

## Devote Yourselves to Prayer: The Gospel, Prayer, and Fasting

Text: Colossians 4:2-4

*Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison—that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.*

### Introduction:

(Bat ako? Meme)

I will be direct! Prayerlessness invades churches nowadays. Too much confidence on ourselves, extreme pragmatism, and indifference. “Prayerlessness is spiritual suicide.”

Why do we ignore prayer, forgetting, or not prioritizing it? In fact, when Paul reminded the church about putting on the full armor in Ephesians 6:10-20, he emphasized at the last part about the importance of prayer. Which is alongside the sword—God’s Word—enclothed with the Spirit of God through prayer. You cannot fight the battles in this world without prayer.

Ohhhhhh. May we repent and ask for forgiveness for forgetting to pray.

### Main Idea:

As said, **prayer is a spiritual condition**: “Tell me who your friends are; I will tell you who you are.” But for Christians, tell me about your prayer life and I will tell you what kind of Christian you are. Prayer life is like a mirror, it reflects one’s spiritual shape.

Do you just pray because you are told to do so? “Prayer is oxygen for the Christians (John Onwuchekwa).” When you do not pray, you feel weak, exhausted, and feel like giving up. Why are you exhausted today? Why are you sleepy right now? Check again, maybe because you have not prayed that today will be all for Christ because today is Lord’s Day.

“Continue (ESV)” or “Devote (NASB)” – meaning, “*to continue to do something with intense effort, with the possible implication of despite difficulty.*” This is actually

Observing this specific imperative of Paul, he is telling us that the church at Colossae were already practicing the act of prayer. This is why Paul is affirming their actions and telling them to continuously devote to it. Praying intense effort, intentionally, regularly, even when you feel not praying; pray.

Devote to what again? to prayer, steadfastly. *Prayer “is the God-ward exercise of learning how to agree with the Lord (His will).”* We pray because we want God to fulfill His will for us. We want to know His will. And we want to take participate in God’s will. That is why we pray.

What hinders are prayer? 1. Lack of faith (James 5:14-15; prayer flows from faith, only those who have the gift of faith can enjoy prayer.); 2. Cherishing Sin (Psalm 66:18, “*If I had cherished sin in my*

heart, the Lord would not have listened.”); and 3. Unforgiving Heart (Mark 11:25, “And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that the Father in heaven may forgive your sins.”; Matthew 5:23-24).

Other than prayer as spiritual condition; **it is also our spiritual celebration**. Hence, we are called to always have an attitude of thanksgiving. Having a grateful heart is a sign of contentment. A sign of humility. Signifies our recognition of God’s authority, power, and rule over our lives.

Every time we have a celebration, we are excited because we know there will be food, fellowship, fun time, and more. This should be our attitude too, despite the struggles of life, we still have someone who is willing to listen to us, talk with us, and walk with us.

Celebration is not mere just having some fun time, but more of observance. We pray because we would like to remember what Christ had done for us; what God has planned for us; and what the Holy Spirit is still doing for us.

Lastly, prayer points to an end, this is our **spiritual motivation**. The goal of prayer is more than just what we need, but we take part in God’s kingdom call. We pray for God’s Word be shared to others. When was the last time you prayed for others personally? Do not wait for others to ask you to pray for them; initiate prayer. Pray for them no matter what. If you remember a certain person, pause and pray immediately.

Do not wait for a later time, I am sure you will forget it. Pray immediately for that person. Pray that God will lead you to people who needs prayer, who needs God’s Word. Pray for them.

But the problem most of the time is that we are motivated not because of God’s plan, but because of our personal agenda. We pray because beneath our hearts we want something in return. We pray and try to manipulate God with our own plan.

Then if God did not answer your prayer, you will blame him and tell God that you prayed so hard for this and that but how come He did not answer you. If this, is you, stop blackmailing God. Do not pray and twist God’s arm, that is not possible.

Many churches—or individual Christians—treat prayer as prescriptions rather than a life support system. It is not something that you only do when you need something like a vending machine. No. Prayer is an essential part of Christian life for breathing, living, and walking.

Oftentimes, we do not pray because we do not know what to pray for. In Romans 8:26, let the Spirit intercede our prayers. Pray what your heart wants to express. Be honest, be genuine, true, and open to God. *“God hears and responds; and because God has already given the answer to all human petitions- Christ Jesus – there are no set limits to the content of prayer.”* – Karl Barth

**Prayer and Fasting:**

Prayer can just be a prayer. But fasting without praying is not biblical. Every time we fast, we ought to pray. (Job, Noah, Esther, and even Jesus). Moreover, prayer and fasting are inseparable with the meditation of the Word of God. When we pray and fast, we are also expected to meditate the Scripture. We will learn more about prayer and fasting next time. But for now, we know that prayer and fasting are biblical.

### **Tech, Prayer, and Fasting:**

Fasting is not limited to food; it is taking a break from the regular things or essential ones you do in a daily basis.

In this digital age, it is also good to take a break from our phones, emails, social media, and other connections. Example: No social media for the whole week; or no phones after 9pm until 9am (unless emergency).

**Digital Fasting:** Solitude and silence were a significant element of Jesus' ministry. He often withdrew from the crowds and went into the wilderness to pray (Luke 5:16).

1. Your fast needs a purpose (rest; renewal; revival)
2. Engagement is the goal — not isolation (offline conversation)
3. Your fast needs definition (12hr? Just social media?)
4. Notice your behavior (self-awareness)
5. Notice what your fast is telling you (be sensitive)
6. Feed your mind without scrolling (read books; write; arts)
7. Of course, every time you pause, you pray and read the Bible.

**Conclusion:** Why pray? Because Jesus prayed. The disciples, when they asked God, they did not ask God to teach them how to preach; they did not ask God to teach them how to cook, to play instruments, or to heal; but they ask God to teach them how to PRAY.

Why did they ask Christ to teach them to pray? Because they know Christ as the one who models prayer in His life. We do not ask a person who do not know a thing about what you want to learn. Youth goes to Sebi because he is good in chemistry. We go to Miguel because he is good in music. We go to Jon C, kuya JR, and more because we know they can advise us about the matters of church.

The apostles ask Christ because **He is an expert of prayer**. Christ is the ultimate model of prayer. Christ is indeed the foundation of prayer.

- Choosing the Twelve Apostles
- Raising Lazarus – John 11:41-42
- Feeding the 5, 000
- Transfiguration
- At the cross (Luke 23:34)

Let me end with what EM Bounds said about prayer,

“Prayer is the language of a man burdened with a sense of need. It is the voice of a beggar, conscious of his poverty, asking of another the things he needs... Not to pray is not only to declare that there is nothing needed, but to admit to a non-realization of that need.”

Challenge:

Church why pray? “A prayerful church is a powerful church,” in which I rephrase, “A prayerful church is a—unspeakably—joyful church.”

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