

Time and Prayer

Have you ever been asked to give a presentation at work, and just waltzed in on the day without preparation and aced it?

No, me neither.

When being asked to pray during the service, I immediately sit down, pull out a pen and begin to write. I have been an actor in my school days in Ireland. I played the scarecrow in the wizard of Oz. Stuffing for brains – so it was not that hard to be in character. Yet we prepared for 14 days and then put on a show – for one night.

When I consider Jesus's ministry – every day was preceded by time spent alone in prayer. When it came to casting out the mute and deaf spirit, we are told that it could only be cast out by prayer and fasting. {Matthew 17:12} Well, obviously, you do not pray and fast at the point of meeting the person having the demon cast out. You do it in advance of meeting the person.

How did Jesus know to prepare in advance? That is simple, He was driven to follow the Spirit. {Mark 1:12-13} Forty days and nights in the desert – the limit of physical endurance – preceded the start of His ministry.

The Apostle Paul did not rush to start preaching, but he tells the Galatians that he spent three years in Arabia. {Gal 1:15-17 - 15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, 16 to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.}

So, if Jesus prepared, and Paul prepared, what makes me, the scarecrow with stuffing for brains, think that I can just rock up and speak – without taking time and without prayer.

This short ten-minute talk took at least an hour to write out. Add to that the prayer that preceded and followed – the meditation on the subject during the intervening days. The time when I was sleeping but my brain was still working on it, and you wake up thinking that you've already worked half the day already.

Everything you see around you in Church takes time and prayer. Do you have a rota for Cell Church or Prayer Group? Someone took time to pray and prepare that rota, the subjects in it. Do you think that Pastor Sackey simply rolled out of bed and on to the microphone this morning? No, he spent time looking for his favourite Spurs mug – because he prepared both his body and in prayer, he prepared his spirit.

Every sermon, every greeting, every prayer, every communion, every worship song, every announcement, every intro, even the panels in between sections, take time and prayer to prepare. Sermons can take weeks to prepare, greetings can take an hour or more, every communion presentation – hours. Worship Teams rehearse every week, never mind the personal preparations of each singer or instrumentalist for a single song that lasts 5 minutes, yet has taken 25 hours of individual time to pray about and prepare. The announcements video takes about 2 hours to prepare, but that's only the head of the needle – the thread involves administration, heads of ministries, voice actors recording and re-recording takes.

Our services may last an hour – but the life that goes into them amounts to many weeks of work. Therefore, we who know this and live this reality encourage you to also walk likeminded with us – to take Time and Prayer in all your dealings.

To wrap this up I will let Paul, and the words of the second chapter of his letter to the Philippians speak: {Phil 2:1-4} Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, 2 fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. 3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. 4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

God Bless you this morning! Amen!