



GROW AT HOME

DAILY DEVOTION

DAY 39

READ

ACTS 1

FOCUS

“THEY ALL JOINED TOGETHER CONSTANTLY IN PRAYER, ALONG WITH THE WOMEN AND MARY THE MOTHER OF JESUS, AND WITH HIS BROTHERS.”

REFLECTION from PASTOR DOYLE SURRATT

Today I would like to talk about just one portion of one passage in this chapter. It is really the essence of how the early church began and was empowered to operate. It is just one little phrase but it was the basic operating procedure for the entire early church. We would do well to incorporate it into our lives. In verse fourteen it says, “They all joined together constantly in prayer.” This is the kind of statement that we can just cruise by, or take for granted, and not understand that the entire New Testament (and all the activities of the early church) began right here, with this very intentional time spent in prayer.

Over the many years I have been in ministry, I have served and led many teams. I have to admit that, during certain periods, not all of them were as fully rooted in prayer as they should have been from the very outset. I have found on a personal level that a lack of prayer often means: more struggles with my thought life, worse attitudes, and much less accomplished in a given day. But what are the implications for a group of Christians, a Christian couple/family or even a ministry team that doesn't set aside time to begin their endeavors in a time of prayer? It has been my experience that we can get so busy living, working, and even ministering that, in our hurry to “do,” we forget that we are supposed to “be” with our Heavenly Father first. It is only in this “being” with the Father that we gain the direction, discernment and power to get the “doing” done. So what happened to those teams that didn't really begin and continue to immerse themselves in prayer? In my experience they either didn't last long because personal conflicts, division, or mission drift rendered them ineffective, or they did survive but were ineffective or just plain dysfunctional. I have seen polarity on a church staff, division in a family and purposelessness in a non-profit--all of which I believe could have been avoided by more prayer (“being”) before all the “doing.”

So what does this mean for you and your current situation? Let's look at this simple passage and see what we can learn. First of all, it seems to imply that for an effective life, you need to be on a team. Life by yourself won't get you there. The first Christians had this new spiritual family and they had a shared purpose or mission. So the first question is: what team or teams are you on? Are they the kind where you can invite God into? I recently saw a very high ranking government official (whom I know to be a Christian) stop for a time of prayer during a meeting about solving the current coronavirus pandemic. I actually was encouraged by that. Funny how in times of crisis, very few people will refuse prayer to invite God's help.

In this passage it says they “joined together.” You first have to identify your team: it could be your spouse, family, ministry team, co-volunteers, or even co-workers (if they are open to it--be sensitive). Then, having identified your team, invite them into the prayer experience. This is referring to those times when, in each other's presence, we seek to know God better, invite Him to be present with us, and petition Him to move in our current situation. While we can't all be physically together with some of our teams, given the technology available, we can certainly “meet” and pray together.

What might happen if you began to invite your teams to pray, not only that God would end this crisis, but that He would give our leaders unity and wisdom in the meantime. How much better is that than choosing sides and arguing about what the best way forward is (especially given that none of us really know what the right answer is). What if we began to see our team's mission as including prayer, not just as a means, but as an end? In other words, what if we not only set out to build a great family/marriage, ministry, or

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organization...but to consider "being" with God as a part of our purpose (an end in itself)? Imagine how we would change, how our world could be affected, and how our team's effectiveness would be supercharged.

Remember that in verse eight of this same chapter in Acts Jesus said that the outcome of this time spent in prayer is that we would "receive power." What if the point of all of this is not to survive, but to learn to invite His Spirit and the accompanying power to be at work in and through us? To not just be survivors, but to be overcomers? The early church certainly seems to exemplify this, why not us!?!

QUESTIONS

- DO YOU SPEND MORE TIME "DOING" OR "BEING" FOR GOD?
- WHO IS ON YOUR TEAM? DO YOU PRAY TOGETHER REGULARLY?
- TAKE TIME TODAY TO PRAY WITH YOUR "TEAM" ABOUT YOUR LIFE, THE CURRENT HEALTH CRISIS, AND FOR OUR NATION'S LEADERS.