

prayer:

talk that goes over your head

selections from Matthew and Acts

When New Testament Christians gathered, prayer happened naturally as they fellowshiped together. They prayed in faith, expecting results, and God answered them. In the roughest times they found many reasons to praise God. When it seemed the whole world opposed them, they continued to pray, assured that Christ stood with them.

Their example of sincere prayer continues to guide us today. As you consider today's text and related passages on prayer, be alert for principles you can carry over into your own prayer times with other Christians.

▶ PRAYER PROMISES (Matthew 18:19-20)

- ▶ What requirement for effective prayer is given in verse 19?
- ▶ What differences should distinguish a prayer meeting from other types of meetings people attend?
- ▶ In what ways does praying together benefit Christians?
- ▶ Will prayer really get us anything we ask? What conditions are suggested by Psalm 66:18; Matthew 21:21-22; James 2:14-16; 4:3; 5:16?
- ▶ Does praying regularly with a group make individual prayer time unnecessary? Explain.

▶ PRAYER IN ACTION (Acts 4:23-31)

Again and again early Christians saw Christ's prayer promises come true. In this passage Peter and John had been imprisoned overnight for preaching in the temple. Jewish leaders pressured them to stop proclaiming the Gospel, but the apostles insisted they had to obey God rather than human authorities. When the apostles rejoined the company of Christians, the group turned to God in prayer.

- ▶ What specific things did they praise God for?
- ▶ What specific requests did the Christians make in their prayer?
- ▶ How were they assured of God's presence?

Matthew 18:19-20

¹⁹"Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."

Acts 4:23-31

²³On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. ²⁴When 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. ²⁵You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: 'Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? ²⁶The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed one.' ²⁷Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed.

²⁸They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.

²⁹Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. ³⁰Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus."

³¹After 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.

»mon

Jesus begins with the word "again." He repeated Himself a lot, especially when He wanted to make an important point or when people needed to be reminded of the truth. Take a moment to remind yourself of the awesome power of prayer.

»tues

It takes at least two people to meet the challenge of these verses. There really can be no loner Christians. Thank the Lord for the fellowship He provides for you in the church.

»wed

Having at least two people involved in prayer can keep us accountable. James says that we need to avoid asking for

things with the wrong motives (James 4:3). Jot down the name of someone you could ask to be your prayer partner for a while. Together you could examine your intentions when praying for something.

»thurs

Jesus said that we could ask anything of God when we make our request with another Christian. With Wednesday's devotional in mind, go get your prayer partner and ask God for anything.

»fri

When two or more Christians meet together, especially for prayer, Jesus promises to be with them. Have you been particularly sensitive to Christ's presence among a group of believers? Write a brief paragraph about that experience, and thank the Lord for it.

»sat

Though God knows what we need, He still wants us to ask for those things. By asking, we acknowledge our dependence upon Him for all things. Thank the Lord for three things He's provided for you this week.

“Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”

— Matthew 18:19-20

TO PRAY OR NOT TO PRAY

over the years, one of several distinctive things about the african-american church has been prayer times.

