

Pray First | The One Thing That Changes Everything | GUIDE - *Matthew 18:19-20*

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There are needs in our church and community that are beyond us. The only path forward is prayer. Prayer has been proven to change impossible circumstances for centuries.

The Welsh Revival began soon after a former coal miner, 26-year-old Evan Roberts, heard an evangelist pray, "God, bend us." To which young Roberts responded, "God, bend me".

Western Churches are often very hard working, but often very lacking in prayer. Until we learn this verse, we will never succeed.

John 6:63-64 (NLT) The Spirit alone gives eternal life. Human effort accomplishes nothing. And the very words I have spoken to you are spirit and life. 64 But some of you do not believe me..."

Jesus' Church Was Founded Upon Prayer.

Acts 1:12-14 (NLT) Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, a distance of half a mile. 13 When they arrived, they went to the upstairs room of the house where they were staying... 14 They all met together and were constantly united in prayer, along with Mary the mother of Jesus, several other women, and the brothers of Jesus.

This is how it began. Jesus' followers started practicing this one thing He had taught them. To Pray. 50 days after the Resurrection, and 10 days after the ascension of Jesus they prayed. Though it only seemed like 10 days that they prayed in that room. 120 believers prayed diligently and waited for Jesus to send the Holy Spirit. In doing so they laid a foundation for what church would be for 300 years. Every time the church has a breakthrough, it always comes after a reconnection with this simple lesson. God's Sons and Daughters devote themselves in PRAYER!

The Little Church that Learned to Pray

They Learned to Wait In Prayer.

Luke 24:49 (NLT) "And now I will send the Holy Spirit, just as my Father promised. But stay here in the city until the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven."

They Prayed Together in "One Accord" (KJV). They prayed in harmony like on the worship team but in prayer rather than in song. They waited and prayed until something happened. . . and something did happen.

They Learned to Build New Believers with Prayer

Acts 2:42 (NLT) All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer.

Apparently, the early Church had some core values: teaching, fellowship, communion and prayer. It was a pretty simple strategy, yet somehow it laid a foundation that rocked the world! They taught them to pray.

They Learned to Strengthen Themselves in Prayer

Peter (the denier) and John (the coward) certainly had their own troubles. Prayer **changed** these guys. Now their very demeanor shouted that they had been with Jesus. The Sanhedrin told them, "Shut up about Jesus." BUT...

Acts 4:23-24 (NLT) As soon as they were freed, Peter and John returned to the other believers and told them what the leading priests and elders had said. 24 When they heard the report, all the believers lifted their voices together in prayer to God:

The Church prayed. It should have been **frightened**. It should have been NICE and QUIET. But no, they raised their voices in prayer despite the risk of persecution.

Jesus' Most Powerful and Practical Promises are Realized Through Prayer

When we Strengthen Ourselves in Prayer More Victory is Possible.

Victory over Temptation. What if we are struggling with sin in our lives because of this prayerlessness?

Luke 22:46 (NLT) "Why are you sleeping?" he asked them. "Get up and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation."

When we Pray, Anything Is Possible. Our God does the impossible. He makes things possible. Do you recall that Jesus even prayed to be delivered from the Cross? He surrendered to the Father's will, but He obviously believed that it was possible. If you KNEW that devoting yourself to prayer for 3 hours would turn your impossible to possible, would you do it?

Luke 11:9 (NLT) "And so I tell you, keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you."

When we Agree in Prayer, Anything is Possible.

Matthew 18:19-20 (NLT) "I also tell you this: If two of you agree here on earth concerning anything you ask, My Father in heaven will do it for you. 20 For where two or three gather together as My followers, I am there among them."

What if the distance between the impossible NOW and the possible answer could be shortened by praying with others? What if you could find 1 or 2 friends you could pray with? What if God's people today prayed like God's people did in the first century? The Kingdom of God would be unstoppable!

We must reclaim our heritage of prayer. When we do, we will make radical changes to the world in which we live. Ask the Father to empower you to pray. MAKE time to pray ALONE. MAKE time to Pray with OTHERS.

Talk About It...

- *What are your first thoughts regarding today's topic? Please share with the group.*
- *Do you find it easier to pray or find something to do? Why?*
- *What are your thoughts regarding Jesus' statement in **John 6:63**, "human effort accomplishes nothing"? Discuss.*
- *What do you think the prayer life of Jesus was really like? What about the early Christians?*
- *Discuss the idea of "waiting" in prayer. What does that mean? What did it mean for the disciples in **Luke 24:49**? How does that verse help us understand "waiting" in prayer?*
- *Review the story of Peter and John in Acts 4. What is so remarkable about the early believers' prayer in **Acts 4:23-31**? Discuss **Jude 1:20**.*
- *How does prayer strengthen us? How could we strengthen ourselves in prayer?*
- *How does prayer change our possibilities? What would it benefit us to pray with others about our desires and problems?*
- *Is there anything in today's topic that you would be excited to share with a friend?*