



**“Prayer”**  
**Wk. 1 Praying for the Right Things**  
**By Pastor Jody May 01/09/2022**

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**2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 ESV**

<sup>11</sup>To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you **worthy** of his calling and may **fulfill** every resolve for good and every work of faith by his **power**, <sup>12</sup>so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

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**[CONNECT/INTRO]**

The **Analogy of the Cargo Cult** – Westernized Christianity has become steeped in materialism, and it has negated the power of prayer in their lives.

As we move into 2022 Pastor Bill encouraged us, I believe a way to find joy even in the midst of the lingering effects of 2020 & 2021 and that was through Gratitude, but **Gratitude will never come unless we understand what we are thankful for**. Unless we see our prayers being answered, unless we can see God on the move in our midst none of us will ever develop a sense of Gratitude. You and I need to see our prayers answered, whether that is a yes or a no, we need to know God is with us. We need to see that this life is about more than just our physical temporary existence, we need to see our lives as they truly are, tied to an eternal God and an eternal life and that our actions have implications in that eternity. So, starting today we are going to put an **emphasis on Prayer** and develop the way in which we can see God at work in tandem with our focused prayer life. **THEN** I think we all will receive that Gratitude that Bill was talking about last week.

Let’s get back to our text this morning.

Before we get to the central message of this text, we need to do some clarification and explanation.

<sup>11</sup>**To this end** we always pray for you,

**First Question, what is that end?** We go back to verse **10**:



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“When He comes on **that day** to be glorified in His saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.”

Paul along with the Elders and good church folk from Corinth have a couple of reasons as to why they would want to pray, **“To what end?”** There’re **2 things here: First**, they know that the day of Christ, the **2<sup>nd</sup> coming**, will eventually happen and on that day the Thessalonians will get to stand up and be **recognized** as a church that **glorified Christ**, even through their sufferings (It is something they wanted, and it was good for them to hear this). **Second**, because this church was birthed out of Paul and Sila’s work; that was the testimony they believed. There is a relationship of love, care, devotion, the **desire** to want to **see** that which came from the **fruit of one’s work** for the Gospel expand.

Perhaps **today you’re not the best prayer it is hard for you to get it out**, you would do good to start right here with these reasonings in v. 10. BECAUSE, church, the Lord WILL return, and you will stand on that day and **not just you as an individual** but **we as a church** will get to stand and people will know how earnest we lived our lives for HIM! We pray for one another because we want to not just make it to that day, but a Christian should have a desire to be known on that day so you can point back to CHRIST, and you get to tell the world **HE WAS WORTH IT!** That’s also why you want to pray for others because part of your/our testimony is the **effect you had on other people**, you glorify Jesus when your work bears fruit in other Christian lives.

Why would we preach on prayer, why would you want to learn about prayer!? Because **“to that end”**, we want to see our brothers and sisters in this room stand and glorify Jesus with the lives they lived, and to know you were a part of helping them stand on that day, that is why!

And that’s why Paul says, **“we ALWAYS pray for you,”**

Remember from Advent our Hope is anchored in the reality of the past Incarnation and therefore we KNOW that HE will return for He said He would. That should make us fervent, ongoing, constant, praying without ceasing type



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of people, because our faith is based in the reality of His return. It is not an “if” but a “when”.

Now this is where we get to the crux this morning because we should be developing a sense of, “Yes we need to pray!” but now let me ask you a question. **WHAT exactly are you praying for?** Do you know how to pray in such a way that it gets you and your neighbor to that glorious day and more than that, when you are recognized as one of His, what will be said of you?

My fear is the **church in America** has become its’ own **Cargo Cult**. All we know how to do is look to the sky and ask for the things. We don’t want the one that gives blessings, we don’t need for Him to return, we are ok with Him just giving us the desires of our heart. If we are honest, we don’t even want to talk to Him, if we can just text Him our ‘order’ and He can have it delivered via uber, that would be great!

So today I want to challenge you with this question knowing that His return is eminent and quickly approaching, **“Are you praying for the RIGHT THINGS?”**

I think we all can do better in this area, and this is exactly what we are going to learn from Paul in this text today, to **PRAY the RIGHT THINGS**.

### **1. Praying for each other’s Worthiness.**

<sup>11</sup>To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you **worthy of his calling** and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power

We are to pray for each other’s worthiness, ours and our brothers and sisters, that they would **live up to their calling**. Now this is not calling as I would use this word for those in Christian service, it is not a calling to a certain type of ministry. This word calling refers to **SALVATION**, when God called you out of darkness and into light, when based upon His divine will before time, when He marked on His eternal calendar to put the call in, that day when He sent the Holy Spirit into your life so that you would not deny Him, that call...



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It is a way of speaking that Paul has used in numerous letters, it was an ongoing concern, it was an **ALWAYS** prayer, that his church family, those he served & loved would be worthy of the calling they received. (Php 1:27; Col 1:10; 1Th 2:12; 3Jn 6; Ro 16:2; Eph 4:1+)<sup>1</sup>

Let me share with you just one examples from Ephesians:

### **Ephesians 4:1-3 ESV**

**4** I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner **worthy of the calling** to which you have been called, <sup>2</sup>with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, <sup>3</sup>eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

This passage is extremely helpful because it explains how one should be **living out their calling**, it is how one practices life in a worthy manner. Humility, Gentleness, Patience, and Bearing - you know **why** you need to **pray** because that right there **IS NOT NATURAL**. You know that if you are a parent of more than one child! Making babies is easy but raising them is a whole other matter. Parenting is a calling by God, to be an imperfect ambassador to sinful children, and it is only by prayer you will ever be successful!

To walk as a person that shows the worth of their life, while they are trying to love AND lead sinful people needs Ephesians 4 prayed over them.

It's not natural but that is exactly how our **Lord walked**.

- He came as royalty but lived a peasant. - humble
- He came as a conqueror but loved as a poet. -gentle
- He came as a ruler but endured as a servant. - patient
- He came as a patriot but died as a traitor. - and bore that on a tree!

The worthiness of our calling looks like the life of Christ. Paul's prayer is that we show the **worth** of our **Salvation through** our **lives**. Let me say it this way for Paul since he's not here, stop thinking you have to **put up with being a**

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<sup>1</sup> Swanson, J. (1997). [\*Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek \(New Testament\)\*](#) (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.



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**Christian** and start celebrating that **YOU GET TO!** I pray with Paul that we all embrace our calling, and that God continues to make us worthy by remaking us into His image for He alone is worthy to live for. And when that happens, here’s what you will get out of it!

## **2. Praying for each other’s Fulfillment.**

“To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may **fulfill every resolve for good** and every work of faith by his power

**“For goodness sake”** – that is a saying heard frequently especially around Christmas time right? We are to be good for goodness sake, because fulfilling God’s will and doing good is what God wants us all to do. But this statement in v.11 is not particularly praying for us to do good works, that comes later, **this request is about** us getting the fulfilling state of knowing we have given and **received good things, blessings** – answers to prayers.

εὐδοκία (*eudokia*) **resolve** – that is the Greek word for resolve, it actually means to “desire”. Paul is praying that our desire for good things is quenched.

**Example** - We were watching a friend of mine’s two-year old over the last couple of days. I have not been around babies for a while, mine won’t let me hold them anymore and rock them. But this kid I got to tell you is cute. She is about a third smaller than most two-year-olds, her parents being on the small side but let me tell you **that child can eat.**

I love to see a child that size all day long put more food down than me over the course of the day. She was with us yesterday at the wrestling meet, and all I could do was laugh as she ran around with her little bloated belly playing with her dad. But then it got real when she walked over to us and this cute toddler had turned into a walking stink bog, well all that food had to go somewhere!

Here’s my point, for two days I never saw that kid stop eating, I never stopped seeing her enjoy her food it seemed that she could never get enough. The



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taste of food and the sense of enjoyment was never delineated by the size of her tummy. **Now, take that image**, and realize the blessing that Paul is praying for the church, he’s “praying always” that the Thessalonians would come to **fulfill their desire of GOODNESS**, not that they would continue in the hunger for it, but that they would finally have a sense of “I’m full”, or contentment, or I have finally eaten the thing that gets me to stop craving all the junk food in the world. It is working now against my Cargo Cult mentality.

**Jesus** had this **contentment** in **John 4: 32-34** we saw it, the disciples were worried about Jesus because He had not eaten all day. He had just gotten done talking to the Samaritan woman and had explained the gospel to her, that He was the Messiah, and she went and brought the town back to talk with Him! The disciples know He’s worn out but he tells them *“I have food to eat that you don’t know about” – “My food is to do the will off Him who sent me.”*

**Gaining fulfillment comes from developing a desire for what God thinks is good, sharing the Gospel!**

**Psalm 37:4 ESV**

Delight yourself in the LORD,  
and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Delight yourself not with secular materialism but enjoy seeing people light up from the light you bring them, and when you do, the Psalmist is basically saying **God is going to give you more of that!** God is going to give you a full feeling, but it won’t come from anything else, only by doing your part in sharing the good news of the Kingdom! Perhaps today, you are walking around like that toddler consuming everything in site because you can’t find anything that makes you want to stop eating! Here, if that’s you this might be your answer to that:

**James 4:3 ESV**

<sup>3</sup>You ask and do not receive, because you **ask wrongly**, to spend it on your **passions**.



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Let 2022 be a year where we start asking for the right things: God fill us with your desires, fill us with a heart to see people get excited about you, put in me the lack of desire for earthly things, tear me away from comfort food and help me to live off the true mana from Heaven, the desire to see the Kingdom of God grow, and let us find fulfillment in it, AMEN.

Then when that begins happening Paul has one more request because you see, these requests build on each other. It starts with worthiness, to be found to be worthy of the calling, your Salvation, that happens when you and I begin to seek fulfillment in heavenly things sharing the Gospel, instead of earthly things consuming material things, and when God answers that Paul wants the whole process to conclude.

### **3. Praying for each other's Power.**

<sup>11</sup>To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and **every work of faith by his power**

I just wanted to shorten the point here I know it sounds like I'm a 'Word of Faith' preacher, but what you are seeing is that Paul is praying that we, the church, would experience God's power in our lives performing the works of faith.

**You see your faith to be a faith that can be shared needs to be something that people can witness and see for themselves.**

### **James 2:17 ESV**

So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

James 2 :17-26 describes that faith without works is a dead faith, but LIVING faith demonstrates itself in this world by the people that possess it. If you are a real Christian your faith will be on display, even when you are not consciously trying to display it, it comes out! God intended for it to be that way and He helps us out by creating avenues by which we can show it.



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### **Ephesians 2:10 ESV**

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for **good works**, which God prepared **beforehand**, that we should walk in them.

God has prepared for us along with election, and then calling us by irresistible grace, when He gives us the gift of faith, He also begins to help us manifest works, or events where our faith would be displayed.

Paul is like, *I am praying that you would live in such a way that your works of faith will be fulfilled by the power of God.* Paul wants your life to have power for goodness' sake, showing your worthiness to all!

What that means is not a cushy life where suffering and calamity never touch you but what it means is we live a life where the power of God is demonstrated in you when you are hit by **trials and tribulations**.

**Example** - You know Superman in the comics, is the strongest of all, it's not the HULK, it's not Thor, it's not even Dark Seid or Thanos. All those people while they are incredibly strong lack something superman has, **a weakness** called **Kryptonite**. The reality is that you can see in superman that when he gets affected by kryptonite he never stops, ne never quits, it doesn't matter how hard he's hit, he comes back - for the strength of superman is not just the yellow sun his strength lies in his **will to achieve**.

**Gospel** - Family, we worship the true superman. Kryptonite!? Jesus gave up His divine power for 33.5 years and still bested death and the devil because of the strength of His will, **all His will!** He was found worthy, He was filled up on the spiritual purpose of sharing the gospel, and He was so powerful when His flesh was so weak. And that my friend is exactly what we need to pray for. We need to pray that not only will we perform these works while in our prime, but we want the world to see us in our death throes accomplishing what only God can do! That is how we need to pray for each other!





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Family, I hope that like me you are done with being a **“CARGO CULT”** where we just pray to the heavens asking for things that make our life more easy and pleasant.

Today you may think I don't need another thing on my plate, it is hard just staying alive pastor! But I want to remind you that praying to be found worthy of this calling that God has called you to is the **safest place** to be in. If you pray for ease and comfort well that is you trying to tell God what you want to run your own life, and if you pray for His discipline and guidance to be found worthy it places you in His hands. Family, be honest, do you really want the responsibility of trying to make yourself worthy, Jesus put that in His Father's hands why don't you?

Today you may be hungry for things outside of God's provision for life. You spend a lot of time on Tik Tok, FB, Netflix or any media service/device that will drain your brain. Perhaps you need to feast on the Word of God, prayer and fasting and stop wasting away in a spiritual famine. Pray that God fulfill you with who He is and pray that for those around you.

Today, you may be a little scared to live your faith out. I have got to tell you, it looks like pretty soon God is not giving any of us a choice, we will have to declare out loud who we follow and what will we stand for. Begin praying now that God will move in power in your life and help you with the work, He has set out for you to do before time. It is such a wonderful blessing to see God build one's faith when you trust Him and become obedient to what He is calling you to do.

Today, you may need to come to Christ and that too is handled in the same way, by prayer. Everyone's relationship with Jesus is to talk to Him, admitting to Him you're a sinner and that you need Him to fix you. To give you a new spirit, to forgive you, to be one of His, and He will do it.

Today everyone let's **commit to 2022 and pray for the right things**, to be worthy, to be full, and to live with the power of God so that the world may come to know the Glory of our God and that some will be saved...



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**[PRAYER]**

**[COMMUNION]**

**[BENEDICTION]**

Go in the name of the Father, that is waiting to give you the desires of your heart.

Go in the name of the Son, that was found to be worthy for us so that our prayers can now be answered.

Go in the name and power of the Holy Spirit, that empowers our works so that our faith becomes a witness to the lost around us, so that the Kingdom increases.

**Introduction Story:**

**The Cargo Cult:**

One of the most unusual legacies of World War II has been the cargo cults, as they're called in the South Pacific. Many of the aboriginal island peoples ranging all the way from Australia to as far north as Indonesia were first exposed to modern civilization through the allied armed forces during World War II. The American military, in particular, often used remote islands that had been inhabited only by local natives. They used those islands as temporary landing strips and supply depots. White men came to those islands bearing cargo, then they left as quickly as they had come. Tribal people had no time to learn the ways of civilization.

Civilization just swooped down and dropped itself on them. They saw high technology up close. These planes would come out of the sky, land in the jungle, leave their payload, and then take off. Island natives saw cigarette lighters and they saw them produce fire magically and thought they were miraculous. They saw large machinery push aside the forests to build the airstrips where these big planes could come in. For the first time they saw Jeeps and modern weapons and refrigerators and radios and power tools and many varieties of clothing and food.

They were fascinated, really, by all of that and the conclusion they made, somewhat naturally, was that the white men were gods and they flew in out of the sky with all the stuff. And their conclusion was that gods were beings who brought you lots of stuff. When the war was over, the armies were gone, tribesmen built shrines to the cargo gods. Their tabernacles were perfect replicas of airplanes or control towers or hangars made out of bamboo or some kind of woven natural material. They looked like the real thing, but all they were good for was a place of worship.

On some of the more remote islands, the cargo cults are still thriving today, right now, today. And if you go to some of those places, you will find that some of them have personified all Americans into one deity, and the



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name of that god is Tom Navy. They pray, the people do, for holy cargo to be dropped. And they venerate religious relics such as Zippo lighters, cameras, eyeglasses, ballpoint pens, nuts and bolts, other assorted things.

As civilization has begun to penetrate these remote islands where cargo cults exist, their fascination for cargo has not diminished. Missionaries who have been sent to those areas to preach the gospel find that the people involved in the cargo cults give them initially a warm reception because they think it's the second coming of the cargo gods. The problem is they're looking for the cargo, not the gospel. And missionaries find that they are so steeped in a materialism they don't even understand that they cannot easily receive the gospel, and it has become very difficult to penetrate these cargo cultic peoples with saving truth.

Well, I look at that kind of strange, bizarre religious phenomena and I see in contemporary Christianity quite an interesting parallel to that. It may be called the Word-Faith movement or the Faith movement or the Faith formula or the Word of Faith or Hyper Faith or Positive Confession or Name It and Claim It or Health and Wealth Prosperity or whatever it is, it's the same old thing. It's sort of a new brand of the cargo cults where God is this God who dumps the goodies and their materialistic, external, tangible consumable products that He delivers.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/53-6/praying-for-the-right-things-part-2>