

Prayer

Guest Speaker: Dr. Mark Johnson
President, Louisiana Christian University

Main Text: Acts 12:1–17

Main Theme: Prayer should be Spiritual, Personal, and Providential.

Main Idea

Prayer is not a last resort — it is one of the greatest gifts God has given His people.

In Acts 12, the church faced impossible circumstances:

- James had been executed
- Peter was imprisoned
- The church was under attack

Yet instead of giving up, the church prayed fervently — and God moved powerfully.

Three Ways Prayer Should Shape Our Lives

1. Prayer Should Be Spiritual

The church understood who they were praying to:

- The God of the universe
- The risen Savior
- The One with all authority and power

Key Truths

- Prayer begins with recognizing the holiness and greatness of God.
- Prayer is not casual conversation, it is approaching “the throne of grace.”

Supporting Scriptures

- Matthew 6:9 — “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.”
- Hebrews 4:16 — Approach the throne of grace with confidence

Discussion Questions

- How does remembering God’s holiness affect your prayers?
- Do you sometimes treat prayer casually?
- What helps you focus on who God is when you pray?

2. Prayer Should Be Personal

The church prayed honestly and urgently for Peter because their situation was desperate.

Key Truth

God invites us to bring every burden, fear, and emotion to Him. He already knows our struggles, but He still wants us to talk to Him personally and honestly about them.

Important Principle

- Prayer is not pretending everything is fine.
- Prayer is bringing your real heart before God.

Supporting Scriptures

- Psalm 34:17 — The Lord hears the cries of the righteous
- Philippians 4:6-7 — Present your requests to God

Discussion Questions

- What keeps people from praying honestly?
- Why is vulnerability before God important?
- What burdens do you need to bring personally before God today?

3. Prayer Should Be Providential

The church prayed while trusting God with the outcome.

Key Truth

Providential prayer says:

“God, however You choose to work, I trust You.” We praise God in both victories and disappointments because God remains worthy no matter the outcome.

Important Principles

- Prayer is not controlling God.
- Prayer is trusting God.

What Happened in Acts 12

While the church prayed:

- God sent an angel
- Peter’s chains fell off
- Prison doors opened
- Guards were bypassed
- Peter was rescued

The church kept praying even before they could see God moving.

Discussion Questions

- Why is it hard to trust God’s timing?
- Have you ever seen God working while you were still praying?
- What does it look like to trust God even if circumstances do not change immediately?

Big Takeaways

- Prayer is powerful even when it seems small
- God is moving even when we cannot see it
- Prayer should become a regular rhythm in our lives
- God often works while His people are praying
- Prayer changes both situations and hearts

Memorable Statements

- “If little old prayer is all you have, then that’s all you need.”
- “When you don’t see God moving, keep praying.”

- “Prayer is the greatest weapon ever invented.”

Application

Personal Reflection Questions

- How would you rate your prayer life right now?
- What would help move your prayer life “up one level”?
- Are your prayers mostly routine or deeply personal?
- Is there an area where you need to trust God providentially?

Prayer Challenge

This week:

- Set aside intentional prayer time daily
- Pray honestly and specifically
- Continue praying even when you do not yet see answers
- Thank God not only for what He does, but for who He is

Closing Prayer Prompt

Ask God to:

- Deepen your prayer life
- Strengthen your trust in Him
- Help you pray with boldness and faith
- Teach you to rest in His providence
- Remind you that He is always at work