

Pastor Joe's Column No. 6

"After Finishing The Morning Devotionals of Passion Week"

From when I was little, I watched my parents never miss their early morning prayers, no matter the weather. They woke up at 5 a.m. and were off to the church by 5:30 a.m. for prayer meetings, every single day of the year.

While I was studying in seminary, I visited my folks back in Korea. They expected me to join them for these dawn prayers, considering my path to becoming a pastor. But, to be honest, I just couldn't. I had become a night owl, sleeping late and waking up late. On the rare occasions I did make it, I wasn't really praying; I was fighting sleep. When my parents expressed their worry about my prayer habits, especially since I was training to be a pastor, I'd counter, "The Bible urges us to pray continually but doesn't specify it has to be at dawn. Prayer isn't tied to any specific time of day. I'm just not wired to be a morning person."

After seminary, as I began my full-time ministry, the expectation to engage in morning prayers felt like a huge weight. I even thought, "Whoever started this must have wanted to make life tough. If I'm ever in charge, I'll put an end to it." But guess what? Over time, I found myself embracing this practice. It's not like there was any rule saying I had to pray in the early hours. Yet, I've found myself voluntarily praying at the church first thing in the morning for almost 20 years now.

The Bible mentions several pivotal moments occurring at dawn, like the parting of the Red Sea (Exodus 14:24), the crossing of the Jordan River (Joshua 3:1), and the walls of Jericho falling (Joshua 6:12). Even Jesus, as Mark 1:35 records, rose early for solitary prayer.

This week, our church held a special devotion for Holy Week from Monday to Saturday, with 13 to 15 attendees each day. I am grateful to all the congregants who participated joyfully. The active participation of the congregation was a significant encouragement, although preparing and proclaiming the Word daily was somewhat stressful and tiring. However, the joy of serving was due to the congregation's desire to share in the suffering of Jesus.

A beautiful church, where pastors pray for the congregation and the congregation prays for their pastor, is the kind of church Jesus designed. I

am delighted that our church is becoming such a place.
I love you all in the Lord!