

We R2B a People of Prayer

Book of Acts

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Introduction:

Theme: The Book of Acts demonstrates that prayer is not merely an option, but a vital characteristic of God's people, enabling **divine power**, spiritual **guidance**, and **breakthrough**.

Today I want to be playful with our five peas in a pod on Pentecost: The **Pentecost power, presence, plan, purpose, and passion of prayer!**

Thesis: Today, we will explore how the Book of Acts consistently portrays the early believers as a people of prayer, and what that means for us today. We are called to be a people defined by persistent, fervent, and expectant prayer.

1. The Power of Prayer: More Than Just a Habit

Acts 2:42 The thesis statement for the book of Acts:

⁴² All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer.

The following are the results or the consequences of the above.

a) The Power of Deep Awe, Signs and Wonders.

⁴³ A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders.

b) The Power of Unity and Sharing.

⁴⁴ And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. ⁴⁵ They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need.

c) The Power of Practicing Presence.

⁴⁶ They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity.

d) The Power of Praise that leads to Participation in the Kingdom!

⁴⁷ ... all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.

Transition: The Book of Acts reveals that prayer was the very heartbeat of the early church, not an add-on. It wasn't something they did, but something they were. We R2B!

2. The Presence of Prayer: The Foundation for Every Beginning

a) The Presence of the Gathered Body (the church)

Once when he was eating with them, he commanded them, "Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift he promised, as I told you before." ⁵ John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."⁶ So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, "Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?" ⁷ He replied, "The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know." ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:4-8)

They all met together and were constantly united in prayer, along with Mary the mother of Jesus, several other women, and the brothers of Jesus. (Acts 1:14)

Over 30 times in the book of Acts, the church gathered in the Presence of the Lord and each other for prayer. Truly, the whole of the New Testament is about coming into union with God through Jesus Christ; prayer is the conduit!

b) Pentecost: The Presence of the Holy Spirit!

On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. ² Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. ³ Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. ⁴ And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability. ⁵ At that time there were devout Jews from every nation living in Jerusalem. ⁶ When they heard the loud noise, everyone came running, and they were bewildered to hear their own languages being spoken by the believers. ⁷ They were completely amazed. "How can this be?" they exclaimed. "These people are all from Galilee, ⁸ and yet we hear them speaking in our own native languages! ⁹ Here we are—Parthians, Medes, Elamites, people from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, the province of Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, and the areas of Libya around Cyrene, visitors from Rome ¹¹ (both Jews and converts to Judaism), Cretans, and Arabs. And we all hear these people speaking in our own languages about the wonderful things God has done!" ¹² They stood there amazed and perplexed. "What can this mean?" they asked each other. (Acts 2:2-12)

This wasn't a casual meeting; it was a focused pursuit of Jesus' promise (Holy Spirit), His purpose (unity), and His plan (Good News)!

Application: New ventures, new seasons, new ministries, new personal commitments –all should begin with, end with, and be bathed in a season of prayer!

3. The Plan of Prayer: Seeking Divine Guidance

a) Choosing Leadership (Acts 1:23-26)

When replacing Judas, they didn't just pick the most qualified; they *prayed* for God's clear direction. The casting of lots was a cultural method of seeking God's will *after prayer*.

b) Appointing Elders: Committing Them to God (Acts 14:23)

Paul and Barnabas *appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord*.

The establishment and leadership of churches were bathed in prayer.

Application: Choosing leaders, whether in the church or other spheres of influence, is a spiritual act requiring fervent prayer. Do we pray for our leaders and for God's wisdom in their selection?

4. The Purpose of Prayer: Engine of Apostolic Ministry

The engine runs the car, and the engine runs on fuel. Jesus is the fuel; the engine is the Good News! The purpose of prayer is to enter and act (run) according to the Gospel! Matt 28!

a) The Purpose of Bold Preaching and Witnessing (Acts 4:23-31)

After being threatened, Peter and John returned to the church, and they *all* prayed. Their prayer wasn't for safety from persecution, but for *boldness* to continue speaking God's word. Result: **"... the place where they were meeting was shaken... and they spoke the word of God boldly."**

Application: Our evangelism, our witness, our ability to speak truth in a hostile world, is fueled by prayer. Are we praying for boldness to share the Gospel?

b) The Purpose of Deliverance from Persecution (Acts 12:1-17)

James is martyred, Peter is imprisoned, facing execution.

"But the church was earnestly praying to God for him." (Acts 12:5)

Result: Angelic intervention, Peter's miraculous release.

Application: When we face impossible situations, whether personal challenges, spiritual attacks, or societal pressures, our first response should be persistent, passionate prayer.

Do you believe God can intervene in the "impossible"?

c) The Purpose of Sending Out Missionaries & Discerning God's Call (Acts 13:1-3)

The church in Antioch was *worshipping the Lord and fasting*.

The Holy Spirit spoke clearly during this time of prayer: **"Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."**

They *prayed and placed their hands on them* before sending them off.

Application: Ministry initiatives, missionary endeavors, and sending out workers for the harvest are all rooted in prayer and discernment. Are we praying for laborers and clarity in our callings?

5. The Passion of Prayer: Times of Crisis and Leadership Transition

a) Passionate Persistent Prayer

Are we quick to plan and strategize, or quick to pray? Are our prayers perky (short) or are we "praying without ceasing?" Are we passionately seeking the Lord's will and His Kingdom?

Application: Major decisions, whether personal, family, or church-wide, demand prayer. Do we make decisions based on human wisdom alone, or do we truly seek God's voice through prayer?

b) Paul's Farewell: Entrusting to God's Grace (Acts 20:36-38)

Paul knelt down with the Ephesian elders and *prayed with them*.

This was a moment of deep fellowship and spiritual commitment.

Application: Significant transitions, partings, and moments of handing off responsibility should be marked by prayer, entrusting people and situations to God's care.

Conclusion: Becoming a People of Prayer Today

a) Recap

The early church didn't just pray; they *were* a people of prayer. Prayer permeated every aspect of their life and ministry –foundations, power, deliverance, guidance, leadership, and transitions.

WE R2B A PEOPLE OF PASSIONATE, PERSISTENT PRAYER! PETITIONING OUR PARACLETE FOR HIS POWER, PRESENCE, PLAN, PASSION, AND PURPOSE!

b) The Challenge for Us

Are we truly a people of prayer?

Is it the first thing we do, or the last resort?

What would it look like for us, individually and corporately, to prioritize prayer as the early church did?

This isn't about guilt, but about invitation to divine power and intimacy.

c) Call to Action

Personal Challenge: Commit to a specific, disciplined time of prayer each day. Start small if you need to, but start.

Corporate Challenge: Join a prayer group. Participate in church prayer meetings. Pray together as families.

Prayer: The words "pray," "prayer," "prayed," and "praying" appear a total of approximately 30 times in the Book of Acts. These references highlight the central role of prayer in the early church.

Acts 1:14 *They all met together and were constantly united in prayer, along with Mary the mother of Jesus, several other women, and the brothers of Jesus.*

Acts 1:24 *Then they all prayed, "O Lord, you know every heart. Show us which of these men you have chosen.*

Acts 2:42 *All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer.*

Acts 3:1 *Peter and John went to the Temple one afternoon to take part in the three o'clock prayer service.*

Acts 4:24 *When they heard the report, all the believers lifted their voices together in prayer to God: "O Sovereign Lord, Creator of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them.*

Acts 4:31 *After this prayer, the meeting place shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Then they preached the word of God with boldness.*

Acts 6:4 *Then we apostles can spend our time in prayer and teaching the word."*

Acts 6:6 *These seven were presented to the apostles, who prayed for them as they laid their hands on them.*

Acts 7:59 *As they stoned him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."*

Acts 8:15 *As soon as they arrived, they prayed for these new believers to receive the Holy Spirit.*

Acts 8:22 *Repent of your wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive your evil thoughts.*

Acts 8:24 *"Pray to the Lord for me," Simon exclaimed, "that these terrible things you've said won't happen to me!"*

Acts 9:11 *The Lord said, "Go over to Straight Street, to the house of Judas. When you get there, ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is praying to me right now.*

Acts 10:4 *Cornelius stared at him in terror. "What is it, sir?" he asked the angel. And the angel replied, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have been received by God as an offering!*

Acts 10:31 *He told me, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your gifts to the poor have been noticed by God!*

Acts 12:12 *When he realized this, he went to the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where many were gathered for prayer.*

Acts 13:3 *So after more fasting and prayer, the men laid their hands on them and sent them on their way.*

Acts 14:23 *Paul and Barnabas also appointed elders in every church. With prayer and fasting, they turned the elders over to the care of the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.*

Acts 16:13 *On the Sabbath we went a little way outside the city to a riverbank, where we thought people would be meeting for prayer, and we sat down to speak with some women who had gathered there.*

Acts 16:16 *Paul and Silas in Prison. One day as we were going down to the place of prayer, we met a slave girl who had a spirit that enabled her to tell the future. She earned a lot of money for her masters by telling fortunes.*