

7 Marks of A NT Church

Evangelism, Apostolic Teaching, Christ Centered Worship, Authentic Fellowship, Christian Baptism

Today: Fervent Prayer

Most of you know I am training as a Spiritual Director, which involves a great deal of prayer.

Contemplative prayer...A LOT more listening than talking! What I do is sit with someone...and Listen to Jesus!

While I was away last week I sat with a young woman in my group that is going through very difficult time

Insomnia...(Days at a time) Debilitating Anxiety; Uncheck Fear (Medication, Counseling, Nothing has helped)

Sitting and listening...and very clearly said...Ask here when the FIRST time it happened was!

She told me a an event that took place on the mission field that was a detailed description of Spiritual Warfare and Oppression

When it is Spiritual Oppression, Medication isn't going to help, Counseling isn't going to help, Willpower isn't going to help!

At that point...Only Jesus...

We all know that prayer is important...and most of us pray many times during the course of a day.

That is a critical part of what you see taking place in the NT Church in the book of Acts.

Today I want to look with you at prayer...And I want to do that in two ways.

Why We Pray...and When we Pray!

4 Reason Why Prayer is Vitally Important in the Life of A Christian...And A Church.

1. Prayer Connects Us To Jesus, The Source Of Spiritual Power In Our Lives.

- What they were doing: Acts 1:1-14 (14)
 - ~Waiting as Jesus told them to wait: vs 4 *"wait for the gift"*
 - ~Praying while they waited vs 14 *"They all joined together constantly in prayer"*
 - ~Followed by the coming of the HS vs 2:1-4
- Why they were doing it: John 15:1-4
 - ~Jesus is the vine vs 1
 - ~We are branches (connected) vs 4 *"remain in me and I in you"* We do that through prayer
 - ~No branch bear fruit by itself vs 4
 - ~If you remain bear MUCH fruit vs 5

Jesus was very clear...There is a direct relationship to staying in spiritual connection with Him (Prayer main way) Power/Fruit

Applic: If you look at your life and you say...wow...I don't feel like I'm producing much spiritual fruit: Ask: Praying?

Not the ONLY reason fruit might not be there ...but is a major one! Most common

Do you want and need that in your life? Want to see God produce spiritual results...Ask Him for it!

James 4:2 "You have not...because you ask not!" (and when you do ask...ask for yourself!)

2. Prayer Connects Us To Others, A Source of Spiritual Strength Beyond Ourselves.

- What they were doing: Acts 12:1-5 *"Prayer was made without ceasing by the church for him"*
 - ~Peter was in trouble Arrested, James already put to death
 - ~They could not "fix" it They couldn't stand up against the Roman Empire!
 - ~They brought it to God...TOGETHER!
- Why they were doing it: Matt 18:18-20 Simply practicing what Jesus taught them to do
 - ~Whatever you bind/loose
 - ~If two agree (harmony)
 - ~2 or more gathered... Verse about PRAYER! Not primarily worship!

Sometimes we need spiritual backup! We need others to come alongside us

They help us understand...they help us pray...they help us hear God when we cant or aren't sure

Applic: When was the last time you sat down and prayed WITH someone...When did you call someone and say...pray for me?

That should be the place we START...not the place of LAST resort!

Colossians 4:12 "Epaphras...always wrestling in prayer for you!"

"Velveteen Rabbit" Love with Skin on it! (Jesus praying...helps to hear others!)

3. Prayer Shields Us From Spiritual Attack From The Enemy.

- What they were doing: Acts 14:23 *"When they prayed they commended them to the Lord."* (New Elders)
 - ~Commended: *To deposit for trust and/or protection; to place with; in front of or beside*
 - ~It is going to be a hard time! Leading the church: (One of the discussion we had with our new Elder candidates)
 - ~When they placed them in leadership, they said..."Let us pray for you...You need spiritual coverage!
 - ~Going beyond their own resources, beyond the resources of the Elders...calling on the church (Community)
- Why they were doing it: Mt 6:9-15
 - ~Lead us not into temptation: Protect us from ourselves
 - ~Deliver us from Evil: Protect us from the Evil one!
 - ~They knew they were stepping into a place of spiritual vulnerability...and NEEDED all the help they could get

Applic: Do you do that when you are spiritually vulnerable? Reach out...Pray alone...or call on those that will support/help

4. Prayer Helps Us Engage In Offensive Spiritual Warfare!

You have heard the saying...The best defense is a good offence!

Many of us have an entirely incorrect view of what we are to be doing as we wait for Jesus to return.

We aren't supposed to be "Just hanging on!" We are to be serving Jesus and going forward spiritually.

That is part of what prayer helps us do!

- What they were doing: Acts 4:1-31 Healing of Cripple...causes problems
~Arrested, Jailed, told "don't preach" vs 18 "Don't preach in the name of Jesus"
~Let them go...they gathered to pray vs 23-38
~Prayed: Consider their threats...make us bold! Vs 30 Makes us bold...Keep healing others!
- Why they were doing it: Mt 6:9-15
~Thy kingdom come: Kingdom of God is something we both PRAY and WORK for
~Thy will be done: We need spiritual insight (thr prayer) to help us know what to do!
~KOG advancing: Mt 11:12 *From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it.*
Forcefully: Like a forceful, violent wind pushing forward!

Applic: We sometimes forget that we are called by many names in the Bible

Family, Sheep, House of God,

One of them we overlook: We are the Army of God! We need to be advancing

We are called to take the Kingdom of God forward.

We are in the middle of spiritual battle for the souls of men and women and boys and girls

We can't afford to stand passively on the sidelines and watch while the Enemy runs wild among us!

Prayer is the Offensive weapon we have to use to advance the Kingdom of God forward!

When was the Last time you did that...either for yourself...or for a loved one...or a friend...or for you church?

We are called to be men and women of prayer...pursuing God...storming heaven...pleading for God to be at work

CONCL: As we close this morning, I want to do that with you. I want to pray...

- Corporately, Connect with others Connect with Jesus...We need HIM and HIS strength
- Offensively: Ask God to move powerfully Shield Us from the Evil One

10 Different Times We Should Be Praying!

Waiting For God to move:

Acts 1:14: In upper room waiting for Jesus promise to be fulfilled
Have you been there? Waiting? Are you there now?

Asking For Direction:

Acts 1:24 Making a decision to replace Judas
Been stuck...not knowing what direction God would have you take?

Times of Trial and Struggle:

Acts 4:25: Don't preach anymore: Make us bold
Where do you turn when you are struggling spiritually, When others oppose?
1 Peter 1: We are shielded by our faith!

Times of Confusion:

Acts 9:11 Knocked down on way to Damascus: Now What? World changed
Where do YOU turn when that happens? How do you find your way?

Time ONLY God can help

Acts 9:40 Facing Death: Peter knelt and prayed
Some times in life we KNOW only God can help...Be bold enough to ask Him to

Time of Ministry Opportunity:

Acts 13:3; 14:23 Missionaries and Elders

Time for Others to Help:

Acts 16:9 Man of Macedonia praying...send help!

Time of Healing Needed:

Acts 28:8 God needed to do what only He can

There are all kinds of times and reasons why we pray. Today I want to close our time of worship that way.

I want to have you come...kneel here and pray....Or...Stand...right where you are...and pray

If you want someone to pray with you...We are here... (Myself, Deacons, Elders)

Grab a friend...say...will you come pray with me?

Or...maybe...take a friend that you KNOW needs prayer...say, I want to pray for you...do that...there...or down here!