

July 2026

PRAYING: WHAT, WHY AND HOW?

July is the month dedicated to prayer and fasting at the Accra Ridge Church, and so our studies this month will be focused on prayer. We will look at some fundamental issues about prayer, including;

- **What should we pray about:** We know that “it is good to pray” and that God desires us to pray, but that we should not only pray when we need something from God. Yet we are often not really sure what we are supposed to pray about besides what we or our loved ones need.
- **Why we should pray;** We are told that God knows what we need before we come to Him in prayer. If that is the case, why should we still pray and tell Him what He already knows?
- **What makes prayer effective:** We all want a positive response to our prayers, and there are many books and teachers who claim to be able to help us be more “effective” in our prayer...

Studying what the Bible says about these things will help give us a better perspective on prayer, and make our time of prayer more fruitful and productive.

Evening Online Bible Studies

Every Sunday evening at 7pm GMT, an online bible study is held on the Zoom platform following this study outline. If you miss the in-person Bible studies for any reason, you are welcome to join us online. Just scan the QR Code below and you will be logged in to join us!



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This study material can also be downloaded as a pdf file, on your device. You can access a soft copy of the study material by scanning the QR code below.



WHAT SHOULD WE PRAY FOR?

(Personal Study)

"In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express."
(Romans 8:26 NIV)

1 Timothy 2:1-4

Introduction

Prayer is something we all do, but may often feel we could do better. In our study today, we will look at some basic instructions on prayer that give some indication of the types of prayer we should pray, and who we should pray for.

Read 1 Timothy 2:1-4 in three Bible versions

Observation Reflection

1. What types of prayers are we urged to pray (v1)?

2. Who are we urged to pray for (v2)?

3. What are these prayers expected to achieve (v2)?

4. What other reason is given for us to pray in this way (v3-4)?

Interpretation

5. What is the difference between petitions, prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving?

6. Verse 3 says that we should pray for those in authority, so that “we may live peaceful and quiet lives”. What should we pray for leaders so as to bring this about?

7. Verse 4 says that God wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. How do our prayers lead to this outcome?

Application

8. What are you going to add to your prayer routine as a result of these verses?

STUDY 1: FASTING AND ITS REWARDS

“But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” (Mt 6:17-18 NIV)

Matthew 6:16-18

Introduction

Last month, we saw how God spoke through the prophet Isaiah to correct a misconception that the Jews of that time had about fasting. We saw that fasting had no effect when it did not reflect a genuine subjugation of our will and preferences to God's will. In other words, fasting cannot overcome the effect of our wilful disobedience and disregard of God's instructions to us. In our study today, we move to the New Testament and look at the teaching of Jesus on fasting.

Read Matthew 6:16-18 in three different bible versions.

Observation

1. Can we tell from verse 16 whether Jesus expected His hearers to fast?

2. In verse 16, whose practice did Jesus tell His hearers not to copy, and what was the practice?

3. What reward did the people described in verse 16 receive?

4. What did Jesus encourage His hearers to do when they fast (v17)?

5. What reward would they receive by following His advice (v18)?

Interpretation

6. What is the wrong motivation in fasting that Jesus was teaching against in this passage?

7. Is Jesus suggesting in this passage that we should expect a reward from God when we fast? If so, what kind of reward should we be expecting?

Reflection/Application

8. How does fasting “in secret”, apply to fasting with a church or fellowship? Does God still reward such fasting?

9. What are you going to do differently during the upcoming month of prayer and fasting?

STUDY 2: WHY SHOULD WE PRAY

“And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.”

(Mt 6:7-8 NIV)

Text: Matthew 23:37-39, Luke 15:11-14 and 17-20

Introduction

Matthew 6:8 tells us that God knows what we need even before we ask him. So why do we need to pray? We will explore this question in our study today.

Read Matthew 23:37-39 in a simple English version.

OBSERVATION

1. Who is speaking in this passage, and who is he speaking to?

2. Why is he unable to gather them “as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings”?

Read Luke 15:11-14 and 17-20 in a simple English version.

3. What did the prodigal ask his father for in verse 12, and did he get it?

4. What caused the prodigal son to return to his father (v17-18)?

REFLECTION/APPLICATION

5. What did the people of Jerusalem need? Did they get it?

6. What did the prodigal son need when the famine came? When did he get it?

7. What does this tell us about how God provides for our needs?

Prayer signals relationship

At its most basic level, prayer signals relationship. John Wesley said, “God does nothing but in answer to prayer.” That’s a claim that the Bible reinforces. God could do stuff on his own – heal this person here, make it rain there – and sometimes it seems like he does. Far more often, though, we see him waiting on people, engaging with people, getting to know people – and then meeting their needs – through their prayers.

Prayer acknowledges our dependence on God. It’s a way of saying, “You’re God, and I’m not.” And whether we’re talking to God because we need a healing or some other tangible blessing, or we want guidance for life, or we just like to hang out in his presence, the ultimate effect of our prayers is to draw us closer to him. “God works through the prayer process,” wrote Jennifer Kennedy Dean, “to expand our vision, to deepen our hunger, to stretch our faith, and to lift our desires higher. We start the process desiring something from him; we end it desiring only him.”

All of which is to say yes, God does know what we need, even before we ask him.

But he still wants us to ask!

(Excerpted from <https://jodieberndt.com/god-knows-what-we-need-so-why-pray/>)

8. How do these passages relate to us “after we have returned home like the prodigal son”? Why do we still need to pray ‘when we are back at home’?

9. Read Luke 15:28-31. Why did the older son not get “even a young goat” so he could celebrate with his friends? What does this teach us?

Are you like the older brother – a Christian in the house of God, feeling that you are “slaving for God and never disobeying Him”? Are you holding back from asking God for things you want or need, because you think that you have to “earn” His favour first?

Or are you waiting for Him to ‘take the initiative’ and do the things you are afraid or unwilling to ask Him for?

Today God is telling YOU:

““Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.”

(Matthew 7:7 NIV)

“Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.”

(John 16:24 NIV)

We need to trust in a God who loves us, and see Him as a God who delights in His children, like any good father does. We must seek to please Him in all that we do, and although He will not give us everything we ask for (also like any good father), we must trust the wisdom of His judgement on our requests (especially when we don’t understand the rationale), and continue to trust Him and be confident in His love for us.

“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! AMEN.” (Eph 3:20-21 NIV)

WHAT MAKES PRAYER EFFECTIVE?

"The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." (James 5:16b NIV)

(Personal Study)

Luke 15:11-16

Our study today begins with reflection on the topic of "effective prayer". Before we can study how to make our prayers effective, we should first agree on what we mean when we say "effective prayer"!

Reflection

1. What do we mean when we say prayer is effective? Do we mean that the prayer is answered positively (i.e., we get what we asked for)?

2. Read 2 Corinthians 12:8-9. Were the three prayers of Paul "effective"? (give reasons)

3. Read Matthew 26:39. Was the prayer of Jesus at Gethsemane "effective"? (give reasons)

4. Is there a better way to define "effective prayer"?

Read Luke 15:11-16 in a simple English version.

Observation

5. What was the request (prayer) of the younger son to his father (v11)?

6. What was the outcome of the positive response to the prayer (v13-16)?

Reflection

7. Assuming that the father knew the likely outcome of the son's request, was he right to agree to his son's request?

8. How do you think the son would have reacted if his request had been denied?

9. How would you like your Heavenly Father to respond to your well-intended but unwise requests?

Application

10. What attitude and expectation should you have when you approach God with your requests in prayer?

“Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? ***If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!***” (Mt 7:9-11 NIV)

“For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.” (1Pe 3:12 NIV)

“The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.” (James 5:16b NIV)

August 2026

BONDED IN CHRIST'S LOVE

Lord, you are the light of the minds who know you, the life of the souls who love you, and the strength of the souls who serve you. Help us to know you that we may truly love you, so to love you that we may fully serve You, whose service is perfect freedom. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

- A prayer of St. Augustine

As Christians, we know that loving one another is central to our calling. Love is essential to the health and well being of every congregation that seeks to be a church – a community that manifests Christ on earth. The words of the song “Bind us together, Lord bind us together with cords that cannot be broken”, express the desire for God to unite or glue us together with love. The thing about being bound together is that it can often feel restricting and opposed to our “freedom” – and freedom is another thing we have been promised.

So how can we be both free and bound at the same time? The prayer of St. Augustine appears to capture this paradox in his famous prayer that describes our God as the one “**whose service is perfect freedom**”. The service envisioned in the prayer is a lifetime “servanthood” – where one is duty-bound to fulfil the wishes of the master (rather than provide service for a few hours each day). So, is it truly possible to see service to God as freedom, or is this just an unattainable ideal?

The prayer suggests that knowing God enables us to truly love Him; and loving Him enables us to truly serve Him. Does the love of Christ truly liberate us to desire to serve God, or is it just a romantic illusion? Does this love also lead us to desire to be glued and united with other Christians without feeling restricted and constrained? Scripture is clear on the importance and power of *agape* love in the Christian life, and in our studies this month, we will explore the concept of being “Bonded in Christ’s Love” and whether this bond is a restriction on our freedom or is able to liberate us to ‘live our best lives’ and fulfil the purpose of God for us.

“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.” (1Jo 4:7 NIV)

FREED TO SERVE

(Personal Study)

Help us to know you that we may truly love you, so to love you that we may fully serve You, whose service is perfect freedom. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Galatians 5:13-15

Introduction

As Christians, we are no longer under the burden of the Law. We have been freed from the burden of following a list of “dos and do nots”, but this does not mean that we are to be lawless or a law unto ourselves. We still have an obligation to God, but it is a debt of love that we can never repay. It is an obligation to follow the example of the one who died to set us free.

Today we reflect on the nature of the call on our lives as Christians.

Read Galatians 5:13-15 in three different versions.

Observation

1. According to verse 13, what were we called as Christians to be?

2. What must we not use our freedom for?

3. What instead should we use our freedom to do?

Discussion Questions

Interpretation

4. Looking at the verses that come before the passage we are studying, what was the specific thing that Paul is saying the Galatians are free from?

5. How can a requirement to serve others be termed as “freedom”? Is it not a greater bondage?

Reflections /Application

6. What needs to change in you for you to experience freedom in serving others “humbly in love”?

STUDY 1: BONDED IN CHRIST'S LOVE – THE BOND OF PEACE

“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.” (Colossians 3:15 NIV)

Ephesians 4:1-6

Introduction

There are two kinds of people in the world: those who live according to their sinful nature, and those who live according to the Holy Spirit. If you are a Christian, the Holy Spirit lives in you, to give you direction and the power or ability to live as God requires. Despite this, you can still choose to live according to the sinful nature that you had before you received the Spirit and the new life He gives. This is however a deadly choice; it puts in question the genuineness of your profession of faith and throws us into internal conflict. However, when we allow the Spirit to lead and direct our lives, He gives us the assurance and confidence that we are indeed children of God – even if we sometimes slip up and do things that displease God. This assurance brings us peace, and the freedom to be who God made us to be.

Read Ephesians 4:1-6 in three different bible versions.

Observation

1. In verse 1, What does Paul urge the Ephesians to live a life worthy of?

2. How is this supposed to translate into how they act towards one another (v2)?

3. What effort are the Ephesians specifically asked to make in verse 3?

4. List the things that Paul says there is only one of in verses 4 to 6.

Interpretation

5. What calling have we received as Christians? (check Ephesians 2:10)

6. If there is only one Spirit, why do we need to make an effort to keep the unity of the Spirit?

Reflection /Application

7. Being asked to “make an effort”, suggests that the thing to be done is difficult or unpleasant. What difficulty do you see coming with “keeping the unity of the Spirit”? Does this discourage you?

8. Does remembering the call on your life as a Christian motivate you to make this effort (or is it a burden of obligation to you)?

“For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.” (Eph 2:14-18 NIV)

*“I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And **I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.***

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

(Eph 3:16-21 NIV)

STUDY 2: BONDED IN CHRIST'S LOVE – ONE BODY

*“There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called”
(Ephesians 4:4 NIV)*

1 Corinthians 12:12-14

Introduction

We continue our exploration of the theme “Bonded in Christ’s love” with the first of three studies on the concept of “oneness”. The focus of our study today is “One Body”. There are several scriptures in the New Testament that proclaim that there is only one body of Christ, or one universal (or catholic) church. How do we relate to this oneness in the face of our many different denominations, and our varying liturgical and musical preferences? This morning we will see how a greater sense of our “oneness as a single body” helps us to overcome the things that pull us apart.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-14 in three different bible versions.

Observation

1. How many times does the word “one” appear in this passage?

2. What is the key characteristic of the human body that is highlighted in verse 12?

3. According to verse 13, what do all Christians have in common – whatever their nationality, background, or social status?

Discussion Questions

Interpretation

4. This passage talks about one body, but verse 14 states that “the body is not made of one part but of many. What lesson is this passage seeking to teach?

Reflection /Application

5. The human body can sometimes develop a condition called an “autoimmune disorder”. When this happens, the immune system mistakenly attacks healthy cells, tissues, or organs. There are over 80 known types, ranging from common conditions like rheumatoid arthritis and psoriasis to type 1 diabetes and lupus. All of these conditions are extremely painful and uncomfortable, and can even be life-threatening.

What are the “autoimmune disorders” that affect the body of Christ?

6. What can you do to be sure you do not “mistakenly attack healthy members of the body of Christ”?

STUDY 3: BONDED IN CHRIST'S LOVE – ONE PEOPLE

“Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.” (Colossians 3:11 NIV)

Galatians 3:26-29

Introduction

The Accra Ridge Church defines itself as “International” and “Interdenominational”, and in addition to having multiple congregations (meeting at different times), we now also have multiple branches in different parts of Accra. This means that many members of our church may never meet or see each other. This reflects the nature of the universal (catholic) Church that we refer to whenever we recite the Apostle’s Creed. We share an identity and are bonded together despite not really knowing each other.

Is it possible to care for or love someone you have never met (and may never meet)? Is it really possible to be “one” with someone you have never met? We have probably all read stories about siblings who were separated at birth re-discovering each other. The invisible bond that draws them together and motivates them to open themselves to each other, is an image of the way Christians should relate to each other.

Read Galatians 3:26-29 in three bible versions

Observation

1. Who do verses 26 and 27 say are children of God?

2. From verse 28, what three main things separated or defined people in New Testament times?

3. What does verse 29 say makes these different categories of people “one in Christ Jesus”?

Discussion Questions

Interpretation

4. What real differences could it have made to a person in New Testament times whether they were Jewish or Greek, slave or free, or male or female?

Reflection/Application

5. Are the social and national differences of today more difficult to overcome than those of New Testament times? If not, why do we struggle to see ourselves as “one” with people from different backgrounds?

6. What does this difficulty in seeing ourselves as “one” indicate about us?

7. What changes are you prepared to make in your attitude towards other Christians?

STUDY 4: BONDED IN CHRIST'S LOVE – ONE LEGACY

"I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one:"

(John 17:22 NIV)

John 17:13-23

Introduction

The last recorded prayer of Jesus before he ascended to heaven captures something that was very dear to His heart. The legacy He was leaving to his followers was clear; it was a legacy of "oneness". Indeed, oneness is the identifying sign of our being part of His family. In His prayer, Jesus said that when we display this "oneness" the world will know that God sent Him, and that God loves us as he loved Him!

Today, many promote miraculous answers to prayers or prosperity and material blessings as indicators of a person's closeness to God. Yet whilst Jesus did say that "signs would follow those who believe", those signs were never positioned as marks of authenticity of Christian faith. As we study today's passage, we will seek to rediscover the legacy that Christ left His first disciples and ensure that we are able to build our Christian lives on that legacy.

Read John 17:13-23 in three bible versions

Observation

1. Why did Jesus say He was praying out loud to the hearing of His disciples (v13)?

2. What did Jesus say His disciples had in common with Him (verse 14 and 16)?

3. Did Jesus pray this prayer only for the benefit of His first disciples? (See verse 20)

4. What was the prayer of Jesus for those of us who later came to believe in Jesus (v21-23)?

Discussion Questions

Interpretation

5. In verses 21 to 23, Jesus prays that “all of us may be one just as He and God the Father are one” and that “we be brought to complete unity”. What does it mean in practice, and is it really possible?

Reflection/Application

6. What does “oneness” or “complete unity” look like in church? Have you ever experienced it (e.g. during a moment of crisis or disaster, or when there was a programme that you and a few other church members were responsible for)?

7. How can we make those periods of “oneness” the norm in our church life, rather than the exception?

September 2026

CHRISTIAN UNITY: PUTTING THE IDEAL INTO PRACTICE

Last month we looked at the concept of being “Bonded in Christ’s love” and how that promote our oneness as a church. This month we look at what this means for us in practice.

Christian love is not so much about “feeling” as it is about “action”. It is not so much about empathising or “feeling sad” in the face of suffering or injustice as it is about doing something to alleviate the suffering. The important thing is that the action must be motivated by love rather than pride, showmanship or other self-serving motive. As 1 Corinthians 13 tells us:

If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would have gained nothing. (1 Corinthians 13:3 NLT)

This month, we will look at practical application of Christian love in our church life, and how it should impact our attitude and relationships with other members of our church to produce the unity that Christ prayed for.

THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN UNITY

“If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.” (Philippians 2:1-2 NIV)

(Personal Study)

Romans 15:1-6

Introduction

Being like-minded or of one mind is much easier said than done. It is like telling your young children to just stop quarrelling and agree when they are in the heat of an argument. To a young child, the one whose turn it is to open the gate, sweep the porch, or choose what to watch on TV is a matter as serious as a matter of life or death! Our older selves can be irritated when our children cannot see the bigger picture and the insignificance of the matters that they are quarrelling over, but we then turn round and make a big deal about someone ‘sitting in our place at Church’, or ignoring us when we greeted them, or even get upset when a Minister uses incorrect grammar during a sermon.

Unity is an attitude of the mind, and requires a determination to see the bigger picture of the purpose of God in our lives. In our study today, we will examine one key requirement of seeing the bigger picture: the decision to “not live to please ourselves”!

Read Romans 15:1-6 in three different Bible versions

Observation

1. What does verse 1 say that those who are strong ought to do?

2. What is “each of us” urged to do in verse 2, and what reason is given for this in verse 3 and 4?

3. What attitude of mind does Paul pray that God gives us toward each other (v5-6)?

Interpretation

4. Is the call to “not live to please ourselves” simply saying we should not be selfish, or is it asking for something more?

5. Why is “endurance and encouragement” required to choose to live “not to please ourselves”?

Reflection/Application

6. What will it take for you to choose to “not live to please yourself” but rather to “please your neighbour for their good”?

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give us a spirit of unity among ourselves as we follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth we may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(Romans 15:5-6 paraphrased)

STUDY 1: LOVE: THE PERFECT BOND OF UNITY

Text: Colossians 3:12 -14

Introduction

In our passage today, the Apostle Paul presents a beautiful portrait of the Christian character that reflects the nature of our Lord Jesus Christ. The analogy used in the passage is of a person getting dressed and putting various apparels of clothing, and it describes love as the most essential of the garments that the Christian must wear. It further describes love as the “binding force” that holds all the other virtues together, bringing them into unity and completeness.

Through today’s study, we will understand why love “binds everything together in harmony” and what it truly means for love to be called the perfect bond of unity for the glory of Christ and the witness of His church.

Read Colossians 3:12 -14

Observation

1. What specific attitudes and actions are Christians called to put on in verses 12 and 13?

2. How are we instructed to forgive one another (v13)?

3. According to verse 14, how does love bind all the other virtues together?

Interpretation

4. Is the passage urging us to be more compassionate, kind, humble, gentle, and patient (i.e. urging us to change our character), or instructing us to display/practice compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience? Is there a difference between the two?

Application/Reflection

5. Is it possible to “put on patience” when we are naturally impatient, or “put on humility” when we feel proud of our achievements? Would that not be hypocrisy?

6. Which of the virtues listed in verses 12–13 do you find most challenging, and in what practical ways can applying Christ-like love help strengthen you in that area?

STUDY 2: THE KEY TO “ONENESS IN CHRIST”

Text: Philippians 2:1-11

Introduction

In John 17, Jesus Christ, the Author and Finisher of our faith prayed that we would be one, perfectly united, just as He is one with the Father. This prayer reveals the heart of Christ for His Church and the kind of unity He desires for all Christians.

In today's passage, the apostle Paul teaches us how this unity can be achieved: by adopting the same attitude and mindset of Christ. Jesus, though equal with God, did not cling to His status. Instead, He humbled Himself, took on the form of a servant, and gave His life for us through His death on the cross.

When we imitate the humility of Christ, choosing to value others above ourselves, we create space for genuine unity in a world marked by division, hatred, ethnic barriers, and economic separation. Our unity is grounded in spiritual truth: one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all. This unity rises above differences of denomination, culture, background, and social status.

Observation

Read Philippians 2:1-8

1. What four “ifs” does Paul state in verse 1 as the basis of his appeal to the Philippians?

2. In verse 2, what three attitudes does Paul urge the Philippians to adopt to make his joy complete?

3. In verse 3 and 4, what principles does Paul say should guide the actions of the Philippians?

Interpretation

4. How does the example of Christ as captured in verses 5–8 explain or describe the attitude we are being called to adopt toward one another?

5. Paul is clearly aware he is asking a lot from the Philippians. Do the four “ifs” of verse 1, justify the personal sacrifice he is asking for?

Reflections /Application

6. Is the call to “adopt the mindset of Christ” an option for some Christians or a requirement for every Christian? Is it a call you are willing to respond to?

7. It may not be easy to adopt the mindset of Christ, but what steps can you take to cultivate the mindset of Christ in your daily decisions and relationships?

STUDY 3: AGREEING IN THE LORD: A PATH TO RECONCILING DIFFERENCES

Text: Philippians 4:1–3

Introduction

In life, we are constantly pulled in different directions. We seek to live faithfully and stay focused on what truly matters, yet challenges continue to arise; pressures at work, tensions at home, and uncertainties about the future. In such moments, it becomes easy to lose our spiritual footing. In today's passage, we are called to stand firm in the Lord and to pursue unity in the Lord.

Standing firm is not merely an individual effort; it is a shared responsibility. Unity is essential for the strength of the church and the spread of the gospel. When disagreements divide us, they weaken our ability to support one another and to serve Christ effectively. We do not need to agree on everything. However, agreeing in the Lord means choosing to value our shared life in Christ above our differences. It means allowing what unites us in Christ to carry more weight than what divides us in opinion.

A church that stands firm is not one without struggles or disagreements, but one that is rooted in Christ, fixed on His purposes, and committed to reconciliation whenever conflict threatens to pull people apart. Standing firm together is not about ignoring problems, pretending they do not exist, or pushing forward alone. It is about leaning on Christ together and refusing to let pride, resentment, or bitterness fracture the unity Jesus purchased with His own blood.

Reflection

- Are you standing firm in the Lord today, or have you lost your footing?
- Is there someone you need to reconcile with so that you can stand strong together?
- Are you willing to pursue unity in a way that reflects the heart of Christ?

Observation

Read Philippians 4:1-3

1. What specific instructions does Paul give in verse 1?

2. Who are the two individuals mentioned in verse 2 and what specific instruction does Paul them?

3. How does Paul describe the work that these women did alongside him (v3)?

Interpretation

4. What kind of conflict may have caused Paul to address Euodia and Syntyche directly in his epistle?

5. What does it mean to “agree in the Lord”?

6. Based on Paul’s instruction in Ephesians 4:3, who is responsible for promoting unity and reconciliation in the church?

Reflection /Application

7. If we are an “Euodia who has fallen out with a Syntyche”, or are aware of the falling out of two Christians in church, what steps should we take to bring reconciliation? Are you willing to take those steps?

JULY ONCE A MONTH STUDY PRAYER – WHY AND HOW

“The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.” (James 5:16b NIV)

Text: Luke 15:11-20

Introduction

Our study today seeks to address two important questions:

1. Since God knows what we need before we pray, why do we need to pray at all?
2. When we pray, how should we pray to make our prayers effective?

Read Luke 15:11-14 and 17-20 in a simple English version.

PART 1: WHY SHOULD WE PRAY?

Observation

1. What did the prodigal ask his father for in verse 12, and did he get it?

2. What was the outcome of the positive response to the request (v13-16)?

3. What caused the prodigal son to return to his father (v17)?

Reflection

4. What did the prodigal son need when the famine came, and when did he get it? Would his needs have been met if he had just trusted in his father's love without asking anything?

5. Read Luke 15:28-31. Why did the older son not get “even a young goat” so he could celebrate with his friends?

6. What does this teach us about how God provides for our needs?

Prayer signals relationship

At its most basic level, prayer signals relationship. John Wesley said, “God does nothing but in answer to prayer.” That’s a claim that the Bible reinforces. God could do stuff on his own – heal this person here, make it rain there – and sometimes it seems like he does. Far more often, though, we see him waiting on people, engaging with people, getting to know people – and then meeting their needs – through their prayers.

Prayer acknowledges our dependence on God. It’s a way of saying, “You’re God, and I’m not.” And whether we’re talking to God because we need a healing or some other tangible blessing, or we want guidance for life, or we just like to hang out in his presence, the ultimate effect of our prayers is to draw us closer to him. “God works through the prayer process,” wrote Jennifer Kennedy Dean, “to expand our vision, to deepen our hunger, to stretch our faith, and to lift our desires higher. We start the process desiring something from him; we end it desiring only him.”

All of which is to say yes, God does know what we need, even before we ask him.

But he still wants us to ask!

(Excerpted from <https://jodieberndt.com/god-knows-what-we-need-so-why-pray/>)

PART 2: HOW DO WE MAKE OUR PRAYERS EFFECTIVE?

Discussion

1. What do we mean when we say prayer is effective? Do we mean that the prayer is answered positively (i.e., we get what we asked for)?

2. Read 2 Corinthians 12:8-9. Were the three prayers of Paul “effective”? (give reasons)

3. Read Matthew 26:39. Was the prayer of Jesus at Gethsemane “effective”? (give reasons)

4. Is there a better way to define “effective prayer”?

5. Was the original prayer of the prodigal son in verse 11 “effective”?

6. Assuming the father knew the likely outcome of the son’s request, was he right to agree to his son’s request? How do you think the son would have reacted if his request had been denied?

APPLICATION

7. What attitude and expectation should you have when you approach God with your requests in prayer? How would you like your Heavenly Father to respond to your well-intended but unwise requests?

Are you like the older brother – a Christian in the house of God, feeling that you are “slaving for God and never disobeying Him”? Are you holding back from asking God for things you want or need, because you think that you have to “earn” His favour first? Or are you waiting for Him to ‘take the initiative’ and do the things you are afraid or unwilling to ask Him for?

Today God is telling YOU:

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.”
(Matthew 7:7 NIV)

“Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.”
(John 16:24 NIV)

“Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? **If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!**” (Mt 7:9-11 NIV)

“For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.” (1Pe 3:12 NIV)

“The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.” (James 5:16b NIV)

“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! AMEN.” (Eph 3:20-21 NIV)

AUGUST ONCE A MONTH STUDY

BONDED IN CHRIST’S LOVE – ONE BODY, ONE PEOPLE, ONE LEGACY

Introduction

The Accra Ridge Church defines itself as “International” and “Interdenominational”, and in addition to having multiple congregations (meeting at different times), we now also have multiple branches in different parts of Accra. This means that many members of our church may never meet or see each other. This reflects the nature of the universal (catholic) Church that we refer to whenever we recite the Apostle’s Creed. We share an identity and are bonded together despite not really knowing each other.

How do we relate to this oneness in the face of our many different denominations, and our varying liturgical and musical preferences? Is it possible to be “one” with someone who is very different from you or does not like what you like? Is it possible to care for or love someone you have never met (and may never meet)?

These are the questions we will deal with in our study.

Part 1: ONE BODY (1 Corinthians 12:12-14)

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-14 in three different bible versions.

Observation

1. How many times does the word “one” appear in this passage?

2. What is the key characteristic of the human body that is highlighted in verse 12?

3. According to verse 13, what do all Christians have in common – whatever their nationality, background, or social status?

Interpretation

4. This passage talks about one body, and but verse 14 states that “the body is not made of one part but of many. What is the lesson that this passage is seeking to teach?

Reflection /Application

5. The human body can sometimes develop a condition called an “autoimmune disorder”. When this happens, the immune system mistakenly attacks healthy cells, tissues, or organs. There are over 80 known types, ranging from common conditions like rheumatoid arthritis and psoriasis to type 1 diabetes and lupus. These conditions are extremely painful and uncomfortable and can even be life-threatening. What are the “autoimmune disorders” that affect the body of Christ?

6. What can you do to be sure you do not “mistakenly attack healthy members of the body of Christ”?

PART 2: ONE PEOPLE (Galatians 3:26-29)

Read Galatians 3:26-29 in three bible versions

Observation

1. Who do verses 26 and 27 say are children of God?

2. From verse 28, what three main things separated or defined people in New Testament times?

3. What does verse 29 say makes these different categories of people “one in Christ Jesus”?

Interpretation

4. What real differences could it have made to a person in New Testament times whether they were Jewish or Greek, slave or free, or male or female?

Reflection/Application

5. Why do we struggle to see ourselves as “one” with people from different backgrounds? Are the social/national differences of today more difficult to overcome than those of New Testament times?

6. What does “oneness” or “complete unity” look like in church? Have you ever experienced it (e.g. during a moment of crisis or disaster, or when there was a programme that you and a few other church members were responsible for)?

7. What changes are you prepared to make in your attitude to other Christians, to be one with them?

ONE LEGACY

In the last recorded prayer of Jesus before He left this earth, He left us a legacy:

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one.”

(John 17:20-22 NIV)

Jesus has passed on His GLORY to us:

Are **YOU** living up to this legacy?

SEPTEMBER ONCE A MONTH STUDY: ONENESS IN PRACTICE

Introduction

Being like-minded or of one mind is much easier said than done. It is like telling your young children to just stop quarrelling and agree when they are in the heat of an argument. To a young child, the one whose turn it is to open the gate, sweep the porch, or choose what to watch on TV is a matter as serious as a matter of life or death! Our older selves can be irritated when our children cannot see the bigger picture and the insignificance of the matters that they are quarrelling over, but we then turn round and make a big deal about someone 'sitting in our place at Church', or ignoring us when we greeted them, or even get upset when a Minister uses incorrect grammar during a sermon. Unity is an attitude of the mind, and requires a determination to see the bigger picture of the purpose of God in our lives. In our study today, we will examine one key aspect of that bigger picture: "not living to please ourselves"!

Part 1: THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN UNITY

Read Romans 15:1-6 in three different Bible versions

Observation

1. What does verse 1 say that those who are strong ought to do?

2. What is "each of us" urged to do in verse 2, and what reason is given for this in verse 3 and 4?

3. What attitude of mind does Paul pray that God gives us toward each other (v5-6)?

Interpretation

4. Is the call to "not live to please ourselves" simply saying we should not be selfish, or is it asking for something more?

5. Why are “endurance and encouragement” required to choose to live “not to please ourselves”?

Reflection/Application

6. What will it take for you to choose to “not live to please yourself” but rather to “please your neighbour for their good”?

7. Read Colossians 3:12-14: What specific attitudes and actions are Christians called to put on to achieve “perfect unity”?

Part 2: THE KEY TO “ONENESS”

Read Philippians 2:1-11

Observation

1. What four “ifs” does Paul state in verse 1 as the basis of his appeal to the Philippians?

2. In verse 2, what three attitudes does Paul urge the Philippians to adopt to make his joy complete?

3. In verse 3 and 4, what principles does Paul say should guide the actions of the Philippians?

Interpretation

4. How does the example of Christ as captured in verses 5–8 explain or describe the attitude we are being called to adopt toward one another?

5. Paul is clearly aware he is asking a lot from the Philippians. Do the four “ifs” of verse 1, justify the personal sacrifice he is asking for?

Reflection /Application

6. Is the call to “adopt the mindset of Christ” an option for some Christians or a requirement for every Christian? Is it a call you are willing to respond to?

7. It may not be easy to adopt the mindset of Christ, but what steps can you take to cultivate the mindset of Christ in your daily decisions and relationships?

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

(Romans 12:1-2 NIV)

““We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us....

For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?”

But we have the mind of Christ.”

(1 Corinthians 2:12,16 NIV)