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Slowing Down in Prayer in Advent

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Hi. I'm Sarah Reinhard. Before we start talking about how to slow down in prayer during Advent, let's begin with a prayer, which I promise not to say super slow, because... Anyway, that would be just cruel for all of us, wouldn't it? Alright.

Let's start in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Lord, thank you for this time together, and thank you for the blessing of this retreat time. Help us to pause. And whether it means we actually physically slow down, or we mentally slow down, please put your hand on our shoulder and guide us in the way you would have us slow down, especially as we turn to you in prayer. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

How are you doing today? You know, for me it was very difficult about this is that I can't hear your answer. And I really wish I could. Because for me, giving talks, there needs to be a lot of feedback. But, I'm hoping we can have a conversation in the com boxes, or you can drop me a line and tell me about how you slow down in prayer. But let me give you some of my tips. First of all, why is it important to slow down? Well, are you listening to how I'm talking? I'm one of those people who talk, talk, talk, talk, talk, talk, talk, talk. I am always trying to multitask and do 17 things at once. Maybe that's just a disease I have. I'm always trying to move faster, be more productive, and get more done, and cram more into an hour than any human being should. Why am I that way? Well, it's how God made me, right. So there's a reason. But I don't think it's just me, because I notice this all over. Everyone is this way. It is like a disease we all have. Which is why we have to talk about how to slow down. We need to slow down. It's good for us.

Do you ever have those days? I don't know, my kids just started playing basketball 2 or 3 years ago, and we're playing on the team where we end up spending a lot of weekends on the basketball court with all of the kids, and I also help announce at basketball games. So, through the week we're at varsity games with the older kids. And, in the midst of that, I find myself understanding my parents. I remember when I was in high school my parents making the comment "Oh, I just wish we

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could be home.” And I always thought “That’s so strange.” And even when my children were much younger I felt the same way. I really wanted to get out of the house, not head back to the house. But now, in the season I find myself in with busier children, I do find myself wanting that day of rest. And maybe just an hour of rest, a chance to sleep in, a chance to not worry about what time we eat breakfast, or whether we’re out the door by a certain time. I think all of us at some point have that desire to slow down. Maybe you call it something different. I call it slowing down.

So, what does that mean for prayer? Well, prayer is hard. And don’t let anybody tell you anything differently. I mean, it’s a conversation with God. And getting to do that is a big challenge. Now, why is it a challenge? Why is it hard? Well I think, first of all, one reason it’s hard is that the devil doesn’t want us to. Prayer helps us. It makes better, it makes us closer to God. He’s going to really put up all kinds of barriers to keep us away from that. And the barriers might look like good things. They might seem like they’re worthy of your attention. And that’s where it really gets challenging, especially for me. If I’m trying to pray my Rosary early in the morning and a kid gets up, do I deal with that kid or do I send him away, or... Maybe that’s a bad example. Buy it’s a real life example, it’s what I face. So, I need to find a way to have a regular time of prayer, and yet I need to find a way to slow down, even though I’m always in a hurry and always trying to do 3 things at once.

So how can I do that? Well, I sat down, and I was thinking about ways to slow down in prayer, especially during Advent, because in Advent we’re preparing for the coming of the Lord. And I know, we’ve all heard this so many times, right? I mean, you’ve heard about Jesus coming in the stable, we’ve all seen the nativity scene everywhere. Just about sick of it, aren’t you? But think of how that small child reacts. I live with a 5-year-old and he is so delighted by the Christmas story. And it reminds me that it’s really something to be excited about. And I think we all need that reminder, that we can be excited about Christmas. We are preparing for that excitement. We’re getting ourselves ready, because the gift we’re going to give the Christ child is the gift of ourselves. And I know that that sounds really idealistic and hard to achieve, but what does that mean? Well, let’s talk about ways you can slow down in prayer during Advent. And maybe you’ll find that using these ways to slow down during Advent will help you the rest of the year too. That’s my prayer for you.

So, first of all, you have to change your mind. Now, that is a hard thing to do. I could spend this whole talk talking about how you change your mind. But for me,

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it usually means I have to kind of twist myself and look at things from a different angle. To change the lighting. I recently just set up a little table in the corner of a room, and I put like this pretty little tablecloth that I'm never going to use – my grandmother had all of these beautiful tablecloths and I ended up with them. Never going to use them. Maybe I will when I'm older. I'm not going to use them right now. But I put this tablecloth over this little table and I put candles on the table, and I light them when I'm praying. Now, it's not a failsafe, right. There's lots of other things that need to change. But by changing my mind, by changing it from being “Ugh, I have to pray” to “Oh, okay, I'm going to go pray.”

Maybe I'm going to let you in on a little secret too: I have a little prayer book that I keep tucked away in my bathroom. I know. I'm not supposed to talk about that am I? But I'm going to. Because you know what? It helps me. I go to the bathroom a lot during the day, and sometimes I feel like that's the only time I sit down and have time to myself, even when all the kids are gone. So I pull out that little prayer book and I try to just focus on one prayer every day in that little prayer book. So maybe I'll read that prayer a couple of times during the day, because I don't always remember to pull out the prayer book, but maybe that's a way to change your mind. Change how you look at prayer. Adjust it. Even if you're already perfect in your prayer life, and none of us are, so... You're not perfect in your prayer life, but change your mind. Change how you're looking at it. Change your perspective.

Okay, so after you change your mind, the second way is to make it a habit. I heard somebody once give the advice to pray a Hail Mary every time you wash your hands, and I thought “That's so silly.” But do you know what? How many Hail Mary's would you pray if you prayed one every time you washed your hands? You'd also probably wash your hands the correct amount of time that they were telling the kids in school to sing the ABCs. So, it takes about the same amount of time to pray a Hail Mary as it does to sing the ABCs, because maybe I timed it, because I'm a big dork. So, make a habit. Maybe every time, if you have stairs in your house, you can pray a Glory Be every time you go up the stairs. And you'll catch yourself when you're somewhere else that's not your home going up stairs and praying whatever prayer you set to mind. Or make it a habit that you get up at 7 AM every day and you sit down just right there, by your bed, for 2 minutes and pray a morning offering of some sort. Say hi to God. Make a habit. I'm sure already you've got some ideas going through your head. So after you change your mind about things, you need to make a habit, or you can make a habit. I guess you don't need to, you can. It's helpful to make a habit.

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Third, take a breath. *breathes*. We're always in a hurry, always trying to do more things, there's always a to-do list waiting for us, right. Just take a breath. And in that breath, feel God. Say hi to Him. Listen for His voice. It's there. Okay, so change your mind, make a habit, take a breath. Now, this is the hardest one for me. Number 4, go half pace. So, what this might look like if you were me, and you were going to go half pace. You might stop, and we'll just use the Hail Mary – that's my favorite prayer – we'll use that as our example. So going half pace might feel like this: Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen. Now, what going half pace does for you is it makes you pay attention differently. You're not whipping through it anymore. You're not going Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee. You're actually paying attention to the words. You can't help it. Even if you're doing your grocery list in your head at the same time, you can't help but pay attention differently, because we're used to going at a certain pace. Change the pace. Go slower, go half pace, right, physically slower.

Okay, so, first, change your mind. Second, make a habit. Third, take a breath. Fourth, go half pace. Number 5, change things up. Maybe you need to start praying in a different part of your house. Maybe you need to make a new habit that changes everything around. Maybe you need to pray before your shower, pray after your shower. Change things up somehow. Maybe there's a chair you usually sit in when you pray, and you need to change it up. Maybe you need to involve other people, invite them in. It will force you to slow down in prayer when you change things up, because you're not used to it. I know, it sounds crazy, and maybe it is a little crazy, but you have to fight the challenge the devil is throwing at you. The roadblocks he's putting in place to try to keep you from praying. You have to fight those yourself. So change things up. Make it fun. Be spontaneous. Plan to be spontaneous. Okay, that's me. My husband told me once years ago that one of the problems I have with family gatherings is that I need to plan to be spontaneous. And once he said that, it was all better. He made everything better. So, plan to be spontaneous, and to change things up a little bit.

Right. Number 6 is also hard. Actually, all of these hard, so I guess I should quit saying they're hard. But you have to show up now. What does that mean? I've been going to a middle-of-the-night adoration hour for a while, and at confession I fall asleep. I don't intend to. I usually start praying a Rosary, or a Divine Mercy Chaplet, and then I start dozing, and then I kind of catch myself waking up in the dark, beautiful chapel, and then I doze again. And I had a priest tell me once that sometimes God just wants us to show up. Think for a minute about someone you

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cherish, and that you love so much, okay. Got that picture in your mind of that person? Imagine if that person came to you and just sat besides you. No reason, just wanted to spend time with you and sit beside you. How would you feel? How would that make you feel? Would it make you feel better about that person? Maybe. Now, imagine that you're just showing up to spend time with God. If you're having a terrible day, maybe you can't think of anything to say, maybe you can't even bring yourself to say the words of a prayer you have memorized. But you know what? Just show up. Because God feels for you like you feel for that cherished person, even more, times like a thousand million. He just wants you to show up. So do that. Just show up. And sometimes just that very discipline of showing up, it will help you in your prayer.

Alright, the final thing. So just to recap, number 1, change your mind. Number 2, make it a habit. Number 3, take a breath. Number 4, go half pace. Number 5, change things up. Number 6, show up. Number 7, this is my favorite, set a timer. I love to set a timer. Because sometimes it feels to me like I don't have any time. Actually, it feels that way to me all the time. So I'll set a timer. Okay, for 8 minutes I'm going to sit here. 8 minutes. Here's why it's 8 minutes, because I can hit the snooze in the morning when the alarm goes off telling me to get the kids up. I'll hit snooze, that's 8 minutes, right? On your alarm clock it's the same. I don't know why it's 8 minutes, but it's 8 minutes. Hit the snooze. 8 minutes I'm going to sit here and I'm going to pray for that 8 minutes. Sit. And it makes you slow down. And that 8 minutes is an eternal time. And by eternal time, I don't mean that it feels longer than 8 minutes, although sometimes it does, I mean that whatever we give God, he transforms and blesses. So, we can never give him too much. So, whatever small amount we feel like we're giving him when we set that timer, he'll take that, and he'll multiply it. So don't be afraid to be generous, or even just to say "You know what? I've got 10 minutes, or 8 minutes as the case may be. And that's what I can give you right now, God." Do you know what? He's going to love that.

So, just to recap, here are the 7 ways you can slow down in prayer this Advent: First, do you remember? You're going to change your mind. Second, make it a habit. Third, take a breath. Fourth, go half paced. Fifth, change things up. Sixth, show up. And seventh, set a timer. Now, what I would like to do for this talk now as I'm looking down at my phone, I want to pray together a decade of the Rosary. And it's not going to be really fast, and for me it's going to feel awkward because I'm staring at a webcam, but we're going to use a scriptural Rosary, which is a version of the Rosary where in-between each Hail Mary there is a scripture verse from scripture. And you can find there's apps, there's places online you can go to

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find a scriptural Rosary. If you have any difficulty finding one send me a note, and I will send you a link to many different resources for that. And there are also books you can buy. I like the scriptural Rosary because it reminds me that the Rosary is rooted in scripture, which I dearly love, both the Rosary and scripture. And also because it forces me to slow down. You can't just whip through it, you have to slow down and read the scripture.

So we're just going to do 1 decade of the Rosary, which is... A Rosary is made up of 5 parts, 5 decades, and each decade is 10 Hail Mary's if you're not familiar with that. So we're just going to pray an Our Father 10 Hail Mary's, and then a Glory Be, and then I look forward to continuing this conversation with you wherever we might run into each other. So thank you for your time. So let's start. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we're going to be praying the third joyful mystery, which is the nativity of the birth of Jesus. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David. To be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed who was with child. Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen. While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her first born son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen. Now, there were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock. The angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were struck with great fear. Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

The Angel said to them "Do not be afraid, for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the City of David, a savior has been born for you who is messiah and Lord." Hail Mary, full of grace. The

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Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen. And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying “Glory to God in the highest. And on earth, peace to those on whom his favor rests.” Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen. When the angels went away from them to heaven, the shepherds said to one another “Let us go then to Bethlehem to see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

So they went in haste and found Mary and Joseph and the infant lying in the manger. Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen. When they saw this, they made known the message that had been told them about this child. All who heard it were amazed by what had been told them by the shepherds. Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen. And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart. Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told to them. Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Oh my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell. Lead all souls to heaven, especially those in most need of thy mercy. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.