

# Prayer walk

## Part 4 – outward prayer life

### Colossians 4:2-6 (NIV)

<sup>2</sup> Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

<sup>3</sup> And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.

<sup>4</sup> Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.

<sup>5</sup> Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.

<sup>6</sup> Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

*Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. (Colossians 4:2)*

One of the great sights in the game of Rugby League is the grass cutting tackle, the sight of an opposition player suddenly stopped in full flight by a perfectly executed cover tackle. Such things do not happen by accident they are



the result of a lot of training and conditioning. Now Larry was my best friend at high school and we played rugby league together. At around 6'2" and 90 kilos Larry was a big fast young man and best tackler in our team. (Yes, I do realise I measure height in imperial and weight in metric – I grew up in a confusing time). One day after practice we came back to the dressing sheds to find this unknown kid rifling through our bags. Well the wood-be thief took off out a back door with me in hot pursuit, luckily he ran straight into Richard our rather oversized prop forward and we managed to wrestle the kid to the ground and after discovering that he didn't seem to have any ill-gotten booty so we let him go. It was only then that Larry turned up looking a little nonplussed. Now if this had been a football field and some guy had run off with a football under his arm Larry would have been after that guy in a flash, because he had been trained and conditioned to do that. What he had not been trained and conditioned to do was run after someone acting suspiciously in a change shed, so his response was a little different. So why did I run after the thief? Well someone had stolen some money out of my sports bag a few weeks previous and I was still mad about it, you see pre-



conditioning has a big impact on the way we live our life.

Some of the great struggles of the Christian life arises out of the limitations created by our own church training and conditioning. We spend a great deal of time and effort helping people to connect to God at church while most people live the majority of their lives away from church and then we wonder why people struggle to engage spiritually at work and home. The place where Jesus sends us, out into the world is not a place in which we have been well trained to operate spiritually and this is particularly true of prayer.



Think about the way we have been taught to pray. Its eyes shut, heads down and hands together. Now don't get me wrong, this is a great way to pray. I love getting all still and closing my eyes and inching my way into the presence of God. It's a wonderful posture for the inner journey of prayer but it's a lousy posture if you want to pray on the run.

It is not a good idea to pray in the car with your eyes shut, it is not a good idea to pray with your eyes shut walking across a road but the bible is pretty clear that a lot of our prayer needs to happen with our eyes wide open. Paul says in Colossians 4:2

*Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.* (Colossians 4:2)

It is very difficult to be watchful with your eyes shut. Paul also says in Thessalonians 5:17:

*Pray continually;* (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

What Paul is saying is that prayer needs to be continuous, an all through life deal. If we are to have Jesus walk with us through all our stuff we have to be turned on and tuned in through prayer. But in order to do this effectively **we need different prayer strategies for different life modalities**. Let's pick up some more of Pauls thoughts on this, again in Colossians, chapter 3 starting at verse 15:

*<sup>15</sup> Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.*

*<sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.*

*<sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.* (Colossians 3:15-17)

In this passage Paul leads us through three different modes of spiritual interaction with Jesus:

1. The inner walk – in your hearts
2. The communal walk – with each other
3. The outer walk – the “whatever you do” walk

The outer walk requires us to learn how to pray with our eyes wide open, it is a walk in which we connect everything we do and see and experience with Jesus. One of the great biblical exponents of this was Agur son of Jakeh who has just one chapter in the book of Proverbs but is someone who prayed with his eyes wide open. Agur admits that he was not very clever or educated – which is an interesting credential for a writer of wisdom.

*<sup>1</sup> The sayings of Agur son of Jakeh--an oracle: This man declared to Ithiel, to Ithiel and to Ucal: <sup>2</sup> "I am the most ignorant of men; I do not have a man's understanding. <sup>3</sup> I have not learned wisdom, nor have I knowledge of the Holy One. (Proverbs 30:1-3)*

However, while Agur may have not had much in the way of book smarts his proverbs show us that he had a lot in the way of life smarts, he prayed with his eyes wide open. Where ever he went and whatever he saw became the object of an unceasing meditation on the ways of God.

*.<sup>18</sup> "There are three things that are too amazing for me, four that I do not understand: <sup>19</sup> the way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a snake on a rock, the way of a ship on the high seas, and the way of a man with a maiden. (Proverbs 30: 18-19)*

*.<sup>24</sup> "Four things on earth are small, yet they are extremely wise:*

*<sup>25</sup> Ants are creatures of little strength, yet they store up their food in the summer;*

*<sup>26</sup> coney are creatures of little power, yet they make their home in the crags;*

*<sup>27</sup> locusts have no king, yet they advance together in ranks;*

*<sup>28</sup> a lizard can be caught with the hand, yet it is found in kings' palaces. (Proverbs 30:24-28)*

Remember:

*The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; (Psalm 24:1)*

If we only pray with our eyes shut we will miss an awful lot of what God has to show us

Probably the best person who ever prayed with his eyes wide open was Jesus. Every breath and moment for Jesus was part of one unceasing conversation with his Father. In John chapter 5, we not only see Jesus in operation but Jesus also provides us with an insight in how He spiritually functioned in the world. The chapter begins with Jesus healing a crippled man at the pool at Bethesda and then receiving some criticism because he had healed on the Sabbath Holy Day.

*<sup>16</sup> So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him.*

*<sup>17</sup> Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working." <sup>18</sup> For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God. (John 5:16-18)*

Jesus defence was fairly simple, God works on the Sabbath, he holds the universe together, loves people, answers their prayers, and he's my father and I do the same thing because I'm God's son. Clearly that thought bubble did not go down well with the religious leaders but what's really interesting is what Jesus says next as he shares a little more deeply about how he does the things that he does.

*Jesus gave them this answer: "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. (John 5:19)*

What Jesus is saying is that every thought, every action, every encounter he had in his life was framed by a continuous encounter with his Father or in other words a continuous prayer with his eyes wide open.

When Jesus walked into the pool of Bethesda that morning he was praying the same prayer he always prayed wherever he went, *"what are you doing here Father? Then his eye fell on one particular man laying by the pool and His father tells him what he is doing, "I am going to change the life of that man, but first*



*you need to know that he has given up and he is not open to receive anything from me, so we need to deal with that first". So Jesus, praying with his eyes wide open, approaches the crippled man and asks him a challenging question; "do you want to get well?" (John 5:6). Having woken up the man's spirit, Jesus then heals his body. "Pick up your mat and walk", and at once the man was cured (John 5:8, 9). Jesus does what he sees his father doing and he sees what his father is doing through prayer with his eyes wide open.*

We can live our Christian life in exactly the same way, we simply need to develop our skills in praying with our eyes wide open. At first it takes quite a bit of persistence, reminding ourselves to maintain a constant inner dialogue with Jesus. "What are you doing today Jesus? Wow that Guy is driving like a maniac, okay I won't indicate my displeasure through the placement of my middle finger, I think you want me to pray for him, because he's probably having a really bad day, dear Lord help that guy get to where ever he's going safely and help him find peace. Oh look at that Jesus, there are no parking spots left I'll have to park all the way up the road...but yes Jesus, that will give us a little more time together, yes now that you mention it, it is a good thing. Wow look at that beautiful blue sky, I am very grateful Jesus I don't live in Beijing. Lord why did you make colours? You could have given us eyes that only see black and white, that would probably have been easier, but you created this smorgasbord of colour for our eyes to feast on, that is very cool, thanks for that. Oh



there's Henry, he and his wife have started marriage counselling, I wonder how it's going? Jesus would you help Henry and his wife overcome the things that drain away their love for each other – I'll ask him out to lunch and see how things are going...

This way of praying, this way of living, seems quite odd at first and you feel that if anyone were to overhear the dialogue in your head they would think the butter had slipped off your noodle. But I guarantee that Jesus lived like this and we are called to be imitators of Jesus (Philippians 2:5) and like everything you persist in it stops being weird after a while and just becomes the way you live. The advantages of praying like this is that Jesus becomes increasingly close to you on a moment to moment bases. The immediacy of your access to the Holy Spirit goes up and the opportunities to be of service to God's kingdom goes way up.

I was coming home from a conference one evening by train and I was praying with my eyes wide open on Burwood station when Jesus drew my attention to a middle aged woman of Asian descent sitting by herself and He prompted me to sit next to her. We exchanged pleasantries and again I felt prompted to share that I was coming home from a Christian conference and she responded by telling me a bit of her life story and her desire to return to God and we managed to pray before the train arrived.

The Bible says that:

*For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him." (2 Chronicles 16:9)*

It's like this, a woman is sitting at a station silently churning about her life and sending out little calls for help and God who ranges throughout the earth hears her cry then looks around for someone who will be his hands and feet but the critical issue is that He needs someone who is there and who is watching and listening, who is turned on and tuned in. We might say that it just so happened that on that day I was praying with my eyes wide open because that's not what I normally do, normally I would be lost in my own thoughts, reading a newspaper, and not really turned on and tuned in to Jesus at all. But we really shouldn't say it just so happened - because God is more actively involved in making these little things come together than we realise. It didn't just so happen, because God purposed that I was available to be his hands and feet but the challenge that Jesus laid on my heart that day is how much more can God answer the prayers of people in need if more of his people are turned on and tuned in because they are praying each day with their eyes wide open.

This is my challenge to you, give one day, just one day to pray with your eyes wide open and then reflect on that day, what kind of day did you have praying with your eyes wide open? Then send me an email about how that day went.

Why don't you think about that for a bit while we meditate on this song up on the screen.

Song meditation: "Your love is a song" by Switchfoot

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xtZQYY-vx34>

**"Your Love Is A Song"**

I hear you breathing in  
Another day begins  
The stars are falling out  
My dreams are fading now, fading out

I've been keeping my eyes wide open  
I've been keeping my eyes wide open

Your love is a symphony  
All around me  
Running through me  
Your love is a melody  
Underneath me  
Running to me

Oh, your love is a song

The dawn is fire bright  
Against the city lights  
The clouds are glowing now  
The moon is blacking out, is blacking out

So I've been keeping my mind wide open  
I've been keeping my mind wide open, yeah

Your love is a symphony  
All around me  
Running through me  
Your love is a melody  
Underneath me  
Running to me

Oh, your love is a song  
Your love is a song  
Oh, your love is a song  
Your love is strong

With my eyes wide open  
I've got my eyes wide open  
I've been keeping my hopes unbroken, yeah

Your love is a symphony  
All around me  
Running through me  
Your love is a melody  
Underneath me  
Running to me

Your love is a song  
Yeah, yeah  
Your love is my remedy  
Oh your love is a song