least it is better than those who don't even pray. We must realize that there are different standards in God that we could achieve. We could either be satisfied with a "C" minus. Some people are satisfied with that in a Christian life. Some people aim higher and go for "B" and some people want to hit "A" with God. They want excellence with God. And that is where we want to reach. We want excellence with God. We should not just be satisfied as we are.

I just want to share some of my experiences with you. From the early start of my Christian life, most of my prayers have been the desperate type. I was tremendously hungry for God. So when I seek God, I really seek Him. I would go on long travail; long fasts, just seek Him day and night. So that was the desperado style. It has its results. As I grow in God, I began to realize what God wants is that He wants us to develop a discipline in prayer so that we will mature in Him. There may be occasions where desperado tactics are necessary. But they are done in situations where circumstances beyond your control, rather than things that you fall into yourselves.

Spiritual Deposits

I believe most of our Christian life should be based on the discipline in prayer, whether or not you have a crisis or situation. You have a regular time set aside to travail before God. Whether you have a crisis or not, you develop a discipline to come before God in prayer. Because what you do is what we call storing up. Operating in the spiritual realm is like operating a bank account. Some

people would like to make huge withdrawal in their bank account when they haven't bank anything in. So in the discipline of prayer when there is no crisis what we are doing is we are making deposits in the spirit realm. Through a discipline in prayer by coming to God in a regular manner, we are putting a deposit in God. Then when the time comes when you really need to draw on the spiritual realm, you find that you don't need a desperado time with God.

If you have not been making that deposits, you may need to go on a seven days desperado with God. If you have not made those deposits in the spirit realm and you need that withdrawal from the spirit realm, you may have to go through a regular fast perhaps for seven weeks. And it comes to the same thing. But the difference is that your character is more stabilized. Some people's characters are not very stable. They are up and down very quickly. God cannot use this type of character much. God will use them for a short time. God in His love would use us as much as possible. But He would prefer that we be constant with Him so that His Spirit could flow and He could use us constantly without going through ups and downs. I personally believe that God prefers that we have a consistent disciplined walk with Him. Then we won't have a up and down walk with Him. One moment you are very close to God and fasting for forty days. But after the fast you got what you want and God has sent the result, you backslide and don't attend Christian meetings any more. You don't fellowship with God regularly. Even your attendance in church is very sporadic. So once in a blue moon they see you, which is not very often. And the next time they see you again in church is when you are having the next crisis. And suddenly you attend church seven days a week. Then God in His mercy answers you again. You make great promises to God. So some people are like that. And I thank God for each one of you who has developed a discipline in prayer.

See sometimes people only do it when they are desperate. They come to an overnight prayer when there is a crisis. When the crisis is over they are no more around. They treat an prayer as a desperado thing. But what is desperado to them is normal for another Christian. That tells you the different levels that the Christians are walking in. We should walk at the level where it is normal to pray for long hours. In fact if we compare ourselves with the way the early church had functioned and the way Jesus Christ had walked, we are quite far from where they are. To them it was nothing to attend church seven days a week. The church and Christian life was a part of their own family, their own very personal life. They don't have off days from God. Everyday was God's day. It was a part of their life.

Daily

In Acts 20 when he was talking to the elders and he says how daily. And Acts 19 also he was daily at the school of Tyrannus. In Acts chapter two they met in the temple daily and also in the homes daily. It is a part and parcel of their lives.

They don't need for somebody to organize a meeting for them. They just meet and they would pray together. And they would worship God together. And they sing together. And they would share together. Then they would just fellowship together. So that was the level they lived at. It would be nothing strange to just move on into nightly vigil with God.

Desperadoes

Lets look in the bible for some situations in the book of Judges. After the death of Joshua in the book of Judges 2: 7 so the people serve the Lord all the days of Joshua. And all the days of the elders who are with Joshua who had seen all the great works of the Lord, which He had done for Israel. Then verse 10 when all the generations had been gathered to their fathers (another words they died), another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord nor the way, which He had done for Israel. In verse 11 then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and serve the Baals. Judges 3: 7 the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord. They forgot the Lord their God and serve the Baals and Asherahs. Therefore the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel. Verse 9, these are what we call the desperado commandos. They are only there in prayer when they are desperate. For eight years they were away from the Lord. They were oppressed until they could not stand it any more. In verse 9 it said they cried. And God is so merciful, so compassionate, so loving, so patience, that He reached out to them and He sent a deliverer. The bible says in verse 12 and the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord after Othniel the son of Kenaz died. Then comes Eglon king of Moab. In verse 14 they serve him for 18 years. In verse 15 here comes the desperado again, the children of Israel cried to the Lord. Again the Lord helped. I hope that doesn't sound like your life but it is the story of many lives. I wish to God that people would learn the discipline of prayer and consistent life with God. And so God helped them again.

In chapters Judges 4: 1 when Ehud was dead when there was no one leading them. You see what was the problem. They need someone who was consistent to lead the desperado. If every single one of us is a desperado and every one of us happened to be at the time where there was no crisis. Then somebody else is in a crisis. They look around. Do you know there is nobody to go to? If the church of Jesus Christ function in a desperado style and everyone including the ministers are desperados, where can people get help? Do you know that help always comes from those who are consistent? How would you like when you phone up and ask for counseling and the counselor say I also need counseling? How would you like when you go to the church to listen to the word and the minister said I also need the word myself. Lets all sit down and listen to God. See it takes consistent people to lead the desperados. But what God wants is all of us to be consistent and disciplined. Anyway the story goes on and say when Ehud died, Israel again was yo-yo downwards. In Judges 4: 3 the children of Israel cried and

the Lord did it again.

Judges 6: *1The children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord. So the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian for seven years. In verse seven, it came to pass the children of Israel cried out to the Lord because of the Midianites. The Lord sent a prophet to the children of Israel and said, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel, I brought you out from Egypt and brought your out from the house of bondage. And I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hands of all those who oppress you and drove them out before you and gave you their land. Also I said to you I am the Lord your God. Do not fear the god of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But you have not obeyed my voice. This time He gave them a scolding before He helped them. Before that whenever they cried for help, He would help.*

And in Judges 8 Gideon died. People sometimes have short memories for what is good and long memory for what is bad. They don't forget the bad things or the wrongs things that people do. But they forget all the good things that people do. In verse 34 *then the children of Israel did not remember the Lord their God who delivered them from the hand of all their enemies. So the bible tells us they again turned away from the Lord. And this went on and on until one day in Judges 10: 6 then the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord and serve the Baals and the Astartes, the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, of Ammon and of the Philistia. And they forsook the Lord and did not serve Him. Verse ten and the children of Israel cried out to the Lord. We have sinned against you because we have forsaken our God and serve the Baals. So the Lord said to the children of Israel did I not delivered you from the Egyptians, from the Amorites, from the Ammonites, the Philistines, the Sidonians, the Amalekites, and the Maonites and you cried out to me. And God said I remember and I delivered you yet you have forsaken and serve other gods therefore I will deliver you no more.*

That is a sad day when the Lord said no more. I will not tolerate desperados any more. The Lord gave them a suggestion*, go and cry out to the gods you have chosen. Let them deliver you in your time of distress. Verse fifteen what else can the children of Israel do. They know that their God did help them. They said we have sinned. Do to us what ever seems best to you. Only deliver us this day we pray. Look at verse 16. I want you to see the compassionate God. So they put away the foreign gods from among them and serve the Lord. When God say that I will deliver you no more, they had a decision to make. When their desperate cries d not work, they had a decision to make. What are you going to do when you ve cried and God answered your cry, and God answered your cry, and God wered your cry, then you cry and God said I won't answer you any more?*

I have a little secret to share with you how to continue when your desperado tactics don't work. I mean you have fasted and fasted until you are blue in the

face. Not a consistent fast or persistent fast to get more into God but you only do it in a crisis. And God has delivered you out of many crises but you have forgotten about God. There are many people who make many promises to God. When God helped they forgot. For some people, it could be in the area of finances. They are very desperate. They will do anything if God can get them out. They make promises after promises. When God has helped them, they don't even remember the tithe, much less the offering. Then they get into trouble because if you keep 100%, the 100% is cursed. Let me tell you a tithe refers to everything that comes. So here is where God starts dealing with Israelites. He says I will not answer you any more. You know what they did. They put away all their idols and they served God. They gave up trying desperado tactics. And instead they start serving God.

Consistency

Look at it again the book of Judges 10: 16 *So they put away their foreign gods and served the Lord. In other words they gave up their desperado tactics and they started living a consistent life before God answers. Before that God just put up with their desperado tactics. But now God wants to train them in consistency. When hey started being consistent the bible says in verse sixteen He could no longer endure the misery of Israel. God is impressed with consistency more than with desperados. He is more impressed when you live a consistent life from Monday to Saturday than when you try to be desperate with Him. He is more impressed even hough you have never gone through a forty day fast, you may have never gone rough a seven day fast, but you have a very disciplined consistent life with God, haven't missed the blessings of God. It takes as much to maintain a consistent er life.*

Lets say between living a consistent prayer life for three years and having a 14 day long fast, which one has a greater pride? Let me tell you. The one who has a consistent prayer life for three years. The one for three years may have fasted once or twice a week. If you multiply up is more than that guy for 14 days. And it takes more out of you to be disciplined throughout than once in a while. Some people try to teach the word this way where they don't spend much time in prayer. They don't spend much time in the word. But only when they are ministering, then they quickly pray before God. The rest of the time they don't care. It takes a greater price to live consistently in order to get the word for God's people. Do you know what the price is like? The price is you can't do the things that people would do. You can't afford it to. You know you have to choose and make a quality decision. You won't come down and do what people will do. You won't waste your time to read books like people do. Lets be honest, some people spend more time reading the newspaper than they spend reading the bible. When the preacher says pray one hour a day and read the bible one hour as day, they say I don't have time. The price you pay to live that way looks very peculiar. People will call you a

fanatic.

It is a greater price to pay to do that consistently day in, day out, week in, week out than it is to do everything you want and live like the world. Then when you are desperate you go to some mountain and for a whole month take a bottle of water and a bible and some fruits and go in. Then for a whole month you become a holy man of the mountain. And people will look at you and say what a great price he pays. The price paid in comparison to living a consistent life is less. It takes more out of you to be consistent with God right there in the streets, right there in your office. It takes a price to get up early and pray every day. How many people can consistently do that? And it is a discipline. Perhaps some of you do it in your office which I encourage people to do. You have a one hour lunch break. You don't need one hour to eat lunch. Some people take 15 minutes for their food and then they take half an hour to read the bible and pray. It is a discipline. It is something that they work into their system. It is the price you pay. The choices you have to choose. Because there are hundreds of things that wants to take your time. But every time you choose to say no to the world and say yes to God. It is as price.

And these are the consistencies that really touch the heart of God; touched the very core of God's heart. See there is a difference between king Saul and king David. King Saul was a man who was a desperado. When he is desperate, he would really go for it. But king David was a consistent person. There was one black spot in his life. But otherwise he was a consistent person. Even for a shepherd boy he was a worshiper of God.

Daniel was another consistent person. The bible tells us this is the discipline he kept. The book of Daniel 6: 10 *Now when Daniel knew, now there was a decree that say no body can pray, that the writing was signed. He went home. In his upper room with his windows opened towards Jerusalem he knelt down on his knees three times that day. And prayed and gave thanks before his God as was his custom since early days. That is a long, long time for this man to keep that up every day. Let me give you one of the marks of as lot of people who really have blessings from God - consistency. They may not know it themselves. They have been consistent perhaps in their devotion life. In a small way, they spent time with e Lord half an hour here and half an hour there. They may not have been people o can say that I have fasted forty days, or I have gone three days without food water. They may not have said that. But God is blessing their lives because is mark of consistency. And it is a discipline in them; it is a custom. They may ow it. But the word of God shows it.*

It is because of that consistency that some time promotion or financial blessing or prosperity comes into their life. And they don't realize it. It is related to their consistency. We can't sort of put it together and show clearly the tithe in the natural but the tithe is in the spiritual. We cannot connect how you are dragging

yourself up every morning and getting down on your knees and praying perhaps for fifteen minutes or half an hour before God and perhaps reading the word of God. And you disciplined that you have done that day in day out, week by week, month by month. But if you really have been doing that, let me say this, for you probably the blessings of God are going up like a graph. Although you may not know it and you cannot place a finger on why God is blessing you and you say I am not that spiritual like somebody who has fasted three days or said "I have done this, I have done that" and you could not say that. You could not testify honestly that you have done that. But yet you see the hand of God on your life. Why? There is consistency in your life. But 95% of your life is consistency and only 5% is desperado.

See it is the devil. The devil attacks in cycles. He cannot attack you consistently. God does not permit him to attack you consistently. He attacks you in seasons and in cycles. The only time you want to put a little bit more effort is not because you want to get something out from God. It is because if the devil tries harder, you dig in harder spiritually. That is the true way that we should operate the desperado before God. So when the devil come against Jesus, Jesus didn't eat for forty days and nights. It is not recorded that the Holy Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness to fast. It was never recorded. It is only recorded in Matt. 4, Lk.4 and Mk.1 that the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted. The bible just said and he fasted. The purpose that God leads Him is to confront the enemy. When the enemy tries his biggest trick. Jesus dug in His deepest realm possible.

Using the Desperado tactic

That is how you use the desperado tactic. Not because you want to convince God. But it is more to give more time. For example, you have been living a persistent life spiritually. You are spending regularly an hour in the morning, an hour in the night and half an hour in the mid day. Then you sense in your spirit a stronger enemy force against your life. You have already spent two and a half hour, which actually gives the enemy quite a headache. The enemy plans a day of evil for you. And so at a certain point he launches out against you. You pick that up with one of the five sensations of the spirit man. You normally spend two and a half hour with God and during that whole week. You may go on a stronger fast. And during that week you pray for four hours instead of two and a half hour because you sensed the enemy pressure. Then the enemy will be really be taken by surprise. That is when you use the desperado part. See the under line current should be your consistency.

But of course the other time when we use the desperado is when God gives an instruction. See one is defensive the other is offensive. Once in a while as you are living in a consistent life, because God knows you are obedient, the spirit of grace and supplication and prayers burden comes on you. God says I need somebody to launch this huge warhead missal against the enemy. So He puts a

spirit burden in you. And you sensed a call on the spirit to really reach into the spirit realm. Normally you spend two and a half hours. Now you get six hours in during the period that God called you. These are the things that are taking place in the spirit realm. And we realize that consistency is the foundation that we should build our spiritual life.

And Paul tells us in First Thessalonians 5, pray without ceasing. That is talking about building a consistency in our life. In Daniel 6: 10 that Daniel gives thanks before his God as was his custom since early days. Now since early days means from the time he was brought to Babylon. And remember what king he is under now. It is king Darius. That means he served under Nebuchadnezzar and he served under Nebuchadnezzar's son and he served under Darius. By that time Daniel is an old man. He started as a young man now he is an old man. He has been doing that consistently. And if you read the bible from Genesis to Revelation you will notice that there seems to be a special mark on Daniel. And there are special marks on those who are very consistent. They receive revelations that seem to be above others. The revelations that Daniel received are tremendous. And the angel that came to him always say O Daniel you are greatly beloved of God. Now there were times when Daniel was desperate. Daniel knew how to fast. He fasted for twenty one days. He went on a fast regarding the seventy years. That was under the offensive. God's Spirit and burden came upon his life. But besides that he was a consistent man as was his custom kneeling before God.

And now they are going to take him and throw him into the lion's den because he committed the crime of praying consistently. So they took Daniel and threw him into the lion's den. And the king was so worried for Daniel that the king did not sleep the whole night at all. And the first thing in the morning he cried with a lamenting voice to Daniel and said Daniel servant of the living God, has your God whom you serve continually been able to deliver you from the lion. Daniel said O king live forever. Some people like to be in Daniel's position. But this is where the desperado will fail. Because if you are taken and you have never prayed consistently before, never spend time with God before. And you are taken and thrown into the lion's den, you won't have time to pray in the lion's den if you didn't pray outside the lion's den. You may pray the wrong pray like the missionary who met the lion and say Lord make this a Christian lion. The lion knelt down and said thank you Lord for this food. So we realize that we have to learn to pray outside of the lion's den.

I challenge you to set aside a time perhaps everyday, perhaps once a week, where you pray especially for the family. Every Saturday I seek the Lord for more grace for ministry. See that is my date with my Lord. God prefers lovers. Desperados are beggars. But lovers make date. They say God let me make a date with you to meet you at such and such a day, at such and such a time. Let me fellowship with you regarding this matter. Let me seek your mind on that matter.

And you will see the difference. If you have been praying desperado tactics for your family, for your business, for your finance, change your style and put consistency in. That is where the meeting together in an overnight prayer is going to help you. If you have a consistency, it is going to burst forth mightily in your life. We have to build consistency until we are self-motivating.

We close with the book of James 5: 16 *confess your trespasses for one another and pray for one another that you may be healed. The effective fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Now fervent means with all earnestness. But the word effective carries with it the meaning of persistency and consistency. Heb.11 verse 6 says without faith it is impossible to please God. For God reward hose who diligently seek Him. Now it is different to seek Him and diligently seek im. God doesn't just reward those who seek Him. God reward those who igently, with great discipline, with consistency, with persistence, continually come ore Him.*

If you were to begin to apply consistency, you could literally say, after some time maturing in consistency, that everything you pray that was in line with God's word is answered. God has never said no to any of His promises. If you believe what He says and consistently, persistently, diligently with great discipline, do it. You will always see all the prayers answered. Whatever you desire for your life, in your ministry, in your business, in your personal life, all that is in line with His perfect will and plan, always get answered.