

Daily Habit 1:

KNEELING PRAYER THREE TIMES A DAY



The Habit at a Glance:

The world is made of words. Even small, repeated words have power. Regular, carefully placed prayer is one of the keystone habits of spiritual formation and is the beginning of building the trellis of habit. By framing our day in the words of prayer, we frame the day in love.

An Excerpt from *The Common Rule*:

While I've been practicing some version of morning prayers my whole life, they radically changed when I got a smartphone. My smartphone exacerbates my tendency toward self-centered or legalistic morning prayers. Why? Because, of course, my phone is the portal through which the chaos of the world reaches my half-asleep heart through the pesky thing we call "notifications." This inevitably begins my day with all that I need to do and all that I've failed to do.

Our phones—and their programmers—are happy to set our habits for us. They would love to speak the first words of the day, and they usually do. Our phones—and whatever has come through them—thus shape the first desires of the morning and order our first prayers for us.

Before I banished notifications—emotionally prepare yourself now, for I will subsequently be recommending you do the same—I would wake to the prayers someone else wanted me to pray. If it was an early-morning work email with a task for me, I would begin the day wishing it could be done or that I could avoid it. If it was a news alert about some elected official doing something abominable, I would begin the day wishing people could just have some common sense like I did. If it was a social media alert, I would begin the day wishing my life happened in a tinted, square frame.

Each of these nudges invited prayers of their own, usually prayers that framed the day in stress, envy, or cynicism—and they are all the more powerful because they are done by unconscious habit.

Reading and Resources:

- *The Book of Common Prayer*
- *Every Moment Holy*, by Douglas Kaine McKelvey
- *Common Prayer*, Shane Claiborne, Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, and Enuma Okoro

Daily Habit 2:

ONE MEAL WITH OTHERS



The Habit at a Glance:

We were made to eat, so the table must be our center of gravity. The habit of making time for one communal meal each day forces us to reorient our schedules and our space around food and each other. The more the table becomes our center of gravity, the more it draws our neighbors into gospel community.

An Excerpt from *The Common Rule*:

More Americans regularly eat alone now than ever before. Food is meant to bind us to God, neighbor, and creation, but we live in a culture where our eating habits keep us apart and increase our isolation. The best way to understand the Common Rule habit of one meal a day with others is to see it as a way of turning on that light of presence in a dark culture of loneliness.

Like all of the habits, the point is to adopt the rhythms of the gospel into our daily lives and to have those rhythms become a blessing to us and our neighbors.

The central promise of salvation is that because of the death and resurrection of Jesus, God and people will eat again. The end of the world culminates not in clouds and harps but in a feast. At the wedding supper of the Lamb, the divine presence is restored to us over a table of food.

But we don't get invited to the table because of anything we've done. We get invited because of what Jesus has done.

This is why Christians regularly come to the Communion table to feast on the body and blood of Christ. It is a reminder that because of Christ, we will commune with God again over food.

To find each other over food each day is to plant and cultivate the culture of communion in our households, offices, and neighborhoods. My friend Drew likes to say that the work of the kingdom begins at the table. I agree. So, let us eat!

Reading and Resources:

- *The Supper of the Lamb*, Robert Farrar Capon
- *The Gospel Comes with a House Key*, Rosario Butterfield

Daily Habit 3:

ONE HOUR WITH PHONE OFF



The Habit at a Glance:

We were made for presence, but so often our phones are the cause of our absence. To be two places at a time is to be no place at all. Turning off our phone for an hour a day is a way to turn our gaze up to each other, whether that be children, coworkers, friends, or neighbors. Our habits of attention are habits of love. To resist absence is to love neighbor.

An Excerpt from *The Common Rule*:

Silence begins as a personal practice, but it always ends as a public virtue. Just think of social media. It exists in the form we know it because we don't know who we are before coming to it. When we can't answer the question of who we are in silence, we can't answer it in public either, and our insecurities spill out into the world in the form of manipulations. We hide our confusion behind a posture of perpetual offense. If we are opposed to someone or something, that's enough to create our identity for the day, which is to say we use others so that we can get the temporary identity we need. We don't know who we are, so we make others feel the pain of our insecurity.

Only when we know who we are can we turn to love others, not use others. Only then can we actually listen to them. As Kyle David Bennett writes in his book on how the spiritual disciplines are for the love of the world, "How can we love our neighbor if we never allow her to reveal herself because we are always chattering?"

Reading and Resources:

- *Alone Together*, Sherry Turkle
- *Deep Work*, Cal Newport
- *Irresistible*, Adam Alter
- *The World Beyond Your Head*, Matthew B. Crawford

Daily Habit 4:

SCRIPTURE BEFORE PHONE



The Habit at a Glance:

Refusing to check the phone until after reading a passage of Scripture is a way of replacing the question "What do I need to do today?" with a better one, "Who am I and who am I becoming?" We have no stable identity outside of Jesus. Daily immersion in the Scriptures resists the anxiety of emails, the anger of news, and the envy of social media. Instead, it forms us daily in our true identity as children of the King, dearly loved.

An Excerpt from *The Common Rule*:

I often turn to work and career in the search for my identity. I hope that by achieving success I will finally become someone who is approved of. This means—as an identity reflector—I have to look at other people’s faces, and my identity is tacked to whether they look happy with me and my work or not.

The habit of checking work emails first thing every morning encouraged this misguided search for identity because it started my day with the questions: What do I need to do to make someone else happy with me? How can I justify my existence in the world today?

After the morning when I read emails through my son’s cries, I began to realize that something much more existential was happening in my morning routine, and I began to wonder if I should change it.

Reading and Resources:

- *The Book of Common Prayer*
- *God's Wisdom for Navigating Life: A Year of Daily Devotions in the Book of Proverbs*, Kathy Keller and Tim Keller