

## Teach Us to Pray

Matthew 26:39-41 (NASB 1995)

<sup>39</sup> And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.” <sup>40</sup> And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “So, **you men could not keep watch with Me for one hour?**” <sup>41</sup> Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

## Introduction: The Perspective of Prayer

This morning, I am going to talk about prayer.

Let me begin with a story. A Christian farmer died in a flash flood. When he arrived in Heaven, he noticed a large service taking place. Many people were gathered, sharing testimonies. When it was his turn, he stood up and described how sudden and devastating the flood had been. He spoke with great emotion, expecting everyone to be amazed. As he spoke, he noticed a man in the front row with a long white beard listening very attentively. After the service, he asked an angel, “Who is that man?” “That is Noah,” replied the angel. The man immediately felt embarrassed.

This morning, I am that farmer. And you are Noah.

My prayer is that my message will **rejuvenate our prayer lives** and bring fresh passion to both you and me—today and beyond.

## Content: The Quadrilateral of Korean Prayers

Prayer is not just a duty—it is the lifeline of the Church. It plays a vital role in both our faith and our walk with God. From Abraham to the early Church, and even into eternity, God’s people have always been people of prayer. Even in Heaven, prayer and praise continue.

I looked up the word “pray” in a concordance. In the NASB, forms of the word “pray” appear **362 times**: 216 times in the Old Testament (about 60%). 146 times in the New Testament (about 40%). The books that emphasize prayer are **Psalms (67 times)** and **Acts (29 times)**. This shows us that prayer is not optional—it is essential to the life of God’s people and God’s Church.

## The Korean Traditional Prayer Practices

I would like to share with you my understanding and practice of prayer, shaped by Scripture and influenced by my upbringing in Korea.

I was born and raised in South Korea and became a Christian in the 1970s. From high school through college, the church became the center of my life—worship, prayer, service, and witness. During that time, I observed four key prayer practices that were common in almost every church in Korea. I would call them **the Quadrilateral of Korean Prayers**. Thanks be to God, because, during that season, the Korean Church experienced tremendous growth. I was immersed in those prayers and deeply shaped by them.

The first one they practiced was...

**a. The Dawn Prayer Meeting (Sacrifice of the First Fruits):**

**The Illustration: The "Coffee First" Principle.** Most of us cannot function without our first cup of coffee. We give the "first fruits" of our morning to caffeine to wake up our bodies. Dawn prayer is the "spiritual caffeine" of the Korean church. It's the belief that if we don't wake up our spirits with God before we wake up our minds with the world, we are walking through the day "spiritually asleep."

Some people say that the Korean Church invented the dawn prayer meeting. I disagree. Jesus our Lord did. If you read Mark 1:35, "*In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there.*"

Well, indeed, almost every congregation in Korea practiced this early morning prayer. Every single day. 365 days. Even on Christmas morning at my home church. Some pastors didn't like that practice because they missed the sleep. I don't blame them, but if the pastor doesn't lead the dawn prayer, he was considered by his own flock not spiritual enough to lead the congregation. So, there was unseen pressure among all the pastors to do it, whether they liked it or not.

As a pastor in America, I have practiced the early morning prayer. One year, we had a 40-day dawn prayer challenge during Lent, several people participated. Now, we do have a weekly morning prayer, every Thursday, 6 a.m. Four men regularly come and pray together. We are still doing it. It brought a revival to our congregation, especially to Men's Group. Thanks be to God. The next one they practiced was...

**b. All Night Prayer and Tongsung Kido (The Power of Corporate Voice):** Luke 6:12: "*It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God.*" Jesus did have 'all night prayer' on a mountain. All by Himself. This one too

Christ initiated and practiced. Once again this is what I grew up with. Every Friday night, members were encouraged to join in with their pastor for all night prayers.

Typically, it would start around 11 p.m. till 4 or 5 the next morning. The prayer meeting began with praise time for 20-30 minutes followed by pastor's message another 30-40 minutes, sometimes an hour. By midnight, they started praying together for the requests from the members or for churchwide concerns, prayers for leaders and nations, and so forth. That would last about an hour or so.

Then the next 1 or 2 hours of individual prayers followed. Some people would lie down and rest between their prayer times. Around 4:00 a.m., they wrap up and get ready for the early morning prayer at 5 a.m. In my home church, all the prayer meetings took place in a prayer room in the basement. It was an open space with heated floor that could have 100 people with prayer mats available.

You might not have heard the expression—

**Tongsung Kido** (praying aloud together).

You might think it is unusual to pray aloud. Think again. Jesus too cried aloud to His Father in His prayers. *“In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with **loud crying** and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety”* (Hebrews 5:7).

If you are unfamiliar with this type of prayer, even averse to the very idea of praying aloud, consider the Pentecost where all the believers prayed aloud under the influence of the Holy Spirit. *“And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance”* (Acts 2:4). The sound was so loud that people outside heard and were bewildered (Acts 2:6). Others thought that they were intoxicated with wine (Acts 2:13). Also, have you seen the Jewish folks fervently praying at the Western Wall in Jerusalem? Many pray aloud.

In the Korean prayer meeting, members were encouraged to pray aloud. They were also encouraged to start the prayer with “주여” (Ju-Yo)— which is translated, “Lord”. It is an outcry to the Lord in Heaven to get His attention. They do it three times and start praying.

The Church I grew up in also encouraged everyone to pray aloud. You may think it is strange, but it had one advantage. When you pray so quietly, you tend to be conscious of others around you. Unless everyone prays in absolute silence, when someone next to you

prays audibly, you cannot but listen to what they are saying. So, when everyone prays aloud, you can easily concentrate on your prayers without too much listening to your neighbor's prayers. Also, there's enormous advantage and power when the whole church prays aloud with united heart.

### **The Illustration: The Symphony vs. The Solo.**

- *The Concept:* When one person speaks in a room, you hear a voice. When 100 people speak different things, it's noise. But when a symphony plays, many different instruments create a "wall of sound" that moves the heart.
- *The Application:* *Tongsung Kido* isn't "noise" to God; it's a spiritual symphony. In the same way a stadium of fans shouting for their team creates an energy that changes the game, a church "shouting together" creates a spiritual atmosphere where the "flesh" (distraction) is drowned out by the "Spirit."

Imagine scores or sometimes hundreds of members gather and spend the whole night praying aloud for the Church and nation, the Lord in Heaven must listen to their prayers (1 Peter 3:12) and something is bound to happen. Wouldn't you agree? The next Korean tradition of prayer is...

**c. Fasting (The Skeleton with a Shining Face):** Once again, Christ led us the way in this prayer with fasting. He Himself spent 40 days and 40 nights in the wilderness fasting and praying. "*He had fasted forty days and forty nights,...*" (Matthew 4:2). The Korean Church, especially my home church adopted this practice seriously.

I remember the assistant pastor of my church undertook a 40-day fast with only water. He completed it. I remember the picture they took after he finished the fasting. He looked really like a skeleton. I will never forget his face—thin and weak, yet shining with peace and joy.

### **The Illustration: The Battery Calibration.**

- *The Concept:* Sometimes a smartphone battery gets "confused"—it says it's at 20% when it's actually at 80%. You have to let it drain completely to zero so it can "re-calibrate" to its true power source.
- *The Application:* My assistant pastor looked like a skeleton (drained to zero), yet his face shone. Fasting is re-calibrating the soul and the spirit. We drain the physical body so we can see how much "charge" we actually have in the Holy Spirit.

My young adults group took this practice seriously. We would go for a three-day fasting to the Prayer Mountain once or twice a year (yes, that is owned and operated by the Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul)—the world's largest church whose membership by now is

over a half million—at that time it was 50,000). At the Prayer Mountain, we witnessed people getting healed from cancer and other problems through their fasting and worship. Our own problems were resolved.

Let me tell you a little bit about my young adults group. It all started with several young adults. Almost every night, they would gather for prayer in our church prayer room crying out for the revival. In a year or so, there was a revival in our group. For the next several years, the Lord blessed the church so much so that out of 1000-member congregation, the group grew over 300 young adults—all in their 20s and 30s! Soon we would call our group “The Gideons 300.” Every Sunday night, after the evening service, 40-50 young people would gather for praise and prayer!

We had the world map on the wall. We started dreaming about world vision. Some of us became pastors (at least a dozen) like me. Several members became missionaries to Philippines, India, and South Africa. Monthly we were engaged in a street evangelism, 30-40 young adults marched with pickets through the streets of our town to the local park and did person to person evangelism. You can imagine the church was on fire. Praise God. All started and sustained through prayer and fasting.

The last prayer practice we did was...

#### **d. Desperate and Persistent Prayers (the Gethsemane Cry):**

We all know how Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night before He was crucified. He prayed fervently and in desperation. *“And being in agony **He was praying very fervently**; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground”* (Luke 22:44).

#### **The Illustration: The Child in the Crowd.**

- *The Concept:* Imagine a child playing in a park. They might casually call out "Mom!" while playing. But if that child gets lost or hurt, that "Mom!" becomes a piercing, desperate shriek. Every mother knows the difference between a "casual call" and a "desperate cry."
- *The Application:* Much of our Western prayer is the "casual call." We are safe and fed. Jesus in Gethsemane, however, wasn't reciting a liturgy; He was the "Child in the Park" crying out to His Father because the "flood" was coming.

The same Christ commands us to pray with persistence without losing our heart (Luke 18). The Korean Church followed His teaching very faithfully. I mentioned earlier that they start the corporate prayer with “주여!”(Ju-Yo) three times. It is much more than just getting God’s attention. It is a heart cry to the Lord out of deep longing and desperation.

Use caution here. We can cry out to the Lord until our face is blue, but it won't work unless it comes from a desperate and sincere desire. The Lord is near to those who cry out to Him in desperation and in truth! He hears all prayers, but there is a special nearness when we cry out to Him with sincere and desperate hearts. Let me share my story.

In the 1970s, things were tough in Korea. It was quite different from today's Korea where almost everyone knows about brand names such as Samsung, LG, Hyundai, and Kia. Back then, many families struggled with daily food, mine included. For instance, more than once, my family didn't have food for the night. \$40 sustained my entire family of 4 for a month! In those days, we didn't have any luxury of having health insurance or cars.

One night, one of my older brothers rode on a motorcycle, drunk, without a helmet, and his girlfriend at his back. He crashed into a concrete barrier; he and motorcycle flung in the air. His girlfriend was OK with a few scratches. But my brother landed on his head that immediately threw him into a coma. Later, X-rays showed that a tennis ball size blood clot was lodged in his brain. Doctors recommended immediate brain surgery (with 50/50 chance of survival), but my family couldn't afford it. We had to opt out the surgery due to the lack of insurance coverage. He was lying down in the ICU without consciousness.

So, out of desperation, I went to the Prayer Mountain and started fasting for three days. During that time, all I did was crying to the Lord, "Give my brother's life back to me!" On the second day, the Lord gave me the assurance that my brother would live. Indeed, my brother with head injury came out of coma in two weeks and walked out of the hospital on foot a month after the accident. Without a single surgical intervention. Praise the Lord! The same brother lived another 45 years afterwards and went to the Lord three years ago.

That leads us to the Call to Action.

### **Conclusion: The Call to Action**

Let us not forget that prayer is not primarily about getting what we want from God. God is not a genie in a bottle, and prayer is not the act of scratching the bottle. Instead, prayer is everything about intimacy with God. It's about the desire to obey Him and walk with God according to His will. It is about aligning our hearts with God's. Through prayer, we learn to trust, obey, and commune with God. When properly done, it also determines the effectiveness of ministry.

So, here are the challenge to myself and to the congregation.

### **The Challenge**

**To Myself:** Pastor Gene's statement: "If the pastor is great in prayer, the congregation will be good in prayer. If the pastor is good, the congregation will be mediocre. If the pastor is mediocre, the congregation will be lost."

**To Congregation:** Become the "pillars" that support the gospel through intercession. Remember Aaron and Hur who held Moses' hands up (Exodus 17:11). As long as his hands were up, God's people won the battle. Pray together with me. Hold my hands in prayer. Don't just pray *for* me; pray *with* me (Acts 1:14). Ask the Lord for the desire and insight to start prayer groups in our church in any form and in any group. Pray daily. Our church's future depends on it. Pray that our church will be the pillar of the gospel truth and love in our communities. Pray that the Lord's presence fills our sanctuary. Pray that the Lord will open the door of evangelism in our communities. Pray that the Lord will send the workers from our congregation to the world.

Stand if you are able and willing to commit to prayer from today on.

### **The One-Minute Commissioning Prayer**

Heavenly Father,

We stand before You today not just as students of Your Word, but as servants of Your Kingdom. We thank You for the example of Your Son, Jesus, who showed us that the greatest work we can do is the work we do on our knees.

Lord, I lift up everyone in this sanctuary. We ask today for a **holy rejuvenation**. Shake our hearts and our sanctuary. Where there has been dryness, bring a spring of living water. Where there has been weariness, bring the strength that comes from waiting on You.

We declare our vision for 2026: **Fill Your House with praise, fill Your House with prayer, and fill Your House with people**. Grant me the spirit of Elijah to lead with fervor. Activate our members as pillars of intercession, holding up the arms of their leaders.

Let it be said of us as it was of the early Church: that when we prayed, the place was shaken, and we went forth to speak Your Word with boldness. May our prayer lives be the engine of our harvest.

In the mighty and matchless name of Jesus we pray, **Amen**.

**Closing Prayer:** A fervent prayer for a "rejuvenated" spirit in our congregation. For the next couple of minutes, let us cry out to the Lord together. Three times—**Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna!** (Save Us Now!) And let us pray for the revival among us.