

# Grow - Prayer

## Introduction:

In our study of the book of Acts, we see many themes emerging. The Spirits work in empowering believers, the spread of the gospel, and the ministry of the apostles are just a few of the important topics covered in this book.

What I want us to pay particularly close attention to in these two weeks, in the vitally important role that prayer played in the lives of these first century believers.

The pages of this book are literally filled with examples of wonderfully inspiring and provoking prayers. I want us to look at several of these prayers so that the Holy Spirit can use them in our lives to inspire us to seek Him all the more as we continue to serve Him in our lives.

I've found at least 30 specific references to prayer scattered throughout this book. No doubt, prayer played a prominent and significant role in this book, and in particular, prayer played a significant role in the very lives of the people who prayed them.

“My object here and now will be to stir up the people of God, and especially the members of this church, to abound exceedingly in prayer, more and more to plead with God for the prosperity of His church, and the extension of the Redeemers kingdom.”<sup>1</sup>

### A. Benefits of a Consistent Prayer Life

1. Spending more time with Jesus means we become more like Him.
2. Praying leads to “fruit bearing” John 15:4-5.
3. When we pray, we receive guidance, wisdom, and instruction from our Lord.
4. Prayer gives us the opportunity to cast all our cares upon Him 1 Peter 5:7.

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Spurgeon

5. Prayer helps us to battle pride and self-sufficiency.
6. In prayer, we present ourselves to Him, so that He might work in, and through us.

“There are some forms of spiritual life that are not absolutely essential, but prayer is of the very essence of spirituality. He who has no prayer lacks the very breath of the life of God in the soul. Prayer comes spontaneously from those who abide in Jesus. Prayer is the natural out-gushing of a soul in communion with Jesus. As the leaf and fruit come out of the vine branch without any conscience effort and simply because of it’s living union with the stem, so prayer buds and blossoms and fruits out of souls abiding with Jesus. As stars shine, so do abiders pray.”<sup>2</sup>

**B. Some common hindrances to prayer**

1. Laziness
2. Boredom, wandering mind
3. Pride, self sufficiency
4. Busyness of life
5. Misplaced priorities
6. Doubt, unbelief, lack of faith

**C. Definition of Prayer, John Bunyan:**

“Prayer is a sincere, sensible, affectionate pouring out of the heart or soul to God, through Christ, in the strength and assistance of the Holy Spirit, for such things as God has promised, or according to his Word, for the good of the church, with submission in faith to the will of God.”

**D. Thoughts on prayer from Paul Miller, A Praying Life:**

“Oddly enough, many people struggle to learn how to pray because they are focusing on praying, not on God. Making prayer the center, is like making conversation the center of family mealtime. In prayer, focusing on

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid

the conversation is like trying to drive while looking at the windshield instead of through it. It freezes us making us unsure of where to go.

Conversation is only the vehicle through which we experience one another. Consequently, prayer is not the center of this book. Getting to know a person, God, is the center.”

“The gospel, God’s free gift of grace in Jesus, only works when we realize we don’t have it all together. The same is true for prayer. The very thing we are allergic to-our helplessness-is what makes prayer work. It works because we are helpless. We can’t do life on our own.

Prayer mirrors the gospel. In the gospel, the Father takes us as we are because of Jesus and gives us his gift of salvation. In prayer, the Father receives us as we are because of Jesus and gives us his gift of help. We look at the inadequacy of our praying and give up, thinking something is wrong with us. God looks at the adequacy of his Son and delights in our sloppy, meandering prayers.”

#### **E. Prayer in the book of Acts**

1. Summarized under three headings:
  - a. Devoted to prayer 1:14, 2:42, 6:4
  - b. Earnest in prayer 3:1, 8:14:17, 9:9
  - c. United in prayer 4:23, 12:5, 13:3
  
2. Verses in Acts where prayer is mentioned:
  - Devotion to prayer – Acts 1:14
  - Believers devoted to prayer – Acts 2:42
  - Peter and John pray – Acts 3:1
  - Church gathers to pray – Acts 4:23-31
  - Apostles devoted to prayer – Acts 6:4
  - Peter and John pray – Acts 8:14-17
  - Saul prays, Ananias prays – Acts 9:9
  - Cornelius, Peter pray – Acts 10:2-9
  - The church prays – Acts 12:5-12
  - Church fasts, prays – Acts 13:3

Elders appointed with prayer, fasting – Acts 14:23  
Paul prays, Macedonian call – Acts 16:6-10  
Paul, Silas pray in prison – Acts 16:25  
Paul and church elders pray – Acts 20:36  
Paul prays – Acts 21:5  
Sailors pray – Acts 27:29  
Paul prays for healing – Acts 28:8