

Prayer – Colossians 4:2-4

Into

As we have been teaching, and learning, especially in our *Hearing from God* class:

- Prayer is important
- Prayer is necessary
- Prayer is not a monologue; it is a conversation.

Each Sunday morning, we meet to pray for the service and our church. But we also take time to listen to what God has to say. We quiet ourselves to make sure we allow Him a chance to talk.

<pray>

Paul tells us in Colossians:

² Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. ³ 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— ⁴ that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.

Colossians 4:2-4 ESV

Paul was somebody who understood prayer and its power. You cannot really be a good Christian and not pray, just like you cannot have a good marriage if you don't talk to your husband. You can be a Christian and not pray, just like you can be married and not talk to your husband. But in both circumstances, you will be miserable. Prayer is the pipeline of communication between God and His people, between God and those who love Him.

It seems more and more these days, instead of prayer being something we do every day, like breathing, eating, and walking and talking, it seems to be more like that little glass covered box on the wall that says, "break glass in case of emergency." It is true that so very often we associate prayer with crises in our life.

There is a story about a man who encountered a bit of trouble while flying his little airplane. He called the control tower and said, "Pilot to tower, I'm 300 miles from the airport, six hundred feet above the ground, and I'm out of fuel. I am descending rapidly. Please advise. Over." "Tower to pilot," the dispatcher began, "Repeat after me: "Our Father Who art in heaven..."

Many of you know my story and have heard me share about some of the difficult times in my life. As I shared in September during my sermon, there were two specific times in my life where prayer was significant – praying for the safe delivery of my first-born child, and then 22 years later, praying for my mom to be healed of esophageal cancer.

Prayer is a part of my day. I pray for my adult kids, probably more than I did when they were young. I ask God to guide me to a verse or topic for the Newsletter. I pray for my friends and family when they are dealing with tough times. I pray with my husband for us and our family. As well as praying for this church and asking God what His plans are.

With that said, there are 4 important points we need to remember when we pray:

1. Pray with Persistence

Paul begins by saying, "Devote yourselves to prayer," (NIV) or "Continue steadfastly in prayer," (ESV). The Greek word ***proskartereo (pros-kar-ter-eh'-o)***, means "continue perseveringly (or steadfastly) in prayer." It can also mean *to be earnest towards, to persevere, be constantly diligent*. It carries with it the idea of dedication. It is a very powerful word and in this verse is given as an imperative, or a command. In other words, persistence in prayer is not an option for us as Christian it is an order from God Himself.

In two of Jesus' parables, He tells us to be persistent and not give up.

Luke 18:1 (ESV), the Parable of the Persistent Widow, He says:

"And He told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart."

Luke 11:9 (ESV), where Jesus teaches the Lord's prayer

"And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."

Each of those verbs are in the present tense, active voice and could be translated, "keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking." Jesus does not want us to give up in prayer, He instructs us to be persistent.

A persistent prayer doesn't mean it has to be a long prayer. Being persistent just means not giving up.

Sometimes we give up easily, we quit because we don't feel like praying, the joy is gone, the feeling is gone. But we are not to live by our feelings but to live by the commandments of our Lord who tells us to pray without ceasing.

John Wimber tells us that Prayer is an Essential Element:

"In the Gospel of John, Jesus talks about an absolutely essential element for a quality prayer life. "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given to you" (John 15:7). The word "remain" here means to live in Jesus, to take your sustenance from him, dwell with him, give yourself over to the process of living there. If you remain in him, his words will remain in you and be dynamic and powerful. The result? "...Ask whatever you wish, and it will be given to you."

You say, "You mean all I have to do is live in Jesus and his words live in me and then I can ask anything I want to?" If you're remaining in Jesus and his words are abiding or remaining in you, you'll be asking on a different level and a different plane. Remaining or abiding in intimate prayer means you will care about those things that God cares about and pray the prayers of faith that he already wants to answer."

Be persistent in prayer.

2. Pray with Passion

So, if you are persistent in something, then most likely you are also passionate about it. In fact, Paul says we should be vigilant or be watchful, in other words, the opposite of slothfulness. This describes passionate prayer.

Jesus was passionate about His prayer life; it was something He was always doing.

Each time we see Jesus praying He prayed with passion:

- Prayer opens Heaven

Luke 3:21

Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened.

- Passionate prayer gives direction

Luke 6:12

In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God.

- Passionate prayer lets us experience God's Glory

In Luke 9:29 (at Jesus' transfiguration)

And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white.

- Passionate prayer impacts others
John 17 - Jesus' high priestly prayer
- Passionate prayer allows us to pour out our hearts to God.
Matthew 26:39 (in the Garden of Gethsemane)
And going a little father he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."
- Passionate prayer enables us to maintain that spirit, even the most difficult times.
Luke 23:34 as He hung on the cross
And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Jesus always prayed with passion, because He knew Who it was He was talking to and He knew that prayer to the Father is powerful and not something to take lightly.

Prayer from the heart, that's what passionate prayer is, it is prayer from the heart not just from the head.

I know when I first started praying out loud, I wasn't comfortable. I wasn't "trained in prayer". I can't say an eloquent prayer. But I did start praying from the heart. Praying what I felt God was encouraging me to pray.

Not only did Jesus teach us how to pray through His example, He specifically told us during the Sermon on the Mount just before the Lord's Prayer, to pray from the heart:

Matthew 6:7

"And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words."

We don't carry on the same conversation, over and over, with our spouses or friends. We have heartfelt conversations. We need to do the same with God.

James 5:16 says,

"The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much."

3. Pray with Thankfulness

Paul mentions being thankful all the time. A few examples:

- Philippians 4:6 tells us to be anxious for nothing but in everything we should pray, giving thanks as we make our petitions known to God.

- 1 Thessalonians 5:18 tells us that giving thanks always is God's will for us in Christ Jesus.
- 1 Timothy 4:4 – tells us everything God creates is good and nothing should be rejected if we receive it with thanksgiving.

Last week during Pastor Jay's sermon, he mentioned a meme he saw on Social Media.



Take a moment to read this and really think about it. This should make us all think of just how good God is to us. I know it has made me think and alter how I have been praying.

When we are thankful:

- It articulates dependence
- It demonstrates relationship
- It communicates gratitude - proper attitudes
- It generates humility

4. Pray, Making Intercession

Intercessory prayer is basically praying for others, it is praying for God's will to be done in the lives of other people.

So, when we hold Ministry Time after the service, we are essentially interceding for those we are praying for. This characterizes the prayer life of Jesus.

- The last part of Isaiah 53:12
"...yet He bore the sin of many and makes intercession for the transgressors."
- As I shared earlier, Jesus' passionate prayer on the cross, was also a prayer of intercession (Luke 23:34):
"Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing."
- John 14:16 tells us if we keep His Commandments, He will ask God to send us His Holy Spirit.

- Romans 8:34 tells us that Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father, making intercession for us.
- Finally, Hebrews 7:25 says,

"Therefore, he is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, because he always lives to intercede for them."

Jesus prayed intercessory prayers; He was always praying for others.

Paul knew the power of Prayer and he wanted to be sure the Colossian Christians understood what it was they were to pray for. He wanted them to pray with a specific purpose. You see, Paul wanted God's kingdom to expand. Like Jesus, he was concerned about others, about their souls, their salvation, and their sanctification.

Intercessory prayer changes things.

You see, when you pray for others, when you pray for God's work to be done, for His will to be accomplished, He will begin to use you and grow you in ways that will astonish those around you. Sometimes I think we don't become what God wants us to become, because we are too focused on ourselves and not on others. It is when we pray for others that we will become more like Jesus, and as we become more like Jesus God will grow us more, show us more, and use us more.

Many years ago at a church in Pinellas County, during ministry time, we had a couple of people that would come forth week after week asking for prayer for the same thing. For several weeks we would pray for them, however, after this continued for numerous weeks, we told them, we will pray for you once you have prayed for at least one person. This took their focus off their own burdens and woes (as Pastor Jay says "navel gazing") and it caused them to focus on someone else for a while.

We must pray for others, no matter what.

Conclusion

We need to pray in good times and in bad. We need to be persistent. We need to be in constant communication with God.

We need to be passionate. We need to fully believe and have faith that God will answer as He sees fit, not just what we want.

We need to be thankful. God is good and faithful. All that we have, no matter how big or small, comes from Him. We need to thank Him for it all.

And as Jesus did, we need to intercede, pray, for others. When we pray for others, for a time it takes our focus off ourselves and allows us to focus on someone else. And it allows us to pray as Jesus did for those He came across.