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2-2020

### Make Room for Prayer

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# Make Room for Prayer

Majestic cathedrals always have inspired me to think through the symbolism they often represent — from the stories that sculptures tell or stained glass windows show. However, the bells have been a fascination as of late.



▲ Ingrid Weiss Slikkers

Historically, some churches will ring their church bells three times a day, starting at 6 a.m., then at noon and again at 6 p.m. The bells ring to summon the Christian faithful to recite the Lord's Prayer at these times. We know Daniel prayed three times a day. These hours might have been the hours that the Jews still continue to pray, starting at first hour (6 a.m.), mid-morning (9 a.m.), sixth hour (12 noon) and the ninth hour (3 p.m.). Psalm 55:17 says, *Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice* (NKJV).

In further reading, I found that in years past the church bells would ring right before prayer during a service so that those who were ill and unable to attend could join the prayer in spirit upon hearing the bells. Other sources describe the belief that church bells ringing could drive out demons and hence the need for consistent times to have the bell ringer climb the tower. Bells rang in times of celebration and, if needed, in times of attack so that people could seek safety.

I grew up as a "PK" (Preacher's Kid). I could relate various stories of the stressors and reasons preachers' kids struggle with the church and even their spirituality. I have people asked me, "How come you and your siblings never rebelled, but have stayed actively in the church?" The questions have caused me to ponder and surmise that there were probably various reasons why we stayed. However, one variable must be named — we were prayed for, and we knew it. While attending academy, I would walk by my parents' room in the evening and see my dad kneeling by the bed. I just *knew* he was praying for something regarding me, and this was both

mortifying and strengthening. While my siblings and I were in college, my parents told us that they would pray for us at noon specifically. More often than not, when noon rolled around, I again *knew* they were praying and felt humbled, sometimes feeling shameful, yet also encouraged that they were bringing me before the throne of God. I could picture them kneeling in the living room, holding hands, with heads bowed.

I have at times struggled with the concept of assigning specific times to prayer during the day as I believe our day should be a constant conversation with our Father and more organic. However, I have come to realize that in my constant hurriedness, I must make prayer intentional. Even though I begin my day with prayer, over the last few months I have set "bells" on my phone that daily cause me to stop and pray at certain times. Some of those times are assigned to my kids and they know that. My father often refers me back to the illustration of Job and his prayers for all his children and the offering of sacrifices. That took quite a bit of intentionality. In this New Year, as I schedule this, that and the other, I must ask myself, "Do I make room for intentional prayer?" ■

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*Ingrid Weiss Slikkers is assistant professor of Social Work at Andrews University, a Child and Family therapist, and constantly learning more about God because of her sons.*