

The Prayers

Based on a Characteristics of a healthy church by Bob Deffinbaugh online at https://bible.org/seriespage/6-characteristics-healthy-church-acts-241-47#P44_12260

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Act 2:42-47 NIV)

Over the last few weeks we have seen how the early church studied the word of the apostles, how they shared their possessions for the good of all, how there is only one way to God, through Jesus, how we are called to work at harvesting souls and worshipping God and how they had 'agape' or brotherly love for each other, which they expressed through breaking bread, both in sharing the Lords Supper and in shared meals. And we continue today looking at the early church as a guide to how we should live.

We read in [Acts 3:1](#) Peter and John were going up to the temple **at the time for prayer**, at three o'clock in the afternoon.

The early saints in Jerusalem persisted in the observance of the stipulated times of Jewish prayer at the temple. These were newly-saved Jewish believers who were just beginning to grasp the significance of the things they had done as Old Testament Jews, even though they were unbelievers at that time:

When we talked about fellowship, we saw how this was sharing in outwards actions in worship together, prayer and, sharing the act of the Lords Supper or communion, it also included acts of mutual kindness and benevolence and hospitality.

Prayer was seen as a key part of worship along with communion. Prayer has always been a mark of the believers' gatherings.

They devoted themselves to ... prayer ([Acts 2:42](#), NIV). OR the prayer, as with the breaking of bread, it not just any prayer, but **the** prayer

So it was not "prayer" they devoted themselves to, but instead "the prayers." What was the content of these prayers? The text is silent on this point. But we know from [Acts 2:46](#) that they were meeting both in the temple courts and from house to house, so these prayers that defined their fellowship were not private devotions. These were public prayers, or prayer meetings.

There is a saying popularized by the Chinese house-church movement, "Little prayer, little power." If we want to be effective in our faith as the early church was, we need to be devoted to prayer, like them. The early church was characterized by prayer. The word "pray" or "prayer" appears 31 times in the 28 chapters of Acts. Seeking the Lord in prayer was a defining characteristic of the fellowship of these first-century believers.

In our discipleship we need to teach our man or woman to pray. We need to pray with them as well as for them. We need to gather like minded people with no other purpose than to be before the Lord in prayer. As you consider [Acts 2:42](#), ask yourself where you can increase the quantity and quality of prayer, not just in your life, but in the life of the people God.

Prayer, for the early church, included private as well as public devotions. These may have been the outpouring of the heart's desires; but they may also have been the Lords Prayer that the disciples were taught by Jesus to pray, as in [Matthew 6:9](#), [Luke 11:1](#). The use of the plural seems to indicate recurring times of prayer at fixed hours.

The Roman Catholic and monastic Divine Offices (such as morning, midday, evening and night time prayers) is based on the Jewish Prayer Times.

However Paul's letter to the church in Colossus, says: Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. (Col 2:16-17 NIV).

Therefore we are not called to religious observance of prayer patterns – praying repeatedly in a proscribed manner without thought – although it can help us to follow patterns, and Jesus himself taught us a pattern with the Lords Prayer, but other ways of praying are equally valid, providing they are meaningful and from our heart and soul.

Many ways of prayer are appropriate – praying in silence, praying aloud, praying in other languages or tongues, praying while prostrate (lying on the floor), on your knees, with eyes closed or open, with hands together or raised, with heads bowed. Prayers can be liturgical (i.e. following set wording or extemporaneous (made up on the spot). Examples of all these ways can be found in scripture and provided they are meaningful and respectful, any method can be used and there is no wrong way to pray.

We also need to remember, that while God always hears and answers our prayers, his answer may be yes, but it may also be no – its not part of his plan for us or not yet. We are called to keep on praying, to not give up when we do not seem to get an answer and when we pray.

We also need to listen to God in our prayer, like a conversation, prayer is a two way communication, not just each of us, telling God what we want, and our answers may come in many different ways (especially if we are not good at listening), it may be that we come to a realisation (as God quietly reveals His answer), it might be we open scripture and a verse stands out for us, it might someone telling us a message from God, certainly if you hear the same message from different preachers week after week, God's probably trying to get through to you. However we also need to test, what we think God is saying to us – His word will never go against Scripture.

The important thing is to keep on praying as Paul's letter to the Ephesian church tells us “And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints”. (Eph 6:18 NIV)

"Don't Miss Out"

The man whispered, "God, speak to me, And a meadowlark sang.
But, the man did not hear

So the man yelled "God, speak to me!" And, the thunder rolled across the sky.
But, the man did not listen.

The man looked around and said, "God let me see you" And a star shined brightly.
But, the man did not notice.

And, the man shouted, "God show me a miracle!" And, a life was born.
But, the man did not know.

So, the man cried out in despair, "Touch me God, and let me know you are here!"
Whereupon, God reached down and touched the man.

But, the man brushed the BUTTERFLY away and walked on.
~author unknown~