

# The Priority of Prayer

## Lesson for Sunday, August 11, 2024

### INTRODUCTION:

- ⇒ What are the functions of the local church? *Allow for some discussion...*
- ⇒ We often say that our goal is to be an *Acts 2 Church!* At the end of Acts 2, we see the main functions of the church outlined for us.
  - Discipleship: “They continued...in the apostles’ doctrine” (vs. 42)
  - Ministry: “And had all things common...” (vs. 44-45)
  - Worship: “And they continued daily with one accord in the Temple” (vs. 46-47)
  - Fellowship: “Breaking bread from house to house...” (vs. 46)
  - Evangelism: “The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (vs. 47)
  - PRAYER: “and in prayers” (vs. 42)
- ⇒ Look at the list the class came up with in the intro question. Did anyone mention prayer? Do we often think of prayer as a function of the church like we would evangelism or discipleship? Why or why not?
- ⇒ Warren Wiersbe noted, “Prayer is both the thermometer and the thermostat of the local church; for the ‘spiritual temperature’ either goes up or down, depending on how God’s people pray.”
- ⇒ In one way, it could be argued that prayer is the first function of the church because the other functions depend on prayer as its fuel. Example: What good is evangelism if is not preceded by prayer?
- ⇒ The Book of Acts is the history of the local church. We learn much from their example. When we closely analyze Acts, we see that prayer was the first priority of that church. They prayed about everything!

### OUTLINE:

1. Overview of Acts (**keep this brief**)
  - a. Who wrote Acts? Luke (Acts 1:1 compared to Luke 1:1)
  - b. What was the purpose of Acts?
    - i. Historical: Records the historical spread of the Gospel (Acts 1:2).
    - ii. Apologetic: Writes a defense of persecuted Christianity (Acts 13:6-12).
    - iii. Evangelistic: Shows the saving power of the Gospel (Acts 16).
  - c. Where did the Gospel spread? Just as Jesus outlined it in Acts 1:8.
    - i. The Spread of the Gospel in Jerusalem (Acts 1-7)
    - ii. The Spread of the Gospel in Judaea and Samaria (Acts 8-12)
    - iii. The Spread of the Gospel to the Uttermost Part of the Earth (Acts 13-28)
2. How did the Gospel spread? It was empowered by prayer!
  - a. **Teacher’s Note**: This sets up perfectly for group work! Our goal in this lesson is to overwhelm the group members with how much prayer is mentioned throughout the Book of Acts. Hopefully, this will impress their hearts of the importance of prayer in our church, as well as in their individual lives.
  - b. Divide the class into small groups and assign them some of the points below. Give them five minutes to work on their points and determine the correct answers. (You will have to prepare these points before class.) Then have each group report back.

1. The believers prayed for **guidance** in making decisions (Acts 1:15–26).
2. The believers prayed for **courage to witness** for Christ (Acts 4:23–31).
3. The believers prayed as a regular part of their **daily ministry** (Acts 2:42–47; 3:1; 6:4).
4. Stephen prayed as he was being **stoned** (Acts 7:55–60).
5. Peter and John prayed for the **Samaritans** (Acts 8:14–17).
6. Saul of Tarsus prayed after his **conversion** (Acts 9:11).
7. Peter prayed before he **raised** Dorcas from the dead (Acts 9:36–43).
8. Cornelius prayed that God would show him how to be **saved** (Acts 10:1–4).
9. Peter prayed on the **housetop** when God told him how to be the answer to Cornelius' prayers (Acts 10:9).
10. The believers in John Mark's house prayed for Peter when he was in prison, and the Lord **delivered** him both from prison and from death (Acts 12:1–11).
11. The church at Antioch prayed before **sending out** Barnabas and Paul (Acts 13:1–3; and note 14:23).
12. The believers prayed in a **prayer meeting** in Philippi and God opened Lydia's heart (Acts 16:13).
13. The believers prayed at another prayer meeting in Philippi and God opened the **prison doors** (Acts 16:25ff).
14. Paul prayed for his **friends** before leaving them (Acts 20:36; 21:5).
15. Paul prayed for God's **blessing** (Acts 27:35) in the midst of a storm.
16. Paul prayed after the storm and God **healed** a sick man (Acts 28:8).

#### CONCLUSION/APPLICATION:

- ⇒ What conclusion(s) can we draw from today's study? *The local church should be a praying church!*
- ⇒ Apply this as a church family:
  - This is why you need to be here Wednesday nights. Talk about your prayer time.
  - This is why we pray in class.
  - This is why we pray for each other throughout the week. Talk about how your class circulates prayer requests.
- ⇒ Apply this as individuals.
  - Hopefully, these first two lessons have impressed upon the group the importance of prayer and the priority it should be in the life of the Christian.
  - Explain that in coming weeks, we will be working on the different parts of our prayer times. Encourage them to be present! We need to learn how to pray!