Giving Prayer A Higher Priority In Our Churches And In Our Personal Lives

Category: Prayer, Church

It's been said, "You can tell how popular a church is by who comes on Sunday morning. You can tell how popular the pastor or evangelist is by who comes on Sunday night. But you can tell how popular Jesus is by who comes to the prayer meeting." So, the question for each believer is this: "How popular is Jesus in the church I attend?" And for Jesus to be popular in our individual churches, he should first and foremost be popular in our own life. In other words, our private prayer life has a significant bearing on the church's prayer life.

Perhaps these references to prayer—all taken from the Book of Acts will encourage our churches and us to make Jesus popular by giving prayer a higher priority in the coming days.

Acts 1:14 "They all joined together constantly in **prayer**, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers."

Acts 1:24-25 "[24] Then they **prayed**, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen [25] to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs."

Acts 2:42 "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to **prayer.**"

Acts 3:1 "One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of **prayer**—at three in the afternoon."

Acts 4:24, 29, 31 "[24] When they heard this, they raised their voices together in **prayer** to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them…[29] Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness"….[31] After they **prayed**, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly."

Acts 6:3-4 "[3] Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them [4] and will give our attention to **prayer** and the ministry of the word."

Acts 6:6 "They presented these men to the apostles, who **prayed** and laid their hands on them."

Acts 7:60 "Then he fell on his knees and **cried out**, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep."

Acts 8:15-16 "15 When they arrived, they **prayed** for the new believers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit, 16 because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."

Giving Prayer A Higher Priority In Our Churches And In Our Personal Lives

Category: Prayer, Church

Acts 8:22-24 "[22] Repent of this wickedness and **pray** to the Lord in the hope that he may forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. [23] For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin." [24] Then Simon answered, "**Pray** to the Lord for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me.""

Acts 9:11 "The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is **praying.**""

Acts 9:40 "Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and **prayed.** Turning toward the dead woman, he said, "Tabitha, get up." She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up."

Acts 10:2 "He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and **prayed** to God regularly."

Acts 10:9 "About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to **pray**."

Acts 12:5 "So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly **praying** to God for him."

Acts 13:2-3 "[2] While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." [3] So after they had fasted and **prayed**, they placed their hands on them and sent them off."

Acts 14:23 "Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with **prayer** and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust."

Acts 16:13 "On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of **prayer.** We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there."

Acts 16:16 "Once when we were going to the place of **prayer**, we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling."

Acts 16:25 "About midnight Paul and Silas were **praying** and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them."

Acts 20:36 "When Paul had finished speaking, he knelt down with all of them and **prayed.**"

Acts 21:5 "When it was time to leave, we left and continued on our way. All of them, including wives and children, accompanied us out of the city, and there on the beach we knelt to **pray.**"

Giving Prayer A Higher Priority In Our Churches And In Our Personal Lives

Category: Prayer, Church

Acts 27:29, 35 "[29] Fearing that we would be dashed against the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern and **prayed** for daylight…[35] After he said this, he took some bread and **gave thanks** to God in front of them all. Then he broke it and began to eat."

Acts 28:8 "His father was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him and, after **prayer**, placed his hands on him and healed him."

Over 25 references of both individual and corporate prayer! As we can see, prayer mattered much to the first Christians. No wonder the church and its members were such a mighty force because they placed a high priority on prayer!

So, how can we make prayer a continuous priority in our own lives and in our local church? Paul Miller may have an answer in his excellent book, "A Praying Life," where he writes, "You don't need self-discipline to pray continuously; you just need to be poor in spirit." In other words, to be motivated to pray, we don't need to focus on cultivating more discipline [though it has its value]. Instead, we need to focus on how needy we really are!

The more we are poor in spirit—i.e., understand how we are spiritually bankrupt and need the Lord for everything—the more we will get down on our knees and look to him in prayer—personally and as a church. Such an attitude will help us realize the solemn truth that nothing will happen of any lasting spiritual significance unless God works. All our human efforts can never accomplish what God can do when he is sincerely sought to move in power in the lives of his people.

How accurate are the words, "A praying Master, like Jesus, cannot have prayerless servants!" The Spirit of adoption will and must always make a person call upon God. May God, through his Holy Spirit, help us to make Jesus popular in our churches and our personal lives by enabling us to give prayer a higher priority in the future.