

Greg Laurie: Your Most Effective Weapon Against Worry and Anxiety

Read Time: 3 Minutes 26 Seconds

I don't even want to contemplate what life would be like if I didn't have the privilege of taking my sorrows, cares and worries to the Lord.

In Acts 12, when the apostle Peter was in Herod's prison facing imminent execution, the young church met one of its greatest tests. This evil king had already killed James, the brother of John. And now he had Peter, their leader, in custody. He was imprisoned behind two gates, chained to two guards and guarded by 14 more.

The odds of Peter living out the week were slim to none. So, what did the church do? Flood the palace switchboard? Call their member of congress? Organize a protest and picket the palace? Fill up Twitter with negative posts? No, we have no record of such a thing.

Verse five gives us their entire strategy: "Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church."

We have a secret weapon in the church. And it is called prayer. Though all other doors may remain closed, one door is always open: the door into the presence of God through prayer.

So often, however, we save this as our last resort—what we do when "all else fails." But this church prayed as a first resort, and it was by far the most powerful and effective thing they could have done.

Acts 12:5 says, "Constant prayer was offered to God."

Jesus made this amazing promise: “But if you remain in Me and My words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted” (John 15:7, NLT).

Don’t miss the big “IF” at the beginning of that sentence. If you are investing daily time studying His Word and growing in your understanding of the nature and character of God, you will begin praying for what He wants. True prayer is not bending God my way. It is bending myself His way.

Note also that the early church prayed with passion and persistence in “constant prayer.” Another way to translate it would be “earnest prayer.” The term used is the same word used to describe the prayer of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. That was a prayer of passion—an agonizing prayer. And that’s the way the church prayed for their leader, Peter.

Our prayers often hold no power because they have no heart. If we put so little passion into our prayers, we can’t expect God to put much passion into answering them.

We get so wrapped up in our own thoughts and concerns that we really don’t give our full attention to prayer. Someone will tell us of a crisis they’re facing, and we may send up a quick, “Lord, help them,” but if truth be told, we don’t care that much. We don’t pray with passion, and we don’t pray continuously.

Jesus taught, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you” (Matt. 7:7, NKJV). However, a better translation of the original language would read: “Keep on asking. Keep on seeking. Keep on knocking.”

God isn’t irritated at all when you keep knocking at His door. He wants to open the door to you, His much-loved child. In fact, He *tells* you to be persistent and to keep at it. One translation suggests that we pray with “shameless audacity” (Luke 11:8, NIV). Keep praying about that matter on your

heart.

So, the church in Jerusalem kept praying with great passion and persistence for Peter, knowing he was in peril for his very life. And they prayed *together*.

The church met together at the home of Mary, mother of John Mark, to plead with God for Peter's release.

There is power in united prayer. Jesus said, "If two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:19-20, NKJV).

If you have a crisis or a need in your life, go to your Christian friends to unite in prayer. When the early church did so, God dispatched an angel to break Peter's chains and open the prison doors. Before long, the answer to their prayer was knocking on the door of the prayer meeting.

In Psalm 61:1-2 (MEV), David wrote:

Hear my cry, O God;

Attend to my prayer.

From the end of the earth, I will cry to You,

When my heart faints,

Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

When your heart is overwhelmed, start looking for higher ground. God will answer in His time, in His way. In the meantime, He will lift you up and give you strength.

Greg Laurie is the pastor and founder of the Harvest churches in California and Hawaii and of Harvest Crusades. He is an evangelist, bestselling author and movie producer.