

Kneeling Forms behind the Power

By Armin Gesswein



In the Book of Acts, in God's Holy Book, we not only see that church, we can actually see Christ building it.

Moreover, He even left us a model—a full-size model, not a mini-model—in the famous upper room. It is in plain view: about 120 members, all praying together in a prayer meeting! Every member was present. Here is the crowning miracle of all Christ's earthly miracles—His new wonder in the world, the last thing He did on earth before He ascended to heaven.

In Acts the Lord Jesus gave us not only a model, but also a blueprint for building. Here we have the "Book of the Church," the ecclesia, the assembly, the congregation. I must learn with Jesus how to build His assembly so that it turns out to be like His model. How is this to be done?

The model and the blueprint correspond. Our Lord builds a praying congregation in Jerusalem. His plan calls for a praying congregation to be the new vehicle for everything He has in mind.

Why does the prayer meeting have such priority? Why was it the first thing Jesus established when He built His church? Why was every member present there, involved in "prayer and

supplication"? What motivated all the new members—by the thousands—to become prayer meeting members, and to do so at once? How could they raise and uphold this kind of a standard for every member? To ask such questions is to ask God for some of His greatest secrets for our congregations.

It is very revealing and rewarding to note how many different assembly meetings are described in Acts. Look at some of them.

In chapter 2 we see the whole Jerusalem assembly on fire with its own kind of powerful action all day long. Then, in chapter 3, more assembly action and preaching hits us with full force, and moves us right into chapter 4 with further high explosives from the same congregation. In chapter 5 we find ourselves in a very different kind of atmosphere, full of the awe of God and power of the rarest kind on earth.

Suddenly we attend two funerals, of a husband and a wife, all within the space of a few hours, and all of this in the midst of God's assembled people.

These are but a few highlights. In chapter 6 we see yet another kind of assembly action, and we can read on and on and find ourselves still in the glorious action of the risen Christ at work in building His Jerusalem congregation. Thank God for the tremendous potential of one small congregation of about 120 members!

The most important and strategic of all the assemblies recorded are the prayer meetings. Like powerful munitions, they appear at the most crucial times and win the day.

So powerful are they that the whole forward thrust of the church comes from them, as the thrust of a jumbo plane comes from its jets.

Of all the many assemblies, the most power-packed are the prayer meetings. When the chips are down, when the battle is joined at the very gates of hell, the prayer meetings rise to

the call of duty and take over. Like a mighty army of God, the church marches forward on its knees—on its witnessing feet, too, but its method is to take ground first on its knees, in prayer.

Side Activity?

Why do we feel a prayer meeting must always be a little side activity? Think of the prayer meetings that generated the mighty revivals in our nation's history. Think of the "American Pentecost" of 1857-58 when the nation became a nation of prayer. Think of the famous Jayne's Music Hall prayer meeting in Philadelphia where thousands gathered for prayer every noon, giving birth to revivals in churches all over that area.

Speaking on Acts 1:14, Dr. A. T. Pierson once said: "There never has been a revival but by such united supplicatory praying, and no revival has ever continued beyond the continuation of that same praying."

Most churches are said to fail because they do not generate their own power. This is also true of the individual Christian. Prayer is the generator. The great London preacher, Charles Spurgeon, once took some people down to his Metropolitan Tabernacle basement to show them his "power plant." There, on their knees, were about three hundred people praying for the service!

In chapter 12 we see the Jerusalem church still praying at the same high upper-room level. Once again the battle is joined. Peter, their powerful leader, is to be executed. Why did they not call on just a few—the "prayer warriors, those in the church who really know how to pray and lay hold on God"? Because they *all* knew how! "Prayer was made *without ceasing* of the church unto God for him" (verse 5). There was an all-night prayer meeting in Mary's house, where "many were gathered

together praying" (verse 12). And Peter was delivered from prison and death by an angel!

That is not all. The angel also delivered Herod to death. But the prayer victory was even more far-reaching than that: "the word of God grew and multiplied" (verse 24).

Why a prayer meeting first? Because there is nothing in His church that does not depend on prayer! Its new abundant life, love, unity, purity, power, constant renewal, warfare, world evangelization, leaders, unending advance without defeat—all depend on praying. If God is going to do it, it has to be by prayer.

Dwight L. Moody once said, "Behind every work of God you will always find some kneeling form." The kneeling form in Jerusalem was the praying congregation—the prayer meeting.

"Lord, teach us to pray."

—**ARMIN GESSWEIN** (1908-2001) was a pastor and prayer leader who founded the Revival Prayer Fellowship. This excerpt is adapted from his bestselling book *With One Accord in One Place* (Available at prayershop.org).