

Devotion to Prayer

We have been looking at God's love for us – the major, overarching theme of the Bible.

We have been considering our response to love Him with all our heart, with all our mind and with all our strength.

More recently we have been considering this through the call to devotion, and in particular the devotions mentioned in Acts 2:42-47.

Prayer is one of the disciplines of devotion we see in the life of the fellowship in Acts 2:42-47.

The last time I spoke, I spoke about how we cannot do anything without abiding in the Vine – without the flow of the life of God's Spirit in our lives.

How we cannot be devoted without this and how we cannot be fruitful without this.

Prayer is something that will most certainly not be truly alive without the work of the Holy Spirit.

At the same time though, we know that prayer does not happen without us but it does not happen because of us.

A discipline in devotion is required.

Prayer is, I think, one of the most important activities that connects us to the kind of fruitfulness that Jesus calls us to.

Consider the following verses:

John 15:5 & 7

5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing... 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

16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

John 14:13-14

13 Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.

John 16:23-24

23 In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. 24 Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

1 John 5:14-15

14 And this is the confidence that we have toward 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 that we have asked of him.

1 John 3:21-24

21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; 22 and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. 23 And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. 24 Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.

1. Pray because we are completely dependent on Him
 - branches in the Vine,
 - connection is vital

Pray continually / constant in prayer

2. Pray because we have access to the throne room
 - assurance,
 - fellowship,
 - He hears us,
 - He will answer us, faith

Pray with confidence

3. Pray because of who HE is
 - sovereign,
 - almighty,
 - gracious...
 - He can and will provide the answer
 - He has the power, the authority and the desire to answer our prayers

- faith is who He is and not in what we do
 - not faith in our prayers,
 - or faith in our faith

Pray with conviction

4. Pray because he has given us the keys of the Kingdom

- Have delegated authority for the work of the Kingdom
 - under authority
 - commissioned
 - **Mt 18:15–20**
 - **Mt 16:13–20**
 - **Mt 28:18–20**
 - **Jn 20:19–23**
 - **Mt 9:1–8**
 - **1 Co 5:3–5**
- We are His Body
 - He does His work through us,
 - we are co-workers with Christ
 - Prayer is working with God
 - Doing the work of Jesus – our Head
- In a sense, the unfulfilled commission of a work to be done on earth that was given to Adam and Eve, is now regained, reassigned to us in the work of preaching the gospel and being co-workers with God in this and in prayer.
- Prayer, along with the proclamation of the gospel, is the chief work of the church
 - **Ac 12:4–12**
 - **Eph 6:18–20**
 - **Col 1:9**
 - **Col 1:24–2:5**
 - **Col 4:12–13**
 - **Ro 15:30**
 - **2 Co 1:11**
 - **Php 1:19**
 - **Phm 22**

- Part of being fruitful.
- Part of seeking the Kingdom
- Part of serving Him as sons and daughters
- A matter of obedience to our commission
 - Our task
 - Doing the will of the Father
 - On earth, as it is in heaven
- Agenda that comes from the throne of God
 - His will
- Persevere in prayer

Commitment in and to prayer

5. We pray together
- because devotion to prayers is incomplete without a participation in corporate prayer / in fellowship
 - Just as devotion to the fellowship is incomplete if there is not a regular 'together' expression of prayer

Pray in community – in one accord

In order to pray like this:

- It is necessary to walk the way Jesus walked...
- under authority,
- as a servant, doing the will of the Father,
- in obedience
- we are commissioned to act on behalf of the one under whose authority we are

In order to pray like this we need to be:

- Listening
- Hearing God
- Asking in line with His will and ways
 - petitions,
 - supplications,
 - intercession
 - Are all about 'asking'

Devotion to prayer then:

- IS devotion to PRAYER
- NOT to prayer meetings
- or being at prayer meetings

What would a devotion to prayer look like?

- Something that is alive in my heart
- Something I seek out opportunity for
- Something that is even more important to me than daily food
- Always ready to pray
- Proactive in prayer
- Constant in prayer
- Seeking to pray in the Spirit
- Flows naturally on the one hand but is pursued with the discipline of devotion on the other
- Have stamina / capacity to pray
- Have become familiar with the 'ways' of prayer
- Able to pray across a wide spectrum
 - Motivated to pray way beyond my own needs
 - Awareness that God wants all men and women everywhere to be saved
 - An outward focus

Story 1 – the way things are in the church... and in my/your life – our current reality

Prayer really should be a primary activity of the church.

- If we are honest then we know this
 - at least on some level
- Because the Holy Spirit has already put that understanding in our hearts
- But do we really believe that
- Do we believe it in a way that it finds a faith expression in our lives
 - the obedience of faith

Do we really believe that these devotions are as essential as eating and drinking?

- What would our daily lives / behaviour look like if we did believe this?

Story 2 – what it could look like... CHRISCO Fellowship as an example. Pray together three times a day, 7 days a week. See themselves as co-workers with Christ – this is where the name of the church comes from.

The teaching of the apostle's stirs us up to consistent and persistent prayer time and time again.

Their teaching also plays a part in helping to pray in line with God's will and ways.

What will devotion to prayer look like for you?

As much as God made prayer something we really should be doing all the time

- on our own and together,
- He never made it about the numbers
- The fervent prayer of one righteous man accomplishes much (Jam 5:16)

Comment on 22 April 2017

- If you feel you want to go:
- Pray before and pray after
 - don't trust in numbers,
 - any man
 - or in an event
- Go with a heart ready to 'be in one accord'
- Plan wisely – logistics

Prayer is also not a matter of many words (Matt 6:7-8).

It is about devotion,

- about heart,
- about faith,
- about persevering in prayer...
- And, when we are together, it is also about agreeing in prayer
- This is perhaps more about a being one in "heart and soul" than agreeing 100% on every detail

The word of God helps us know the will and way of God

- Helps keeps us aligned with His agenda in prayer
- Devotion to the apostle's teaching necessary in this

The breaking of bread reminds us of the foundation of our faith,

- the reason we have access to the throne room and why our prayers are heard

- That we pray in His name because we belong to Him
- and that being heard and answered depends on what He has done
 - and not our effort

Fellowship provides opportunity for us to pray together

- in agreement
- and encourages / strengthens us in and through prayer
- Praying together in one accord is a central part of how we express koinonia

Do we pray in one accord with each other?

- we have heard that before – Acts 1:14, 4:32 – one in heart and soul
- This is where our agreement in prayer comes from – koinonia
- Hearing God together
- Hearing God through each other
- Most often listening (and agreeing) more than speaking when we are praying together
- Pleasing to God

Prayer does not happen without us

- but it does not happen because of us.
- Our devotion to prayer is empowered by the Holy Spirit rather than self-effort

It is a partnership with God that

- He desires,
- initiates,
- empowers / resources
- and delivers on

A very unequal partnership, but still a partnership.

We cannot take credit for the result but God counts our prayers as extremely valuable.

Prayer, true prayer,

- comes from a heart that acknowledges and believes that we can do nothing without God,
- that He alone is sovereign,
- that He is the source of all life,
- that the earth is His and the fullness thereof
- and that He is good

The authority of the church – given to achieve it work

Mt 18:15–20

¹⁵ “If your brother sins (against you), go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶ But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. ¹⁸ **Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.** ¹⁹ **Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven.** ²⁰ **For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”**

Mt 16:13–20

¹³ Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” ¹⁴ And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” ¹⁵ He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” ¹⁶ Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” ¹⁷ And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹ **I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”** ²⁰ Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

Mt 28:18–20

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.** ¹⁹ **Go therefore** and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Jn 20:19–23

¹⁹ On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” ²⁰ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so

I am sending you.”²² And when he had said this, **he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.”**

Mt 9:1–8

And getting into a boat he crossed over and came to his own city.² And behold, some people brought to him a paralytic, lying on a bed. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven.”³ And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, “This man is blaspheming.”⁴ But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, “Why do you think evil in your hearts?⁵ For **which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise and walk’?**⁶ **But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins**”—he then said to the paralytic—**“Rise, pick up your bed and go home.”**⁷ And he rose and went home.⁸ When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men.

1 Co 5:3–5

³For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing.⁴ **When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus,**⁵ **you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.**

Prayer as the work of the Church

Ac 12:4–12

⁵So Peter was kept in prison, **but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church.**

⁶Now when Herod was about to bring him out, on that very night, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries before the door were guarding the prison.⁷ And behold, an angel of the Lord stood next to him, and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him, saying, “Get up quickly.” And the chains fell off his hands.⁸ And the angel said to him, “Dress 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 followed him. 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 the second guard, they came to the iron gate leading into the city. It opened for them of its own accord, and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel left him.¹¹ When Peter came to himself, he said, “Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of

Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.” ¹²When he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, **where many were gathered together and were praying.**

Eph 6:18–20

¹⁸**praying at all times in the Spirit**, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, ¹⁹**and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel**, ²⁰for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

Col 1:9

⁹And so, from the day we heard, **we have not ceased to pray for you**, asking that

Col 1:24–2:5

²⁴Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, ²⁵of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, ²⁶the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. ²⁷To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. ²⁸Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. ²⁹For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

2 For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all **who have not seen me face to face**, ²that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God’s mystery, which is Christ, ³in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ⁴I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. ⁵For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

Col 4:12–13

¹²Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, **always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God.** ¹³For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis.

Ro 15:30

³⁰ I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to **strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf**

2 Co 1:11

¹¹ **You also must help us by prayer**, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.

Php 1:19

¹⁹ for I know that **through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance,**

Phm 22

²² At the same time, prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping **that through your prayers I will be graciously given to you.**

Mt 18:18

31.15 συμφωνέω^a; συμφώνησις, εως f; σύμφωνον, ου n: to come to an agreement with, often implying a type of joint decision—‘to agree with, agreement.’

συμφωνέω^a: συμφωνήσας δὲ μετὰ τῶν ἐργατῶν ἐκ δηναρίου ‘he came to an agreement with the workmen for a denarius’ Mt 20:2.

συμφώνησις: τίς δὲ συμφώνησις Χριστοῦ πρὸς Βελιάρ; ‘do Christ and Beliar agree on anything?’ 2 Cor 6:15.

σύμφωνον: μὴ ἀποστερεῖτε ἀλλήλους, εἰ μήτι ἂν ἐκ συμφώνου πρὸς καιρόν ‘do not deny yourselves to each other, unless you agree to do so for a while’ 1 Cor 7:5.¹

4856 συμφωνέω [*sumphoneo* /soom·fo·neh·o/] v. From **4859**; TDNT 9:304; TDNTA 1287; GK 5244; Six occurrences; AV translates as “agree” three times, “agree with” twice, and “agree together” once. **1** to agree together. **2** to agree with one in making a bargain, to make an agreement, to bargain.²

4859 σύμφωνος [*sumphonos* /soom·fo·nos/] adj. From **4862** and 5456; TDNT 9:304; TDNTA 1287; GK 5247; AV translates as “consent” once. **1** harmonious, accordant, agreeing. **2** thing agreed upon, compact.³

4862 σύν, συνεπίσκοπος [*sun* /soon/] prep. A primary preposition denoting union; TDNT 7:766; TDNTA 1102; GK 5250 and together with Strongs 1985 as GK 5297; 125 occurrences; AV translates as “with” 123 times, “beside” once, and “accompany + 2064” once. **1** with.⁴

AGREE, AGREEMENT

A. Verbs.

1. SUMPHTONEŌ (συμφωνέω, (4856)), lit., to sound together (*sun*, together, *phōnē*, a sound), i.e., to be in accord, primarily of musical instruments, is used in the N.T. of the agreement (*a*) of persons concerning a matter, Matt. 18:19; 20:2, 13; Acts 5:9; (*b*) of the writers of Scripture, Acts 15:15; (*c*) of things that are said to be congruous in their nature, Luke 5:36. ¶

Note: Cp. *sumphōnēsis*, concord, 2 Cor. 6:15, ¶, and *sumphōnia*, music, Luke 15:25. ¶⁵

Acts 1:14, 4:46

31.23 ὁμοθυμαδόν: pertaining to mutual consent or agreement—‘with one mind, by common consent, unanimously.’ οὗτοι πάντες ἦσαν προσκατεροῦντες ὁμοθυμαδόν τῇ προσευχῇ ‘all these continued in prayer with one mind’ Ac 1:14. In a number of languages ‘with one mind’ would need to be rendered as ‘prayed for the same things’ or ‘said the same in their prayers.’ ἔδοξεν ἡμῖν γενομένοιμαδὸν ἐκλεξαμένοις ἄνδρας πέμψαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς ‘we unanimously agreed to choose some

¹ Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 367). New York: United Bible Societies.

² Strong, J. (1995). [Enhanced Strong's Lexicon](#). Woodside Bible Fellowship.

³ Strong, J. (1995). [Enhanced Strong's Lexicon](#). Woodside Bible Fellowship.

⁴ Strong, J. (1995). [Enhanced Strong's Lexicon](#). Woodside Bible Fellowship.

⁵ Vine, W. E., & Bruce, F. F. (1981). [Vine's Expository dictionary of Old and New Testament words](#) (Vol. 2, pp. 43–44). Old Tappan NJ: Revell.

messengers to send to you' Ac 15:25. The expression 'we unanimously agreed' may also be rendered as 'we were in agreement that.'⁶

3661 ὁμοθυμαδόν [*homothumadon* /hom·oth·oo·mad·on/] adv. From a compound of the base of 3674 and 2372; TDNT 5:185; TDNTA 684; GK 3924; 12 occurrences; AV translates as "with one accord" 11 times, and "with one mind" once. **1** with one mind, with one accord, with one passion. *Additional Information:* A unique Greek word, used 10 of its 12 New Testament occurrences in the Book of Acts, helps us understand the uniqueness of the Christian community. Homothumadon is a compound of two words meaning to "rush along" and "in unison". The image is almost musical; a number of notes are sounded which, while different, harmonise in pitch and tone. As the instruments of a great concert under the direction of a concert master, so the Holy Spirit blends together the lives of members of Christ's church.⁷

3674 ὁμοῦ [*homou* /hom·oo/] adv. Genitive case of *homos* (the same, akin to 260) as adv; GK 3938; Three occurrences; AV translates as "together" three times. **1** together: of persons assembled together. *Additional Information:* For synonyms see entry 260, *hama*. See entry 5807 for comparison of synonyms.⁸

2372 θυμός [*thumos* /thoo·mos/] n m. From 2380; TDNT 3:167; TDNTA 339; GK 2596; 18 occurrences; AV translates as "wrath" 15 times, "fierceness" twice, and "indignation" once. **1** passion, angry, heat, anger forthwith boiling up and soon subsiding again. **2** glow, ardour, the wine of passion, inflaming wine (which either drives the drinker mad or kills him with its strength).⁹

ACCORD

A. Adverb.

HOMOTHUMADON (ὁμοθυμαδόν, (3661)), of one accord (from *homos*, same, *thumos*, mind), occurs eleven times, ten in the Acts, 1:14; 2:46; 4:24; 5:12; 7:57; 8:6; 12:20; 15:25; 18:12; 19:29, and the other in Rom. 15:6, where, for A.V., "with one mind," the R.V. has "with one accord," as throughout the Acts. See MIND.¶

Note: In Acts 2:1, the adverb *homou*, "together," is so rendered in the R.V., for A.V., "of one accord."¹⁰

31.23 ὁμοθυμαδόν: pertaining to mutual consent or agreement—'with one mind, by common consent, unanimously.' οἱ πάντες ἦσαν προσκατεροῦντες ὁμοθυμαδόν τῇ προσευχῇ 'all these continued in prayer with one mind' Ac 1:14. In a number of languages 'with one mind' would need to be rendered as 'prayed for the same things' or 'said the same in their prayers.' ἔδοξεν ἡμῖν γενομένοις μαδὸν ἐκλεξαμένοις ἄνδρας πέμψαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς 'we unanimously agreed to choose some

⁶ Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, pp. 367–368). New York: United Bible Societies.

⁷ Strong, J. (1995). [Enhanced Strong's Lexicon](#). Woodside Bible Fellowship.

⁸ Strong, J. (1995). [Enhanced Strong's Lexicon](#). Woodside Bible Fellowship.

⁹ Strong, J. (1995). [Enhanced Strong's Lexicon](#). Woodside Bible Fellowship.

¹⁰ Vine, W. E., & Bruce, F. F. (1981). [Vine's Expository dictionary of Old and New Testament words](#) (Vol. 2, p. 23). Old Tappan NJ: Revell.

messengers to send to you' Ac 15:25. The expression 'we unanimously agreed' may also be rendered as 'we were in agreement that.'¹¹

¹¹ Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). [*Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains*](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, pp. 367–368). New York: United Bible Societies.