

## How to Pray For Your Church - Colossians 1:9-12

**Introduction:** A father, walking past his 5 year old daughter's room one night, noticed she was on her knees praying. Listening in, he heard this curious prayer- "abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxy"- repeated several times. When she was finished, he asked her what it meant.

She said, "Well, I know God is really smart, and when I don't know what to pray about, I just say the alphabet and He figures it out for me."

Well, when you hear this message tonight, you're going to think that we're supposed to pray the whole alphabet.

Obviously, tonight we're talking about the subject of prayer. Specifically, we're looking at how to pray for your church. With everything else we have to pray about, the church ought to rank right up there on everyone's priority list.

It was surely on Paul's priority list. It was because among all the things we know about Paul, we know Paul he was a missionary. We know that He boldly preached the message of Christ, and wherever he went to preach, he started churches.

But Paul was also a prayer warrior. Over and over in his letters to the churches Paul gives testimony of his prayers. He prayed for the churches. He prayed for fellow workers. He prayed for the saints. He prayed for God's will to be done in and through the church.

If we can learn anything from Paul's powerful prayer life, we can learn that we must constantly pray for the church. Your church needs your prayers.

In Colossians 1:9-12 we find a prayer of Paul. As we look at this prayer, may we let it serve as a model for us as we pray for the church.

**Colossians 1:9-12 (NIV)** <sup>9</sup> *For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.* <sup>10</sup> *And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,* <sup>11</sup> *being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully* <sup>12</sup> *giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.*

According to this passage, there are six specific things Paul prayed for concerning the church. How should

be pray for the church? First, we should:

### **1. Pray to Know the Will of God (9)**

*“For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.”*

Paul prayed that the church would be filled with the knowledge of God’s will and would have spiritual wisdom.

Think about it! This is God’s church. If we aren’t pursuing the will of God, than why do we exist? For a church to not be in the will of God is a crazy notion. That makes in absolutely imperative that we pray to know the will of God. We ought to be constantly and diligently praying that God’s will is made clear to the leaders and to the church as a whole. But that is not enough, next Paul says that we should:

### **2. Pray to Walk In the Way Of God (10)**

Look at what he says in the first part of vs. 10: *“And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way...”*

To know God’s will is one thing, to walk in it is another. We must pray that as a church we will have the courage to actually carry out God’s will once we discover it.

God’s way is not always an easy way. He said that His way was a narrow road, and because of that there would be few people who would find it. God’s way requires obedience and faith and sacrifice. And unfortunately, not many people are looking for that kind of way. However, it should be every Christian’s desire to please God in every way. So, when you pray for your church, pray that we will always seek to walk in God’s way.

Next, Paul says that we should:

### **3. Pray to Do the Work of God (10)**

He says in the middle of vs. 10, that God’s church should be *“...bearing fruit in every good work...”* That means that we are to be about God’s work. If the church is not effectively doing God’s work, and bearing fruit, then what are we doing? Why do we even exist? First and foremost, our primary function as a church is to carry out God’s Kingdom Work. Anything less is contrary to God’s purpose for the church.

We are to carry out his work. We are to worship Him, and disciple His people, and evangelize the lost world; and minister to people with needs, and fellowship together a body. Pray that we will seek to do God’s work. Next, Paul says that we should:

#### **4. Pray to Grow In the Knowledge of God (10)**

He says in the last part of vs. 10, that the church should be, "...*growing in the knowledge of God.* "As a church we are growing, standing still, or falling behind. God's church should always be growing because we are on a journey of growth. God wants us to grow in our faith, and that is why Paul prays for it. We too must pray that we will grow deeper in our faith.

On another occasion Paul reprimanded a church for not growing as they should. In **1 Corinthians 3:1-2 (NIV)** he writes, "*Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly--mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready.*"

What a shame! For a church to be spiritually immature means that they will have a very limited understanding of the "*things of God.*" And as a result, a spiritually immature church will not be effective in God's work.

In order to become spiritually mature, we need to intentionally be disciples of God's Word. By that, I mean we can't be satisfied with just the "*milk*" of the Word. We need to be strengthened and encouraged and challenged by the "*meat*" of the Word.

If we're going to meet the challenges and opportunities before us, we'll have to be spiritually mature. Pray that we will grow in the knowledge of God and that we will continually mature in our faith. Also, Paul said that we should:

#### **5. Pray to Work in the Power of God (11)**

Paul prayed for the church that they would be, "*strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience...*"

He was praying that the church would always work and serve in the power of God. He knew first hand how hard Kingdom work was. He knew about the struggles, the hardships, and the persecutions that would come.

By its very nature God's Kingdom Work is difficult. We cannot do His work in our own power. Our strength fades but God's power is everlasting and abundant.

I like what **Isaiah 40:30-31 (NIV)** says, "*Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.*"

This reminds us just how weak we are and just how powerful God really is. We cannot even begin to

approach what God has for us in our own power. Pray that we will have God's power to do His work. Finally, Paul said that we should:

## **6. Pray to Find the Joy of God (11-12)**

He wrote in vs. 11b and 12, "*...and joyfully giving thanks to the Father....*"

Paul prayed for the Colossian church to be a church filled with a joy that gives thanks to God. We too should pray that our church would be a church of true joy. People need to come here and find that we have the joy, joy, joy, joy down in our hearts. And why not? We have every reason to be filled with joy. Look at Paul's reason in the last part of vs. 12. He says "*...the Father, ...has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.*"

That means that God has made us fit for heaven. We're going to share in the glories of heaven, and live with God forever! That is reason enough to be full of joy.

That's why this place ought to be brimming and bubbling over with joy every time we meet. It ought to be seen on our faces and felt in our expressions of worship. The joy in the place should be contagious!

We have enough to be down and discouraged about out there, but when we're in here, the very least we can do it focus on Christ - focus on the mission He's given us - focus on His power, provision, and answers to prayer. When we do that, it ought to bring us joy. Pray that we will be a church where joy abounds!

**Conclusion:** I hope you are praying for your church. I hope you will pray that we'll not only know the will of God, but do it as well. I hope you'll pray that we'll constantly grow in the knowledge of God, work in the power of God and find the real joy of God.

When God's people pray, things happen! Pray for your church. Pray for your leaders. Pray for yourself. Pray that we'll be faithful to God!