

GOD'S POWER UNLEASHED

United Prayer and Church Growth in Acts

Acts 1:14, 15: Believers met in the Upper Room. They “all continued with one accord in prayer.” These days of repentance, confession, and humility—as well as seeking the Lord’s vision, power, and the Holy Spirit—were followed by Pentecost, one of the most powerful events of Scripture. Just 120 believers added 3,000 to their number in one day!

Acts 2:42-47: The newly baptized believers continued daily to study, fellowship, worship, and pray together, and “the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”

Acts 4:18-33: Peter and John were threatened not to speak or teach about Jesus. The church cried out in united prayer to God for boldness. The room was shaken, they were filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the Word of God boldly. They gave witness with great power and grace.

Acts 6:1-7: The early church faced practical problems. The apostles realized they must focus on the ministry of prayer and the Word, so seven deacons were chosen to care for the congregation. God blessed these plans: the Word of God spread, the number of disciples increased, and many priests became obedient to the Word.

Acts 8:14-25: Peter and John successfully interceded for those who had not yet received the Holy Spirit. They also preached the gospel in many Samaritan villages. Prayer was the secret of their powerful witness. The Word of God moves forward only with prayer.

Acts 10:9-48: God sent a vision to prepare Cornelius to receive the gospel. He sent another vision to prepare Peter to take the gospel to Gentiles. The two men were miraculously brought together thanks to prayer, fasting, and visions.

Acts 12:1-24: Herod threw Peter into prison. But “constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church” (verse 5). An angel set him free, and he hurried to Mary’s home “where many were gathered together praying.” His escape caused a stir, and Herod continued to search for him, but “the word of God grew and multiplied” (verse 24).

Acts 13:1-48: As the prophets and teachers fasted and prayed, the Holy Spirit called Paul and Barnabas to go on their first missionary journey. The church prayed with the laying on of hands before sending them out.

- They started churches and proclaimed the gospel in Cyprus.
- Almost the entire city gathered to hear the Word of the Lord in Pisidian Antioch.
- “When the Gentiles heard this. . . as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed” (verse 48).
- The Word of the Lord spread through the entire region.
- And the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.

Acts 14:23-28: Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in every church and commended them to the Lord with prayer and fasting. They reported all that God had done through them, and the Lord opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.

Acts 16:13-34: Paul looked for places where united prayer was happening, and that's where God worked His miracles.

- Paul looked for a place where united prayer was being offered in Philippi. On Sabbath he met Lydia, and she and her household were baptized.
- They were on the way to a place of prayer when Paul cast the demon out of a slave girl.
- Paul and Silas were put in prison for casting an evil spirit out, so they prayed and sang. An earthquake loosened their chains, but they ministered to the jailer instead of escaping. The entire household was converted and baptized.

Notice the constant process we see in the book of Acts:

1. Situation/problem arises.
2. God's people gather/pray/fast.
3. Holy Spirit's power is poured out.
4. The problem is overcome.
5. Challenge leads to proclamation of God's Word.
6. People obey.
7. People criticize.
8. The Word of God spreads more!

The united prayer of God's people leads to the growth and spread of God's church.