

3. Power

When they had finished praying God displayed His power. Without a doubt their prayers were answered.

How did this display of God's power specifically answer their petitions?

After experiencing Jesus, the new believers determined that they would live for Him. Their desire to do so allowed Jesus to bring about His redemptive ministry and mission through them, but that would only happen when they stepped out in faith and acted on God's great commission to go to the world, make disciples, baptize them and teach them to obey God's commands.

WRAP-UP

The early church came together in power then they joined in praise of who God is, then petitioned Him for their needs and acted in the power He provided them. They hadn't asked for escape from the threats they faced but for faithfulness to be bold witnesses. And in response to their prayers God sent his Holy Spirit to fill them with boldness to preach the word of God.

Memory Verse

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 4:31 NLT

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members' needs: _____

Challenge- Are you prepared to ask God for boldness? Pray not only that you would be bold in your witness, but that God would do miracles.

"The Power of a Praying Church"

Book of Acts – Week #6

INTRODUCTION

As we continue our study of the birth of the church, we follow Peter and John upon their release from jail and the council's interrogation. They were free to go anywhere and do anything, so where did they go first? They returned to their community of believers. And what did they do there? They prayed. When we are challenged by trials and in distress it is easy to let ourselves be driven into isolation. Perhaps we think we must take care of our own problems before we can gather once again with "the church". But Peter and John knew the power of a praying community and that is what we will discover as well in this study.

Key Passage

Acts 4:23-31 NLT - 23 As soon as they were freed, Peter and John returned to the other believers and told them what the leading priests and elders had said. 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-- 25 you spoke long ago by the Holy Spirit through our ancestor David, your servant, saying, 'Why were the nations so angry? Why did they waste their time with futile plans? 26 The kings of the earth prepared for battle; the rulers gathered together against the LORD and against his Messiah.' 27 "In fact, this has happened here in this very city! For Herod Antipas, Pontius Pilate the governor, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were all united against Jesus, your holy servant, whom you anointed. 28 But everything they did was determined beforehand according to your will. 29 And now, O Lord, hear their threats, and give us, your servants, great boldness in preaching your word. 30 Stretch out your hand with healing power; may miraculous signs and wonders be done through the name of your holy servant Jesus." 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.

STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

1. Praise

As Peter and John rejoined the community of believers, they shared what had happened to them and the church began to pray. There was a structure of sorts to their prayer. It is a natural order that we might also use when we come before God. Their prayer began with praise and recognizing who God is.

When you see the first words in their prayer, "O, Sovereign Lord," how does that effect your view of God? Do you find that you address God using different titles as your circumstances change? How do our circumstances influence our perspective on God's role in our lives at the moment?

As the prayer of this group continued, they proclaimed the actions they attributed to God; He created, He spoke to His people through His Spirit, and He predestined the answer to sin through Jesus.

Recounting how God has sovereignly acted in the past gave them confidence in God's movement in the situation they faced. We see many other places in the bible that also encourage us to remember God's sovereign power.

Isaiah 43:16 NLT - 16 I am the LORD, who opened a way through the waters, making a dry path through the sea.

Psalms 61:3 NLT - 3 for you are my safe refuge, a fortress where my enemies cannot reach me.

What sovereign acts of God help you see Him at work in the current situations we are now facing in battling a pandemic? How has He demonstrated His power and authority in the past that gives you confidence He will move on our behalf once again?

As they prayed, this group remembered what was said in Psalm 2 in recognition that God had revealed His heart and His intent to us. But we can't remember what we have never seen. This is why it is important to continue faithfully to study the bible, because it tells us who God is, who we are and how God is redeeming us.

2. Petition

After spending time praising God for who He is and what He has done, the prayer turns to petition; asking God for what they needed. And even though they had been threatened with arrest if they spoke Jesus' name they didn't pray for protection, or for the threat to be taken away, but for boldness to be witnesses. Grounded in their confidence in God, they expected to take action and be witnesses of Him. And the first thing they asked for was that they would be bold as they spoke.

The threat they faced was real as are the threats many of us face. But the threats we face are not always about what we can see. What does Eph 6:12 tell us we are fighting against?

Ephesians 6:12 NLT - 12 For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

What does a battle against spiritual forces mean to you?

After asking for boldness they prayed that God would move through healing, signs and wonders. They had witnessed the lame man walking and knew what God could do.

John 14:12 NLT - 12 "I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father.

What had Jesus told His followers that encouraged them to ask both for boldness and for miracles? How did this connect the power of their prayers with their action?

Sometimes we must wait on the Lord's direction before we act, but it is often an active kind of waiting.

What are the things we can do while we actively wait for God to move? Has God ever answered your petition for someone by telling you to take action, not only through prayer, on their behalf? Perhaps when you asked Him to comfort the hurting, save the lost or provide for the needy He has moved you to take action to meet those needs.