

Date : 5th July 2026
Theme : The work of the Holy Spirit in our sanctification and service.
Topic : Devoting ourselves to the Discipline of Prayer.
Passage : Acts 12
Key Verse : *...Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church.... Acts 9:15,16*

Introduction:

By the time we come to Acts 12 (42% of the book of Acts), we are continuously reminded that prayer is the early church internet line to the risen Christ, allowing the early believers to instantly access the power and presence of Jesus.

- Note how the writer, Luke, intends the reader to make this connection.
 - Acts 1:14 disciples *joined together constantly in prayer*, awaiting the Holy Spirit.
 - 1:24 disciples prayed for guidance before selecting Matthias to replace Judas.
 - 2:42 newly baptized believers *devoted themselves... to prayer*.
 - 3:1 Peter and John went to the temple *at the time of prayer* and healed the lame beggar.
 - 4:24-31 After being threatened, believers prayed for courage: result? the place being shaken and them being filled with Holy Spirit.
 - 6:6 The apostles prayed and laid hands to bless the first 7 deacons.
 - 7:59-60 Stephen, being stoned, prayed and asked forgiveness for his killers.
 - 8:15 Peter and John prayed for new Samaritan believers to receive Holy Spirit.
 - 9:11 Saul prayed after his conversion.
 - 9:40 Peter prayed before he raised Dorcas from the dead.
 - 10:2-4 Cornelius prayed to God regularly.
 - 10:9 Peter prayed on the roof top, received the vision, opening the gospel to Gentiles.
 - 12:5 Peter was imprisoned. The church earnestly prayed for him.
- What was the scenario surrounding the church then?
The year was 44AD. 10 years since the church was founded at Pentecost in Acts 2. The church in Jerusalem then was in great danger.

King Herod Agrippa I had been authorised by Rome to rule over the land previously occupied by the 12 tribes. He was the grandson of Herod the Great, the bloodthirsty King, who ruled during the time of Jesus' birth and who had mercilessly put to death all the babies and infants in Bethlehem. He was an Edomite who had no sympathy for the Jews. His son, Herod Antipas, had imprisoned and ordered John the Baptist to be beheaded because John had spoken against him for taking Herodias, his brother's wife, as his wife.

Herod Agrippa I, the Herod mentioned in Acts 12, had ordered James to be beheaded. He had Peter next in line for execution. In fact, the whole church was in his cross-hairs. The spirit of darkness, had been transmitted 3 generations, in the 10 years since Pentecost.

- How did the church's culture of prayer change the spiritual climate?
Instead of merely acting as a thermometer to react to the heat outside, the church's culture of prayer, acting like a thermostat, actively shifted the atmosphere to bring God's peace, power and presence into the spiritually chaotic environment, through prayer and intercession.

1. How did the church overcome the threatening spiritual circumstance?

a) The church prayed.

They prayed because they recognised God’s absolute Sovereignty versus King Agrippa who was a temporary instrument in a much larger, divine story.

Rather than panicking, their identity is rooted in God’s authority over earthly powers.

- King Herod Agrippa targeted the church with evil intentions to harm her.
(root word for harass *kako* = bad)
- James the Apostle, one of the leaders, was put to death.
Herod used this act to intimidate the church.
- Peter was targeted next to appease the crowd. He was arrested, imprisoned without trial. Herod clearly planned to kill Peter, the visible spokesman. He had Peter put in the deepest dungeon, behind 4 sets of barriers.

b) The church had P.U.S.H

They prayed in Mary’s home constantly *Acts 12:5*.

The word *constant* = *ektenos* (stretching the limits, pray strenuously), involves endurance, prayer without ceasing.

It is not a 5 minute ‘flying’ prayer.

It is PUSH — **Pray Until Something Happens**

c) The church had a prayer culture

The culture of prayer meant that the church was praying rather than just the faithful few. Even the house maid was present. We believe she took part in praying for Peter because she recognised him when he showed up unexpectedly. This unified, non-stop prayer culture sustained their endurance in the face of vicious political threats.

2. Did the church prayer strategy succeed? Yes!

a) King Herod outwitted. *Acts 12:6-19*

- What was the difference between Peter’s imprisonment in Acts 5 and Acts 12.

b) King Herod’s sudden demise. *Acts 12:20-23*

c) The Word of God continued to spread and flourish. *Acts 12:24*

Political crackdowns accelerated the church’s growth.

3. How can BC be a House of prayer and cultivate a culture of prayer?

- Make prayer the engine of our momentum, not just holding prayer events.

- Pray, not merely be present, at our prayer meetings

A. Use different prayer routines

- a) Pray now instead of *I will keep you in prayer* (and then leave without praying).
- b) Bless 5 daily (before meal time)
- The Prime Minister
 - Parents
 - Senior Pastor
 - Net / Cell leader
 - Cell Members
- c) A.C.T.S to simplify prayer — **A**doration, **C**onfession, **T**hanksgiving, **S**upplication.
- d) Confess F.A.U.L.T.S
- **F**ears
 - **A**rrogance
 - **U**nbelief
 - **L**aziness / lies
 - **T**ensions
 - **S**pectating spirit (watching without participating)
- e) Prayer for the sick. *James 5:16*
- f) Ripple prayer for concentric intercessory prayer.
- Pray through expanding circles of contacts— example, pray for your cell group members, expand to their siblings and families, spread out to their friends and community
- g) The Lord's Prayer to structure your prayer.
- Praise and Adoration ...*Our Father in heaven...*
 - Priority of God's Kingdom ...*Your Kingdom come...*
 - Physical daily need ...*give us this day our daily bread...*
 - Pardon from God and release forgiveness to others.
...*forgive our debts as we forgive our debtors...*
 - Protection from evil ...*deliver us from the evil one...*
 - Power from above ...*Yours is the Kingdom and the power and glory...*
- h) Tabernacle prayer, to move through the different phases of worship.
- Enter His gates with thanksgiving
Come into His courts with praise.
 - Thank God for the sacrifice of Jesus at the brazen altar.
 - Come to the laver for cleansing and repentance
 - Linger at the golden candlestick for the Holy Spirit's guidance.
 - Wait at the table of showbread to meditate and receive revelation from the Word.
 - Enter into the Holy of Holies of His presence for our Lord Jesus has taken away the veil.

B. Practicalities

- The leader must pray and must be prayed for.
- The family must pray
 - schedule prayer times with spouse, child at home.
 - daily, family time, family altar.
- The church must pray. The Lord Jesus has designated her to be a House of prayer for all nations. Therefore what good is a church that does not pray strenuously.
 - corporate prayer 3rd Sunday 8am.
 - weekly prayer every Sunday 8:45am
 - weekly prayer every Monday 6:30-8:30pm
- The Cell group must pray
 - come early to pray before cell meeting begins.
 - pray during the meeting.
 - Intercede for cell to grow and multiply.
- Adopt good prayer habits:
 - pray Biblical prayers, that align with the will of God.
1 Chronicles 29, Colossians 1:9-11, Ephesians 1:18. Psalm 25, Psalm 8
 - avoid cliches in prayer: *Bless me, give me, make me successful.*
Repeating the title *Lord* at every other word.
 - set times for prayer – daily.
– prayer retreat.
- Drop poor prayer habits
 - long scripted prayers
God looks at our hearts not beautiful words.
God accepted the prayer of the tax collector ...*Have mercy on me...*
 - performative language
God rejected the prayer of the Pharisees ...*I am not like those sinners...*
 - mindless rambling and jumbled thoughts (Instead be specific in what you ask)
example of disconnected ramblings: Father God, You are Great. We raise a banner. Bless us today. We confess our sin. Make us your instrument. Be with our leaders. Give us Your peace etc etc
 - Filler words / repetitive use of *..just...*
or ...we commit to you...
or I echo what has been said (instead of bringing new thoughts to talk with God).