

Effectiveness Through Prayer.

2 Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. 3 At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— 4 that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. (ESV)

As Paul began to land the plane on this letter, he gives some very important insight on how a local church can be effective in this Christ rejecting world. I think it's incredible that one of the most faithful men of all time knew his own personal effectiveness relied upon the prayers of a local church.

AN EFFECTIVE CHURCH IS A PRAYING CHURCH.

What kind of prayer life does an effective church have?

I believe Paul describes 7 Characteristics of the prayer life of an effective church.

Characteristic #1 - An effective church prays continually. **4:2a**

Continue steadfastly in prayer,

An effective church prays continually. Every member throughout his or her day plays a part. It's an ongoing continual practice of each person within the local church. Continue means

to to never stop talking to God - to give constant attention to Him - to have a constant habit of talking to God throughout your day. Steadfast carries the idea of consistency over the long haul.

Have you ever considered that your personal prayer life plays a role in the effectiveness of the ministry work of your local church?

Characteristic #2 - An effective church prays watchfully. **4:2b**

being watchful in it

That word watchful means to be alert, to have energy, to be enthusiastic, to be awake, to not be sleepy and sluggish. The apostle Paul urges Christians to pray with enthusiasm.

I believe watchful praying is a broad term that can be applied in a variety of ways.

Watchful prayers include watching how God is working in answering your prayers.

Watchful prayers include watching for when temptation come your way in order to pause and pray.

Watchful prayers include letting the Spirit of God redirect your prayers to pray what you ought to pray.

Have you been sluggish in your prayers lately? Of have you been praying with energy and enthusiasm for what God can do?

Characteristic #3 - An effective church prays with thankfulness. 4:2c

with thanksgiving

Throughout the Bible, prayer and thanksgiving go hand in hand. In light of God's wonderful mercy upon us, God expects us to be thankful. God rescued from the penalty we deserved. He rescued us from hell. He has given us heaven, given us eternal life, given us hope, given us joy, and a great calling to be a child of His. We have so much to be thankful for.

Have you personally and privately thanked God today?

Characteristic #4 - An effective church prays for its missionaries, pastors, and ministry workers. 4:3a

At the same time, pray also for us,

An effective church is others focused in their prayers, and ministry focused in their prayers.

At the same time, as you go about your day in conversation with God, pray for those ministry workers connected to your local church. If you are part of the Village Church, do you pray

for Pauline, our missionary in Uganda, on a regular basis? Do you pray for your pastor?

If you want to be part of an effective church, it starts with personal private prayers from every individual to the Lord. An effective church asks His hand of favor on its missionaries, pastors, ministry workers, and volunteers.

Characteristic #5 - An effective church prays for opportunities to share God's Word. **4:3b**

that God may open to us a door for the word,

Paul humbly asked God for opportunities to share the Word with others. He prayed. He watched and waited, and he saw God work.

Have you ever asked God to give you an open door to share God's Word with someone?

If that's too daunting, have you ever considered asking God to open up doors for your local church to share God's Word with more and more people?

Characteristic #6 - An effective church prays for the ability to explain the deep things of Christ. **4:3c**

to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison—

And Paul's assignment was to unravel, unlock, and explain the deep mysteries of Christ - things that were not told in the Old Testament. One of those mysteries is listed in Colossians chapter 1 and verse 27, that Christ is in believers.

I think an effective church is one that asks God for the ability to go deep in teaching the mysteries of Christ. An effective church is not content being a surface level church. An effective church wants to explain to the world the mysteries of Christ.

Characteristic #7 - An effective church prays for clarity in preaching and teaching. **4:4**

that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.

Paul wanted to speak clearly. This is the proper way to preach the Word. Make it clear. If this is something the apostle Paul needed prayer for, then I certainly need prayer for this.

An effective church is a praying church. Imagine what God could do here in our community if we prayed like this.

