

# Prayer that Changed History

One of the most dominant features of the New Testament church was that they prayed. Following the ascension of Jesus, the followers of Jesus were left in Jerusalem, and even though they were without Jesus' physical presence, spiritually they were still in contact with Him because they prayed.

When the disciples were selecting the replacement for Judas they prayed because the decision was too great to make by themselves. Following Peter's sermon on Pentecost that resulted in many new believers, they were instructed in spiritual growth tools and among those tools was prayer.

Prayer was such a way of life that they took time out each day, even in the afternoons, to spend time in prayer to God. Prayer was so important to the apostles that they set aside other servants to care for the physical needs of the widows, so they could spend extended periods of time in prayer themselves.

## Do you see the picture?

Prayer is not to be:

1. *Some function tacked on at the end of a service as a formality.*
2. *An agenda item that if we get to it then we will pray as if it does not matter or it has no value.*

Prayer is to be:

1. *Prominent in the life of the believer.*
2. *Primary in our relationship with Jesus.*
3. *Prestigious in the life of a church and its members.*

Our prayers should move beyond the walls of the church and embrace the concerns and needs of our communities with the power of God.

We have now been through four brief studies deal with prayer in the early church:

1. The Indispensable and Distinguishing Feature (Acts 2:42).  
*Prayer was **the** distinguishing feature of their lives & of the early church.*
2. Prayer Brings God to Us (Acts 4:24).  
*Prayer reminds us that we need God more than he needs us.*

3. Prayer Changes Us (Acts 4:13).

*Prayer changes us.*

4. Prayer Unleashes the Power of God (Acts 4:31).

Two characteristics dominated the apostle's prayer meetings:

- *God's presence*
- *God's power*

Is it any wonder that the Evil One seeks valiantly to keep Christ followers from praying?

When we don't pray - Satan has won the battle.

But when we pray - the presence of GOD and the power of God are unleashed!

Today's message is the 5<sup>th</sup> in a series of 7 brief studies on prayer in the early church:

## **Prayer Prepares Us to Share Our Faith Boldly**

### **Acts 4:31**

**[31] And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.**

The early disciples prayed!

Notice, "After they prayed . . . they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God *boldly*."

This was not a second Pentecost – rather this was a fresh filling, a renewed awareness of the Spirit's power and presence in their lives and witness.

1. *This endowment of power for witness would continue as they prayed.*
2. *Boldness was the outward sign of the Holy Spirit's anointing.*
3. *Telling others about Jesus is the front line of the battle for the hearts of men and women.*

It is Prayer that equips us to tell the story. How foolish one would be to go to battle without proper:

1. *Preparation.*
2. *Training.*
3. *Equipment.*

How foolish are we to go to spiritual battles without prayer!

1. *Prayer is the equipment of our warfare.*
2. *We are not outfitted for the battle against evil unless we pray.*
3. *As believers and as a church we will only be triumphant in storming the lines of evil for the souls of men and women when we pray.*

Evelyn Christenson tells of the time the pastor of a large Texas church and his wife walked her to her car after an all-day prayer seminar for 2,000 people.

Earlier at the final session of the seminar, when she had given the invitation to pray aloud in groups, over one-fourth of the people, many weeping, repented and boldly invited Jesus into their hearts

The pastor asked, “To what do you owe that kind of power?”

Taken aback, Evelyn responded, “Well, prayer, of course.”

“What kind of prayer?” he quizzed.

“First of all, the prayer of the committee who invited me to come here.

They signed a contract promising to get a representative from the churches in the community and pray together for at least six months before I came—I said I wouldn’t come unless they did.

Then last night, I dropped in to their group and kicked off the seminar with an evening of prayer, once again pleading for those who didn’t know Jesus.

My own board members pray every day. I have a prayer calendar that includes a special intercessor of the day.

My telephone prayer chains pray three times a week. Thousands of my newsletter subscribers pray.

We have a group that prays around the clock for special events and overseas trips, plus the prayers of friends, family, and my own prayers several hours each day.”

The pastor looked at Evelyn in silence.

Finally, he said, “What would happen if I, as pastor of this church, had that kind of prayer?”

“Sir,” she replied, “you wouldn’t be able to get all the new believers into your overcrowded sanctuary.”

God is working powerfully around the globe today. In fact, some view it as the greatest movement of God ever.

Christianity is rapidly advancing all over the world.

1. *China*
2. *India*
3. *Africa*
4. *Central & South America*

According to one researcher, if Christianity keeps growing at the same pace that it is today the whole world will be Christian by 2032! One of the common denominators in all these locations is that the people of God pray together.

In general, there are only a few places in the world where the gospel is declining or not advancing:

1. *Australia*
2. *Japan*
3. *Western Europe*
4. *North America.*

Could it be that in these places, believers are not praying?

What would God have us do?

1. *Offer bold prayers that reflect a strong faith and secure hope.*
2. *Let's not just:*
  - *Talk about prayer.*
  - *Have seminars on prayer.*
  - *Read books about prayer.*
  - *Listen to sermons on prayer.*

**Let us pray!!**

**The souls of men and women hang in the balance!!**