

Local Church Priorities: Devoted to Prayer

Pastor John Brackbill/Acts 2:42/9.6.15

10:45 am Morning Worship Service

Introduction:

- We have been looking at Local Church Priorities for 4 weeks now and this will be our 5th message looking at the priorities revealed in Acts 2:42.
 - But it is so important to keep reminding ourselves about the context in which these priorities are revealed to us for our instruction.
 - The context is what happened on Pentecost 50 days after Christ's resurrection.
 - The context is what happened on the very first Lord's Day of the Church.
 - The context is after Peter authoritatively stands up and explains what the events of Pentecost mean.
 - This is what he says toward the end of the first sermon in church history.
 - **Acts 2:33** "Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He [Jesus] has poured forth this which you both see and hear.
 - The context of these four local church priorities is that Jesus is continuing to do things even after His ascension.
 - He poured out the Spirit in fulfillment of OT prophecy that in the last days, that is the Messianic age, the Lord would pour forth the Spirit
 - Jesus did so as the reigning Davidic Messianic King who died in our place and was raised again by God the Father vindicating who He said He was and what He said He came to do.
 - When Jesus poured out the Spirit upon His followers the One True Church of Jesus Christ was born
 - And so too was the first local expression of that one true church
- All those who believed in Christ were forgiven of their sin
 - And all those who believed were water baptized
 - And all those who believed and were water baptized were added to defined number of that first local expression of the one true church.
 - And in verses 42-47 we are given the first snap shot of what the first local expression of the one true church looked like.
 - This morning we have come to our last week of looking at what the gathered church prioritized.
 - Once again I think in terms of application to all of our lives we have to ask this question:
 - If we are not continually devoting ourselves to these priorities with the gathered local church why is that?
 - It might be because we are not saved-we do not have new hearts that desire these things in worship.
 - It might be because we are so worldly in our values that the things that ought to be most wonderful to us and most eye-catching are hidden from our view because the things of this world are much more eye-catching to us.
 - Or it might be that we have never been carefully and lovingly instructed on these things-but that if we were we would see how important they are and delight in reordering our priorities and valuing these gathered church priorities.
 - Now, try to analyze with me which reason is most for someone attending a church that does not really value these priorities yet.
 - If we are talking about solid churches that the gospel is clear and there carefulness not to be compromising God's truth with the surrounding culture.

- My guess is that if you were to rank those three reasons from 3-1 #3 would be about salvation.
 - In other words I believe that in a careful church that is striving to be biblical the issue is not because most of the people are not saved
- It is also my guess that the #2 reason would be because folks have not been instructed on it.
 - Now, I have to say, that it could be that someone has been instructed on these priorities, but not with biblical Christ-like love in that instruction.
 - And certainly if someone is instructing us on these things in a caustic grace-less condescending way--that doesn't encourage us to accept even biblical teaching does it?
- But in my estimation, probably the #1 reason is because imperceptibly God's people have been so effected by the surrounding culture and what it values
 - ...that what a Christian ought to value has been squeezed into a tight little compartment with very little oxygen that is only opened with God's people on a little sliver of the Lord's Day because we are so enamored with other things.
- And I can assure that if you are not really prioritizing these things in this local church either...
 - Because you are unsaved
 - Or because you are worldly
 - Or because you have not been instructed on these things or you have but not in a loving way
- Whatever the reason God delights in taking us from where we are to where we ought to be.
- He delights in saving people and giving new hearts that have new heart desires.
- He delights in transforming earthly minded Christians into heavenly minded Christians.
- He delights in growing immature Christians
- As I go back through the 3 priorities that we have considered together are you willing to have the Lord search your heart about these things.
 - Are you willing to agree with the Spirit of God about what you ought to value?
 - Are you willing to by faith submit to Christ and take practical steps toward actually valuing these things with this local church?
- We have considered that they were continually devoting themselves to the apostle's teaching-that is to God's Word.
- We have considered that they were continually devoting themselves to fellowship:
 - That is to spiritually sharing their lives with one another on the basis of their commonality in Christ
- We have also considered that they were continually devoting themselves to observing the Lord's Table.
- And now we come to the fact that they were continually devoting themselves to prayer
 - I realize that the last few weeks have been different than our normal taking a paragraph of Scripture and working through it, but if you will just considered these 5 messages on Acts 2:42 as one big really long message that had to be broken into 5 parts it will help you.
- The exposition of Acts 2:42 is driving these messages
 - The fact that the church was continually devoting itself to these four practices.

- It is just that we have taken the time to explore what that means and we have looked elsewhere in Scripture to really fill in our understanding as to what it would mean to have these same priorities.
- We have done this to really emphasize the application of these things to the life of our church.
- So once again I want to ask some questions to help us come to know what this fourth priority means
 - And remember, what you continually devote yourself to is what you value and what you prioritize and what you feel to be important.
- The fourth priority or value of the first local expression of Christ body was this:
 - They were continually devoting themselves to prayer

What does it mean to be devoted to prayer as a church? To prioritize praying together as the gathered church.

- Of all four of these priorities this is the most transparent one right?
 - We all know what prayer is
 - We had to sort through what exactly apostle's teaching meant
 - And fellowship
 - And the breaking of bread
 - But it is clear that being devoted to prayer means being devoted to prayer.
- But what we really have to grasp is this:
 - It would be really easy for us to just cruise through this priority with this thought
 - I need to prioritize prayer.
 - But that is not all that this priority shows us.
 - Yes, you ought to personally cultivate a prayer life.
 - But what does it mean to be devoted to prayer as a church? It means to prioritize praying together as the gathered church.

- In other words, you could be flourishing in private prayer, but still not be prioritizing prayer like Acts 2:42 is speaking of.
- Acts 2:42 is speaking of praying together as the gathered church.

Transition: Like we have done with the other priorities, let's ask this question secondly.

How did the early church display being devoted to praying together?

- ✓ Well, one thing is for sure-
 - The book of Acts shows us who the early church displayed this priority.
 - The book of Acts is full of prayer, but we are just going to consider specific times when the gathered church is praying.
- The church prayed for guidance on the basis of God's Word (1:24)
 - They looked at what Scripture prophesied regarding Judas Iscariot's replacement and they sought the Lord about who it should be.
- The church prayed in the face of persecution (4:23-30)
 - **Acts 4:23-30** When they had been released, they went to their own *companions* and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. ²⁴ And when they heard *this*, they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, "O Lord, it is You who MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM, ²⁵ who by the Holy Spirit, *through* the mouth of our father David Your servant, said, 'WHY DID THE GENTILES RAGE, AND THE PEOPLES DEVISE FUTILE THINGS?' ²⁶ 'THE KINGS OF THE EARTH TOOK THEIR STAND, AND THE RULERS WERE GATHERED TOGETHER AGAINST THE LORD AND AGAINST HIS CHRIST.' ²⁷ "For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with - the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ²⁸ to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur. ²⁹ "And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your

bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence,
³⁰ while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus."

- The church prayed at the recognition of deacons (6:6)
 - No doubt they prayed about who should be deacons, but they went further, once they were selected they prayed for them.
 - Why? Because they knew God had to enable those men to serve.
- The church prayed for Peter when he was in prison (12:12)
 - **Acts 12:1-17** Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church in order to mistreat them. ² And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword. ³ When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. Now it was during the days of Unleavened Bread. ⁴ When he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out before the people. ⁵ So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God. ⁶ On the very night when Herod was about to bring him forward, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and guards in front of the door were watching over the prison. ⁷ And behold, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter's side and woke him up, saying, "Get up quickly." And his chains fell off his hands. ⁸ And the angel said to him, "Gird yourself and put on your sandals." And he did so. And he said to him, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me." ⁹ And he went out and continued to follow, and he did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. ¹⁰ When they had passed the first and second guard, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city, which opened for them by itself; and they went

out and went along one street, and immediately the angel departed from him. ¹¹ When Peter came to himself, he said, "Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting." ¹² And when he realized *this*, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. ¹³ When he knocked at the door of the gate, a servant-girl named Rhoda came to answer. ¹⁴ When she recognized Peter's voice, because of her joy she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter was standing in front of the gate. ¹⁵ They said to her, "You are out of your mind!" But she kept insisting that it was so. They kept saying, "It is his angel." ¹⁶ But Peter continued knocking; and when they had opened *the door*, they saw him and were amazed. ¹⁷ But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had led him out of the prison. And he said, "Report these things to James and the brethren." Then he left and went to another place.

- The church prayed for Barnabas and Saul as the beginning of the missionary journey (13:3)
 - **Acts 13:3** Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.
 - Just as once the deacons were recognized they prayed for the newly appointed deacons, so they prayed for those that were going out on the first missionary journey.
- The apostles prayed at the ordination of elders (14:23)
 - **Acts 14:19-23** But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. ²⁰ But while the disciples stood around him, he got up and entered the city. The next day he went away with Barnabas to Derbe. ²¹ After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, ²² strengthening the

souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and *saying*, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." ²³ When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

- The church prayed when Paul departed from Miletus on his journey (Acts 20:36)
 - **Acts 20:13-18** But we, going ahead to the ship, set sail for Assos, intending from there to take Paul on board; for so he had arranged it, intending himself to go by land. ¹⁴ And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and came to Mitylene. ¹⁵ Sailing from there, we arrived the following day opposite Chios; and the next day we crossed over to Samos; and the day following we came to Miletus. ¹⁶ For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be in Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost. ¹⁷ From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church. ¹⁸ And when they had come to him, he said to them, "You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time,
 - **Acts 20:36** When he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.
- The church prayed for Paul and the apostolic company when he left Tyre (21:5)
 - **Acts 21:1-6** When we had parted from them and had set sail, we ran a straight course to Cos and the next day to Rhodes and from there to Patara; ² and having found a ship crossing over to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail. ³ When we came in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left, we kept sailing to Syria and landed at Tyre; for there the ship was to unload its cargo. ⁴ After looking up the disciples, we stayed there seven days; and they kept telling Paul through the Spirit not to set foot in Jerusalem. ⁵

When our days there were ended, we left and started on our journey, while they all, with wives and children, escorted us until *we were* out of the city. After kneeling down on the beach and praying, we said farewell to one another. ⁶ Then we went on board the ship, and they returned home again.

Transition: It is rather obvious that the reflex of the church in Acts was to pray together.

- ✓ And of course all of this puts meat on the statement in Acts 2:42 that the church continually devoted itself to prayer-specifically together.

What should characterize our praying as we devote ourselves to praying together?

- ✓ Here is where we are informed from all of Scripture one what biblical prayer is like.
- ✓ There are various acronymns that are used to help summarize the components of prayer.
 - Adoration, Confession, thanksgiving, supplication
 - FACTS adding Faith to the start of that because all pray must be believing prayer.
- ✓ But I am going to give three R for the components of what our prayer should be marked by.
- Repenting before the Lord
 - **1 John 1:8-10** If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.
 - As believers in Christ we are already forgiven once and for all on the basis of what Jesus did for us on the cross.
 - His work on the cross was applied to our account the moment we trusted in Christ.

- But as followers of Jesus we still sin and a chief evidence that we are truly followers of Jesus is that we continue to turn from our sin (that is confess and repent) and we continue to trust in Jesus alone.
- So, as we pray together as God's people our prayers ought to include repentance before the Lord as a gathered people.
- We are to be holy for God is Holy
 - But don't ever confuse that reality with acting holy by not admitting our sin.
- The reality we are not going to be what we want to be and must be until we see Jesus and He totally takes away our remaining sin.
- And until then, part of being holy is continually admitting we are not yet completely set apart from sin in our practice.
- In other words, holiness here on this earth before glorification involves admitting we are not as holy as we should be and continually turning from that unholiness remaining in our lives.
- Our prayer as God's people gathered together ought not give the impression to any one listening in that we have it all together and we have no sin to turn from.
 - If we say we have no sin, we lie and the truth is not in us.
- Obviously in a gathered setting, there are specific sins that we should personally be turning from that are not appropriate to do so with God's gathered people.
- But we would do well to be much more transparent before God together in prayer about the areas in our lives that we are in need of confession to the Lord about.
- Rejoicing in the Lord
 - And under this I mean things like this:
 - Worship of the Lord in prayer, adoration, exalting the Lord in prayer, exulting in the Lord in prayer, giving thanks before the Lord.
- We need to hear one another worshipping in prayer together.
- We need to agree with the adoration of our Lord that another brother or sister is leading us in.
- Probably one of the better examples of this within the church would be how Paul opens most of his letters.
 - He is always giving thanks before the Lord worshipping the Lord for what He has done in the lives of those Paul is writing to.
- We should be like the believers in Acts 4 and we ought to have more and more Scripture committed to our memory and we ought to be praying expressly Scriptural truths in praise to the Lord in prayer.
 - **Acts 4:24-26** and when they heard *this*, they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, "O Lord, it is You who MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM, ²⁵ who by the Holy Spirit, *through* the mouth of our father David Your servant, said, 'WHY DID THE GENTILES RAGE, AND THE PEOPLES DEVISE FUTILE THINGS? ²⁶ 'THE KINGS OF THE EARTH TOOK THEIR STAND, AND THE RULERS WERE GATHERED TOGETHER AGAINST THE LORD AND AGAINST HIS CHRIST.'
- O how we need to hear one another expressing our only hope in the Lord and worshipping Him together in prayer.
- God uses this to stoke the fires of our personal prayer lives
- He uses this to help us individually to pray without ceasing.
- Requesting things of the Lord
 - ✓ Unfortunately this is the area where our immaturity is so much on display in our prayer lives.
 - ✓ Why do I say that?
 - Well, because first, this is the area of prayer that we run to or the area that we emphasize to the

exclusion of repentance before the Lord and rejoicing in the Lord in prayer.

- But secondly, it reveals our immaturity because we tend to pray for the things unconnected to the advancement of the gospel in us and through us.
 - We tend to make requests about things unrelated to or not motivated by a thirst for the advancement of God's Kingdom.
- ✓ So what should we make requests for before the Lord as God's people praying together?
 - Well, let's go back and recapture what the Lord taught His disciples regarding prayer.
 - In Matthew 6 Jesus gives a model that we can use as a guide for our prayer personally, but even as God's people gathered.
 - **Matthew 6:9-13** "Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. ¹⁰ 'Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹ 'Give us this day our daily bread. ¹² 'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³ 'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. *For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*'
 - 1st Petition: Pray that God is reverenced, honored, glorified and exalted
 - Hallowed by your name
 - 2nd Petition: Pray for the coming of God's reign
 - Your Kingdom come
 - 3rd Petition: Pray that God's moral will would be done on earth
 - Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven
 - 4th Petition: Pray for immediate physical needs
 - Give us this day our daily bread

- 5th Petition: Pray for God's gracious application of forgiveness you already have in Christ to any current relational sin debt in your current practice.
 - Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors
- 6th Petition: Pray for deliverance from sin
 - Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

- ✓ We need to be requesting things of the Lord...
- For everything
 - Scripture is clear that this is the case.
 - As we just saw.
 - Praying for spiritual things and physical things.
 - Jesus taught us that we ought to pray for our daily needs.
 - But secondly....we need to be requesting things of the Lord...
- Especially those things that we know are God's revealed will
 - I say especially because of the examples we are given in Acts and in the epistles.
 - The Lord knows that we are always going to be praying about very physical things like our bills and our health and many other things.
 - And there is nothing wrong with that, but for some reason, He choose to give all throughout the NT the example of praying for things based on what He has said He would do.
 - And especially in the area of the advancement of the gospel in us and through us to those around us.
 - So first, generally, our prayers as a gathered church ought to especially focus in on anything that God has revealed is His will
 - **1 John 5:14-15** This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask

anything according to His will, He hears us.

¹⁵ And if we know that He hears us *in*

whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.

- So our prayers as God's people ought to be more and more informed by and filled with petitions and requests that are expressly revealed to be God's will.
- For example:
 - Lord, please help each one of us to turn away from anxiety and know your peace
 - Lord, please help each one of us to have a thankful spirit because we know that you have said that we are to give thanks in everything.
 - Lord, please help each one of us to be willing to be hated by the world as we follow you.
 - Lord, we ask that you might cause our love for you and one another to abound in all discernment and knowledge.
- But also, our prayers as a gathered church ought to be especially focused in on the advancement of the gospel in us and through us
 - Jesus taught us this.
 - **John 14:13-14** "Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.
¹⁴ "If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do *it*."
 - **John 15:7** "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask

whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

- **John 15:16** "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.
- Paul modeled this focus:
 - **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.
 - Devote yourself to prayer that is alert with thanksgiving (2)
 - Devote yourself to prayer that is focused on gospel advancement (3-4)
 - Praying for gospel advancement through one another (3a)
 - "For us as well"
 - Praying for gospel advancement through God given gospel opportunities (3b)
 - Praying for gospel advancement through faithful ministry (4)

Transition: So....

- ✓ **What does it mean to be devoted to prayer as a church?** To prioritize praying together as the gathered church.
- ✓ How did the early church display being devoted to praying together?
- ✓ What should characterize our praying as we devote ourselves to praying together?
 - Repenting before the Lord
 - Rejoicing in the Lord
 - Requesting things of the Lord
 - For everything
 - Especially those things we know are God's revealed will
 - And at the core of these things is praying about the advancement of the gospel in and through us.

What is being communicated when a church prioritizes praying together?

- ✓ Much could be said here, but I just want us to think of a few things so we can really recognize the beauty and importance of praying together as a church.
- That God is sovereign and powerful
 - There are many debates among God's people about what exactly it means that God is sovereign, that He is in control.
 - There is much disagreement, but prayer has a way of functionally showing that all believers believe that God is sovereign and in control.
 - We pray that God will save people--because we know He can and only He can.
 - We pray that God would do things that only He could do if He had access to people's hearts.
 - Every time we pray we are proclaiming that God is sovereign and that He is powerful.

- Don't you think it is important for a church to regularly as a gathered church communicate this truth to itself?
 - That God is sovereign and powerful.
- That we can do nothing apart from Jesus (John 15:4-8)
 - That is exactly what Jesus says about prayer
 - **John 15:4-8** "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither *can* you unless you abide in Me. ⁵ "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. ⁶ "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. ⁷ "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and *so* prove to be My disciples.
- That Jesus is the head of this church (Col. 1:16-18)
 - What would it mean if we gathered as a church and we gave lip service to God in prayer but busied ourselves with all the things that we can do instead of asking God to do things?
 - It would mean that Jesus was not the functional head of this church.
 - Again, today Jesus is continuing to do things by the Spirit in the church
 - IN a real sense, you can't say that is true unless we as His people are petitioning Him to act in and through us for His glory.
 - **Colossians 1:16-18** For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-- all things have been created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. ¹⁸ He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the

beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

How are we at this church attempting to be devoted to praying together?

- By starting each gathering with prayer
 - I grew up going to church and every single service started with prayer.
 - I went to college at a Christian college and every single class started with prayer
 - So it felt odd to me when I got my first none-Christian context office job and we had meetings and they just started without any prayer.
 - It felt odd because I had been used to being around other believers in similar meeting type situations and opened up those meetings with an expression of dependence upon God through prayer.
 - One of the ways we are attempting to be devoted to prayer here is that each time we gather we start off with prayer.
 - Expressing our dependence upon the Lord.
- By praising God in prayer at the Lord's Table
 - We remember what Christ has done for us among other ways by praying in praise to Him about what He has done before we take from His Table in remembrance of Him.
- By having a focused pastorally led time of corporate repentance before the Lord, rejoicing in the Lord, and requesting things of the Lord
 - We do this during this service at the start of the service
 - This is a sustained time of corporate prayer together where we can all agree together in prayer as we repent, rejoice and request.
 - BTW, a very helpful tip about how to pray when someone else is leading in prayer is this:

- Simply repeat in your heart before the Lord what they are saying and affirm it in your spirit if it is Scriptural.
- By spontaneously praying with one another over specific burdens
 - This is a really important practice.
 - Lets say a brother or sister mentions a burden to you today during our gathered day of worship
 - When appropriate just spontaneously ask them if you can pray with them about it right then.
- By gathering for specific times of prayer -right now that is Wednesday night.
 - Wednesday night
 - I realize that some are still at work then.
 - But if you can, even if you are tired and even if you have had busy day, and even if you don't want to fight traffic
 - You will find that gathering for prayer with God's people will be a blessing in your life and you will be a blessing to others.
 - At times during the 9 am service and we may be doing that more in the future

Conclusion:

- ✓ Here is the point, we are to be prioritizing praying together as God's people.
- ✓ In closing, let me give three pointed applications about this area.
 - First, it would be pleasing to the Lord for all of us to value gathered prayer more.
 - Will you do that.
 - Second, it would be pleasing to the Lord if as a result of this focus today we not only valued gathered prayer more, but were spurred on to praying and interceding before God more in secret.

- Third, do you want to be more joyful? Then give yourself to prayer, but as a gathered church and a scattered church.
 - **John 16:23-24** "In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. ²⁴ "Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.
- ✓ I would like to encourage us to take a practical step this week to emphasize praying together.
 - The point of this focus is emphasizing praying together as God's people gathered.
 - But what if we randomly prayed together throughout the week, don't you think that would also tend to help us to value gathering together to pray as a church?
- ✓ This week, I would like you to approach someone else in this church and ask if you could call each other sometime this week and just pray with them briefly or meet with them to pray.