

A People on Their Knees

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning and happy new year. It's good to see all of you this morning. Contained for us in the Gospel of Luke and now moving into the book of Acts, which helps us see this outworking of Christ's ministry and the apostles' hearts and their lives and the emergence of this new entity known as the church.

We'll be looking at and discovering over the next several weeks, what does it mean to become a church? What is the church? How does that church develop?

What is made up of the church? Church, before we even begin and how we're going to kind of set the course of this morning's study, is to recognize that before we can ever stand as a church, we need to be a people who kneel before the Lord.

Before we can ever stand as a church, we must be a people who have learned to kneel before the Lord. The significance of kneeling and praying and depending and looking to the source of all power and wisdom so that we can access that power and we can understand and recognize the work of the Lord among us.

That's where we're going and that's what I want to try to help us understand the significance of this morning. Back in 1857, there was a man by the name of Jeremiah Lamfire.

[1 : 57] He was a businessman. He was a layman, but he was also a believer, a Christian. And he was hired by the Dutch Reformed Church to help try to encourage and invigorate those those who were part of the church who were working in New York City.

The difficulty was that in New York City, as the city began to grow and as people were working there, they were moving out of the city and kind of moving into the suburbs and so they would come and commute into the city to work and then they would leave to do the rest of their normal routines of life.

And because of moving out of the city and moving into the suburbs, there seemed to be this discontinuity, this lack of connection and the spiritual soil that was once rich there in New York City was beginning to wane.

So he was, Jeremiah Lamfire was hired by the Dutch Reformed Church to try to reinvigorate the spiritual vitality of those who were living there in New York City.

He designed a special time of prayer. His thought was that people were there in New York City and normally had between 12 and 1 o'clock free for lunch.

[3 : 21] And so his thought was he would encourage anyone who wanted to, in whatever denomination they were a part of, to come to enjoy some time of prayer and reflection with other believers who wanted to pray as well.

He designed this very special one-hour, punctual, very clear boundaries that were set. You could come and go as you wanted. And the idea was it would just be a time of prayer.

No preaching, no singing, just praying. And the goal was that each individual that would come would come and just present their prayers in short contributions so that everyone who was there could participate.

And that's how this meeting began. And Jeremiah showed up for this first of those meetings and he waited for five minutes and then for 10 minutes and then for half an hour and no one showed up.

He wondered if anyone would come. And finally, after about a half an hour, some people started to trickle in and during that first meeting, only six people would come and would begin to pray.

[4 : 34] But week after week, and especially once the financial crisis and panic of 1857 would hit the city, this resurgence of prayer in the city would come to life.

So that by the spring of 1858, reports of thousands of people who would gather not only in this Dutch Reformed church but also in churches throughout the city of New York would begin to

understand the significance of prayer and the life that it brought to the people of God living there. Hundreds of thousands are reported to have come to faith in Christ because of this simple strategy but from somebody who for all intents and purposes was totally unqualified to lead.

He wasn't a pastor. He had no pedigree as it were. He had no credentials as it were. He just came as a businessman to encourage others to pray.

And God used the prayers of his people to change the lives of those who came. It's a reminder of what E.M. Bounds will say. He says, What the church needs today is not more machinery or better or new organizations or more in novel methods but men and women whom the Holy Ghost can use.

[6 : 02] Men and women of prayer. Mighty men and women whom the Holy Ghost uses. It does not flow through methods but through men and women.

The Spirit does not come on machinery but on men and women. He does not anoint plans but men and women of prayer.

And that's where we are this morning. As we reflect on all that God has accomplished for us in 2025. Thinking about his faithfulness to us as a church.

Thinking about answered prayer. I think about all of the faithful people who are part of ministries.

And I can't even begin to name all of those who are part of those ministries.

Ministries with our children. With our teens. With our connect groups. With our small groups. With our praise team. And our media ministry. Our welcome ministry. And so many other areas of Bible studies.

[7 : 02] And discipleship. And hospitality. And greeting. So many of you who are a part of building into the lives of others. And it's something that we can celebrate. God's work among us through God's people.

And then the harvest offering that we did for the first time. Just a couple of months ago. And an invitation to give for our missionaries. And you rose to the occasion.

And more than \$40,000 was raised on behalf of missions. In just the matter of a month. Your generosity. In responding. In God using that.

In giving. In our budget that far exceeded our expectations. That the actual giving was far more than the budget of expenses that we had.

New initiatives that God allowed us to accomplish. And God's faithfulness to cover unexpected expenses. \$80,000 for a backflow device. \$40,000 for two HVAC units that we needed to replace.

[8 : 07] \$60,000 for a gym roof. And God provided all of those things. Unexpectedly. An ever-growing youth missions team.

And what a joy it's been to watch more than 20 students. And several leaders who've been part of the mission teams over the last couple of years. And how God has worked instrumentally through their lives.

How God has used them to bless us individually. But also to partner with other churches. And to bless those ministries as well. It's exciting to be able to continue to have interns.

And we're praying that God will continue to bless us with more interns. That we can pour into and invest in. Also new deacon-elects. We have at least two new deacon-elects this year.

New members. New conversions. New baptisms. It has been a year to celebrate. God has been so faithful. But what does this next year hold?

[9 : 10] Where do we stand in this year? What will God do in this year? And what God will accomplish in this year will depend on one thing.

It will depend on whether or not we will be people who couple our hearts to God in prayer. That we depend on the Lord to do His work and not strive and seek to do it on our own power.

And that's where we find ourselves this morning. A reminder this morning that before we can ever stand as a church. We must learn to kneel as the people of God.

And captured for us in this two-volume work that we've been studying over the last several years.

As we go back just for a moment and kind of touch on this gospel of Luke.

And then transition into the book of Acts. And just kind of laying the foundations for what does it look like to be a people dependent on God through prayer.

[10 : 11] And Jesus, He will obviously entrust this ministry to His disciples. And what will it look for those disciples to then also depend on God in prayer?

How will they do this? The headline of Acts is not, look what the church has accomplished. But look at what God has accomplished for His people.

People of prayer. Because a church advances in the power of God. And through the prayers of God's people. Not through the machinery that E.M. Bounds refers to. Before Luke ever shows us sermons and strategies and structures and mission routes. He shows us a people who have committed themselves to God in prayer. Forever to experience fruitfulness in our families, in our workplaces, in our communities. We must be a people dependent on the Lord. But resting, not striving. [11:16] Learning to rely and not to struggle. Learning to trust and not to work. Learning to depend on the Lord. And it's not that the Christian life doesn't involve effort.

We understand that it will involve effort. But it must first be coupled with prayer. It must first start with prayer. And we see this promise that we get from John chapter 15. That those who are coupled to God. The vine as it were. Will enjoy the benefits of fruitfulness. That's what we want. John 15 verse 5 says, I am the vine. You are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him. He it is that bears much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. If you abide in me and my words abide in you. Ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you. Do you want to enjoy the benefits of fruitfulness? Do you want to have a life that is abundant in harvest? [12:19] Do you want to enjoy the blessing of God? The favor of God on your life? To experience his working in your life. And using you instrumentally in the lives of others?

Well you must be connected to the vine. You must depend on his words. And have his words spill out in the way you live. And as we open this series. It's important for us to understand. That Luke will continue to establish this pattern for us. This pattern of dependence on God through prayer. A people on their knees. So I would encourage you if you have your Bibles. Open with me to the gospel of Luke. We're going to start there. We're going to be there for a little bit of time. And then we're going to flip to the book of Acts.

To conclude our time together. Luke chapter 1. That's where we're going to start our time. Luke chapter 1 verses 5 to 7. Let me read this for us. As we begin. [13:16] It says, In years.

Luke is setting this up as the very first story. In the gospel of Luke. And he does this strategically. He does this instrumentally. Because he wants to draw our attention. To the work of God. Working through and over our barrenness. We need to recognize. First of all as a church. If we're ever going to enjoy the benefits of fruitfulness. We must recognize our poverty. You have to recognize. I have to recognize my poverty. What I bring to the table. I bring barrenness. I bring insufficiency. I bring inadequacy. I bring inadequacy. I bring nothing to the table. And that's where this story begins. This story begins with this dramatic contrast. [14:37] That God wants to help set the tone. Right out of the gate. How is fruitfulness going to happen? How is mission going to take place? It's going to happen on the power of God. In the power of God alone.

Every piece of this description. In verses 5 to 7. Are meant to call our attention. To God's work in spite of poverty. God's work in spite of barrenness. Luke is drawing our attention to this. He wants us to see it right at the outset. That the gospel record. Will indicate that in this story. If we want to enjoy the blessings of God. The fruitfulness of God. It must begin on your knees. Luke wants us to understand. This tone of fruitfulness. How it will happen. It's only going to happen one way. It's only going to happen. By trusting and depending on God. And so he spotlights barrenness. [15:37] This couple. This couple. Zachariah and Elizabeth. And what they bring to the table. Is barrenness. And we recognize that. That our own barrenness.

Our own fruitlessness. Is in view. Notice. Zachariah and Elizabeth. It says they come from the right family. That Zachariah is a priest.

We also see that. That they come with the right heart. You notice that in verse 6. They were righteous before God. Walking blamelessly. And all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. This righteousness. This blamelessness. This obedience. So from the right stock. And having the right character. And it's met with futility. It's met with barrenness.

They have no children. All of their efforts. And I think their godly efforts. What they bring to the table. Is not enough.

[16:37] And that's the point. They need the Lord. To fix it all. To do it all. Because they can't do it for themselves. And the story graciously moves on.

That in spite of barrenness. We see in verse 8. Now while Zachariah was serving as a priest before God. When his division was on duty. According to the custom of the priesthood.

He was chosen by lot. To enter the temple of the Lord. And to burn incense. Immediately the scene changes.

Immediately now we transition into the space of provision. Where is provision going to happen?

Well it's going to happen in the temple. It's going to happen through prayer.

It's going to happen because of God's power. And the occasion of this hour. Is the hour of incense.

This is the hour of prayer. And what would happen is. Is during this first century.

[17:35] There were 24 divisions of priests. Broken out by families. And 24 divisions in 12 months. Means that every priestly family would serve.

Approximately two weeks in the space of a year. And there were about 18,000 priests in Israel. And so for your number to be called up. For you to be able to serve in this way.

Was like a once in a lifetime opportunity. And by God's providence. He brings Zachariah by lot. To accomplish this prayer representation.

In this moment. Because he has a point for us to understand. He has a message for us to hear.

Because barrenness is only going to be overcome.

Through God's power. It's only going to become. Overcome. As God's people. Couple their hearts.

In dependence on him. To provide. And we find that Zachariah.

[18:33] He's not just performing a duty here. He's not just going through the motions. He's not just doing what he's told to do. But notice in verse 13. He's a man of prayer as well.

The angel says to him. Do not be afraid Zachariah. For your prayer has been heard. And you and your wife will bear a son. And you shall call his name John.

Barrenness will be replaced by fruitfulness. Barrenness. Barrenness. Replaced by fruitfulness.

Because of prayer. We learn the strategic nature.

Of their prayers. Not just praying for a son. But praying for the coming of Messiah. Notice. They're praying for this work of God.

This spirit of Elijah. This fulfillment of promise. It's all bound together. Zachariah and Elizabeth. Understand this plan of God. To bring salvation.

[19:37] To his people. They understand. That it's going to happen through. The spirit of Elijah. He's going to come. And he's going to accomplish this work. They're praying. That God. Would hear.

And answer. And help this nation. And God has heard their prayers. And he is. Letting them understand. Your prayer has been heard. It's going to be answered.

The amazing part of this prayer. Is that God would. Would answer. And he would answer. Very personally. Not just give them help. To the nation.

But give them help. Through. Specifically. A son. Who would come. From their own family. God would give them a son. Who would be. Filled with the Holy Spirit.

Even from. The point of his mother's womb. Faithful prayers. Would result. In Holy Spirit power. Faithful prayers. Dependent prayers.

[20:30] Desperate prayers. From barren. Hearts. Are going to be met. By God's power. Those faithful prayers. Rose from an important. An important.

Awareness. They recognized. Their own poverty. And so. They coupled their heart. To pray. You see. If we're ever going to enjoy.

The blessing. Of fruitfulness. In life. It begins. With an awareness. Of your poverty. Do you recognize. Your poverty.

Do you recognize. What you bring to the table. Do you. Do you see. Your insufficiency. Do you. Come to a sense. Of. Realizing. That there are areas.

In your life. That are out of step. Out of bounds. That are not. In line. With God's standard. You are. You're broken. There is. Barrenness. In your life. Not fruitfulness.

[21:25] In your life. And. And you recognize. That there are. Are specific deficiencies. That God has brought. To your attention. And those aren't meant. To discourage. Or.

Or even. Deflate you. They're meant. To encourage you. To. To put. To press in. Like Zachariah. And Elizabeth did. To. To become aware. Of their barrenness.

Their brokenness. Their poverty. And to pray. May. Most often. We do not recognize. Our. Insufficiency.

I. I think. We're complacent. I think. It's really easy. To think. That we have it all. Together. I think. It's really easy. To be comfortable. With the here and now.

And. And. And if God is ever going to work. In the people of Maranatha. If God is ever going to work. In your heart. And. And. In the ministries. And the circles. In which you run.

[22 : 20] It's only going to happen. When you come to a place. Of recognizing. Your desperate need. For God. Your own insufficiency. Your own barrenness. Your own inadequacy.

But. God meets. Our inadequacy. By providing his son. He provides his son. And. And if we want to be useful.

And we want. To be fruitful. And we. We don't want to be. Barren in life. We. We need to. To. To. To be in tune. With our poverty. And run. To.

His all sufficiency. Let God. Turn. Your poverty. Into provision. Let God. Turn your poverty. Into provision.

He delights. In doing that. But it. But it won't happen. Until you come to a place. Of recognizing. You bring nothing. To the table. Jesus will say.

[23 : 15] Blessed. Are the poor in spirit. For they. Shall see. God. Blessed. Are the poor in spirit. Is God helping. To tune. Your heart. In that way.

To recognize. Your poverty. So you. So you. Actually come to a place. Of dependence. On him. And pleading. With him. To. To. To. To produce. In your heart.

In life. What you so desperately need. And when God helps us. Recognize our poverty. Then he also. Invites us. To reach. For something.

That he's provided. And that's the next. The next point here. Reach. For God's promise. Reach for God's promise. We. We understand. Our poverty. But it's not meant to leave us there.

It's meant for us. To. To see him. To understand the truths. About him. And to reach for him. And to trust in him. To rest in him. Reach.

[24 : 09] For God's promise. The second snapshot. That we're going to look at. Briefly here. In the. In the gospel of Luke. Is found in Luke chapter 2. Verses 22 to 38.

And. And we encounter another man. And another woman. Now. They're not married. The man's name is. Simeon. And the woman's name is Anna. They're unrelated by family.

They're. They're obscure. They're. They're anonymous. And I think that's by design. Because. Because here in our story. As this begins to. Continues to unfold. God wants us to understand. It's not by pedigree.

That he's going to accomplish his work. He's going to do it through normal people. Who come to grips with their barrenness. And turn it over to the Lord. And trust him. And that's what we find. In Simeon.

And Anna. Beginning in verse 22. It says. And when the time came. For their purification. Speaking. Of Joseph. And Mary. And Jesus. According to the law of Moses.

[25 : 06] They brought him. Jesus. Up to Jerusalem. To present him. Before the Lord. Verse 25. Now. There was a man. In Jerusalem. Whose name was Simeon. This man was righteous.

And devout. Waiting for the consolation. Of Israel. And the Holy Spirit. Was upon him. It had been revealed. To him. By the Holy Spirit. That he would not. See death. Before he had seen.

The Lord. Christ. And he came. In the spirit. In the temple. And when the parents. Brought in the child. Jesus. To do for him. According to the custom. Of the law.

He took him up. Into his arms. And blessed God. And said. Lord. Now you are letting. Your servant. Depart in peace. According to your word. For my eyes.

Have seen your salvation. That you have prepared. In the presence. Of all people. A light. For revelation. To the Gentiles. And for glory. To your people. Israel. We find that.

[26 : 01] As with Zachariah. And Elizabeth. Simeon. Is too. Is waiting. He's waiting. For the consolation. Of Israel. He. He's anchored. And tethered.

His heart. To promise. He knows. What God has said. About this coming. Messiah. And he believes. That God will do. What God has promised. And so he's reaching.

He's longing. He's yearning. He's. He's looking. And waiting. Actively. For the. Fulfillment. The fulfillment. Of that promise. God. You're gonna do it. I know you will. You promise. It's gonna happen. I'm reaching. For that promise. I'm trusting. In your. Sufficiency. Your ability. To see this through. He knows. God's promises.

And the knowledge. That knowledge. Drives him. To something. It drives him. To prayer. And then he gets this answer. Here. The Holy Spirit indicates. That he would not die.

[26 : 56] Until he had seen. The Lord. And on this occasion. After years of waiting. And praying. And serving. Jesus. Serving God.

In the temple. He sees him. He recognizes. What no one else. Has been able to recognize. He sees the Messiah. In the form of a little baby.

That not even Mary and Joseph. Really knew the full extent. Of what. What was going on. And he takes Jesus up. In his arms. And he blesses him. My eyes. Have seen.

Your salvation. Here he is. The consolation. Of Israel. The one we've always. Been waiting for. Finally. He's here. In his reaching.

Heart. Has led to prayer. And dependence. Upon God. And it's the Holy Spirit. His power. Who has made it possible. Mary and Joseph. Even marvel. At what is said.

[27 : 51] And Simeon. Reinforces. This pattern again. This pattern. Of dependency. And reaching. For God. Through prayer. And dependence. Upon the Spirit. We find this prophethood.

Anna. In verses 36. And 38. We find that. She did not depart. From the temple. Worshiping. With fasting. And prayer. Night and day. Why? Why did she do that?

Because she. Was tethering. Her heart. To the promise. This consolation. Of Israel. Praying. That God would see this through. And through. Her faithful prayers.

God. Delivers. The message. And the. The example. That is set for us. By Simeon. And Anna.

Also. Comes to us as well. Are we. Depending. On the promises. Of God. Do you know the truths. That God says. About himself. Is it helping.

[28 : 45] To steady your heart. To secure you. In life. Is it leading you. In how you pray. Is it. Helping to. To orient.

The. The affections. And the. The desires. Of your life. We just finished. The book of Colossians. And in Colossians. 1. 15. It says. He is the image. Of the invisible God.

The firstborn. Over all creation. And by him. All things are created. In heaven. And on earth. Visible. And invisible. Whether thrones. Or dominions. Or rulers. Or authorities. And all things were created. Through him. And for him. He. Is before all things. And in him. All things. Hold together. What is. Or what should be. The natural.

Conclusion. Of a heart. That believes. That truth. That he's above all. He's above. Rulers. And authorities. Visible.

[29 : 41] And invisible. He created them all. He's over them all. They submit to him. What are we. What should be the response. Of a heart. That believes that. Well.

I think the psalmist. Sums it up well. When he says. The Lord. Is my light. In my salvation. Whom shall I fear. The Lord. Is the strength. Of my life. Of whom.

Shall I. Be afraid. God. Is over. In all. I can trust him. It'll steady. My heart. I believe in him. And I'm. I'm reaching. For the promise.

Of the truths. Of God. And I want to. I want to settle that. On my life. So my life. Is enjoying the benefits. Of these truths. And. For those.

Who understand. The great promises. Of God. We recognize. The model. That Jesus. Has set for us. When he says. Pray this way.

[30 : 39] Your kingdom come. Your will be done. On earth. As it is in heaven. And so. The posture. Of my heart. Is to ask the Lord. To do. His work. In his way. And when the Lord.

Says. The harvest is plentiful. But the laborers are few. Therefore. Pray. That the Lord of the harvest. Will send forth laborers. Into the harvest. What is my. Reaching heart.

Trusting God's promises do. It commits itself. To pray. That God will perform. The promise. He's given. To send laborers.

To allow us. To enjoy. And to see. The evidence. Of fruitfulness. You see. Our hearts. Should be guided. By these promises. Our hearts.

And lives. Should be anchored. By these promises. So. That when God. Helps us. Recognize. Our poverty. It leads us. To know.

[31 : 36] That he's a God. Who's made promises. And when we see. His promises. And reach for. Those promises. We recognize. That we need to rely. Then on his plan. We must rely.

On his strategy. Not our own strategy. What is. His strategy. What is. God's plan. God's master. Strategy.

It's by the way. An unstoppable program. It's a fail-safe plan that God has put into place. And we see it evident in the life of Christ. We see it through the remaining parts of the book of Acts.

Do we know God's plan? Are we relying on that plan? Jesus' plan is to build the church. But he builds it through a praying people, a dependent people, and the power of his spirit working through those people to accomplish his purposes.

We see it right at the start of Jesus' earthly ministry. He's commissioned into public ministry in John chapter 3. And you remember the story how Jesus will come to the Jordan River.

[32 : 47] And John the Baptist is speaking there. He says, I baptize you with water. But he, speaking of Jesus, who is mightier than I, is coming. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

The power of the spirit will accomplish God's purposes. And so when Jesus comes to be baptized, we find in Luke chapter 3, verse 21, now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus was also baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened.

And the Holy Spirit descended on him in a bodily form, like a dove, and a voice came from heaven, and you are my beloved son. With you I am well pleased. Jesus is praying.

And Jesus then enjoys and experiences the benefit of that Holy Spirit power, being indwelt by the spirit. So then we turn the page to Luke chapter 3, verse 21.

We see that it's the spirit who drives Jesus into the wilderness, to set him apart, to help establish the power of God working through his life. We turn to chapter 4, and we see this continuing evidence of the spirit in Jesus' ministry.

[34 : 02] We see the spirit working because of a heart of Christ in modeling prayer. Luke 4, verse 42 says, And when it was day, he departed, speaking of Jesus, and went into a desolate place.

Well, what was he doing there? We find from Mark chapter 1, verse 35, what he was doing. It says, And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out into a desolate place.

And there he, what church? He prayed. He prayed. And this was his routine. This was his pattern. This was the plan of our Savior to accomplish the purpose for which God had sent him.

Luke 5, 16. But he would withdraw to desolate places to pray. Luke 6, 12. In these days he went out to the mountain to pray. And all night he continued in prayer to God.

In Luke chapter 9, verse 18. Now it happened that as he was praying alone, the disciples were with him. And he asked them, Who do the crowd say that I am? Luke chapter 9, verse 28.

[35 : 06] Now about eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and he went up to the mountain to pray. Luke 11, 1. Now Jesus was praying in a certain place.

What do we learn from Jesus' life and example? We learn that there is a commitment to fellowshiping and trusting in God through prayer. And then the power of the Spirit will come and to accomplish the work of God through the life of Jesus.

The Son of God was dependent on prayer and full of the Spirit. He sets the pattern. He establishes the expectation. He provides the example.

And the prayer life of Jesus was so clear, was so evident. The power was so obvious in the disciples' minds. And so what do they say?

And what do they ask in Luke chapter 11, verse 1? They say, Lord, teach us to what? To pray. Why? Because they knew this was plan A.

[36 : 12] This was the game plan of God to accomplish His work through prayer. A praying people. And so for those who commit themselves to this exercise, Jesus makes promises.

In Luke chapter 11, verses 9 and 10, He says, I tell you, ask and it will be given to you. Seek and you will find. Knock and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. The one who seeks, finds.

And to the one who knocks, it will be opened. If you then who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?

Pray, depend, and enjoy the benefits of the Holy Spirit's power in your life. In Luke chapter 18, verse 1, we find Jesus' instructions.

He told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. Be a praying people. Depend on the Lord. And then in verses 7 and 8, He says this, Will not God give justice to His elect who cry to Him day and night?

[37 : 21] Will He delay long over them? I tell you, He will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?

And that's the question for us. The plan has been set. The program is clear. Will we be a people that follow the example of our Lord?

Will God find faith on the earth? And how will He know? He will know through a people who've committed themselves to Him in prayer. God's strategy, done God's way, will find the benefits of God's working in our lives.

We turn to Acts chapter 1 now, and we find that these praying people, and now the emergence of this church is going to be set through these praying people, and they're going to receive God's power.

They're going to receive this power that's been promised by God to enjoy it for themselves personally. That same power that was present in the Lord Jesus will be present in them.

[38 : 29] And so the church, before it would ever launch and reach the world, it must learn this important lesson. It must first learn to pray. This great commission, go into all the world and make disciples of all nations.

Before that would ever happen, they must first learn the strategy of depending on God through prayer and receiving the power of the Spirit. Notice Acts 1, 4 says this, While they were staying with them, he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which he had said, you heard from me.

What was that promise? Verse 8 says, you will receive power. When the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria into the ends of the earth. See, before the people of God are to move, they must first learn to pray. They must first learn that they need to wait not for human power, but for divine power, for God's power, for power from on high.

And so that's what they do. They return to Jerusalem and they wait there. We find they're waiting in verse 12 of Acts chapter 1. They returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away.

[39 : 50] And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew and Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James, the son of Alphaeus and Simon, the zealot and Judas, the son of James.

All these, with one accord, were devoting themselves to prayer together with the women and Mary, the mother of Jesus and his brothers. What do they do?

They go to Jerusalem. They obey God's directives and they pray. They wait and then they see the power that God had provided, the power of the Holy Spirit that comes.

We see that in Acts chapter 2, verse 1. When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place and suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind and it filled the entire house where they were sitting and divided tongues as fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them and they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Prayer of God's people produced power. not self-induced power but divine power from God to them because of obedient, receptive, humble, dependent hearts.

[41 : 13] The life and power and glory of the church is prayer. The life of its members is dependent on prayer and the presence of God is secured and retained by prayer.

the very place is made sacred by its ministry. Without it the church is useless, it's lifeless, it's powerless. Without it even the building itself is nothing more other than the structure.

Prayer converts even the bricks and mortar and lumber into a sanctuary, a holy of holies where the Shekinah dwells. It separates it in spirit and in purpose from all other edifices.

Prayer gives peculiar sacredness to the building and sanctifies it, sets it apart and conserves it from all common and mundane affairs.

E.M. Bounds. Are we a people of prayer? Finally, and briefly, rejoice in God's provision. We can rejoice in God's provision.

[42 : 19] As we continue to read, as we continue to read through Acts chapter 2 and then on through Acts chapter 28, we see this work of God and the coming of the Holy Spirit and we see the evidence of this spiritual life and how it overflows into a people who are not only sanctified and changed and transformed, but that transformation is evident.

Creating unity, creating zeal for God, creating a sense of devotion to His Word and to what the apostles teach, but also to prayer itself. They devote themselves to prayer.

Why? It's because that's what worshiping people do. They recognize that their dependence is on God through prayer and they rejoice in God through that provision and they settle their hearts to do and to carry that life out.

I know our time has expired, but I want to just ask for a couple more minutes and I want to drive this point home with a quick video and at the end of each service, I want to encourage you with kind of like an object lesson, a little illustration and so the Manwiller family is helping us to understand a little bit through this series of videos what it means to be a church or becoming a church being used by God in a way to reach the communities that God has put us in.

So just watch this then I'll pray and I'll dismiss you. After much research debating and praying, we decided that we wanted to homeschool our children through fourth grade and then send them to public school.

[44 : 04] There were several reasons for that. We want to be able to walk them through situations they face to learn how to handle them biblically. Also, we wanted them to have the opportunity to share Christ with those around them and be the salt of the earth and the light of the world as Jesus says in Matthew 5, 13 through 16.

We were once challenged with the fact that if we're going to be the salt of the earth, the salt's got to be on the beef. Before our boys went to public school, I had heard other moms talk of their involvement in their child's classroom and supporting the teachers in that way and I was looking forward to having that same opportunity but it turned out to not be that way when Caleb enters fifth grade.

About the same time, we began a themed prayer schedule during our family Bible time each evening and on Tuesday nights, we prayed for leaders. So if I couldn't support the teachers in person, I would support them in prayer.

Weekly, we prayed for the boys' teachers, coaches, and other leaders at their schools. Sometimes we knew specific needs but most of the time we did not. And as a mom, I pray regularly for my sons that the Lord will clothe them in His armor, strengthen them for the good works He has prepared for them, and that it will be known that they have a different spirit within them.

From about my sophomore year onward, I consistently prayed every night that I would get opportunities to share the gospel. While those opportunities did not come often, God worked in my heart to desire to proclaim His good news and pray faithfully for years.

[45 : 32] Every first day of school, my dad plays for me the song by Audio Adrenaline, aka Public School. In that song, there is a line that goes, they pay to put you in the classes, it's your chance to reach the masses.

The song is a great way to be reminded of the opportunity that God has given me at school, both to be there, to learn, and more importantly, to shine bright for Christ.

We don't go to public school yet, but when we do, we can learn, make new friends, and point them to Jesus. I'm praying to have God help me make new friends. God wants to use every single one of us instrumentally this year.

He will only accomplish that objective by a praying people, a dependent people. Will you join me this year in making prayer something more than just a casual kind of thing in your life, but that we are so settled and so committed and so reaching for it that it becomes a way of life for us.

Oh, may God help us to be a people of prayer so we can enjoy the benefits of His power and see that power working out in our communities, in our families, in our church.

[46 : 50] Let me pray and I'll dismiss you. Oh, Lord, thank you for the example of your son Jesus. Thank you for His instruction to us to be people who are dependent on the Father through prayer and then enjoy the benefits of that power that comes through the Spirit.

May our lives demonstrate that kind of example to others in Jesus' name. Amen. God bless you.
Happy New Year. Have a good day.