

Prayers *Small Group Discussion*

WEEK NINE

Intercessory Prayer for Peter Acts 12

Prayer is a vital yet often confusing aspect of the Christian life. Do I pray enough? How should I pray? What should I pray about?

The prayers of the Bible have much to teach us about our freedom to relate to God through prayer, and in these prayers we learn about who Jesus is and what he has done for us.

Psalms 66:16-20

- ¹⁶ Come and hear, all you who fear God;
let me tell you what he has done for me.
¹⁷ I cried out to him with my mouth;
his praise was on my tongue.
¹⁸ If I had cherished sin in my heart,
the Lord would not have listened;
¹⁹ but God has surely listened
and has heard my prayer.
²⁰ Praise be to God,
who has not rejected my prayer
or withheld his love from me!

Romans 8:26-27

- ²⁶ In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. ²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

Acts 12

It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. ² He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. ³ When he saw that this met with approval among the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Festival of Unleavened Bread. ⁴ After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover.

⁵ So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.

⁶ The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. ⁷ Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists.

⁸ Then the angel said to him, "Put on your clothes and sandals." And Peter did so. "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me," the angel told him. ⁹ Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. ¹⁰ They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him.

¹¹ Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I know without a doubt that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were hoping would happen."

¹² When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. ¹³ Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant named Rhoda came to answer the door. ¹⁴ When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, "Peter is at the door!"

¹⁵ "You're out of your mind," they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, "It must be his angel."

¹⁶ But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. ¹⁷ Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison. "Tell James and the other brothers and sisters about this," he said, and then he left for another place.

¹⁸ In the morning, there was no small commotion among the soldiers as to what had become of Peter. ¹⁹ After Herod had a thorough search made for him and did not find him, he cross-examined the guards and ordered that they be executed.

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Prayer Ideas

- Pair up and listen and pray for one another.
- Pray (with a partner, trio, large group) for your small group, your church, the greater church, missionaries, etc.
- Share requests together & pray for the person on your right this week.
- Brainstorm characteristics of God. Note them somewhere and take time to reflect & pray over each of them!
- Pray through a favorite worship song's lyrics together. Sing together.
- Pray for your neighbors and co-workers.
- Lay hands on one another to pray.
- Write a prayer on a post it note. Stick the notes all around the room. Take some time to travel and pray over all the prayers. Split the notes up to take home & pray this week.
- Take some time to think of things that start with each letter of the alphabet. Write or draw a picture and then pray prayers of thanks for each of those things listed.
- Kneel together. Take time to listen, pray silently and then pray aloud.
- Pray a Psalm. Look at Psalm 8 or one of your favorites and take time to pray through it together!
- Go for a prayer walk!
- Pray one word prayers.
- Pray for your city together.
- Other ideas?

How is the praying church described in verse 5?

What could this have looked like?

Potential answers: earnestly, fervently, praying with perseverance and expectancy

Wow! List all the hurdles Peter had to overcome to leave the prison.

Potential answers: two chains, two guards, getting dressed, iron gate, unbelief, surprise, etc.

What was the response from the others when Peter arrived at the door? Is this the response you thought it would be?

Potential answers: certainty from Rhoda (she recognized his voice), disbelief from others (it must be his angel), astonishment, excitement

Where in this passage do we see who Jesus is and what he has done for us?

Pray Together! Really. Do it!

Leader's Note: Yes this is different, but we do want you to take time to pray together before your accountability time.

Some of these prayer ideas work best with pens, paper, crayons, post it notes, a whiteboard, etc. Look through the list on the left, get creative, ask if anyone else has ideas, add in your own, be bold and try something new - and/or (potentially) plan ahead for next time!

Accountability Questions

How readily do you recognize your need to pray - is prayer your first response in a time of need?

How can we encourage you to pray for others earnestly & fervently this week?