

# We Will Give Ourselves to Prayer

by Hugh Morrison

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of prayer in ministry, citing the early church's example and the largeness of the promises connected to prayer.*

**Duration:** 44:07

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Acts 2:47, Acts 6:1-7

**Topics:** "Prayer"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on Acts chapter 6, specifically verse 4. The passage highlights the attention of God's disciples, which is centered on prayer and the ministry of the word. The speaker emphasizes the simplicity of this formula for growth in discipleship. By giving their attention to prayer and the word of God, the disciples saw the spread of the word and an increase in the number of disciples in Jerusalem. The speaker encourages the audience to adopt this same focus in their own lives and ministries, believing that it will lead to rapid growth in discipleship.

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## Transcript

Hello, good evening. My name is Hugh Morrison, just in case you don't know, I'm from Marguerite Valley. And Tracey and I and our family have been there for the last 12 years, and the Lord has put something on my heart for us.

So why don't we just pray, and then I'll share from the Scripture. Father, Lord, I just pray that you'd help us right now. I pray you'd convince us of your truth, Lord.

I pray your Spirit would work in our hearts, in no uncertain way. God, that you would grab a hold of us, Jesus, that your Spirit would come. I pray that you'd help me to preach everything you have placed upon my heart, Lord.

That it would come out exactly as you would have it come in. And Lord, it would be received in the very way that you want it received. Jesus, surely, Lord, we're not turning to your Word for nothing.

You have an intention and a purpose, Lord, and I praise you for it. You've gathered us together tonight, Lord, for your namesake and for your glory and praise. So God, speak to our hearts.

Speak to us, Lord. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. Well, if you have your Bibles, I want to share just a passage from Acts chapter 6. Acts chapter 6. And I just want to read the first seven verses. I'm sure you're familiar with the passage.

In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Christian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the Word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom.

We will turn this responsibility over to them and we'll give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the Word. This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, also Philip, Procaris, Nicanor, Timon, Permanus, and Nicholas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism.

They presented these men to the apostles who prayed and laid their hands on them. So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

I just want to share from this passage, mainly at the end of verse four, and I just want to ask you what has your attention. There's lots of things that can have our attention. In ministry, there's all kinds of things.

I don't know what has your attention, but here's just a simple thing. It's a very simple phrase, and we know what had the attention of God's disciples. It's given right here, and so this is their formula, their program, their focus, and sometimes the simplicity causes us to lose sight of it or just kind of put it aside or not really see it for what it is.

But I just pray that God would speak to us tonight, and this is their focus. We will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the Word. That's not very complicated, is it? And so I want to share on that tonight.

That word, we will give our attention, actually means to be earnest towards. We will be earnest towards prayer and the ministry of the Word. And really, I want to focus on prayer, or we will be constantly diligent toward prayer.

That's what it means. And so what has our attention? What are we constantly diligent towards? And this is God's agenda. This is God's method, and I find that today it's not a very popular method, especially in North America, possibly in the Canadian National Baptist Convention.

Are we giving our attention? Are we constantly diligent towards prayer? Could you say, and this is daily, this is weekly, could you say that in your heart, in your life, in your ministry, this is the attention, this is where your attention is, it's where you're focused on. You've zoomed in, you see it, it's prayer and the ministry of the Word. And I believe it flows out of that.

You know, it's interesting in this, and I don't know if you'd agree with this order, but the Bible says we'll give our attention to prayer and then the ministry of the Word. You know, is it like that for us? Is prayer first? It is. In this passage, it's first.

We will give our attention to prayer. And then out of that will flow the ministry of God's Word. We can give ourselves to the ministry of the Word, and yet if we haven't prayed, really, we're rowing against the wind and the waves, aren't we? We're not making much headway.

We can do that. We can give our attention to community involvement. Maybe we're giving our attention to worship and, you know, the kind of worship program we have, you know, upbeat contemporary music.

We can give our attention, you know, to the format we have or a certain church growth strategy. We can give our attention to all kinds of things, being, you know, people or seeker-friendly or all kinds of things. But, you know, simply in the Word of God, they gave their attention to prayer first and foremost.

But that's not popular. You know, I have a little description from Ian Bounds about, you know, how the prayer should be first, and it says, The praying which makes a prayerful ministry is not a little praying put in as we put a flavor, put flavor in to give it a pleasant smack. But the praying must be in the body and form the blood and the bones.

Prayer is no petty duty put into a corner, no piecemeal performance made out of the fragments of time which have been snatched from busyness and other engagements of life. But it means the best of our time, the heart of our time and strength must be given to it. It does not mean the closet absorbed in the study or swallowed up in the activities of ministerial duties.

But it means the closet first, the study and activities second, both study and activities freshened and made efficient by the closet. Prayer that affects one's ministry must give tone to one's life. The praying which gives color and bent to character is no pleasant hurried pastime.

It must enter as strongly into the heart and life as Christ's strong crying and tears did. It must draw out the soul into agony of desire as Paul's did. It must be an inwrought fire and force like the effectual fervent prayer of James.

It must be of that quality which when put into the golden censer and incense before God works mightily spiritual throws and revolutions. The prayer that makes much of our preaching must be made much of. The character of our praying will determine the character of our preaching.

Light praying will make light preaching. Boy, that's quite a phrase, isn't it? Light praying will make light preaching. Prayer makes preaching strong, gives its unction and makes it stick.

In every ministry, weighty for good, prayer has always been a serious business. The preacher must be preeminently a man of prayer. His heart must graduate in the school of prayer.

In the school of prayer only can the heart learn to preach. No learning can make up for the failure to pray. No earnestness, no diligence, no study, no gifts will supply its lack.

Talking to men for God is a great thing. But talking to God for men is greater still. I mean, that's quite a phrase, isn't it? Talking to men for God is a great thing, that's esteemed.

But talking to God for men is greater still. He will never talk well and with real success to men for God who has not learned well how to talk to God for men. It's a daily battle.

I believe that if we're to give our attention, if we're to set our focus and determination to pray and to seek the face of God, we will enter into a daily battle for it. And, you know, one of the reasons it's a daily battle is because Satan fights against it. I mean, doesn't he fight against praying? I mean, how many of us setting ourselves in that direction have not been distracted as he sought to distract the disciples right from within the church that they would neglect prayer and the ministry of the Word for something that's good.

And he, right from within, stirred up the believers, a little bit of quarreling going on, to grab a hold of their attention, to distract them, to woo them away to something good. Oh, we need to settle this. But no, it was such a great work to them that they would not neglect prayer or the ministry of God's Word.

And boy, when we see things in their value, then we see, you know, the priority of things and other things go to the wayside. They are so much lesser. You know, prayer first and foremost.

Satan attacks it. Why? Because in prayer we touch a God who can do anything. Jesus, who's come to destroy the works of the devil, is the one we're coming through and we come to God in prayer.

And he's the one who transfers people out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. Can you imagine that Satan attacks prayer? I mean, if he can keep us from praying, what has he kept us from? But not only does Satan battle against it, you know, I put down our flesh comes against it. Doesn't yours? I mean, prayer is hard work, isn't it? I mean, does your flesh want to do hard work? It's the last thing it wants to do.

But not only is it hard work, it's humbling work. Don't we have to bend down, get on our knees, bow our heads before God, humble ourselves under his mighty hand that in due time he might lift us up? I mean, it's humbling and it's the last thing. The flesh doesn't want to be crucified, doesn't want to be humble.

It wants to assert itself and say, I can do something independently of God, really. I don't really need him. I can go on my own.

I can preach. I can do this. I can visit.

I'm a people person. I have a strategy. I've learned.

I've read. And I can go along without seeking the face of God and humbling myself. But you know, it's also, not only is it a humbling work, but it's a hidden work.

And the flesh doesn't want to be hidden, does it? It wants to be on the street corner praying or out visiting. It wants to be up here preaching. It wants to be doing anything but hidden in a closet away where no one sees except God alone.

And I think for those reasons, we battle the flesh battles against prayer, doesn't it? It wants to be prominent. It wants to be seen. It wants to be applauded and patted.

But in prayer, who's applauding and patting you on the back for prayer? I mean, we don't get much applause for that, do we? Oh, preaching, that's a good sermon. You know, people shake your hand. Oh, what a wonderful sermon.

That was so good. I don't know if I've ever had anybody say that to me about prayer. It's hidden.

It's between you and God. And God sees. And the one who sees in secret will reward you openly.

But not only does our flesh battle against it, I believe our minds do as well. We argue against ourselves. Oh, there's so much to do.

And all of a sudden, in our minds comes, oh, that situation that we have to rush to. And we have to get up and, oh, well, maybe I can snatch a little bit of time here. But our minds are running.

And we never wait upon God long enough to still our minds and to come before the one, you know, who can do all things. And so our minds are racing. We have this to do, that person to visit.

You know, we have to study. We have to prepare. We have to give ourselves to that and this.

And we're slowly lulled away so that even at each of the heart of our time in prayer, that we can't get still long enough to really come before the Lord and hear His voice. Because so many other voices are speaking to us. And so our minds argue against taking time to pray, even while we're on our knees.

But, you know, I have a little quote because I believe time does tick against it. And, you know, sometimes it's best to take off our watches and put them aside when we go to prayer. And we need to give much time to prayer.

This was said, one of the greatest lies of Satan is that we just don't have enough time to pray. Have you ever said that to yourself? I just don't have enough time. However, all of us have enough time to sleep, eat, and breathe.

Now listen to this. As soon as we realize that prayer is as important as sleeping, eating, and breathing, we'll be amazed at how much more time will be available for us in prayer. I mean, is prayer as important as sleeping, eating, and breathing in the spiritual life? Absolutely.

So then we give time to those things, don't we? To the things that we esteem and value. We will give our attention to prayer. And the last thing I have is unbelief, or unbelief raises its ugly head against it.

I mean, even as you go to your knees, you know, can you hear, Oh, well, God is sovereign. He's going to do it anyway. I mean, does it really matter if I pray and seek the face of God on this? I think I have an idea in mind what to do.

Do I really need to hear from God? I mean, He's given me wisdom. I have a brain. I'm supposed to use it.

You know, I can weigh the good and, you know, the way and the bad, and surely I can, you know, reason things out. Or, you know, I mean, you've prayed before and really nothing happened. Oh, there's so much to pray about.

You're really, you know, how can you pray for it all? And you're defeated before you get down on your knees. And unbelief raises its ugly head. But, you know, our spirits can battle against it as well.

You know, sometimes when we're dull, apathetic in spirit, aren't you battling to go and find that place of prayer? I mean, the very one and the very place we need to go to, dullness and apathy of spirit, keep us from it. And yet there is where we meet the God who's a consuming fire. We want to be hot.

We want to have our spirits quickened. And yet the very place that we find, you know, the heart of God coming to us and touching us with that call from the altar and inflaming our spirits, that's the one we avoid. And so we go on in apathy and dullness and wondering why not so much is happening.

And yet the one who could quicken us and refresh us and revive us and put a fire into our hearts and make us as flames of fire, which He says His servants are, is the very one we avoid. Keep your spiritual fervor in serving the Lord. That's what the Scripture says.

And so I believe for all those reasons we're in a daily battle to give our attention, to constantly give our attention to prayer. Because that's where the battle is won. I want to give you some reasons why we should give our attention to prayer.

And I've listed a bunch of them. And I pray that God will speak to our hearts through these. And one is the largeness of the promises connected to it.

I mean, when you think of the promises connected to prayer, ought we not to pray? Ought we not to give our attention to it? Think of just one, John 14, 14. Ask anything in my name and I will do it. I mean, do we believe that? If we believe that, brothers and sisters, can we honestly say we'll neglect that place? If we believe that we can ask anything in the name of Jesus Christ who sits at the right hand of God with all power and authority, that if we give our attention to prayer, and he says, ask anything, and we take him at face value, then will we not pray? I mean, surely we will.

That's just logical, isn't it? The one who can do anything we come to. You see here, right in this passage, we see another reason why to give our attention to prayer. It's effective.

It was the early church's way. Do we really want to be an early church? I mean, we say that, oh, we want to be a New Testament church. What did they do? They gave their attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.

What? It was that simple, really? They gave their attention to prayer first. And the ministry of the word flowed after that. Look at verse 7. That's why I read that prayer.

So, they remained undistracted from prayer and the ministry of the word. So, the word of God, what? Spread. And the number of disciples in Jerusalem increased, what? Rapidly.

The Lord was adding to their number, what? Day by day, those who were being saved. That's what it says in Acts chapter 2. I mean, isn't that what we want? We want the number of disciples increasing rapidly. And is anything else really accomplishing that? But this, we did.

This did. And we see it. It has worked.

And this is the word of God. This is the truth that we say we believe. And it's that simple.

Pray and minister the word of God. Give your attention to these two things. And the number of disciples in where your area, in Marguerite Valley, will increase rapidly.

I mean, isn't this true? This is the testimony of the New Testament. The testimony of God to the churches down through the ages. Listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

Give your attention to prayer and the ministry of the word. And the word of God will spread rapidly. And the number of disciples will increase rapidly.

I mean, that's what we say we want, isn't it? Here's another reason I believe. The Spirit came in response to prayer. The Spirit always comes in response to prayer.

Isn't it the Spirit that we need to do His mighty work? I mean, who else saves souls? Who else takes the word of God and drives it into the human heart? And breaks up the fellow ground and causes somebody to fall on their knees and cry to God, God save me. Who is it that does that work? Isn't it the Spirit of God

who is now here on the earth poured out upon His church? And doesn't He come in response to prayer into our meetings and gatherings? See, Jesus at His baptism, the Bible says, as He was praying, what happened? Heaven was opened and the Spirit of God descended upon Him. In response to prayer.

I mean, can we see that? That as we're praying, heaven opens up and the resources of heaven come down and the Spirit of God with it and we begin to see the movement of God in our churches, in our communities. I mean, then we see that in Acts chapter 2 at Pentecost. They were, what, continually giving themselves to prayer, it says.

And the day of Pentecost, a mighty rushing wind came into that building. Tongues of fire rested on them and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak and proclaim the mighty deeds of God. And 3,000 people were saved at the preaching of one sermon.

I mean, how about now or work that day? In answer to their praying, the Spirit of God came. 3,000 people saved in one day at the preaching of one sermon. Now we have 3,000 sermons being preached and one person being saved.

But they were continually giving themselves to prayer and the Spirit came in response to prayer. And then in Acts chapter 4 when they were threatened, right? And they said, don't teach anymore in the name of Jesus. And they were threatened.

And they went back to the believers and what did they do? They gave themselves to prayer and they cried out with one voice. And they said, Lord, you know, give us boldness and courage while you stretch out your hand. And then the Bible says this, and when they prayed, after they had prayed, the building, the place where they were praying, it shook.

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. And they went out and spoke the Word of God boldly. You know, it continued to spread.

The Word of God continued to run and have force and wait. Why? They gave themselves again to prayer. The Spirit of God came.

They were filled with the Spirit. They went out boldly. People kept being saved.

God's way. They gave their attention to prayer. I have an account here of Reese Howells.

I don't know if you've ever read his biography. It's one of the greatest biographies I've ever read. And when he went to South Africa, and this is the Spirit coming in response to prayer.

Upon our arrival in South Africa, Reese Howells began to speak about revival. Within six weeks, the Holy Spirit began to move upon the Christians. Twelve missionaries, just twelve, were praying together.

They sang, Lord, send a revival. Let it begin with me. God assured Reese Howells that revival was on the way.

Three days later, revival began. The Spirit of God began to come. In the Sunday evening service, a young African girl who had fasted and prayed for three days.

A young African girl who had fasted and prayed for three days. That's quite a method, isn't it? Began to weep and pray in the service. Within five minutes, the whole congregation knelt, weeping and praying.

The Holy Spirit fell upon them. That night, the sound of prayer could be heard in every village. For six days, the Spirit convicted people.

And the prayer services were continually filled with people who stood to confess their sins. Everyone who came near seemed to be gripped by the Holy Spirit. For fifteen months, there were two revival meetings each day.

And hundreds of people came to Jesus Christ. I mean, that's quite a method, isn't it? Twelve missionaries giving themselves to prayer. One young African girl.

One giving herself to pray and fast for three days. And the Spirit of God comes upon a meeting. One meeting.

And out of that flows the Spirit of God and His mighty working. And hundreds of people come to Christ in fifteen months. That's the working of God, brothers and sisters.

Ought we not then to give our attention to prayer if the Spirit comes in response to prayer? He doesn't come in response to being out in the community. Never read that. He doesn't come to, you know, beautiful worship music.

I've never heard that. He doesn't come if all the churches just come together. Some kind of movement if we bring everybody together and we're all one.

The Bible doesn't say that. They were constantly giving themselves to prayer and the Spirit of God was poured out upon them. And then they were one.

You know, I have this down that the men and women who have known God most intimately and been used most effectively gave their attention to prayer. I mean, don't we see Jacob wrestling all night with God until he had a blessing? I mean, isn't that right? He was wrestling with God all night and God blessed him in that place. And his walk was different after that, wasn't it? Don't we see Moses forty days on the mountain with God, coming down off that mountain with his face radiant so that the people really couldn't look upon him.

And he had to put a veil over his face because he had been in the presence of God so much. And how God used that man so mightily. Don't we see Hannah, the Bible says, pouring out her soul to God.

And out of that fervent effectual prayer came a Samuel who turned a nation back to God through the prayer of one woman. The Bible says in the book of Psalms that David gave himself to prayer evening, morning, and at noon. And what God, the victories that God wrought, Goliath and many others through that one man.

We see Daniel at the face of death. What did he know? In the face of death and being thrown into the lion's den, still giving himself to pray three times a day, he would not be distracted, he would not be turned away, he would give his attention to prayer. What did he know? Can't we see Jesus, the Bible says in the book of Hebrews, with loud cries and tears, praying and pleading with his Father who was delivered over to the cross but who God raised by his power from the dead, by which we're saved.

Paul, the Bible says, who constantly gave himself to prayer, that's what he said to the Thessalonians, as I constantly pray for you, constantly. And what did God do through that man? I mean, brothers and sisters,

can we not see and look back in history, in Hebrews chapter 11 we have a record of faith, don't we have the same record of praying men and women who God used so effectively because they were much with God? Hudson Taylor, you know, the China Inland Mission, when Jonathan Goforth was coming to China, and how God used Hudson Taylor, he wrote him a letter and he said this, you will only go forward in China on your knees. I mean, isn't that true of some of our villages? Of the Maritimes? Can we go forward in really any other way except by seeking the face of God and giving our attention to prayer? And the ministry of the word flowing out of that? I wrote this, nothing else will win the victory in so many different circumstances.

Are you not frustrated with different circumstances? Marriages that just are going apart, and you can't seem to, you're counseling but it's not working. That person who you're witnessing to, and they just, they're not coming to Christ. Those church members who are, you know, fighting, or so focused on such foolish things, and you just can't seem to get them focused on Jesus Christ? How many different circumstances right now where we just don't know what to do? But wasn't that the disciples coming down from the Mount of Transfiguration, and they found they couldn't cast the demon out, and Jesus said, this kind can come only out by prayer.

By prayer. In the book of Mark. I mean, isn't that true in some of our circumstances that we're frustrated with, and we just don't know what to do, and we wring our hands, and we feel discouraged that that kind, that circumstance, that situation, that person can only be touched by praying and seeking the face of God who can do anything, who can reach them in a moment, and turn the situation upside down? We will give our attention to prayer.

That's what the disciples said, and that's what they knew, and Jesus had modeled that for them. You know, I have another quote, and this is Praying Hyde. I don't know if you've ever read the life of Praying Hyde.

John Hyde. And this is a man, he was, Wilbur Chapman was his name, and he gave a testimony, and he was doing gospel meetings, and it was hard going. It says he was kind of like plowing through mud.

He says, we believe in prayers never before. I have learned some great lessons concerning prayer. I know that all great revivals are born of prayer.

As one of our missions, at one of our missions in England, the audience was extremely small. Have you ever done that? Results seemed impossible. But I received a note saying that an American missionary was coming to town and was going to pray God's blessing upon our work.

He was known as Praying Hyde. Almost, this is his testimony, almost instantly the tide turned. The hall was packed.

My first invitation meant 50 men for Jesus Christ. As we were leaving, I said, Mr. Hyde, I want you to pray for me. He came to my room, turned the key in the door, dropped on his knees, waited five minutes without a single syllable coming from his lips.

I could hear my own heart thumping and beating. I felt the hot tears running down my face. I knew I was with God.

Then with upturned face down, which tears were streaming, he said, Oh God. Then for five minutes at least, he was still again. And then when he knew he was talking with God, his arm went around my

shoulder and there came up from the depth of his heart such petitions for men as I had never heard before.

I rose from my knees to know what real prayer was. We believe that prayer is mighty and we believe it as we never did before. You can be sure that after that they gave their attention to prayer.

They were giving their attention to having meetings and gospel preaching, but they hadn't given themselves or given their attention to prayer. Results were small. Oh well, that's just the time we're in.

You know, it's hard going here. Not many people believe we're in a secular society. It's post, you know, post-Christian era kind of.

And we have all those arguments and our mind plays those things to kind of, you know, you're doing okay, you're doing the best you can. But if we would give our attention to prayer and we would seek the face of a God who can do anything, who is saving Muslims in Iran and Iraq and Pakistan. I mean, can He not save people in our society? I mean, obviously He can.

But what are they doing there? We're having a Pakistan pastor come in October and I just got an email from him last week about the suicide bombers who blew up the church and 80 people were killed. And they're holding gospel meetings and he emailed me to pray. He said after that, you know, we didn't know what to do because there's an uprising and radical Muslims are doing lots of things.

And so he said they gathered together for prayer. Nobody, you know, told him, well, maybe you should pray about this. You know, they were seeking the face of God.

And he said, we believe that God is still calling us to have the gospel meetings. Pray for us. I mean, He's supposed to be coming to us in October.

I mean, He believes in prayer, let me tell you. If you're going to be killed at the next gospel meeting that you had, would you not seek the face of God? You would. Nothing sometimes will do except to go to God in prayer.

You know, I have another thing here. God commands it. I don't know if you've ever noticed this in scripture, but in Colossians 4.2, the Bible says devote yourselves to prayer.

Same word as in this. Give our attention to devote yourselves to prayer. In 1 Thessalonians 5.17, pray continually.

In Romans 12.12, be faithful, be devoted in prayer. Ephesians 6.18, always keep on praying. 1 Corinthians 7.5, that you may devote yourselves to prayer.

Philippians 4.6, in everything by prayer. 1 Timothy 2.1, I urge you that requests, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made for everyone. I mean, does the Bible not command it, brothers and sisters? We believe in not going out and getting drunk, but do we believe in devoting ourselves to prayer, and it's commanded over and over and over again.

And it's almost the last thing that sometimes we're willing to do. And we'll try every other method, but to seek the face of God, and to humble ourselves before God, that He might lift us up, that He might show Himself strong. We hesitate.

And yet it's commanded constantly. And the New Testament church modeled this for us in Acts 2.42. The Bible says they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the breaking of bread, to fellowship, and to prayer. New Testament church again.

I don't know if you've ever felt this. I have in ministry, that I can do so little of eternal consequence. Really.

I can do, yeah, I can physically do things, but to do things that have eternal consequence and weight, I mean, how can I do it? Isn't it only God who can save? Then I have to seek the face of God then to save. I can't save anyone. Oh, I might have apologetics, and have persuasive arguments, and know the Bible, and have my verses, and have the four steps, but only God by His Holy Spirit can touch a heart and save them.

So I need to seek the face of God. Surely He's willing, but I need to be in step with His Holy Spirit. If I live by the Spirit, I have to keep in step, to be in harmony with Him, so that as I open my mouth like Philip in Acts chapter 8, words would be given.

He opened his mouth, and the gospel came out. The Spirit of God was moving him. It's more than just saying words.

Remember, as in heaven and all together, we need the Spirit, and to be filled with the Spirit. And so, when we realize we can do so little, of eternal consequence, then we must go to God, who can do anything. You know, I noticed, and this was in Samuel, something he prayed, but isn't it then, if God commands it, isn't it a wicked sin of the greatest kind not to give our attention to it? If He commands it over and over again, isn't it an independent spirit that keeps itself from prayer? Well, isn't that a wicked sin? Isn't it an arrogant spirit that doesn't humble themselves before God, and says, I can do it on my own.

Lord, I don't have time to see Your face today. I have to get going, Lord. I'm on the run.

I mean, isn't that an arrogant spirit? And we think we're going to preach, God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. And isn't it by grace that people are saved? That if we want much grace, then let's humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. That we might receive grace.

Samuel said this to the people of Israel, 1 Samuel 12, How can I sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you? Brothers and sisters, we've been given a task to pray. And how can we sin against God by ceasing to pray for the people God has placed under us? It would be a sin against God. My last two or three points on this, to commune with God.

Why should we give our attention to prayer? To commune with God. I mean, isn't God beautiful? We sing about Him. Lord, You're so wonderful.

You're so beautiful. God, five minutes really, I really don't have that much time. It's not hard to spend time with someone who's beautiful.

David said, he asked the Lord of one thing, to dwell in the temple all the days of his life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord. He saw the Lord. He saw His beauty.

He saw His wonder. It was not hard for him to give his attention, evening, morning and at noon. He saw something of Jesus Christ and of His beauty.

I mean, can we get along without communing with God? Can you really carry that weight that you're carrying in ministry or to preach or to speak to that person or reaching to that difficult situation? Can you carry that weight on yourself without throwing it off at the feet of Jesus? Can you really? Can you solve that problem? Don't you need the wisdom of God? But the wisdom of God is given. If anyone lacks wisdom, let him what? Ask. Let him pray.

I mean, can you heal that person without praying? Can you understand where you should go without seeking the leading of God? Don't we need communion with God? Don't I need to hear His voice? Don't I need His direction? Him to guide me along my path? Don't I need His working in my meetings? Don't I need His working in my own heart? Then I need to be at His feet and much with Him. Not five minutes. You know, I went into a bookstore and, you know, five minutes with God.

I mean, and I know five minutes. God can do something in five minutes, believe me. But if we're seeking to take five minutes with God each day, I mean, if we meet with God in five minutes, we'll be there longer than five minutes.

If we meet with God within those five minutes. There's no question about that. I mean, oh, good marriage.

Five minutes with Tracy every day. Oh, yeah. I mean, it's not going to work, is it? My second last point on this.

Why should we give our attention to the greatest good is done by it? The greatest good is done by it. What hasn't God done through the answering the prayers of His people? Hasn't He healed the sick and raised the dead? Hasn't He saved multitudes of people? Hasn't He reconciled marriages and set captives free? Hasn't He released a bitter person? Hasn't forgiveness come through the answer to prayer? Hasn't He cleansed that guilty conscience? Hasn't He given leading and direction when it was most needed? Hasn't He cleared the fog? Hasn't He released you from oppression? Hasn't He delivered you from Satan's tricks? I mean, what hasn't been done through prayer in talking to God? And if the greatest good is done by it, then don't we want the greatest good? Don't I want the greatest good in my marriage? Then I must pray. Don't I want to see the greatest good in my family and see them raised up to follow Jesus Christ? Then I have to pray for them.

Don't I want to see the greatest good in my church? Then I must give my attention to praying for them. Because I can speak to them. But oh, if God speaks to them, then the greatest possible good has happened in their life.

It's not enough for me just to talk. God has to minister. No wonder they gave themselves to prayer.

How couldn't they? And then last they said, it's God's way. I mean, isn't Jesus the revelation of the Father? Doesn't it say they spent whole nights in prayer? Yes, in Luke chapter 6. Jesus gave His attention to prayer. Are we not to grow up into all aspects into Him who is the head? All aspects.

Can we say that He did not give His attention to prayer as He spent whole nights in prayer to God? The Bible says in Mark chapter 1, He rose early and He went away and found a solitary place to pray, rising early, seeking the face of God. People were seeking Him. They didn't know where He was.

He was out praying. The Bible says in Luke chapter 5, verse 16, He often withdrew to lonely places. Often.

To pray. That's Jesus. Don't we see Him in Gethsemane? Sweat, as it were, like three drops of blood, going three times, seeking the face of God.

And didn't He have the victory in that? And an angel came and strengthened Him. And He went to the cross and He drank that cup to its depths. Why? Well, the disciples planned.

They were found sleeping where they should have been praying. And Satan caused them to flee. But Jesus stood strong.

Why? He received strength in the hour that He needed it because He sought the face of His Father. And He went to the cross. And aren't we glad He did? And then, you know, we see Him on the cross, praying.

I mean, isn't that something? That right to the very end, He's praying, Father, forgive them for they don't know what they're doing. I mean, there's Jesus praying from the cross. I mean, He's still giving His attention in communion with the Father.

And yet, the anger of God is poured out on Him at the same time. So, I want to ask you, what will it take to fall in line with this simple command? Everything's pulling at us. Everything is pulling at us.

Everything is pulling at you. But don't you think everything was pulling at them? Who had a more diligent, busy life than Jesus Christ? Who not only His Father was working, but He was also working. Every moment was taken.

Not a moment was wasted in His life. And yet, He continuously gave His attention to prayer. And if He could, can we not? The disciples, 3,000, you know, new babies born in a day.

You don't think they were busy? I mean, 3,000. I mean, one person gets saved, and you have a lot to do. 3,000.

But they did not become distracted. Will we give our attention to prayer? You know, I said this, it will take an adjustment in our thinking. What will it take? An adjustment in our thinking.

You know what? Our North American Christianity esteems is not necessarily what this book esteems. It esteems praying to God and giving it the foremost place in drawing near to God. We're going to have to change our thinking about that.

Not something, well, I know I should do, but something we will do. I say it will take an adjustment of our priorities, what we esteem as most valuable. You know, what has priority in your life? Is it studying the word? And I believe in studying the Bible.

Meditating upon it. What has priority in your ministry, in your life? What does? We will give our attention to prayer. It will take an adjustment of our priorities.

It will take an adjustment of how we do ministry. And listen, prayer is the work. That's an adjustment of ministry.

Oh well, you know, I heard a pastor say, you know, he was good at preaching and he had other people who prayed. What does that really say? You have other people who talk to God and I just like to preach. You know, it will take an adjustment of how we do ministry and what we think is the ministry.

Not what other people value as ministry. They might think, well, a pastor should be doing this and visiting and doing all these things and maybe we should. Yes, and that will happen.

But I'm not sure. I need to look to them to see if they value praying because if they don't, it doesn't so much matter because God values me seeking His face. And so it's going to take an adjustment of what I see as ministry.

Prayer is my main ministry focus. Whoa. Can we really say that? Then that's an adjustment that needs to be made if we're going to line up and be a New Testament church.

And then really I say it's going to take an adjustment of our whole life to make room for prayer. Because there's not much room, is there? You know, as I read there, you know, really can I give more time? How much time, you know, can I give? I mean, it's going to take an adjustment maybe of our whole life. We might have to get up earlier.

We might have to go to bed a bit earlier. We might have to flick off the TV a little bit or put aside that recreational activity and seek the face of God. Whatever it takes to give our attention to prayer because it's commanded as the very thing that God esteems and calls us to.

So our whole life needs to adjust around what the Word of God says and what ministry actually is. Because if He's called us to this then He intends for us to do it. Not just to say, well, yeah, I know I should or I hope I do.

But notice what they said, we will. And that is very different than I should give my attention to prayer. I think most of us can say that, I should.

We all in agreement. Well, I hope I do. That's not what the Word of God says.

They had something more. They had more grace. They said, we will.

Yeah, thousands of people are being saved. There's lots of ministry. Peter, people are fighting right in the church.

People want to kill us on the outside. We'll give our attention to prayer. We will.

You're not going to distract us. Satan, we know your schemes and what you're up to. You will not distract us from the greatest good that we can do.

And you know the incredible thing is when we're giving ourselves to prayer we find we're up to the greatest good. That we can honestly say as we're seeking the face of God and giving much attention to it. Lord, I couldn't be doing anything greater at this moment than being at your feet seeking your face and hearing your voice and meeting with you.

There's no greater good I could be doing for my own self, my marriage, my family, my church than being at your feet. Mary, you've chosen the better part. One thing is needful and it won't be taken away from you.

How much will be taken away from us? Will we be like Mary and choose the better part? Can we really say one thing is needful? Just one thing. The repentance spirit and the set determination. God's been laying this on my heart for the last three weeks, this verse.

And it's been my... Every day it's before me. Will I give my attention to prayer today? Will I can honestly say at the end of the day today I gave my attention to prayer. And it's a battle.

And of course it is. I mean if Satan defeats us there he defeats us on a thousand places. So it's a battle.

But can I seek the face of God? God, give me grace today when I rise in the morning. Lord, give me grace today to put my attention in seeking your face and being at your feet. Lord, today.

No, not tomorrow, Lord. Today. Oh yes, with all the things that need be done? Yes, today, Lord.

God, I have a sermon. No, Lord, today. Lord, that person needs to be visited.

Today, give your attention to prayer. Yes, Lord. A repentant heart.

I've been repenting. Lord, forgive me. I've given my attention to so many other things.

But not truly to prayer. It's your way. It's not the North American way.

It might not even be our convention way. But it's God's way. What will happen, brothers and sisters, if this becomes the method of the East Coast Baptist Association? We give our attention to prayer.

Well, let's pray. Father, I just pray that you would seal this word to our hearts. I pray you'd work it into our hearts, Lord.

Lord, I know that Satan doesn't want it worked into our hearts. He wants us to put it aside and, oh, yeah, that sounds good, or... Oh, God, this is your word. This is your eternal word for the church.

For us here in North America, in Canada, in the East Coast, this is your word to the church. There's no question about it. This is one thing your spirit is saying to each and every single one of us.

Give your attention to prayer. Lord, I pray that you would cause a response to come to our hearts even this very night. Even this evening, Lord, that we would say a hearty yes and amen.

Yes, Lord. God, I don't know about anybody else, but, Lord, in me. Yes, your grace, Lord.

I will give my attention to prayer. Thank you, Jesus. Give us repentance, Lord.

Show us, Jesus, the things that need to go to the wayside in our lives. I pray that you would do that, Lord. Thank you, Jesus.

In your blessed name, amen. Amen.

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