

WORSHIP

SUGGESTED WORSHIP SONGS:

Victory in Jesus, Only a God like You, The Lord is my Salvation, This I Believe

WELCOME

Describe the current state of your prayer life with a 1 to 10 scale--- 10 if it's like Jesus' prayer life, and 1 if it's almost non-existent.

WORD

ACTS 12:1-5

Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church in order to mistreat them. ²And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword. ³When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. Now it was during the days of Unleavened Bread. ⁴When he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out before the people. ⁵So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God.

Prayer is like a thermometer and a thermostat. If a thermometer measures room temperature, our prayer life measures how we are spiritually. Like a thermostat that adjusts room temperature – if we are feeling spiritually sluggish, praying will adjust our spirituality.

Of all the spiritual disciplines, prayer is the most fundamental. We are commanded in **1 Thessalonians 5:17** to pray without ceasing, to keep on praying. There are many words for prayer in the Bible but in this particular verse, the Greek word used is *proseuchomai*. It has the idea of going before God in worship, devotion, and adoration. Prayer is more than requests. It is coming before God and wanting His presence. It is a lifestyle, a way of life.

Philippians 4:6 commands us to be anxious for **nothing**, but in **everything** by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving to let our requests be made known to God. We should realize that when we worry, we are committing sin. The antidote for this is prayer with thanksgiving, and God promises to give us His peace which surpasses all understanding (**v.7**).

So why should we learn to pray without ceasing?

PROBLEMS

Problems are inevitable. As we continue reading the book of Acts, we see in chapter 12 that Herod decided to run after Christians particularly the leaders. We learned that the Apostle James was put to death and now Peter was in prison.

James was part of Jesus' inner circle (with Peter and John) and was specially loved by Jesus (**Mark 5:37, 9:2**). But God still allowed him to die, making him the first martyr among the apostles.

What happens to us is beyond our control, but how we will respond is what's within our control. Whatever

happens, we must pray. In times of disappointment, when prayers are not answered, we should pray without ceasing and thank the Lord by faith for how He will choose to answer us.

PERSPECTIVE

Prayer will realign our perspective. Peter's situation seemed impossible, humanly speaking. He was guarded by four squads of soldiers so there was no way he could escape. In **verse 5**, however, we learned that the entire church was praying **fervently** for him. This included the thousands that were added to their number which we learned in the previous chapters.

Peter was at peace and was sleeping the night before he was about to be executed (**v6**)! When we are prayerful, God changes our perspective. We should not be afraid of problems for God will only allow them if necessary, so that the proof of our faith may be tested (**1 Peter 1:6-7**).

Sooner or later, we will all die. But for God's people, death is beautiful and precious (**Psalms 116:15**). We will enter into peace (**Isaiah 57:1-2**) and rest from our labors (**Revelation 14:13**). In **Philippians 1:21**, the Apostle Paul said, "For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain." We are all living for something. If we are not living for Christ, then to die is a loss for us. The wicked in the Bible is anybody who does not put God first, those who don't recognize God in their lives; God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked (**Ezekiel 33:11**). God does not want wicked people to die because He knows their destiny (**Ezekiel 18:32**). For those who don't belong to Jesus, death is a different story and their ending is not a happy one.

WORD (cont'd)

Praying without ceasing will affect our perspective. When our perspective changes, it will affect our thinking, when our thinking changes and becomes aligned to God's will, it will affect our feelings, which will eventually affect our behavior. This will encourage us to pray some more until it becomes a cycle.

When we get discouraged because our prayers are not answered, we need to change our perspective. We need to believe that God is good, in control, all-wise, and that He knows what's best for us. We need to keep praying.

POWER

We need God's power.

As Peter was sleeping, an angel of the Lord woke him up and led him to escape the prison (**Acts 12:6-10**). God can do the impossible and His timing is always perfect – not too soon nor too late.

Those who were praying for Peter could not believe what happened (**vv.15-16**). Sometimes we don't believe our own prayers too. But God honors even our little faith. **A little faith in a big God is powerful, a big faith in a small god is nothing.** God's power is not dependent on our faith for His power is absolute.

God is still active today. In the first part of chapter 12, Herod was killing the Christians. But in the last part, he was the one who died (**vv.20-23**) when an angel of the Lord struck him down. God is sovereign and His purpose will be accomplished (**vv.24-25**). So let us keep on praying for: *"Around us is a world lost in sin, above us is a God willing and able to save; it is ours to build the bridge that links heaven and earth, and prayer is the mighty instrument that does the work."* -E.M. Bounds

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

(Leaders: Please choose questions that are appropriate to the level of spiritual maturity of your members)

1. Sometimes God allows problems in our lives so that we will get on our knees.
Share a time that this has been true to you.
2. As a group, list down the attributes of God as revealed in His Word. How should these change your perspective as you come to Him in prayer?
3. Knowing that we are commanded to pray without ceasing, what is God impressing in your heart to fervently pray for?

WORKS

PRAY CARE SHARE IN ACTION

Knowing that God can do the impossible, keep on praying for the people in your Pray-Care-Share list. Ask for their prayer requests and pray for them and with them this week.

WEEKLY PRAYER POINTS

I. Thanksgiving

- Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives

II. Country and the World

- A peaceful, safe, and fair election
- Wisdom and discernment for all voters
- For righteous and God-fearing leaders to be elected in office

III. Church

- That CCF Members would honor and love God and make disciples
- Elders, Pastors, Leaders, and Families
- Ministries and Churches worldwide

IV. CCF Facilities

- Worship and Training Center
- Prayer Mountain

V. Personal Concerns

- Deeper intimate relationship with God
- Righteous living
- Salvation of family and friends