

April 16, 2020 Devotion Devote ourselves to prayer.

Colossians 4:2-5

There is a story about D. L. Moody making a visit to Scotland in the 1800's and opening one of his talks at a local grade school with the rhetorical question, What is prayer? To his amazement, hundreds of children's hands went up. So he decided to call on a lad near the front, who promptly stood up and said, "Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, in the name of Christ, by the help of his Spirit, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies." This is the answer to question #98 in the Westminster Catechism. To this Moody responded by saying, "Be thankful, son, that you were born in Scotland."

What is prayer? And what does Colossians 4:2-5 say?

Further Instructions

²Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. ³And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. ⁴Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. ⁵Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.

New International Version (NIV)

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Devote, being watchful and thankful, Paul was being very specific with these words about prayer. Many are probably doing a lot more praying in the last few months because of the COVID 19, and that is a good thing. I would like us to think about what a better way of praying would be.

The word “devote” is an interesting word. When we devote ourselves to something or someone it is a huge commitment. It makes sense to devote ourselves to prayer, TO GOD! God wants to be in relationship with us, because God loves us!

So, how do we do this praying devotedly thing. This is what I do, and I am not suggesting it is the only way to pray. I always start my prayers with praying for my own soul. Sounds odd maybe, but if I am not in communion with God to begin with, just throwing things out to God, I will not have a successful

prayer life. I then move to my family and friends, and then to the world. This probably sounds a bit simplistic and it is.

I prepare myself for prayer by being quiet, being still, and ask God to help me, guide me, and I always thank God. There are things that go on in our lives that we may not think we should be thankful for, but we should give thanks in all things” 1 Thessalonians 5:18. This is an example of how we might be devoted in prayer. It opens the way for us to bring our requests for others to God.

I function much better when I am organized, and right now I think I could say that many of us want organization in our lives that seem to be a bit “topsy turvy” now.

I move to my family and say each person’s name. I move to friends and say their names. My church is next, and it’s in this place of family and friends that they exist in my mind and heart. This is where my personal and church prayer list come. Over the years I have found it is much easier for me, and to be honest it helps me remember, to write down people’s names, what the prayer request is, and if I do not know them personally I list the persons name who asked me to pray for someone.

Then I move to the world, the things going on in the world that need prayer. For instance, a natural disaster, or now with serious health issues due to COVID 19.

In this scripture Paul is writing to his church in Colosse from prison. There was concern about false teachings and Paul hoped to speak through his letter to the people, reminding them that Jesus is supreme over everything. Taking this piece of background information, we see this is not just Paul instructing them about prayer. This section is titled in some translations as “Further Instructions” that follow sections on “Rules for Holy Living” and “Rules for Christian Households”. Paul isn’t fooling around in this letter. We are to pray faithfully, fervently, strongly, and we are to be watchful and thankful. Instead of watchful I would use the word wakeful. We are called to be alert, not falling asleep, don’t let your mind wander. We are to be thankful. Again as Paul said in 1 Thessalonians, “give thanks in all things”. I bet some of you are thinking, ‘gee, I don’t think I can be thankful for all that is going on right now’ and I fully understand. When we are thanking God, we thank God for the people in our lives and we petition God for healing or comfort for those people. We also

are moved to praise God for all the blessings in our lives. Thanksgiving is woven into thanks, praise, and petition.

I have a cycle of prayer time during the day; I pray early in the morning, the quietest time of the day for me, I pray mid-day and in the evening. When something happens during the day that needs prayer, I try to quiet myself before praying.

The final part of this scripture is Paul asking for prayers for himself and those with him. That doors would be opened and the message, the Good News of Jesus Christ will be shared.

Paul also tells the church that they should be wise about outsiders and make the most of every opportunity. Hmm, maybe I will leave this for our next devotion!

Let us pray:

Eternal God, we praise you that your glory has dawned on us and brought us into this season of resurrection. We pray for your guidance in all that we do, we pray for your comfort for the storms that are brewing in our souls, we pray for each other, thanking you for each person in our lives and the blessing they have been to us; Gracious God, we pray for all who are fearful, alone, and sick. We pray for healing and comfort in all circumstances. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

God bless everyone, stay safe!