

Prayer: Just Keep Fighting the Battle
By Katie Warner

My friend Michelle once told me that she feels like one of the best ways to describe her prayer life is that of a battle.

In her words “I know just how important it is to keep fighting and how discouraging it can be when we feel like we are losing. The most important thing I can say about prayer is this: just keep fighting the battle”.

If you're like me, finding time for prayer or being focused during prayer doesn't always come easily. Then, add in all of the obligations of family life, work and other responsibilities and happenings of our day to day lives and sometimes it can really feel like it's a struggle to pray with our whole hearts and to give adequate time and attention to God; which is so important to nourish our spiritual lives. And it's not like those obligations necessarily prevent us from drawing closer to God in prayer.

As St. Teresa of Avila noted, Jacob did not cease to be a saint because he attended to his flocks.

But they can present interesting opportunities for us to find new and different habits of prayer. Certain times or phases in life in particular you may find that prayer is especially difficult.

When I was interviewing Michelle for my book, “Head and Heart”, she and I talked about the importance of recognizing that there are different seasons to prayer in all of our lives. And each season has it's own beauty and it's own challenges.

So, here is one of Michelle's tips on how to evaluate your prayer life more effectively. Regardless of what season of prayer you find yourself in.

She says, “Rather than thinking of my prayer life as a straight line with a beginning and an ending, I have come to see it as a spiral going deeper and deeper into the mystery of God. The seasons come and go with time and eventually I find myself again in a familiar place.”

The question I have to ask myself then is not how many spiritual books I've read, how many prayers I've prayed or how many hours I've been able to spend at

adoration. But rather, how much more am I able to love in this given situation the last time I was here? And, am I able to find God in this particular setting in a new and more meaningful way?

I love this!

I can't tell you how many times I've gotten discouraged with myself for missing one of the days in a novena I was praying. Or for being caught up in my responsibilities as a wife and mom and not making it to the adoration chapel as frequently as I want to.

But really, though trying to pray a certain amount of prayers or going to the adoration chapel as frequently as possible, for example, isn't bad at all in itself. We should be focused on much larger goals in our prayer lives.

How is my prayer life drawing me closer to God? Am I finding that I am growing in virtue given my current prayer regimen? And regardless of my feelings, is my heart in the right place when I pray?

Prayer in our ordinary lives isn't always going to look very glamorous. But that's when we need to get creative with how we're going about praying and loving on a daily basis.

Michelle exercises creativity in her prayer life by assigning certain types of prayers to certain daily tasks.

When she's doing the dishes she counts her blessings. While folding laundry she intercedes for other's intentions while offering that chore itself as a prayer too. When brushing her teeth she offers up her own petitions.

And in the process of having those little moments for prayer throughout the day she's noticed the substantially positive effects that this creative method has had on her growth in prayer.

Remember, perseverance is one of the most important qualities to possess if you want a strong prayer life.

And that requires patience with whatever season of life we are in; a time of suffering, a phase when you may be overwhelmed with work or home duties, or whatever the season may be. It also requires creativity in our prayer methods as we

work to capitalize on both traditional and less glamorous forms of prayer throughout our day.

Finally, looking at your prayer growth in terms of growth in relationship with God. Virtue and proper disposition of heart can have a dramatic impact on your attitude toward your prayer life and give you the proper motivation to keep fighting the battle to pray when prayer is difficult.

And don't forget to rejoice in the beauty of prayer and recognize the great gift that prayer is even when growth in it is challenging. Because, frankly, we shouldn't even be able to imagine life without it.