

Pray Desperately

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[0 : 00] All right, well, good morning again. If you have your Bibles, let's turn to the book of Acts. We are going to be beginning with Acts chapter 2, verse 42. We'll be looking at a number of verses this morning as we continue talking about prayer.

And the title of today's message is Pray Desperately. And we know that we are in desperate need of prayer because apart from God, we can do nothing.

And so I believe if we as a church are living our lives and if we are functioning as if we would fall flat on our faces in everything that we do, if God wouldn't show up, that means we're not doing it in our own strength.

We're doing things that only God can accomplish and he would be the one who gets the glory. And as we think about prayer, I think about the early church.

The book of Acts has prayer mentioned more times than any other book of the New Testament. And when we look at the early church in the book of Acts, we see many things that God is doing.

[1 : 05] God is showing up in a mighty way in the life of the church. And so if we look at Acts chapter 2, verse 42, we look at that together.

The Bible says, and they continued, the church continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

And as we look at the early church, as we look at Acts chapter 2, verse 42, what we see is the source of life for the early church.

Prayer is something that was very, very important to them. But something that I'm seeing in my own life and in our lives, the life of the modern church, I believe, is what has happened is prayer has become supplemental rather than fundamental.

Prayer has become something maybe we tack on to a service. Prayer is something that maybe we think, well, it's supplemental. We'll just keep on doing. We have great programs and they're running very well.

[2 : 09] They're running efficiently. And, you know, we just show up and things take place. Well, and prayer becomes supplemental rather than fundamental. And as we look at the book of Acts, again, we said it has more references to prayer than any other book in the New Testament.

And I think what I would want us to see this morning, more than anything else, is how the prayer life in the early church unfolded as the mission of Christ advanced. So we'll begin by looking at three verses.

First, we'll go back a chapter to Acts chapter 1, verse number 14. Acts chapter 1, verse 14. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication with the women and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

Now, we're going to see a theme here in these verses, these three verses, and they really tie in with Acts chapter 2, verse 42.

In your Bibles, what you will probably notice is these three verses have different English words when it comes to how they prayed. Acts 2, 42.

[3 : 21] They continued steadfastly. In Acts 1, verse 14. All continued with one accord. The same different English words that were translated by the translators, for whatever reason, they chose to translate different words each of these verses.

But each of these verses has the same Greek word. And the Greek word is the same in all four of these verses. And it has more the idea that they devoted themselves to prayer.

They devoted. We could read Acts 2, 42. And they devoted themselves to prayer and the apostles' teaching and in the fellowship and in the breaking of bread and in the prayers.

And also Acts 1, 14. These all devoted themselves to prayer with one accord. Let's look now at Acts chapter 6. Acts chapter 6, verses 3 and 4.

This was in preparation for choosing those who would be serving as deacons, the servants in the church, those who would be taking care of the physical needs of the widows and others.

[4 : 37] So verse 3, Acts 6. Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

But the apostles said, But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word. And so what the disciples were saying here is, Choose these men who can carry on this ministry, but we are going to devote ourselves to prayer.

We are going to be devoted to prayer. Same Greek word in all of these. So let's look at the church having devoted themselves to prayer.

So they're seeing God doing great and mighty things in response to them being, as a church, as a church body, as a church fellowship, being devoted to prayer.

And what I would like for us to see is how things would look if we as a local body of believers would devote ourselves to prayer in the same manner, in the same fashion that the early church did.

[5 : 50] And I want us to look, first of all, at two stories in the New Testament that I believe exemplify and demonstrate the priority that the early church put on prayer.

The first is Acts 4, verses 23 through 31. Acts 4, verses 23 through 31. I know this is a rather long section, but Peter and John had just been arrested.

And verse 23, And being let go, they went to their own companions and reported all of the chief priests and elders had said to them. So they had taken them, Peter and John, they said, don't ever do this again.

Don't ever talk about Jesus again in public. And otherwise, it's going to be bad. And so they released, they come to the people. So verse 24, when the church heard it, when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said, Lord, you are God.

Lord, the one who is sovereign, the one who is in control, you are God, who made heaven and earth and sea and all that is in them, who by the mouth of your servant, David, have said, why do the nations rage?

[7 : 07] And the people plot vain things. The kings of the earth took their stand and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against his Christ, for truly against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel were gathered together to do whatever your hand and your purpose.

And this is their prayer to God. Your purpose determined before to be done. Now, Lord, look on their threats and grant to your servants that with all, what?

With all boldness, they may speak your word by stretching out your hand to heal and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of your holy servant Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken and they were filled with the Holy Spirit and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

So in response to these threats, they say, Sovereign Lord, you who are in control, grant your people boldness that we may speak the gospel.

And so God shows up in a mighty way and God gives them boldness and they're able to speak throughout the city with boldness. And we see as a result of that, people coming to know Jesus as their Savior.

[8 : 28] The second one is over in Acts chapter 12. Acts chapter 12 and verses 1 through 18. Acts chapter 12, verses 1 through 18.

And this is self-explanatory. Herod's violence to the church. Now about that time, Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church.

Then he killed the brother of James, the brother of John, with a sword. So he beheads him. And because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also.

Now it was during the days of unleavened bread. So when he had arrested him, he put him in prison and delivered him to four squads of soldiers to keep him, intending to bring him before the people after Passover.

Now verse 5. Here's where we see the story unfold. Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church.

[9 : 37] Constant prayer. Continual prayer. And when Herod was about to bring him out that night, Peter was sleeping. So here is Peter, and he knows that just days before, James was beheaded.

And so very possibly, the same fate was going to be Peter's. And what is he doing? He's sawing logs.

That shows the peace of God that he is able to give. So let's look to see what unfolds. He was sleeping, bound with two chains between two soldiers and the guards before the door were keeping the prison.

So he's very well guarded. Now behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him and a light shone in the prison. So get this picture. We have this magnificent picture of an angel showing up.

The light, this brilliant white light shining in the prison cell. It was like a Cecil B. DeMille cinematic moment. I mean, for some of you who don't know who I'm talking about, think Charlton Heston, the Ten Commandments, you know, the old movie where it is awesome going on and it's just, oh, and what's Peter doing?

[10 : 58] He's still sleeping. So what does the angel have to do? The angel kicks him or pokes him. He struck Peter on the side and said, Peter, wake up! Something great is about to happen.

So he struck Peter on the side and raised him up saying, arise quickly. And his chains fell off his hands. Then the angel said to him, gird yourself and tie on your sandals.

And so he did. You know, it's like the angel saying, Peter, you're going to be remembered for over 2,000 years for this. You don't want to go out in the street in your underwear. So get dressed, put on your sandals, and it's like, okay, okay.

And so he does it. And so he did and he said to him, put on your garments, follow me. And when he went out and followed him and did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, he thought it was a dream but thought he was seeing a vision when they were past the first and second guard post, they came to the iron gate that leads to the city which opened to them of its own accord and they went out and went down one street and immediately the angel departed from him and when Peter had come to himself.

Up to this point, he's still thinking it's a dream. Just following the angel. Okay, this is cool. This must be a vision. It would be nice if this were real and all of a sudden, it is real.

[12 : 21] And so he's delivered from the hand of Herod from all the expectation of the Jewish people and so when he had considered this, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark where many were gathered together praying and as Peter knocked on the door of the gate, a girl named Rhoda came to answer when she recognized Peter's voice because of her gladness.

She did not open the gate but ran in and announced that Peter stood before the gate. Imagine thinking, you know, here is an escaped convict and he's at the door and he's thinking, okay, what?

And so she goes back in and she says that, here's Peter, Peter's voice, they said to her, he announced that Peter stood before the gate but they said to her, you are beside yourself.

Yet she kept insisting that it was so. So they said, it is his angel. Now Peter continued knocking and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished but motioning to them with his hand to keep silent, he declared to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison.

And he said, go, tell these things to James and the brethren and he departed and went to another place. Then as soon as it was day there was no small stir among the soldiers about what had become of Peter.

[13 : 40] Awesome account of what God can do when God's people are praying. But the question we ask ourselves, to whom are they praying? Who did they pray to?

So to whom were they praying? And a lot of people are praying today. And we mentioned this a few weeks ago on prayer. You know, there's no power in prayer alone.

The power is the one to whom you're speaking. Because there are Hindus that pray. Muslims pray. Buddhists chant. But to whom are they praying?

All the difference in the world. First of all, we see that the early church was praying to the God who is sovereign over everything in the world.

Remember, how did they begin their prayer? Lord God. Sovereign Lord. The one who is in control of everything.

[14 : 37] Let's look at Acts 24. 1. They were praying according to the word of God. Psalm 24. 1 says, the earth is the Lord's and all its fullness.

God owns everything. The world and all those that dwell wherein. So here they are facing opposition. How do they begin their prayer? God, you're in control of everything.

The Lord God who made heaven and earth. The one who's in control. The sovereign Lord. So how should God's sovereignty affect the way we pray? Well, it ought to give us boldness.

To come before him and say, God, you're bigger than they are. You are more powerful than they are. So they come to him with bold, or they come to him and in confidence as the sovereign Lord, they're praying to him.

Not only do they pray to the sovereign God who's in control of everything, they pray to the God who supplies everything that we need.

[15 : 42] Now that's important for us to understand when we're living out our Christian life. You see, it's not our power. I want us to look at another verse.

It's Acts chapter 17 verses 24 and 25. Acts 17, 24, 25. It's really not a verse that deals specifically with prayer. Paul is here in this pagan city.

He's looking around trying to figure out how he can share the gospel with them. They're really not open to the gospel, but they like hearing new things. So in verse 24, he says, God who made the world and everything in it, since he is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands, nor is he worshipped with men's hands as though he needed anything, since he gives to all life, breath, and all things.

Now I think what the early church understood, they understood that. They understood that power did not come from serving God. Let me say that again.

The early church understood that their power did not come from serving God. Their power came from the God who served them. Now you think, well, God doesn't serve us. Really? What did Jesus do when he came to earth?

[17:01] He came to serve. Now what does God do for us when we are serving him? He supplies the power to do the work. work. So the power doesn't, you know, there are a lot of Christians who are busy with a lot of activity.

And there may be absolutely no power in that service. The power comes when we realize that God does not need us, as Paul said.

He is not, he is not worshipped with men's hands as though he needed anything, since he is the one that gives life and breath and what? All things.

So the early church understood that if we are to do anything that matters for eternity, God has got to show up and God has got to do it. We are just his hands on earth. You know, God doesn't need us to go out and do all this frenzied activity and feed the nations.

You say, well, isn't that what the Bible tells us to do? Feed the poor? Take care of the widows? Yes. He wants us to be the vessel, but he is the one that gives the power to the vessel.

[18:14] So we need to understand that as believers. You know, it's not our insight, it's not our intellect, it's not our charisma, it's not our ability that changes the world for eternity.

It's God showing up and working through us, through his Holy Spirit that changes things that make a difference. So the early church understood that.

So then that brings us to the question, why did they pray? Well, first of all, I think we see they were utterly dependent on God's power.

They were utterly dependent on God's power. Let's look at Acts 4, 33. Acts 4, 33.

It says, and with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Now think about it. What type of group were these guys prior to the Holy Spirit being given to them on the day of Pentecost?

[19:25] Well, they were scared, a bunch of guys who were too scared to be seen with Jesus after he was arrested and when he was going through his trials. They were the ones who did not show up at the cross when Jesus was hanging there giving his life for them.

Peter was the one who denied Jesus three times when they said, we know you, you are with him. No, I'm not with him. Have nothing to do with him. Three times he denies Jesus.

But when he is filled with God's Holy Spirit power on the day of Pentecost, he boldly preaches to the same ones who put Jesus to death and who had the same power and authority by the government to put him to death.

And so it's with great power and boldness that the disciples are accomplishing God's mission. And so the early church, I believe, understood that they were dependent upon God for his power.

So they prayed to him because they were utterly dependent on God's power. And with great power, mega power, was upon them. Just think of all the times in the book of Acts that God shows up with great power.

[20 : 33] Almost, well, every single time God shows up with this great power, it was a result of the church praying. They prayed, God shows up with power.

They prayed because they had a need, they were being persecuted or they needed to make a decision. And so they prayed and God shows up with power. Can we connect the dots?

We see that the church cannot function and accomplish anything of eternal value without prayer. And so they prayed for his power. They were also utterly dependent upon, or they were desperate for God's grace.

Again, Acts 4.33. They were utterly desperate for God's grace. Acts 4.33. With great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and great grace was upon them all.

Remember, what does God supply us? What does God show us? God shows us his grace. It is because of God's grace that we can be called his children. It is because of God's grace that our sins can be forgiven.

[21 : 47] Now, it is according to justice because Jesus died, paid our penalty. But it's by grace that we're saved. Through faith, not of ourselves, it is a gift of God, lest any man should boast.

And think about this. It's only because of God's grace. And it's the one who gives the grace that gets the glory. Because think about it.

If we were the ones who, like, 60-40, you know, 40% was according to our ability, 60% God, or whatever ratio we wanted to make, then who would get the glory?

God and us. But the Bible tells us we can do nothing apart from Christ. We can do nothing apart from the Holy Spirit. So the one who gives the grace gets the glory.

And that's the way God designed it. And really, that's why he uses, as the Bible says, there are not many who are wise, according to this world, that are called. There are not many, you know, idols and stars and important people that are called.

[22 : 52] He calls the common people. Why? Because when, through prayer, and the power of God's Holy Spirit, when he shows up, the world says, how in the world could such ordinary men and women and boys and girls have such power and can speak with such authority.

It's because the one who gives the grace gets the glory. So they were praying. But also, the third thing we see is they were utterly devoted to God's mission.

They were utterly devoted to God's mission. All throughout the book of Acts, we see them praying. Prayer is intertwined in everything the church did and it's linked to the mission of the church.

That's the place of prayer involved in the mission of the church. God has given us a mission. Jesus gave us the mission. Go and make disciples.

And that's what the early church was doing. Often the problem arises when we ask ourselves, why should we pray? Now, we don't necessarily do it overtly, but we might do it, we act like prayer may not be that important.

[24 : 07] You know why? Because you don't need to pray to watch TV. You don't need to pray to surf the internet. You don't need to pray to go through religious motions Sunday after Sunday.

You don't need to pray to do that. And so, if that's all we're involved in, you don't need to pray to go to work. Most of us don't need to pray to do the job that you're given.

And so it's possible for us to live our entire Christian life from salvation to death without praying because we don't need to. Because if all you're doing is attending church, reading your Bible, watching TV, surfing the internet, saying hi to friends, and talking about things that you're comfortable with, why do you need to pray?

But if you've got a mission that's life and death, and people will go to hell if you don't accomplish your mission, and you need God's power and God to show up, and if we're living that kind of Christian life, then we need to pray because we're sunk.

I mean, we've got our heads, I mean, we're under the water without God if we have this mission and realize we have the mission that if God doesn't show up, we're going to utterly fail.

[25 : 27] So, does our Christian life require prayer? Or does it not? Are we truly dependent upon God's grace? Next we ask, how did they pray?

How did they pray? How did they pray? Think about it this way. Maybe if prayer is not a significant thing in our life, maybe it's because we lack mission.

Maybe it's because you don't have a mission. Get a mission. Get on board with the mission Jesus gave us as the body of Christ, as the local church, and then you're going to find yourself with a need to pray.

First of all, we see they prayed with structure. The early church prayed with structure. But secondly, the early church prayed with spontaneity.

Prayed with structure, prayed with spontaneity. Look back in your Bibles at Acts chapter 2, verse 42. Acts chapter 2, and verse 42.

[26 : 41] The Bible says, they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship in the breaking of bread and in prayers. In the Greek, there are the definite articles before each one of these.

So it could be read and they devoted themselves or they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine or the apostles' teaching and the fellowship and in the breaking of bread and in the prayers.

So it's a very good possibility that, and we know that they were praying Old Testament prayers as well, but didn't Jesus give a model prayer? Didn't Jesus say, when you pray, pray this way.

So they started with adoration. They started praying to God. They prayed with thanksgiving, but they also prayed with supplication for their own needs. They prayed that God would keep them from temptation, but they also then had intercessory prayer.

They prayed for others. So there was a structure to their praying. God, we come to you. May your name be praised throughout all the earth. God, we thank you for what you supply.

[27 : 48] God, so there was an order to their praying. There was a structure. When I pray, I have a prayer list. Actually, it's a prayer app that I have that I can check off when the prayer's answered because I find I need some structure to my prayer life.

Otherwise, if there's no structure to my prayer life, I'm all over the place and I might forget to pray for someone or I might forget to pray for a need when someone gives a prayer request and I say, oh, I'll pray for you.

If I don't write it down, I'll probably forget. So I need structure in my prayer. But if all I'm doing is praying and checking off a prayer list, my prayers can get very wooden after a while.

It's like, oh, pray, pray, pray, check, check, check, check, check, and then I go on to something else. So we need the structure, but we also need the spontaneity. You see, throughout the book of Acts, not only did they pray with structure, but also when a need arose, they prayed.

So to be able to learn how to pray with spontaneity is just like Joseph went before the, just like Nehemiah went before the king.

[28 : 57] He was the cupbearer. What did he do? He breathed the prayer. God gave me the words to say. So with spontaneity. Now when did they pray? When did they pray?

Well, I believe we see in the New Testament in the book of Acts, the early church prayed in concentrated prayer. Concentrated prayer. They met together to pray.

They spent probably minutes or hours in prayer, like a concert of prayer, and they met together just to pray.

It's like the ladies when you got together and you spent concentrated time in prayer. Guys, when we get together for the first time, again, I'm looking at Jeremy.

He says he'll schedule a time for us men to come together and pray. And I'm hoping that it's on a regular basis of concentrated prayer. Just that's all we're going to do for a period of time.

[29 : 53] But also, I think, what we see in the New Testament is we see that they participated in continual prayer. Not only did they come together and pray concentrated prayer, but they did, as the Bible teaches us, to continually be in prayer.

Pray without ceasing. Let your prayer just flow from one prayer to the other all throughout the day. Whatever you're doing, whether it's washing dishes, digging a ditch, working at the plant, doing whatever it is, working in the office, just breathing a prayer, living from prayer to prayer, they prayed continual.

Acts chapter 1, Acts chapter 4, Acts chapter 12, are all times where they were in concentrated prayer. They spent time with God. Now think about this.

Many of you may have read the book Love Languages, Five Love Languages. And for some of you, it's quality time. That's your love language.

Do you think God is any different in a relationship if we give God five minutes here and five minutes there separated by hours, maybe even days?

[31 : 08] Wouldn't our relationship with Him be so much richer if we spent quality time with Him in prayer, in that concerted time in prayer?

I think God appreciates that. A minute here and a minute there probably won't cut it. Next thing, where did they pray? Where did they pray? Well, what did we see in Acts 2, 42?

What did we see back here in Acts chapter 4? What did we see in all these periods? They got together to pray.

They gathered together for prayer. We see this all throughout the book of Acts. Something happens. The church gathers together for prayer. They go out.

They come back together. They gather together for prayer. That's where they prayed. Second thing is they scattered apart to pray. We see this as Peter, John.

[32 : 09] We see Paul, Barnabas. They go out and they scatter and they pray. And God says, no, you don't go here. Go there. And so God is directing them as they scatter out and they're praying as they are scattered out and they're seeing God accomplish great and mighty things.

Then we come to what did they pray for? What did they pray for? Let's go back to Acts 2, 42. Acts 2, 42. We see, first of all, they devoted themselves to prayer.

They continued steadfastly in what? In the apostles' teaching. The apostles' doctrine. They got that from Jesus. And in, remember, there's a definite article here.

They also devoted themselves to the fellowship in the breaking of bread and in prayer. So the first thing I think we see according to Acts 2, 42 is they prayed for the success of God's Word.

They prayed for the success of God's Word because the Bible says they continued steadfast in the apostles' doctrine, the apostles' teaching.

[33 : 27] Now, what was their teaching? Their teaching was based upon, I believe, the Word of God. So when the apostles taught, they weren't teaching their philosophy.

I don't think they were teaching what they just felt like. They were teaching what they learned from Jesus. And so what they were doing, literally, they were speaking the Word of God.

Because if Jesus said it, Jesus is the Word. So what they learned from Jesus was the Word of God. And so this is what the apostles were teaching the church. And so the church continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching.

So they were praying, I believe, for the success of God's Word. We need God's Word. Because if all we're doing, and we need prayer for God to accomplish His Word.

Because if all we're doing is preaching without praying, then we're just engaged in religious activity. But if all we're doing is praying without the preaching, then we're missing out on what God will accomplish through the teaching of the Gospel.

[34 : 34] And so this is important. The second thing I believe we see is they were praying for the needs of each other and the world. They were praying for the needs of each other.

Acts 2.42, they were continuing steadfastly in the fellowship, in fellowship with one another. So they were taking care of each other. They were praying for God to take care of each other's needs.

Because we see that when there were some who lacked because they lost a job or they couldn't practice their trade in the guilds who put them out because they were talking about Jesus.

They say, you have a need, you're hungry, you don't have any food, come, we'll sell what we have and we'll spread it around. So they were praying for the needs of each other but also I believe for the needs around the world because they were giving to help the church in Jerusalem.

They were giving to help others all around the world. And then thirdly, I believe they were praying for the spread of God's worship. They were praying for the spread of the gospel around the world.

[35 : 43] Now this reminds me of a story from D.L. Moody. D.L. Moody was a famous preacher from a number of years ago and he preached in inner city Chicago.

He preached in the New England area and then he went over in Europe and preached quite a bit there. And we see God having done great and mighty things through D.L. Moody.

But early in D.L. Moody's ministry, he wrote in his journal about a particular time of preaching. He had gone to England and he was preaching in this church one Sunday morning and he says as he was preaching, he wrote in his journal, he said that it seemed that no one was listening, that no one seemed interested in what he was saying.

You know, it's very humbling when that happens. You know, that happens in church sometimes. It never happens here. You know, it's like sometimes you feel like saying, is this mic still on? So he writes that this is what took place that Sunday morning.

And so he did like he normally did. Anyone who wanted to know Jesus, their Savior, and nobody stood up. No response whatsoever to the gospel.

[37 : 06] And so very discouraged. Moody was supposed to preach that same night in the same church. And so he's thinking to himself, you know, if Sunday morning was dead, Sunday night it would be more dead.

And so he's thinking, well, I guess I better do it. And so he shows up Sunday night and as he writes in his journal, he says that he was able to preach with great power.

He said that when he came to the point at the end of his message, when he said, anyone who is right now ready to trust Jesus as their Savior to please stand, he said people stood throughout the auditorium.

And he's thinking to himself, well, maybe they didn't understand. So he has them all sit down. And he gives the gospel presentation again. And after he gives the gospel presentation a second time, he says, now everyone who wants to trust Jesus as their Savior, please stand.

Well, even more people stood up than the first time. Not convinced, he has them sit down a third time. I mean, true story. It's in his journal. And he gives a gospel presentation again.

[38 : 22] And he gives the, and then what he says after, he says, anyone who is ready to trust Jesus as their Savior, come to, he gives the room, and he says, the pastor and I will meet you there to explain again to you what it takes to know Jesus.

Jesus. And so, they close the service, and he says, the room is standing room only. He gives another gospel presentation, he said.

And he says, I'll tell you what, this is what I want you to do. I want you to come back tomorrow, and the pastor will meet you, and the pastor will explain to you again to make sure that you know what he's, what he's saying.

True story. He has this in his journal. And so, what Moody does is Moody gets in a boat, and he goes, he goes somewhere else to preach. Well, what he finds out, he gets, he gets a cable from the pastor a few days later.

he says, he says, pastor, he says, you won't believe it. More people showed up the next day than were even in the church building when you preached.

[39 : 44] Now, how is that possible? They went out and told their family. They went out and told their friends about Jesus. They were winning souls on their own. And so, he says, more people showed up than were even in the church when you preached.

And so, Moody ended up coming back to that church and he preached there for weeks. And thousands and thousands of people were saved. Well, he got curious. And so, what he ended up doing was, he wanted to find out what happened, excuse me, that Sunday morning.

And, you want to know what made the difference. And what he found out, there was one bedridden woman. It was a lady who was bedridden in that town who had not been in the church that morning because of her illness.

And when her sister came home from church to bring her lunch, the sister who was bedridden asked, well, how did it go this morning? And the sister said, oh, it went all right.

A guy by the name of D.L. Moody came and preached this morning and she said, it wasn't very exciting. Well, the sister who was bedridden, her eyes lit up and she said, D.L.

[40 : 55] Moody, I've heard about him. I've read about him in the papers. She said, and I've been praying that God would bring him to our church. And so, and so, that Sunday morning she heard about this.

So what she did was, she said, forget about my lunch. I'm going to start praying for tonight's service. All afternoon and all during that service, this one prayed that God would reach out and touch lives for Jesus.

So what made the difference? A not very exciting Sunday morning where nobody responded to a Sunday evening where people came out in droves and kept showing up and kept showing up and kept showing up.

It was prayer. It was prayer. And I believe that's just a simple story about how God can accomplish what he wants to accomplish when we but simply pray.

So what I wanted to do is if we as a church will devote ourselves to prayer just for a week and it can go longer obviously but I want to challenge us this week a week of intentional prayer at Faith Bible Church to number one this is the first challenge is to memorize and pray a verse of scripture each day all day.

[42 : 24] That doesn't mean you can't go to work I'm just saying as you're working as you're going about your business take a verse of scripture and pray according to his word.

So what you do is look at your life if there's any areas in your life where maybe there's a need situations maybe that you're in and I want you to find a verse of scripture that speaks to that.

I know the Gideon Bible has if you have a little Gideon New Testament there's a section in there that speaks about different situations that you may find yourself in and verses of scripture to pray.

Some other Bibles may have that in one of the sections for example if you're struggling with some things in your life and there's maybe a lot of hurt a lot of pain memorize Psalm 46 1 Psalm 46 1 God is our refuge and strength and ever present help in time of trouble.

So what you would do is you would memorize that and all throughout the day all throughout the week you could choose a different verse each week or you could choose the same verse but pray that prayer back to God.

[43 : 30] God I know you're my refuge God I thank you for being my help God I thank you that you're always there ever present to help me when I need you and pray that prayer back to God and allow it to saturate your soul and just pray pray scripture all throughout the week all day every day maybe you do different verses maybe the same verse over and over again but see how that will change your life and change your week.

Second set aside a structured concentrated time each day to pray for local and global needs around you. Set aside a structured time not necessarily a minute here a minute there but say you know what on my lunch hour you may choose to fast to say for this next 30 minutes for this hour that I have instead of eating I'm going to open up God's word and I'm going to pray I'm going to spend some concentrated structured time praying to God pray for local needs pray for global needs we have missionaries that we're supporting all around the world go to the board in the hallway over here and there's prayer letters from our missionaries so maybe write down some prayer requests that our missionaries have given and so pray for those needs pray for our pray for our local needs as well so set aside some structured concentrated time each day this week to pray and then thirdly begin to pray on a daily basis

God give us the people you want us to reach give us the people you want us to reach because how did the early church reach people they prayed how did the early church get boldness to speak their faith they prayed how did God show up and do miraculous things or why because the people prayed and God showed up all throughout the Old Testament all throughout the New Testament we see God's people had a need they prayed to him he showed up and he answered will God show up and answer in mighty miraculous ways unless we ask him ask you have not because we ask not let's pray Lord God today we are so thankful that you meet our needs we're so thankful that you provide us the power that we need for each day help us to be a praying church help us to be a church that we realize that if we don't pray we cannot expect you to show up in a great and a mighty way working miracles in the lives and the hearts of people that if we expect to see people saved expect to see lives changed it's going to have to be through the power of your word and it's going to have to be the power of your Holy Spirit working in us and through us so Father help us to be prayers help us to spend quality concentrated time with you help us as we gather together to pray help us as we scatter apart to pray and accomplish your will or be with us we ask

Lord we know that you're here among us you're here with us your Holy Spirit indwells us so Father help us to ask for that which we know you desire that we would pray according to your will we pray Father this in Jesus name Amen let's stand please