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## Missional Fatigue: Fuel for When We're Running on Empty

Sometimes how you're resting is more important than what you're doing.

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David Jones has a heart for seeing churches planted, souls won to Christ, Christians disciplined, and local churches reach their full potential, all with the hope that many would come to choose, love and follow Jesus. David is passionate about preaching and teaching, organizational leadership and operations, writing and content creation. After finishing his undergraduate degree, David began his theological training while helping plant a church in Johannesburg in 2013, in which he now pastors. David is married to Talya with two children, and when they are not busy with church stuff, they love to travel, create family memories, and from time to time David's family releases him to satisfy his above average love for golf.

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Growing up, my family would often travel to a small, beach-side town in Kwazulu-Natal (South Africa) called Zinkwazi to visit my Grandparents during the school holidays. I distinctly remember one particular day visiting friends at their dairy farm, being amazed with the vibrant green grass on their field, in contrast to the dull sugar cane in the farm next door! As we went on a tour of the dairy process, our farmer-friend turned wise-Yoda informed us that he is not, in fact, a dairy farmer but a grass grower. In seeing our confused expressions, he continued on to explain himself: "The key to great milk", he said, "is great grass. The better the quality of our grass, the more nutritious it is for our cows, and the milk quality increases." Now I'm not a farmer, but this is an important philosophical concept for Christian living that I have come to hold onto.

Evangelistically speaking, COVID-19 may have used more of your fuel than you anticipated, and you may be finding yourself wearied with the pressures, problems, and pain of this time. Tiredness and discouragement may have crept in and clouded our vision of God's heart for the lost. How can we spur each other on, and increase personal evangelistic health when we're running on empty?

We have to be honest and admit that we can, at times, live spiritually detached from the urgency of Christ's heart for the lost. At times, we lack the desperation to see the people across the street and around the world come to know and follow Jesus. Many of us can be more intentional with our diets than living as an evangelistic influence where we live, work, and play.

In Colossians 4:2-4, the Apostle Paul provides some direction and encouragement for us:

Devote yourselves to prayer; stay alert in it with thanksgiving. At the same time, pray also for us that God may open a door to us for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains, so that I may make it known as I should.

In these verses, the Apostle Paul demonstrates some of the evangelistic rocket fuel we can grab hold of in order to stir our hearts again for unbelievers. There are just four areas of focus we can dig into, in order to grow our hunger and effectiveness to see the lost saved

### **Cultivating Spiritual Vitality**

Paul encourages us in Col 4:2 to be steadfast in prayer. His call is to take prayer seriously, and to ensure we are celebrating God's grace and kindness to us with gratitude regularly.

This is of course an essential spiritual discipline in and of itself, but it is also a vital necessity for our evangelistic zeal. Prayer has a rekindling effect in us, helping us grow again in desire and passion where it may be waning. Our evangelistic proclivity tends to walk in step with our spiritual vitality, and it is crucial for us to ensure we continue to grow in spiritual health rather than falter. As we continue to thrive in our personal relationship with Christ, we can trust God to keep us as compassionate for people as we are passionate for him.

Cultivating spiritual vitality takes hard work and consistency, and this is an essential ingredient to evangelistic integrity and effectiveness. Where spiritual vitality is lacking, there is eventually a decline in missional intentionality and fruit. It is important for us to remember that missional longevity and spiritual vitality go together, and we need to be continually propelled by God's power and purpose at work in us if we're to go the distance full of joy and vision.

### **Advancing Personal Intentionality**

Seeing that God has given us a missional purpose, and intends to grow a desire in us for salvations, we need to pray for evangelistic opportunity and advance our own personal intentionality. The mighty Charles Spurgeon said, "If there be any one point in which the Christian church ought to keep its fervor at a white heat, it is concerning missions. If there be anything about which we cannot tolerate lukewarmness, it is the matter of sending the gospel to a dying world".

The church must be characterized by evangelistic desperation, operating collectively as a missions agency rather than a museum. This of course has to be personally owned, as each of us live in the deliberate joy of God's missionary activity.

Firstly, let us consider how we might practically grow in our Gospel proclamation. This has, in essence, two levels of focus: the heart-level and the skill-level. How are we planning to advance in these areas personally? Secondly, as the Apostle Paul demonstrates to us, we need to increasingly advance in the area of missional prayer. Are we praying for

evangelistic opportunities from the Lord? If God answered all of our prayers this past week, would anyone have become Christian? Which specific names of people are we regularly bringing before God, and trusting in him to rescue?

### **Navigating Prayerful Directionality**

As we advance in our personal intentionality in proclamation and prayer, we enter into what God is doing around us as we prayerfully navigate his moving. In Col. 4:3-4 the Apostle Paul demonstrates prayer that is intent on petitioning "that God may open a door to us for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains, so that I may make it known as I should."

Paul is in chains petitioning God to open gospel doors before jail doors, as he positions himself for evangelistic advance even in the midst of his trying circumstances. His concern is for evangelistic opportunity, and he prays for God to break through to this end.

Friends, what would God 'opening a door' look like in your context? Paul demonstrates a prayerful navigation of God's particular leading, even as he displays cognizance of the persistent evangelistic need and potential (Luke 10:2). Evangelistic desperation and discernment mark Paul's life and ministry, as he seeks to be sensitive to the Lord's leading.

In true gospel providence, it seems the more we pray for God to open doors, the more opportunities we see before us!

### **Mobilizing Collaborative Potential**

Lastly, you may have noticed that Paul's prayer for evangelistic opening was framed within a partnership with the Colossian church. As the Apostle Paul asks them to join with him in prayer, Paul is opening our eyes to the potency of collaborative potential.

We began by admitting that we often do not live as evangelistically as we are called to. One of the most important sources of evangelistic fuel is entering into a collaborative partnership with other Christian ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:18-10), as we share edifying testimonies, encourage each other, equip each other, remind each other of the commissioning we have by God in the Gospel, and mobilize ourselves to go together in the power of the Holy Spirit for the glory of God and the salvation of the world.

In closing, let us remember that when we're running on empty, we serve a king who loves to refresh and refill us with and in His grace. Our fuel is in His empowerment, not solely our own grit! As we continue to grow the "grass" in our lives, so to speak, let's continue to be compelled by what we long for God to do in a desperate and needy world.