

**ALL IN:**  
**Prayer**  
**Matthew 21:12-17**

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**Text Introduction:** We are a journey together called ALL IN. Our chief text for the study is Acts 2. It is one of the most foundational passages of the New Testament on the work of the church.

These described in Acts 2 were authentic believers in Jesus Christ. They believed, and as a result of their belief, they were baptized. After being baptized, they banded themselves together as the church.

As a church they committed themselves to these things: Discipleship (becoming fully devoted followers of Jesus), fellowship (doing life together), prayer, worship, and stewardship.

The reason that I want us to take a hard look at this passage is because these are the very things that will happen in the new building that we will build. There will be a Fellowship Hall that will seat double the capacity that our existing Fellowship Hall seats. This will be a place of teaching with up to 18 Adult Education rooms being available. This space will also have connecting corridors that are a vibrant place of fellowship. This space will also house a new prayer room for our church's prayer ministry.

As a result of doing these things together, the LORD continued to prove Himself to them so that there was a sense of awe about them, they experienced miracles together, they had favor with one another, and every day people were being saved.

We have focused on this first and second commitments—a commitment to the Apostles' teaching and fellowship. Today we focus on the commitment to prayer. Reminding ourselves of the Acts 2 passage, let's also put another text before us that deals specifically with this discipline of prayer in the church.

**Text:** Jesus went into the temple complex and drove out all those buying and selling in the temple. He overturned the money changers' tables and the chairs of those selling doves.<sup>13</sup> And He said to them, "It is written, My house will be called a house of prayer. But you are making it a den of thieves!"

<sup>14</sup>The blind and the lame came to Him in the temple complex, and He healed them. <sup>15</sup>When the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonders that He did and the children shouting in the temple complex, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were indignant <sup>16</sup>and said to Him, "Do You hear what these children are saying?"

"Yes," Jesus told them. "Have you never read:

You have prepared praise  
from the mouths of children and nursing infants?"

<sup>17</sup>Then He left them, went out of the city to Bethany, and spent the night there.

**Introduction:** Again in Acts 2, we see that the church had a commitment to praying. This wasn't just individuals praying, but the church coming together to pray. In fact, I did a little study this week on prayer in the Book of Acts. I discovered that people are said to be praying 31 times in the Book of Acts. Of these 31 times ...

14 times an individual is said to be praying.

2 times two or more people in a small group are said to be praying.

15 times it is the church gathered in prayer.

Half of the references to praying in the book of Acts are references to corporate praying!

These earliest believers must have known well Jesus' words about prayer in our text today.

According to the New Testament, the Church has several important purposes. The Church is to be a place of worship, evangelism, prayer, teaching (or discipleship), fellowship, and ministry. Out of all these Biblical and practical purposes, Jesus chose one to speak about as he cleared the temple this day as recorded by Matthew. Jesus said, "My house shall be called a house of prayer." Of all that the Church is supposed to be, on this important occasion, Jesus said that the Church is to be a place of prayer. The challenge for the Church to be a place of prayer still faces us today. I want to call you to become a person of prayer and do your part in helping your Church become a people of prayer.

**Jesus' Displeasure**—In Matthew 21 we see that Jesus is displeased when He walked into the temple. Often I have heard people say that Jesus was displeased by the buying and selling going on in the temple. However, buying and selling would have been quite common throughout the period leading to Jesus' entry into the temple. More than the buying and selling of goods, Jesus was displeased with the manner in which this exchange was being carried out by those involved. People were being cheated! This is what made Jesus angry. Well-meaning worshippers had come to give their offerings to God, but some were using this as an opportunity to cheat and steal. Here is the source of the anger: God's house was being used for purposes never intended. Thus comes his follow-up statement—"My house shall be a house of prayer."

**A Description of what Happens when a Church Becomes a House of Prayer**—What follows in this passage is a description of what a Church becomes when that Church becomes a place of prayer. First, that Church becomes a place of **power**. "And the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them." Second, that Church becomes a place of **praise**. The Acts text tells us that there was a sense of awe. When we begin to see the power of God, praise is going to follow. So, in summary, notice the progression: Prayer→Power→Praise. Wouldn't you like to see that happen in your church?

The Big Question is How are we to pray?

**The Overwhelming Task of Prayer**

In Acts, we also that there was appointed times and places for prayer. We see that the church prayed for power, wisdom, boldness to share Christ, in crisis, for missionaries, for pastors, and for each other.

I don't think this list is necessarily exhaustive, but it is instructive.

As we consider a study on prayer, to simplify this matter, I want to call your attention to three general New Testament principles on prayer. They all come from Paul's writings.

**1. Pray without Ceasing.**

*1 Thessalonians 5:17* simply says, "Pray without ceasing."

**2. Pray about Everything.**

In *Philippians 4:6*, we are taught, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."

The following verse tells us what happens when we do pray about everything. "And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

**3. Pray for Everybody.**

The third general overwhelming principle is given in *1 Timothy 2:1*. "First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men . . ."

So, now, let's see. The New Testament has instruction for us to pray all the time, about everything, and for everybody. Does that task seem impossible? Does that task overwhelm you? Can I ask you a very practical question? How are we going to do that?

Start Where You Are! Start Where We Are! Help me to make FBC a House of Prayer!

For a little motivation, think about the following written by Joe McKeeever, one of my favorite authors. He said in a recent column, "Use this piece in any way you can." Thanks, Joe, for such convicting words.

"PRAY ANYWAY!"

"When you don't know how to pray, pray anyway.  
IGNORANCE IS NO EXCUSE.

When you don't feel like praying, pray anyway.  
DEPRESSION IS NO EXCUSE.

When dullness sits on you like a vulture, and you can't muster enough enthusiasm to change channels, much less to pray, pray anyway.  
BOREDOM IS NO EXCUSE.

When you see no need to pray and no reason to intercede for those about you, recognize this as a sign of impending danger, and pray anyway.  
BLINDNESS IS NO EXCUSE.

When you've grown spiritually lazy and feel that you'll never be able to pick up your Bible and read it the way you once did, pray anyway.

LAZINESS IS NO EXCUSE.

When you don't understand what the big deal is about prayer, and you think it's overrated because it never did you much good, pray anyway.

IMMATURITY IS NO EXCUSE.

When you're too tired to remember your own name, and you know God will understand if you don't pray, pray anyway.

FATIGUE IS NO EXCUSE.

When you're embarrassed to be back before God confessing the same sins and admitting the same failures, come on and pray anyway.

SHAME IS NO EXCUSE.

When you've been unfaithful and you know it and you feel that burden of guilt that makes you want to run and hide under the porch, pray anyway.

SIN IS NO EXCUSE.

When the nagging voice of the enemy keeps telling you there is no God and even if there were, He'd never have anything to do with a nothing like you, pray anyway.

UNBELIEF IS NO EXCUSE.

We can bless ourselves immeasurably by rescuing our prayer life from bondage to our emotions and circumstances. There is no time and there are no conditions in which prayer is not necessary, not helpful, and not the right thing to do.

Let us pray."