

GROWTH + GROUPS

NAVIGATE LIFE TOGETHER

Maranatha Chapel Sermon Based Study Guide
SB 02.26-2023

THE CHURCH PRAYS FOR BOLDNESS – ACTS 4:23-31

Receiving the Message and Relating to the Study

What insights, principles, or observations stood out to you from this week’s message? Discuss with your group.

Pastor Danny tells us “Jesus’ parting words to His followers were to wait in Jerusalem for power. They were to remain in Jerusalem in anticipation of the coming of the Spirit. Jesus then ascended or return to heaven. Luke’s account tells us that the disciples gathered together, Acts 1:14 “devoting themselves to prayer.” Think of 120 men and women, young and old, fervently calling out to God. Hear voices fill the room where they gathered with praise and petition. To an outsider observer the scene bordered on chaos. However, for the early church, corporate prayer was as natural as breathing. In our time together, we want to see an example of how the early church prayed for boldness.” Let’s get into our lesson...

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

1. What struck you most from this week’s sermon?
2. What is the biggest answer to prayer you’ve personally experienced? What did that answer do for your prayer life? for your faith?

When we work, we work; when we pray, God works. Too many Christians—and churches—have lost dependence on God. Do we not believe God can work as He did in the days of the early church? In Acts, believers boldly prayed as they faced persecution while sharing the gospel. And as God performed His wonders with the early church, He will do it for us as well.

Digging Deeper in God’s Word: Life Lessons

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 4:23-28

Peter and John returned after they were released from jail to the other apostles, friends, and relatives who encouraged and supported them during this difficulty. Once there, they reported the events that just transpired, telling how authorities had ordered them not to preach of Jesus again.

1. Who do you go to when you experience difficulty? What is significant about the people to whom Peter and John went after their release?
2. What is typically your first response to a crisis situation? Is your response similar to the one described in the Scripture passage or would it be different? Why?
3. The believers acknowledged in their prayer that Jesus knew what it meant to experience every possible form of opposition that could be experienced. How does knowing that encourage you today?
4. What parallel does this prayer reveal between the experience of Peter and John and that of Jesus?
5. How can this understanding impact your prayer life?

“PROMISES” in 2023

Rather than despondency and defeat or fear and anxiety over such dire news, the assembled believers turned to God in prayer, not as a last resort but as a first resolve. Surprisingly, the believers didn't pray for changed circumstances or personal comfort. They instead turned to God, recognizing His power and sovereignty.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 4:29-30

1. Why would the believers have called themselves “slaves” in their prayer? What’s the implication for us as believers today?
2. What does complete boldness look like? Who do you know that most closely fits this description? How do you think they became that way?

Having embraced God’s plan in their prayer, the believers now requested God to perform a great and visible work. They asked that God would consider the threats from their opposition, give them boldness in witnessing, and show miracles in answer to their prayer. God’s will might not remove us from difficult situations; but when we pray, God will strengthen us and make us more effective for Him in those situations.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 4:31

1. What was the direct result of prayer in this verse?
2. How do you feel about your own prayers in light of this verse? Why do you think our prayers often have less of an impact as what we see in this verse?
3. Besides sharing our faith with others, in what situations might we act boldly for God?

Because of the infilling with the Holy Spirit, the disciples began to speak God’s message with boldness. Their motivation originates from the indwelling Holy Spirit’s power and presence. Christians overflowing with the Holy Spirit share the gospel. In fact, one filled with the Spirit declares the gospel boldly. Isn’t that what we want? Courage? Boldness? Living obediently to Christ? Dependent prayer fosters such a transformation.

Applying God’s Word

What did you learn from this study and how does this personally speak to you? Discuss with your group.

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

In Acts 4:31 we see something vibrant and exciting. The coming of the Spirit infused power into ordinary people. No one person was a spiritual superhero or celebrity. The church was no longer 120 disciples gathered in a room, it’s was no less than 3000 people scattered throughout Jerusalem and the world. It is interesting to note that the same religious system that opposed Jesus now persecuted the church. Threatened, the church didn’t pray for protection, rather they prayed for “boldness”. Their great concern was that the fear of man might deter them from proclaiming the gospel. The early church didn’t pray for persecution to end. “a reasonable request,” they asked for courage to speak God’s Word resulting in the salvation of the lost. Let’s learn to pray bold audacious prayers to a Big God. We must also leave the answer to our prayers to God alone who knows what’s best!

1. What is the difference between living for Jesus and allowing Jesus to live in and through us?
2. We may not vocalize our doubts on God’s powerful ability to answer our prayers, but specifically how do we sometimes see ourselves doubting God’s ability?
3. How can you plan for opportunities to share God’s message? How does a person witness with complete boldness? What practical step can you take today?

“PROMISES” in 2023

4. How can praying together as a group of believers, such as our group, transform our church?

PRAYER – Pray that God would help us pray big and bold prayers for ourselves and our church. Ask that the Holy Spirit would give us boldness in sharing God’s message of hope.

“The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.” Psalm 34:18

Notes on prayer:

C.S. Lewis once wrote,

**“We are not necessarily doubting that God will do the best for us;
we are wondering how painful the best will turn out to be.” ~ C.S. Lewis**

David tells us that “The LORD is near to the brokenhearted” – He “saves the crushed in spirit.” Jesus is with you in your sadness – He rescues you from your pain by being with you.

His well-known poem tells us, Psalm 23 v. 4, Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. God walks with us, unfortunately He’s not in a hurry – but Jesus leads us each step of the way.

Again, Paul’s words from Romans 12, this time v. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. It is loving to pray for others – He is the God who hears.