

## Everyday Prayer

### Acts 1:12-14

This is the first message in a brand new series called Acts and the New Normal. It's all about how we can learn from the approach the early Christians took in the face of massive challenge and change in their everyday lives and how God used those challenges and changes to further his purposes and see the world come to know Jesus.

If you asked those early Christians "How do you intend to fill the world with God's glory and goodness? To reconcile people to one another and to God?" They'd say without missing a beat "By following Jesus Great Commission to make disciples of all nations and teach them his ways".

Because the change that Jesus brings is the Fruit of the Spirit: love and joy and peace and patience and gentleness and self-control. Because the gospel of Jesus doesn't value one human being more than another, it unites us in our sinfulness and makes us all equal children of God.

### **What were the characteristics of that first church in the face of change and challenge?**

Acts 1:14 gives us today's answer:

<sup>14</sup> **They all joined together constantly in prayer**, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

We often discover what kind of people we are when faced with solitude and spare time. Most of us find we're not primarily "constant in prayer people".

But we're all on a journey in prayer. We have places to go in this important area

### **What were their drivers for wanting to pray?**

#### **1. They found prayer a delight**

Just a few months earlier they'd spotted Jesus praying and said, "Teach us to pray". Prayer wasn't initiated as a command from Jesus- but a request from his disciples.

They saw something so desirable about the relationship with God that Jesus enjoyed – they wanted it! Father RELATIONSHIP.

- If you want to learn to pray- learn from people who love praying.
- See examples in Acts of teaching delight in prayer (2:42, Stephen in Acts 7, Peter in Acts 10)

## **2. Delight requires structure and planning; discipline.**

Missing an old friend? You make a plan.

- I. Lord's prayer is a structure
- II. Early church had plans and places for prayer:
  - a. Acts 3:1: "One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer. These happened 4 times a day.
  - b. Acts 16: Paul and Silas go to the river to pray outside (lesson there for us today!)

## **3. There was a sense of desperation**

They prayed because they needed to.

- Desperate for Spirit: Acts chapter 1
- Desperate for help in persecution. In Acts 4:24 they "raised their voices together in prayer to God."
- Desperate in the face of being overwhelmed by practical need. In Acts 6 when faced with the challenges of caring for the poor- they said "we need to give more time to prayer"
- Desperate when faced with any trouble. James was there in Acts 1. Later he wrote: <sup>13</sup> Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. <sup>14</sup> Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. <sup>15</sup> And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. <sup>16</sup> Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

Ephesians 6 Pray in the Spirit with ALL KINDS OF REQUESTS

## **4. Their prayers had direction**

They received direction in the place of prayer.

Breakthroughs mostly happened in or after prayer gatherings in Acts.

- Acts 2: they're gathered together doing what? Praying! Then the spirit comes.
- Acts 4 when they prayed- the Spirit broke in and gave them boldness to preach.
- Acts 10 Cornelius is praying and an angel appears
- Peter is praying and a vision comes to him about Cornelius.
- Acts 13. In a worship and prayer gathering Paul and Barnabas are commissioned by God to plant churches.

Therefore we must be EXPECTANT that God will speak as we pray.

Pete Greig's advice on individual prayer:

- Keep it Simple
- Keep it Real
- Keep it Up

What about "together" prayer?

- Be there. Show up
- Be yourself (don't get discouraged/ compare)
- Be active. Pray along

### **Questions:**

Please encourage your small group to come to 2 of the sessions of the week of prayer. Make a plan to pray next week in your small group.

1. 4D Prayer. Which D (Delight, Discipline, Desperation or Direction) fuels your current prayer life? Which one do you feel the need to grow in the most?
2. How can we ensure Delight in God is the centre of our prayer life? Who do you know who models this well?
3. What are some of the dangers around discipline that put us off making a plan? Why is it important to make a plan?
4. Look at the prayer in Acts 4 at the end. What characterized the "desperate" prayer of the early church?
5. How can we keep our selves alert to God speaking when we pray? Look at Acts 13:1-2 How should we process guidance we receive in the place of prayer?

### **Resources**

Terry Virgo interview on prayer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ilpsw-r97hQ>

"How to Pray" (book) by Pete Grieg: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/How-Pray-Simple-Normal-People/dp/1529374928>