

Prayer

This morning I want to talk about prayer. The reason for this is that we are starting our prayer evening this week. I do believe that a praying church is a growing and staying church. We need to pray for our leaders, people in the church and things we partake in within the church. I got some inspiration from the books of John Piper, and Cathy Ferreira. Please keep in mind that prayer is for every believer, young and old!

Colossians 4:2-4

Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; (3) praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; (4) that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak.

One thing that is clear from this passage of scripture is that it is God's will that we pray to Him!

Sometimes we struggle to know the will of God for our lives. But there are some things that we do not have to struggle to know. One of them is that it is God's will that we pray to him. The text says, "Devote yourself to prayer." God wills for us is to pray to him.

The meaning of "devote" or the need for "alertness" or time and place and quantity and method of praying, just let it sink in that God wants us to pray to him. He commands it.

What is Prayer?

Mainly it means asking God for things. By "things" I don't mean objects - stuff. I mean, generally, whatever your heart desires or needs. And, of course, what our heart needs most is God - to know him and trust him and love him and obey him. I know that we should come to God with more than asking. We should come to God confessing sins and giving thanks and praise. In a broad sense, prayer includes all that. That's why in **Colossians 4:2** it says, "Devote yourselves to prayer . . . with thanksgiving." Thanking God should always be part of what we do in prayer. So I define it as asking God for things.

Be sure to notice the main thing: "Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God." That is the main meaning of prayer. "With confession of sins" and "with . . . thankful acknowledgment of his mercies" - these go along with these expressed desires. But the essence of prayer is the expression of our dependence on God through requests.

Prayer is also fellowship with, cooperation and partnership with the Lord. It is speaking to God as you would to a friend, telling Him your triumphs, Fears and Desires, and then allowing Him to speak to you. He does not often speak in an audible voice but speaks

through your thoughts and the word. Learn to be quiet after you have prayed and allow God to speak!

God Loves to Be Asked

Now think about this for a moment. God's will is that we, his creatures, ask him for things. And it is not just his will, it is his delight. He loves to be asked for things. **Proverbs 15:8** says, "The prayer of the upright is His delight." He is so eager to hear prayers and respond to them that he says in **Isaiah 65:24**, "It will also come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear."

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Meditating on this is very encouraging to our faith and hope. This means that God, the Creator of the Universe, who holds our life in his hands and rules the world, is the kind of God who loves to be asked for things. Amen!

God is always the Giver **Acts 17:25** And He is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else.

That is what he loves to be a giver! And the last phrase of Romans 11:36 says why, "To him be glory for ever." It is more glorious to be a Giver than a getter. Getters look needy. Givers look self-sufficient. (Are we givers or getters) So God ordains prayer because he wants us to see him as gloriously self-sufficient and ourselves as totally needy. So he says in **Psalms 50:15**, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honour Me." God answers our call for help so that we get the rescue and he gets the honour. "I will rescue you and you will honour me." Similarly in **John 14:13** Jesus says, "Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son." Ask for things in my name! That is why we ask and receive, So that our Father may be glorified. So he may look as glorious as he really is.

Hopefully these truths behind prayer will strengthen us to pray even more this year. God wills that we pray.

God's wills that we ask him for things. And not just wills it, but He really delights in it and takes steps to see that it happens, because He enjoys it so much. Why should we be confident of this? Because it comes from the very nature of who God is. He is love - he is a Giver. Why is he a Giver? Because he is utterly self-sufficient and delights to overflow and show us his glorious fullness and strength and wisdom, and that he will give us whatever we need to get us to everlasting joy in Him. God loves to show the fullness of his grace in meeting the needs of humble, dependent - that is, praying - people, because it magnifies his riches and makes our joy.

So prayer is not some small thing. It is not some marginal thing. It is not some incidental thing in the Christian life. Prayer is at the heart of why God created us. It is one of the nonnegotiable happenings in a Christians' life.

And the way God delights to display his glory in man is by being depended on through prayer.

As Christians we live by the Word and prayer the same way we live by inhaling and exhaling air. This is our life.

Some Handles of Payer

1. When and Where?

When are you going to pray? You may say, "I don't want a legalism way of praying". We must want to have a life with prayer saturating everything we do." If we want you want to walk in prayer all day long, and then you will need to linger in prayer in times of quiet communion with God. Why do I say that? Because we cannot get deep with God on the run, fitting Him into the cracks of our day. But we can enjoy continual fellowship with God on the run if you have gone deep with God in the stillness of our devotion. So our aim to have our whole day a walking conversation with God - his memorized Word feeding you all day, and your desires being offered up to him hour by hour. Make that your aim.

So decide on a place and a time for this meeting with God in prayer, and our whole day will be with God!

2. How Long?

So how long do we pray for? I ask this question, how long is a piece of string? If you are doing nothing, do something. Start where you are and take a step. Then ask God to grow you into a deep and wise and fruitful person.

It doesn't always have to be one long time. It can be several planned shorter times.

Be alert in it, and do whatever you have to do to see that you meet God in a focused way to hear from Him in his Word and to offer up your desires to him in prayer.

3. How?

Is there a right and wrong way? Jesus says we must pray the Lord's Prayer. That is our guideline to prayer. Four topics come into mind to start. Self, Family, Church and Work

1. First, pray for your own soul then outward to the whole world or people you know. I pray for my own soul first. Not because I am more deserving than others, but because if God doesn't awaken and strengthen and humble and fill my own soul, then I can't pray for anybody else's. So I plead with the Lord for my own soul's perseverance and purification and power and continuous filling of the Holy Spirit.
2. Then I pray for my family, and I pray for each of them by name: Yvette, Meaghan, Jason. Also we pray for our extended family. Also by name, needs, worries, direction.

3. Then we pray for our church elders, leaders and friends. Growth, people, needs, finances, ministries, outreaches, whatever our church gets involved in.
4. Then I pray for my job. My boss, finances, favour, vision, friends, colleagues whom I work with.

Remember, we can't always pray for everything every time. So there need to be differences in our prayer lives. And our heart will dictate much of your burden and whom or what to pray for. Some day's one family member or one staff member or one crisis in the church or the world will consume most of your time. But if you have a pattern, you won't spin your wheels wondering where to start.

The second thing that we should do is to pray Scripture

The prayer time and the Bible meditation time don't have to be separate times. It would be best if they were not separate.

God's word reveals God and His will. What you want for yourself and those you pray for is more of God' will and less of ourselves. As you see him in his Word, pray that God would make this seen and known and loved in the lives of the people you pray for. And as you see his will, pray that God would cause it to be done in the lives of those you pray for. "Thy will be done on earth as in heaven." For the saved and the unsaved.

The third thing

I would say about how to pray is that praying in groups is important to build into your life. Families that pray together stay together. Small groups, pray together. Ministry groups, pray together. And consider being a part of the one and half-hour prayer gatherings that happen here at the church each week. Wednesdays 19:30 and Sunday mornings 9:30am. Home groups are ideal place to build relationships and be prayed for, also to do some praying.

So practically, "Be devoted to prayer, keeping alert in it," this will link you more fully with God and his purpose for yourself and others.