

Practicing This One Thing:
How to Pray Together
Acts 4:23-31

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Text Introduction: We are in the middle of a prayer challenge. We are calling our challenge “This One Thing.” This is not only guiding our times together on Sunday morning as we examine the Scriptures about prayer, but we are also challenging one another about our discipline and habits of prayer. And what a time it is to pray! I could not have imagined the importance of this effort when God birthed this in my heart early this summer. But, now, all of this makes perfect sense, right?

Most of our study has focused on praying individually, but I want to show us a teaching today regarding praying together as a church. The first century church gives us such a good model.

Text: After they were released, they went to their own people and reported everything the chief priests and the elders had said to them. ²⁴When they heard this, they all raised their voices to God and said, “Master, You are the One who made the heaven, the earth, and the sea, and everything in them. ²⁵You said through the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of our father David Your servant:

Why did the Gentiles rage
and the peoples plot futile things?
²⁶The kings of the earth took their stand
and the rulers assembled together
against the Lord and against His Messiah.

²⁷“For, in fact, in this city both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, assembled together against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, ²⁸to do whatever Your hand and Your plan had predestined to take place. ²⁹And now, Lord, consider their threats, and grant that Your slaves may speak Your message with complete boldness, ³⁰while You stretch out Your hand for healing, signs, and wonders to be performed through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.” ³¹When they had prayed, the place where they were assembled was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak God’s message with boldness.

Introduction: Do Our Prayer Shake the Place?

Throughout the book of Acts, we see that the church had a commitment to praying. This wasn’t just individuals praying, but the church coming together to pray. In fact, let me remind you that people are said to be praying 31 times in the Book of Acts. Of these 31 times ...

14 times an individual is said to be praying.

2 times two or more people in a small group are said to be praying.

15 times it is the church gathered in prayer.

Half of the references to praying in the book of Acts are references to corporate praying!

The Immediate Response of a Person in Need

After they were released they went to their own people and reported what had happened and what had been said to them. We all need “our people.” We need to report.

The Immediate Response of the Persons Who Hear of the Need

They raised their voices to God. Prayer was not the last resort. Prayer was their first response. This happens all throughout Acts.

The Requests that are Made (Verses 24-29): How did the early church pray?

We must pray....

According to the Sovereign Control of God. “Master.” This is the same way Jeremiah prayed when God told him to purchase a field when at the same time he saw the Babylonian army gathering in the distance. Jeremiah went on to pray, “There is nothing too hard for you.” (Jeremiah 32:17) This is the way Daniel prayed when God began to show him that the land of Israel was going to be restored.

Someone said, “Sovereignty is understanding that God is God all by Himself.”

According to the Creative Activity of God. “who made Heaven and earth...”

According to the Crisis. “Now, LORD, look on their threats.”

Asking for God’s continued hand upon their lives.—Notice what they did not pray? They did not pray for the LORD to keep them safe. They did not ask for the threats to cease. Instead they prayed for boldness in the face of the threats. A preacher of another generation, E. Stanley Jones, said, “Prayer is surrender--surrender to the will of God and cooperation with that will. If I throw out a boathook from the boat and catch hold of the shore and pull, do I pull the shore to me, or do I pull myself to the shore? Prayer is not pulling God to my will, but the aligning of my will to the will of God.”

Prayer does not change God so much as it changes us.

Asking God to cause miracles to happen. (Verse 30) As I have told you many times before, our prayer ought to be that God do something in our church, in our community, and in our country that can only be explained by His power.

The Results of Praying (Verses 31-32a)

Greater Awareness of God’s glory! This business of the place shaking is hard to fathom isn’t it? At its most basic level, here is God saying, “I am here. I have heard.”

Greater Boldness to share God's story! They prayed for greater boldness, and they were filled with greater boldness. This should be our story. This is the continued answered prayer of this story.

Greater Togetherness for life's journey! I'm sure you know the trite saying, "The family that prays together stays together." Isn't it amazing, though, how true even though so trite? It is hard to be at odds with a person that is a prayer partner.

So What?

You cannot be in prayer partnership with someone until you are in relationship with God, first, and then others.