

THE 5 PILLARS OF THE CHURCH

PRAYER

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What Is A Pillar?

A pillar can be defined as a firm upright support for a superstructure. (Merriam Webster dictionary)

Prayer as one of the five Pillars of the church helps to strengthen the body of Christ. As Pillars are the most important thing in supporting a structure or building, so is prayer. If you take the Pillars off the building, the building will collapse, so in the same way, if you take one of these five pillars away from the church, the church becomes dysfunctional.

What Is Prayer?

- Prayer is an act of **dedication** and expressing our dependency on God. (John 15:5-7)
- Prayer is an act of **communication**. Communication is the most important thing in any relationship. You can't know God's will unless you communicate with Him and you can't know the right way to communicate with someone unless you have a relationship with them. (John 15:15-16)
- Prayer is an act of **supplication**. Supplication simply means to make a request. Prayer is God's chosen method to meet our needs. (Philippians 4:6-7, John 16:23-24)
- Prayer is an act of **cooperation**. It is mankind giving God permission, access and right to interfere in earth's affairs. God sovereignly chose us to cooperate in His plan through prayer. (2 Chronicles 7:14, Genesis 1:26)

Without God man cannot and without man God will not. (St. Augustine)

There is a dependency God himself created between Him and us. Every action taken by God in the earthly realm required the involvement of a human being.

- To rescue humanity in the flood, He needed Noah.
- For the creation of the nation of Israel, He needed Abraham.
- To lead the nation of Israel, He needed Moses.
- To defeat Jericho, He needed Joshua.
- For the salvation of man, He needed to become a man.

God does nothing but in answer to prayer. John Wesley

In order to understand why prayer is one of the main pillars in building a strong church foundation, we will need to look at Prayer in the early church.

The book of Acts provides a recorded history of the vital role prayer played in the lives of the disciples, who were completely dependent on God. In fact, prayer preceded almost every major event of the early church. Prayer preceded the in-filling of the Holy Spirit, multiple healings, bold preaching, and comfort for persecuted believers.

The Early Church Was Devoted To Prayer

The early Christians were devoted to prayer. It was the driving force behind all that they did. Immediately following Jesus' ascension into Heaven, the eleven disciples returned to the upper room in Jerusalem.

The book of Acts, records that the first activity of the disciples was to join together devoting themselves to prayer. *They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers* (Acts 1:14). From the very beginning of the early church, prayer has been primary.

Acts 2:42

There Were Great Acts Of God Through Prayer

The coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:3 is directly tied to the devoted prayer of the disciples in Acts 1:14.

During persecution together they prayed to God. (Acts 4:31)

While Peter was in prison, *earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church* (Acts 12:5). Incredibly, at the same time the disciples are praying for Peter, an angel of the Lord helps Peter escape from prison. This demonstrates the awesome power of prayer.

What Can We Learn From The Early Church?

We must have a **discipline of prayer** - Prayer for the early church was a spiritual habit. it was a regular practice. The disciples would commit time to pray no matter where they were in their travels.

Firstly, before healing the lame beggar in front of the gate of the temple, Peter and John were intentional about making time for regular prayer.

"Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour" (Acts 3:1, NKJV).

Secondly, when Luke and Paul were in Philippi, they went to *"the place of prayer"* (Acts 16:16). Again, the early Christians set aside regular time for prayer.

Not only did the disciples commit specific time to prayer, but they also prayed continually. A mark of true discipleship is being in constant communication with God through prayer. In his first letter to the church at Thessalonica, Paul commands them to *"pray without ceasing... for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you"* (1 Thessalonians 5:17–18). And this is what we see in the early church

Then we apostles can spend our time in prayer and teaching the word. (Acts 6:4, NLT)

We must **set aside time to pray** - *Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour"* (Acts 3:1). For a Christian to grow in spiritual maturity, they must be intentional about setting aside time to talk to God. Prayer is one of the most important kingdom keys on earth. Why? Because Jesus did it daily. (Matthew 14:23, Luke 5:16, Mark 1:35)

The infallible test of spiritual integrity, Jesus says, is your private prayer life. (Tim Keller)

One of the great uses of Twitter and Facebook will be to prove at the Last Day that prayerlessness was not from lack of time. (John Piper)

Ezekiel 22:30

Jesus instructs us to have a set-aside time to pray to Him. (Matthew 6:6)

We must **pray like our life depends on It** - Many Christians live life as if prayer is unnecessary. In the early church, prayer was essential. However, for today's church, prayer is optional. This is in large and partly due to the lack of dependence on God. When life is comfortable, prayer takes a back seat to everything else.

People In The Bible Who Prayed Like Their Lives Depended On It

Hannah: In 1 Samuel chapter 1 we read about the story of Hannah, she was greatly troubled and sought the Lord for a child (1 Samuel 1:10-11). Hannah had total reliance on God. There was no other option. There was nowhere else to get help but from God. She also made a vow to support her request.

I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him. (1 Samuel 1:27, NIV)

Jabez: In 1 Chronicles 4:9-10, Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, *"Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain."* And God granted his request.

The Early Church: In Acts 4:23-31, we read how believers prayed to God for boldness to be able to continue the great commission despite threats and intimidation from oppositions. *"Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness"* (Acts 4:29). God again answered them in verse 31 *"After 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."*

We must **not give up**. There are many in the church who have tried praying but did not receive the answer they were looking for. As a result, they have given up praying. However, the testimony of the early church should encourage us to never give up. Prayer can change your situation in a moment. It's so comforting to know that our prayers cause God to intervene. Don't allow what's in front of you to cause you to doubt what God can do.

(Proverbs 3:5-6, Jeremiah 32:17, Deuteronomy 31:8, Jeremiah 32)