
CBC WEEKLY RESOURCES



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[DATE]

COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH
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SERMON RECAP

Pastor Gary reminded us that the book of Acts is not just a history book, it is God's original pattern for what the church is meant to be. Rather than skimming random verses, he urged us toward "immersion": parking ourselves in one book, living in it, and "eating everything off the bone" so we see the relationships, conflicts, and purposes God reveals in the whole story. In Acts, we see ordinary, unimpressive people "unschooled, ordinary men" (Acts 4:13) doing extraordinary things because they simply did what Jesus told them to do, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The heart of the message was Acts 2:42 and Acts 4:31. The first church "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:42). That fourth element, corporate prayer, was emphasized as the most neglected reality in the American church. Pastor Gary contrasted our strong Bible teaching, programs, and even generosity with our weak corporate prayer life. The early church prayed together, and God shook places, filled people with the Holy Spirit, and gave them boldness in witness (Acts 4:31).

At the same time, the message carried a strong note of hope and tenderness. God doesn't discard "bruised reeds" or "smoldering wicks" (Isaiah 42:3). He takes broken, bent people and makes music out of their lives. Many of us, especially those who feel outcast, hurt, or overlooked, need to hear Jesus call us "daughter" or "son" again. As we devote ourselves to the apostles' teaching, to Spirit-filled fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and especially to corporate prayer, God can revive His church and even heal our land.

STUDY GUIDE

KEY POINTS

- **Immersion in Scripture, not sampling**
 - Instead of hopping from verse to verse, immerse yourself in a book (like Acts) for weeks or months.
 - This honors how Scripture was written as unified, Spirit-inspired narratives and arguments, not isolated inspirational quotes.
- **Personal vs. Corporate Prayer**
 - Personal devotions are good and needed, but Acts emphasizes believers **praying together** in one place, “of one accord.”
 - The early church’s explosive growth (120 → 3,000 → 5,000+) was inseparably connected to sustained, corporate prayer.
- **Corporate Prayer as Lifeblood, not Optional Extra**
 - The church in Acts 2:42 was built on four devotions: teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer.
 - Pastor Gary warned that if we practice the first three but neglect the fourth, we can slip into becoming a “spiritual social club” instead of a Spirit-empowered body.
- **Identity in Christ: God Uses the Broken**
 - A “bruised reed” and “smoldering wick” (Isaiah 42:3) is not thrown away by God; He heals, straightens, fills, and uses.
 - Jesus calling the bleeding woman “Daughter” (Mark 5:34) restores her dignity, belonging, and identity—He does the same for us.
- **Worship-First Posture in Prayer (A → C → T → S)**
 - The Lord’s Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) is corporate (“Our Father...give us...forgive us...”) and begins with worship: “Hallowed be Your name.”
 - Our prayer life (especially together) should begin with **Adoration**, move to **Confession**, then **Thanksgiving**, and finally **Supplication**.
- **Stillness and Humility Before God**
 - 2 Chronicles 7:14 begins with, “If My people...will humble themselves and pray and seek My face...”
 - Prayer isn’t just words; it’s a posture—stillness, humility, listening, and allowing God to “topple” our expectations and self-reliance.

KEY SCRIPTURE (QUOTED OR DIRECTLY REFERENCED)

- **Acts 2:42**- “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”
- **Acts 4:31**- “And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.”

- **Acts 1:8**- “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”
- **Luke 1:1-4**- Luke writing to Theophilus about what Jesus began to do and teach.
- **Acts 2**- Pentecost account: 120 believers, outpouring of the Spirit, Peter’s sermon, 3,000 baptized.
- **Acts 2:46-47**- Daily fellowship, breaking bread in homes, glad and sincere hearts, the Lord adding to their number daily.
- **Acts 3-4**- Healing of the lame man, Peter and John arrested, threatened, then gathering with the church for prayer.
- **Acts 4:13**- The leaders saw Peter and John were unschooled, ordinary men.
- **Matthew 6:9-13**- The Lord’s Prayer; corporate focus: “Our Father...give us...forgive us...deliver us...”
- **Matthew 18:19-20**- “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”
- **2 Chronicles 7:14**- “If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face...” God’s promise to hear, forgive, and heal.
- **Isaiah 42:3**- “A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench...”
- **Ezekiel 22:30**- God searching for someone to stand in the gap.
- **Mark 5:25-34**- Woman with the issue of blood; Jesus calls her “Daughter” and tells her, “Your faith has made you well.”

(PASTOR ALLUDED TO THE LORD’S PRAYER, PENTECOST, AND VARIOUS REVIVALS; SOME TEXTS ABOVE REPRESENT THOSE ALLUSIONS.)

OTHER RELEVANT VERSES

- **Hebrews 10:24-25**- “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together...”
THEMATIC TIE: Reinforces the importance of not just attending but intentionally gathering for mutual encouragement and, by implication, corporate prayer.
 - **Philippians 4:6-7**- “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God...”
THEMATIC TIE: Shows how a worship-first, thankful posture in prayer brings God’s peace, individually and in community.
 - **Ephesians 6:18**- “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance...”
THEMATIC TIE: Expounds our call to persistent, Spirit-led prayer for “all the saints”—a corporate outlook, not merely private devotion.
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DEVOTIONAL MATERIAL (DAYS 1-5)

DAY 1 - DEVOTED TO THE ORIGINAL BLUEPRINT

Reflection Question:

Am I patterning my expectations for church life after the culture around me, or after the original church in Acts?

Reading:

- Acts 2:42-47
- Acts 4:31

Devotional Content:

The book of Acts was written by Luke to a man named Theophilus (Luke 1:1–4; Acts 1:1) to explain what Jesus **continued** to do and teach through His Spirit-filled people. These early believers, mostly ordinary Jews in Jerusalem, had just watched their Messiah crucified, raised, and ascended. Rome was still in charge. The temple authorities who opposed Jesus were still powerful. There was no legal protection for Christians, no “freedom of speech” or religion as we know it.

Yet, in that environment, the church did four simple, profound things: they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer (Acts 2:42). “Devoted” in the original Greek carries the sense of steadfast, ongoing adherence, showing up and continuing steadfastly. This was not an occasional Bible study or a once-a-month potluck. Their lives were reoriented around these four pillars.

Notice how corporate everything is. They learned together. They shared life together. They ate in one another’s homes. They prayed together. And what did God do? He added to their number daily (Acts 2:47). Later, in Acts 4:31, after they prayed together under threat, “the place where they were assembled together was shaken... and they spoke the word of God with boldness.” Their shared devotion invited God’s shared power.

Application & Closing:

Take inventory of your rhythms. If someone watched your schedule for a month, what would they say you’re “devoted” to? Work? Entertainment? Is there any evidence of being **devoted** to teaching, fellowship, communion, and prayer? Especially with others?

Specific challenge:

- This week, commit to **one concrete act of immersion**:
 - Choose one book (Acts is a good start) and read the same 1-2 chapters every day for a week.

- OR commit to attend one extra gathering (prayer meeting, class, or small group) specifically to practice Acts 2:42 with others.
- Ask the Lord to show you one way your expectations for church need to be realigned to His original blueprint.

DAY 2 - PERSONAL AND CORPORATE: BOTH, NOT EITHER/OR

Reflection Question:

Is my prayer life primarily private and individual, or do I also prioritize praying with others?

Reading:

- Matthew 6:9-13 -The Lord's Prayer
- Matthew 18:19-20

Devotional Content:

In the Western church, we often think of prayer as something we do alone. Scripture absolutely values personal prayer (cf. Matthew 6:6) but notice how Jesus **taught** His disciples to pray. The Lord's Prayer is corporate: "Our Father... give **us**... forgive **us**... lead **us** not into temptation... deliver **us** from the evil one." (Matthew 6:9-13).

Jesus also said, "If two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them... For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:19-20). The early church took this seriously: after persecution, "they raised their voice to God with one accord" (Acts 4:24). They didn't retreat to ten separate houses to pray in isolation; they gathered physically, prayed with one voice, and God shook the place.

Culturally, this is counter to our individualism. We like privacy, autonomy, "my space." But God has always formed a people, not just scattered spiritual consumers. Corporate prayer is where we humble ourselves, surrender preferences, and discover that God speaks and moves through US.

Application & Closing:

Ask yourself: When was the last time I prayed with others beyond a quick mealtime blessing or a short "opening" prayer? Do I avoid corporate prayer because of schedule, discomfort, or simply habit?

Specific challenge:

- Pick one **concrete step** into corporate prayer this week:
 - Invite a Christian friend or family member to pray with you for 10-15 minutes.
 - If there is a scheduled prayer gathering at CBC, make a plan to attend **one** this month.
 - If not, invite 2-3 believers to gather in a home for 30 minutes of focused prayer for the church and the nation.
- As you pray, consciously use "we/us/our" language. Ask God to expand your heart from private spirituality to shared intercession.

DAY 3 - WORSHIP FIRST: THE SHAPE OF OUR PRAYERS

Reflection Question:

Do my prayers start with who God is, or with what I need?

Reading:

- Matthew 6:9-10
- Philippians 4:6-7

Devotional Content:

Jesus begins the Lord's Prayer with worship: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done..." (Matthew 6:9-10). Before we ask for bread, forgiveness, or protection, He teaches us to **adore** the Father and align with His kingdom. This frames everything else.

The classic ACTS pattern (Adoration → Confession → Thanksgiving → Supplication) reflects this structure:

- **Adoration:** "Hallowed be Your name" (Matthew 6:9) - We praise God for who He is, not just what He does.
- **Confession:** "Forgive us our debts..." (Matthew 6:12) - We agree with God about our sin and need.
- **Thanksgiving:** Implied in recognizing daily bread and forgiveness as gifts (Philippians 4:6: "with thanksgiving").
- **Supplication:** "Give us...deliver us..." (Matthew 6:11-13) - We bring our requests.

In Philippians 4:6-7 Paul echoes this: "In everything by prayer and supplication, **with thanksgiving**, let your requests be made known to God..." The result is not just changed circumstances, but "the peace of God...will guard your hearts and minds." Worship shapes our outlook before it shapes our outcomes.

The early church, under pressure and persecution, did not begin their prayer in Acts 4 by complaining about threats; they began by declaring, "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them" (Acts 4:24). Worship first, then requests.

Application & Closing:

Reflect on your recent prayers. Are they mostly lists of needs and crises? Or are they weighted toward adoration and thanksgiving?

Specific challenge:

- For the next 5 days, when you pray (alone or with others), intentionally follow ACTS:
 1. **Adoration:** Spend at least 2-3 minutes naming God's attributes and praising Him.
 2. **Confession:** Ask the Spirit to show you any sin or misplaced priorities; confess honestly.

3. **Thanksgiving:** Thank Him for specific blessings in the past 24-48 hours.
 4. **Supplication:** Only then bring your requests—for yourself, your church, your nation.
- Notice how starting with worship changes your perspective on the things you're asking for.

DAY 4 - SHAKEN AND FILLED: BOLDNESS IN THE FACE OF COST

Reflection Question:

Where do I need God-given boldness, and am I willing for it to cost me something?

Reading:

- Acts 4:29-31
- Acts 1:8

Devotional Content:

In Acts 4, Peter and John had just been jailed and threatened by the same religious establishment that crucified Jesus. Speaking about Jesus in public was not protected speech; it was dangerous. After their release, they gathered with the believers and reported what had happened. The church's response was not to strategize escape routes but to pray.

They didn't ask, "Lord, make the authorities nicer" or "Lord, remove all risk." Instead, they prayed: "Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all **boldness** they may speak Your word" (Acts 4:29). They prayed in line with Jesus' promise: "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses..." (Acts 1:8). The word "witnesses" comes from the Greek MARTYS, from which we get "martyr", someone who testifies even at great cost.

The result? "When they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was **shaken**; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:31). Pastor Gary suggested that this "shaking" can also be seen as God toppling their preconceptions, control, and self-protection. God was reordering their inner world, so they could stand firm in an unstable outer world.

In our context, we may not face imprisonment, but boldness is still costly: social rejection, misunderstanding, being labeled, or losing opportunities. Spirit-filled boldness does not mean being abrasive; it means being obedient and clear about Jesus, regardless of response.

Application & Closing:

Where is God inviting you to boldness? A conversation with a neighbor? Owning your faith at work? Initiating a prayer time in your home or small group?

Specific challenge:

- Identify **one specific area** where you've been silent out of fear.

- Ask the Holy Spirit to:
 - “Shake” what needs to be shaken—your fear of people, your craving for approval.
 - Fill you afresh with His courage to be a loving, clear witness.
 - Then, within the next 7 days, take a **concrete step**: share a testimony, invite someone to church, or offer to pray with someone in need.
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DAY 5 - BRUISED REEDS AND DAUGHTERS: IDENTITY IN HIS HANDS

Reflection Question:

Do I see myself more as damaged and discarded, or as a beloved son/daughter God delights to restore and use?

Reading:

- Isaiah 42:3
- Mark 5:25-34

Devotional Content:

Isaiah 42:3 says of the Servant (ultimately fulfilled in Jesus), “A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench.” In the ancient world, reeds by the river were common. Children would cut them and make flutes. A bent or bruised reed was usually discarded, it couldn’t produce a clear tone. Similarly, an oil lamp that burned down and smoked filled the house with stench; the natural response was to snuff it out and start over.

But God says He does not treat people that way. He does not discard the bruised or snuff out the smoldering. Instead, He straightens what is bent and breathes into what is nearly extinguished. Pastor Gary drew this picture: God can take your bent, bruised life and make music out of it; He can turn the smell of burnout into the fragrance of fresh oil.

We see this heart in Jesus with the woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years (Mark 5:25–34). She was ceremonially unclean, socially isolated, financially drained. She reached out in desperation, touched Jesus’ garment, and was healed. But Jesus gave her more than a physical miracle. He called her “Daughter” (Mark 5:34) a word loaded with belonging, protection, and identity. He restored her to community and to the Father’s household.

In the same way, many in the church feel like bruised reeds. Some women in particular need to hear Jesus call them “Daughter” again; some men need to hear “Son.” Corporate prayer and worship create space for God to speak these identity-words over us.

Application & Closing:

How do you see yourself before God? As a problem to be tolerated, or as a person to be cherished and restored?

Specific challenge:

- Take 10-15 minutes in stillness before God.
 - Acknowledge where you feel bruised or “smoky.”
 - Ask the Lord: “How do You see me? What do You call me?”
- Then, take one step of **belonging**:
 - Join a small group or Bible study.
 - Invite someone from church to coffee.
 - Attend communion with a fresh expectation that God meets broken people at His table.
- Let your identity in Christ (“daughter,” “son,” “beloved”) become the foundation for how you approach prayer, Scripture, and fellowship.

IV.

SMALL GROUP RESOURCES

OPENING

Welcome everyone warmly. Acknowledge that we're not just a discussion circle; we are the body of Christ gathering in His name.

Call to Prayer (Prompts, not a scripted prayer):

- Invite a group member to:
 - Thank God for His Word and for the example of the early church.
 - Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you about corporate prayer and boldness.
 - Ask God to make the group a safe place for honesty and growth.
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THEMATIC RECAP

This week's message reminded us that God gave us a **model** in Acts: a church devoted to teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and corporate prayer. The early believers were ordinary people, but they experienced extraordinary power because they prayed together, were filled with the Holy Spirit, and spoke God's word with boldness. Our calling is not to reinvent church but to recover the original pattern.

Core Highlights:

- Scripture immersion helps us see God's big-picture design, not just isolated verses.
 - The early church's explosive growth was linked directly to **corporate prayer**, not just programs or personalities.
 - Prayer in Scripture is often **corporate and "our/us" focused**, not only "I/me."
 - God uses **bruised, broken people**—He does not discard them.
 - Our patriotism and love for our nation should be expressed primarily through **humble, corporate intercession**, not just civic activity.
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ICEBREAKER (5-15 MINUTES)

Question:

Think back over your life: Can you share a time when praying **with** other believers (even a small group) made a noticeable difference in your faith or circumstances? What happened, and how did it shape you?

SCRIPTURE EXPLORATION

PASSAGE 1: ACTS 2:42-47

Discussion Prompts:

1. What stands out most to you in this description of the early church's life together?
2. Which of the four devotions (teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, prayer) do you personally find easiest? Which is hardest?
3. How does this passage challenge modern Western ideas of church as a once-a-week event?
4. Verse 46 describes them breaking bread "in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts." How might hospitality and table fellowship strengthen our prayer life?
5. Verse 47 says, "the Lord added to their number daily." What does that tell us about who ultimately grows the church, and what our role is?

PASSAGE 2: ACTS 4:29-31

Discussion Prompts:

1. What do you notice about **what** they prayed for and what they did **not** pray for?
2. How would you describe the "cost" of boldness for the early church? How does that compare with the cost for us today?
3. What do you think it means that "the place where they were assembled together was shaken"? How have you seen God "shake" or reorder things in your life or in a group?
4. Verse 31 says they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness. What is the relationship between being filled with the Spirit and boldness?
5. How does this passage shape your expectations for what might happen when we gather and truly pray together?

PASSAGE 3: ISAIAH 42:3& MARK 5:25-34

(Read Isaiah 42:3, then Mark 5:25–34.)

Discussion Prompts:

1. How does the image of a "bruised reed" and "smoking flax" help you understand God's heart toward broken or struggling believers?
 2. In Mark 5, why do you think Jesus publicly calls the woman "Daughter"? What layers of healing (beyond physical) is He bringing?
 3. How might feeling like a "bruised reed" affect someone's willingness to engage in corporate prayer or community life?
 4. In what ways can our small group embody Jesus' heart toward "bruised" and "smoldering" people among us?
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GRAND SYNTHESIS PROMPT (ALL PASSAGES)

- When you put Acts 2:42-47, Acts 4:29-31, Isaiah 42:3, and Mark 5:25-34 together, what kind of church do you see Jesus forming?
 - How do devotion to teaching, fellowship, communion, and **corporate prayer** intersect with God's heart for broken people and His desire to empower them with boldness?
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APPLICATION: STEPS TOWARD PERSONAL AND COMMUNAL PRAYER GROWTH

As a group, brainstorm 3–5 practical commitments you can make for the next month. Possibilities:

- **Group commitments:**
 - Dedicate the **first 10-15 minutes** of every group meeting to worship and corporate prayer (adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication).
 - Once this month, meet **only to pray**—no study, no agenda beyond worship, confession, thanksgiving, and intercession for the church and nation.
 - Start a simple prayer chain (text, email, or app) where members share requests and commit to pray for one another daily.
- **Individual commitments:**
 - Each member chooses **one person** from the group to pray with (by phone or in person) for 10 minutes once a week.
 - Practice ACTS in personal prayer at least 3 days a week and share next time how it changed your perspective.

Encourage the group to decide together on at least **one group practice** and **one personal practice** to implement before the next meeting.

CLOSING

Prayer Needs:

- Go around the room and invite each person (if comfortable) to share:
 - One personal request.
 - One person or situation outside the group (church, community, or nation) they'd like prayer for.

Closing Prayer Prompts:

Ask one or more group members to pray, including:

- Adoration: Praise God for His faithfulness to His church from Acts until now.
- Confession: Acknowledge where we've neglected corporate prayer or relied on our own strategies.

- Thanksgiving: Thank God for hearing, for His mercy toward bruised reeds and smoldering wicks, and for calling us sons and daughters.
 - Supplication:
 - Ask for a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit and boldness in witness.
 - Ask God to teach CBC to be a praying church, not a prayerless social club.
 - Ask for healing and restoration for those in the group who feel broken or overlooked.
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LEADER NOTES

1. Set the Tone of Safety and Grace

- Emphasize at the beginning: This is a place for honesty, not performance.
- Normalize struggle with prayer: “Many of us feel weak or inconsistent in prayer; this is why we need each other.”

2. Guard Against Shame

- The sermon challenged prayerlessness, but your role is not to scold.
- When people admit lack of corporate prayer, affirm their honesty and point to God’s invitation, not condemnation.

3. Manage Time Wisely

- Leave adequate time for application and prayer; don’t let all the time be consumed by discussion alone.
- Consider using a timer or gentle prompts (“Let’s move to our next passage...”) to stay on track.

4. Encourage Participation, Not Pressure

- Invite, but don’t force, people to pray out loud.
- You might say, “If you’re not comfortable praying out loud, it’s okay to agree silently. You’re just as much a part of this.”

5. Model Vulnerability

- As a leader, briefly share your own challenges in consistent prayer or corporate prayer.
- Demonstrate repentance and renewed desire; this gives others permission to be real.

6. Follow Up

- At the next meeting, revisit the commitments made (group and personal) with grace-filled accountability:
 - Ask: “What worked? What was hard? What did God do?”

- Use testimonies, even small ones, to build faith that prayer really does “shake” things.

By leading with warmth, humility, and faith, you can help your group not only talk about the early church, but begin to **live** more like it.