



## Pray As You Can

This past summer, I was working out at the YMCA for an hour a day, five days a week. Thanks to free child-care, I was able to aerobicise, weight lift, and torture my core muscles via Pilates on a very regular basis, and I felt strong, lean, alert. When fall rolled around, however, my schedule got a whole lot tighter and more intense. Devoting 60 minutes or more to the gym (when I had kids to shuttle from here to there, school uniforms to keep clean, homework to assist with and chores piling up faster than even the spam in my e-mail inbox) became altogether unrealistic, much to my dismay.

“Then nothing!” I decided, I pouted, “I will do nothing!” When my ideal became unattainable, I threw in the towel.



You know what would be really cool? To have a house that's clean all the time – to be able to declare, I will NEVER eat sugar again, and then actually never eat sugar again – to be such a regular at the gym, they engrave my name on my favorite gym locker – to have an infinite amount of patience with my children – to stop misplacing my keys and cell phone – to be able to stand attentively in front of our icon corner and recite long rules of prayer upon waking, after lunch, and before going to sleep. I'd feel fantastic, if I could achieve all of that! Life would be more enjoyable, that's for sure. If only I were perfect, if only my circumstances would yield to my desires, I could stop standing here in place pining over a romanticized



existence in which I never had to struggle, or wait, or depend on anyone for help.

Okay, okay, I get it already: not up and reconfiguring an attitude like that A.S.A.P is going to result in some serious flabbiness, frustration and spiritual lethargy. So what options do I have as busy, busy mother of four with only two arms, two legs and a pesky need for seven hours of sleep at night? Well, the first thing would be to stop setting myself up to fail by having too high of expectations. I need to starve those lofty expectations pronto by, number one: taking my big drooling gaze off of other people's stuff and talents, and number two: focus on being thankful for, and a better steward of, what I've got. Second (once I've pulled my head down from out of the clouds), is to reprioritize. It's easy. I'll show you right now how I do it...

Let's see, out of all the hundreds of hopes, dreams, worries, to-dos, things (including the many needs of my family) competing for my attention, what should come first every time? Every. Single. Time.

Christ.

There, I'm done.

And with that uncomplicated realization, I can lay aside all fretting regarding what I'm going to do about, or how I'm going to accomplish, this, that and everything else (whew!). But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you (Matthew 6:33).

The best way to start my day, is by literally and desperately clinging to God from the minute my feet first touch the floor, and then by living minute-to-minute after that – to just go ahead and assume:

A. I do not know what is best for me

B. I am not strong enough to bear the weight of this day on my own fragile shoulders

C. I am not capable of any selfless act on my own

I need to accept that this season of my life does not lend itself to monastic-sized prayer rules. I need to be grateful that all the time and energy I devote to my family (making it difficult to carve out large chunks of time for prayer) is good and holy. And I need to STOP MAKING EXCUSES, and create (my spiritual father can help with this) a consistent and practical rule of prayer I can stick with. Without a consistent rule of prayer, I will be frazzled and anxious.

I pulled the following useful excerpt on creating a rule of prayer off the Greek Archdiocese website:

*There are times when our prayer is fervent and it is easy for us to pray. There are times when our thoughts are so distracted that we find it virtually impossible to concentrate on prayer. This is especially true when we try to keep a rule of prayer each day. Some days it goes very well, but other times—if not most of the time?—our efforts seem almost to be in vain. But because we are “creatures of habit”, as the saying goes, it is very profitable for us to set apart a special and regular time (or times) during the day for prayer. The time in the evening before going to bed is a good time, as it is important to end the day with prayer. The morning, upon awakening from sleep, is also good, so as to begin the new day with prayer. Or a person may find other*



*times during the day when he is able to be quiet and concentrate.*

We are trying to establish a rule of prayer in our lives, not an exception, so we want to find a time when each day we can find some quiet in order to concentrate and turn the eyes of our soul towards God.

I agree, we are creatures of habit. It used to be a real effort to prepare my a.m. coffee the evening before, for example. Although it only took minutes to grind the coffee beans and measure the water, even that seemed overwhelming and I would go to bed having not done it, only to be sorry the next morning. Finally, I decided I'd make myself do it, no matter how late it was or exhausted I was. For weeks it was a challenge but oh how happy it made me to have fresh hot coffee available at the push of a button when I needed it most! Somewhere along the way, it became a bon a fide habit, one I never had to think about or talk myself into – just an essential part of my daily routine, like brushing my teeth.

Is not communing with God by way of prayer, continuously seeking after Him, more important than coffee?

Hmmm.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Luke 12:34.

Christ is my treasure. Lord have mercy! Let Christ be my treasure always.

**Source:** [Orthodox Church in America](#)