



Week three:

Biblical Prayers

The power of prayer

- **Welcome (5-10 minutes)**

A children's toy – Power _____
 A wet wash – Power _____
 Not quite running - Power _____
 Abode – Power _____

Ruins electrical appliances – Power _____
 Toys for boys - Power _____
 Rest a while – Power _____

- **Worship (10-15 minutes)**



pray

*Our Father in heaven,
 hallowed be your name.
 Your Kingdom come,
 your will be done,
 on earth as in heaven
 Give us today our daily bread.
 Forgive us our sins,
 as we forgive those who sin against us.
 Lead us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from evil.
 For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours.
 Now and for ever. Amen*

- **Word (50 minutes)**

Empty phrases or words of hope and power. An emotional crutch or an expectation of divine response; prayers are used by all kinds of people in many and various situations.

- Talk about the variety of public places prayer has featured in the past couple of weeks. What were the purposes of the prayers and what do you think the expectations of the pray-ers were?



Read the passage:
 Acts 12 1-19

Herod Causes Trouble for the Church

1At that time King Herod caused terrible suffering for some members of the church. 2He ordered soldiers to cut off the head of James, the brother of John. 3When Herod saw that this pleased the Jewish people, he had Peter arrested during the Festival of Thin Bread. 4He put Peter in jail and ordered four squads of soldiers to guard him. Herod planned to put him on trial in public after the festival. 5While Peter was being kept in jail, the church never stopped praying to God for him.



Peter Is Rescued

6The night before Peter was to be put on trial, he was asleep and bound by two chains. A soldier was guarding him on each side, and two other soldiers were guarding the entrance to the jail. 7Suddenly an angel from the Lord appeared, and light flashed around in the cell. The angel poked Peter in the side and woke him up. Then he said, "Quick! Get up!" The chains fell off his hands, 8and the angel said, "Get dressed and put on your sandals." Peter did what he was told. Then the angel said, "Now put on your coat and follow me." 9Peter left with the angel, but he

had experienced God's rescue in their own recent history. Although James' death was a deep tragedy, they hoped in God that death at this point was not to be Peter's lot.

- Why might they have believed that Peter could be released?
- Give 2 Old Testament and 2 New Testament examples of 'earnest' or 'fervent' prayer in this manner.

As we look at the passage we find Peter asleep in prison, whilst the church is alert and wakeful in prayer! He does not fear death or persecution. He is secure in God's sovereignty over his life. James had died a martyr's death. Jesus had endured crucifixion. Peter faced nothing worse. Fernando writes of such situations:

Without any doubt, God never lets us go through a crisis without preparing us adequately for it and providing for us to come out of it victoriously. We are reminded of the promise to Paul as he was troubled by the thorn in the flesh; "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." (2 Cor 12 :9) (p.370)

- Consider the word 'victoriously' set alongside that wonderful promise to Paul. What could this mean in your life? Where are the areas of struggle and difficulty? Where do you need to see God's victory?

pray

- Spend several minutes in quiet prayer. If you want, pray aloud for the area you struggle in. Or ask someone to pray for you.

The church prayed expectantly and hoped passionately for Peter's release. God is the same today: powerful and all mighty ... his church is impoverished in her hopes and faith ... maybe this is evident in the quality of her prayers.

- How can you experience some of the belief and passion that the early Christians understood?



It is somewhat amusing that the church at prayer are utterly dismissive of Rhoda's claim that Peter is at the door, released to them!

- Do we look for the miraculous, or is our God bound up and powerless in our faith and our church today? Share your opinions about this.

- Witness (20 – 25 minutes)

pray

Pray about your outreach event/activity that will point people in the direction of Jesus.
Now do some planning!

You should have a clear idea about what you want to do by the end of this session ...

Don't forget there are other groups you could work with ... think BIG if you can ...
... the challenge is to do something!

Time for refreshments, you've earned them!



Bibliography

Stott, John RW; *The Message of Acts*; BST; IVP; 1991

Ajith Fernando; *The NIV Application Commentary: Acts*; Zondervan; 1998