

THE PRIORITY OF PRAYING TOGETHER

Acts 6:1-4

June 22, 2008 Sunday pm

INTRODUCTION

- A. There will always be a need for private or personal prayer.
 - 1. Jesus often prayed privately.
Matthew 14:23 After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone,
 - 2. We should pray privately too.
Matthew 6:6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.
- B. There is also a tremendous need, however, for corporate prayer in the church today.
 - 1. "Corporate" means to "combine into one".
 - 2. Our passage shows us the importance of "combining in one" when we pray—of corporate prayer.

I. PRAYING TOGETHER WAS A PRIORITY OF THE APOSTLES.

- A. The Apostles certainly prayed privately. After all, it was they who asked Jesus to show them how to pray privately.
Luke 11:1 One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."
- B. They saw corporate prayer, however, as one of their main ministries to the church.
 - 1. Prayer was one of the ministries they identified in Acts 6:4.
 - 2. This was a reference to "corporate" rather than "private" prayer. How do we know?
 - a. The context of Acts 6 dealt with church ministries (i.e. ministry to the widows, ministry of the word, and the ministry of prayer to the church).
 - b. Our own deacons recognize the importance of praying together and have led out in two corporate prayer meetings—before Sunday School and during Worship.
 - c. Other references to the Apostles praying in Acts always involved leading others to pray.
Acts 1:14 They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.
Acts 2:42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.
Acts 4:23-24²³ On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them.²⁴ When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them.
 - 3. So, praying together was a priority for the Apostles.

II. PRAYING TOGETHER WAS ALSO A PRIORITY FOR JESUS.

- A. Jesus certainly often prayed privately.
Luke 5:16 But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.
- B. However, of the 37 verses in the Gospels of Jesus' teaching and practicing prayer, 33 of them dealt with group or corporate prayer.
 - 1. For example Matthew 7:7 ("you" is plural not singular, referring to more than one person praying).
Matthew 7:7 "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.
 - 2. Another example is Matthew 18:19.
Matthew 18:19 "Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.

III. PRAYING TOGETHER WAS ALSO A PRIORITY FOR THE EARLY CHURCH.

- A. Consider examples from the book of Acts.
Acts 1:14 They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers. (following Jesus' ascension).
Acts 4:24 When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. (when Peter and John were released from the Sanhedrin).
Acts 4:31 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 (again after Peter and John released by Sanhedrin).
- B. Its obvious from these examples that the majority of God's mighty acts came as a result of corporate or group prayer.

CONCLUSION

- A. Is it possible we haven't seen many mighty works of God today because we no longer place a priority of group prayer?
- B. Lord, teach us to pray privately and corporately.