Episode 101

"While Peter was kept in prison, the church began to earnestly pray to God for him."
- *Acts 12.5*

Rory has pointed to this chapter of Acts many times saying: "At the start of this chapter, James is dead, Peter is in prison, King Herod is persecuting the church and the Christians are in hiding. But by the end of the chapter, Herod is dead, Peter is out of prison, the word of God is being preached and many are being added to the church. All because the church began to pray."

I am sure, like me, you've heard that comment, nodded your head in agreement, said a fervent "amen" and walked away unchanged. Somehow we know the supernatural value and importance of prayer, but never really see it translate into our everyday lives.

As someone who struggles with all kinds of self-discipline—attending the gym, declining the chocolate cake, going to bed before midnight, binging on Netflix, and, yes, even maintaining regular times of prayer—I hesitate to advocate the rigidity of any such routine. I don't want to put anything heavy or unsustainable on you as you seek to grow in prayer.

But here is the great and inescapable truth, taught in Scripture, modelled by Christ and advocated, without exception, by all the heroes of our faith: you cannot grow in prayer without some measure of effort and discomfort, self-discipline and self-denial. Just as you cannot get physically fit without regular exercise and a healthy diet, so your spiritual growth will be determined, to a very significant extent, by the prayer exercises you choose - or do not choose - to establish and sustain.

Here are two suggestions to help you develop rhythms of prayer that are regular and sustainable: make it easy, and keep it up. Prayer can be a lot like stacking dominoes. We pray the same thing we've prayed one hundred times before, until suddenly, the whole lot comes down. The breakthrough occurs. The miracle happens. It's not that we finally found the right formula. It's simply that we didn't give up praying one prayer too soon.

ONE33