

## Day 1

Weekly Theme - Direction of Hope Fellowship

Today's Theme - Consistent Prayer

Scripture - Acts 4.31

As we return to the second week of praying over the future of Hope Fellowship, we start this session by asking God to give us a passion for, and a vision of, consistent prayer in the life of this church. You may recall the earlier week in the 100 Days of Prayer where we spent much time in Acts 4. The church felt threatened and they prayed. They were concerned they may shy away from telling the world about Jesus, so they prayed for boldness.

Prayer was the first place they went to and they were blessed by it. How? Read Acts 4.31 again. And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness. The Lord made His presence visibly known with a shaking, the believers were blessed with a filling (empowering) of the Spirit and they carried on boldly for Christ.

Too often we tag prayer on to a service or use it as filler, when it really should be part of the lifeblood of a church. So, how can we better prioritize prayer, so we have it engrained in our personal and corporate lives?

## Themes to pray over

- Ask God for a personal passion for prayer
- Ask the Lord to move us to pray first in our daily lives
- Ask God to excite us for prayer and drive us to pray in our worship services

## A Prayer for us.

We are not saved by our good works, but for good works (Ephesians 2:8-10). Focus our hearts on the mission you have for us to share the gospel and make disciples of Christ (Matthew 28:18-20). Remind us how our marriages, family lives, work, and hobbies can be avenues to adorn the gospel through our proclamation and Christ-exalting lifestyles. Use our time as your gathered body to build us up and send us out for ministering your gospel, in the power of your Spirit, to our broken world. May we be passionate for prayer, to lean on You, to hear from You, to be equipped by You.

Amen.

## Heart Question

Be honest, how do you approach prayer? Does it excite you or is it something that you tolerate?

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## Day 2

Weekly Theme - Direction of Hope Fellowship

Today's Theme - What Can We Learn From China?

Scripture - Acts 5.40-42

Admit it, we have a comfortable way of life in Canada and that translates to the Church as well. One problem with comfort, as delightful as it is, is that we can subtly drift to a stage where we miss the mission of the Church. Today, let's be inspired from Frances Chan's book, Letters to the Church, as he speaks of the Church in China. Pay attention to the pillars that they live out.

As Frances spoke to the leaders of these underground churches, he was told of these five pillars. 1 - A deep church-wide commitment to prayer. 2 - Commitment to the Word of God (not the preacher presenting it, but EVERYONE READING AND LEARNING IT ON THEIR OWN). 3 - Committed to sharing the gospel. These first three pillars Frances was easily tracking with, but then he was challenged to rearrange his thinking for the next 2.

The fourth pillar was the expectation of miracles. These Chinese churches were so dedicated to prayer that they fully expected the Holy Spirit to intervene and miracles to occur in various situations from salvations, to protection and provision, to healings and the expansion of kingdom of God. The fifth pillar was that these churches embraced suffering. They were prepared to suffer for Christ, just as the early church experienced in the passage we read above.

(This paragraph added since the Russian invasion of Ukraine of Feb. 24, 2022) Our perspectives changed recently with the news coming from Europe of Russian troops overwhelming Ukraine. In the hours before the invasion, Putin and Chinese leader Xi jointly released a 5300 word manifesto that details methods of instilling their form of 'democracy' in this world and it has nothing to do with fair elections, human rights or individual freedoms.

What can we learn from China? Extreme commitment to pray and EXPECT miracles, to embrace the Word of God on our own, to share the gospel of Jesus and to fully expect and embrace the suffering for Christ that can come our way. In light of recent events, the church needs to pray expecting God's power and plan to be revealed and we need to understand that we can and possibly will suffer for Christ. Let's embrace these pillars of the Chinese Church.

#### Themes to pray over

- Ask God that your commitment to prayer, scripture, evangelism, expectation of miracles, and willingness to suffer for Christ be expanded in your life.
- Pray that God will reveal to our church how to best structure this ministry to encourage these practices and minutes.

#### A Prayer For Us All

Almighty God, I confess to you that I would love to live my life without hardship, suffering, or persecution. I know this desire is selfish and unrealistic, but I feel I should be honest with myself and with you, dear Father. Recognizing this selfishness awakens my heart to those who are my brothers and sisters in need and under persecution today. Deliver them. Open my eyes so I can help them. And, dear Father, as I support them, strengthen my faith for the times when suffering, hardship, and persecution may come my way. I want to be faithful to Jesus, no matter what happens in my life. Amen.

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## Day 3

Weekly Theme - Direction of Hope Fellowship

Today's Theme - How to live the love command

Scripture - 1 John 4.7-21

As we seek how to live out the love command fully, let's break down this passage of 1 John 4:7-21. One aspect we notice in verses 10 and 19 is that God is not *passive*. He doesn't just sit back and leave us alone to figure this sin problem out, but rather, He takes and is taking an active role in the redemption of His people. How can we better live out the love command? Let's not be passive in meeting needs.

A second aspect is how Jesus displays and responds to the people He is loving. God was not obligated to send Jesus for the forgiveness of sin, He doesn't *have to* do it, but He does willingly (verses 9 and 10). He takes the initiative and loves first, even if it is for a people that do not—and may not—love him back. We as His followers need to display love with no expectation of it being returned to us.

Finally, let's look at the result of God's love in our lives. The love of God, well It drives us, it transforms, and it changes us. It drives us to love one another (v.11), to care for our brothers and sisters (vv. 20-21), gives us confidence towards God even in judgement (vv. 17-18), and transforms us to be more like Christ (v. 17). Have we personally let that love of God transform us and direct us to act like what is described in the verses listed in this paragraph?

## Themes to pray today

- Ask God to unfold a discipleship plan to us, in order that love may be evident in our lives.
- Pray that each of us would act in love, having no expectation that we would receive it.
- Pray that each of us would be more compassionate to each other and to our community.

## A prayer for us all

Heavenly Father, thank You that You loved the world so much that You gave Your unique and incomparable Son as the substitute for my sin and for the sin of the world. I pray that I may walk in spirit and truth and show forth Your love in my life for the benefit of others. I pray that I may decrease and that You may increase in every area of my life, until I become a transparent conduit through whom Your divine love flows to others, to Your praise and glory. In Jesus' name I pray, AMEN.

## Heart Question

How can the love of God drive us at Hope Fellowship? What are some tangible ways to display that?

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## Day 4

Weekly Theme - Direction of Hope Fellowship

Today's Idea - How to display God and see attraction to Him

Scripture - Isaiah 53:2-3

We don't have a photo of Jesus, which is a good thing because I have no doubt that people would begin to worship it and not Jesus Himself. But if we did have a picture of Jesus, what do you think He would look like? We all have a visual of Him in our mind's eye, that's just a part of how our brains function as we read the gospels, a book on Christian living or hear a message about the Messiah.

We may picture Jesus standing head and shoulders above the crowd, long flowing hair, chiseled jaw that is covered by a closely trimmed beard. Maybe he is muscular from carrying countless logs into his dad's carpentry shop. He may have that smile that will instantly calm a tense situation or melt the hearts of all who look at Him. It's possible but I have doubts after reading Isaiah 53.

Look at verse 2 and 3 of Isaiah 53. he had no form or majesty that we should look at him,  
and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men,  
a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces  
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

One of my favourite things about Jesus is that when He chose to take on human flesh, he just picked an average look. Jesus could have chosen to be the most attractive man that ever walked the planet, but instead, Isaiah 53 indicates that he chose to look average.

Therefore, we need to ask ourselves What Makes Jesus So Attractive? Well we play a role in that, showing this world that we can transformed to be more like Christ. Are we attracting people to know God through our daily average lives, or distracting them with our "good impressions?" It's possible Jesus chose to be average so he could display the greatness of God and teach his disciples to do the same. Why was Jesus attractive? Why did Jesus draw enormous crowds? The glory of God was evident in the way Jesus lived, and God's glory is still attractive today...through us!

## Themes to pray over today

- Ask God to reveal to you areas of your life that don't show the attractiveness of God to this world.
- Pray that Hope Fellowship will desire to display the beauty of Jesus to this region.
- Thank God for the Holy Spirit who drives us to be more like Jesus.

## A Prayer For Us All

Heavenly Father, the image of Christ in His humiliation as a man who had no exciting outward appearance or desirable human attributes to commend Him to the children of men, for whom He died.. stands in such stark contrast with His divine nature, His holy character, His sinless life; the sacrificial offering Himself - His amazing grace and eternal beauty. Thank You for the remnant of Israel that recognized Christ's first advent and left witness to His sacrificial death and glorious resurrection. I pray that many in Israel will have their blindness removed and we rejoice to know that the day is coming when in happy unison, the nation will recognize their Messiah - at His second advent. To Him be all praise and glory, AMEN

## Heart Question

If we internalize that part of the attractiveness of Jesus is His followers, in what ways would you have to change your life?

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## Day 5

Weekly Theme - Seeking Direction for Hope Fellowship

Today's Idea - Making Inroads Into the Community

Scripture - Matthew 28:19-20

Ahhh, the Great Commission. Go and make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We can all recite but it can be hard to live out those words. It's much easier to simply advertise church and hope that someone shows up, except that isn't what Jesus told us to do. He said GO!

Let's be inspired from the words of Karl Vaters' blog found in Christianity Today as he tells us the difference between advertising and evangelism.

Advertising is an impersonal way to convey information ("Our Easter services start at 9am and 11am at this address!")

Evangelism is about personal invitation ("Would you like to come with me to church this Sunday?")

Advertising is done by professionals.

Evangelism is done by church members.

Advertising draws a crowd.

Evangelism builds the church.

Advertising is about hype.

Evangelism is about passion.

Advertising promotes a specific church or event.

Evangelism builds the church as a whole.

Advertising uses the ideas of marketers to create customers.

Evangelism follows the mandate of Jesus to make disciples.

(Pivot Blog by Karl Vaters, April 17, 2019)

#### Themes to pray over

- Ask God to give us each a heart of evangelism
- Pray for Hope Fellowship that we would move to be passionate for the spiritual lives of our communities
- Pray for a practical vision to lead us down this road of evangelism

#### A prayer for us all

Jesus, my Savior, I long for the opportunity to proclaim the goodness of Your name. As I go out today, please bring me into contact with those who have been given eyes to see and ears to hear. Direct my steps and lead me into the conversations You want me to have today, Jesus. I pray for Hope Fellowship, that we as a community of faith would be passionate to go to our communities with the good news of Jesus.

Amen

#### A heart question

- What is the most difficult part of evangelism?

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Day 6

Weekly Theme - Praying for the direction of Hope Fellowship

Today's Idea - What does worship look like

Scripture - Habakkuk 3:17-18

No doubt there were difficult times in the days of Habakkuk. As you read the verses above, you can see that wherever a person looked, east, west, north or south...there was nothing to celebrate. But, regardless of the lack in their lives there was still something to celebrate and that was God. Talk about a true understanding of priorities in life. They were ready to worship.

When we think of worship, our minds usually go to music and singing. But it can and should be so much more than that. As we pray for Hope Fellowship and worship as an event, why not ask the Lord to reveal to us other ways to worship on a Sunday morning?

Shouldn't we feel comfortable worshipping with different aspects of our lives?

- Reading extended Scripture passages?
- Art?
- Generosity?
- Fellowship?
- Prayer?

How can we experience new aspects of worship in our services? God gave us a mind and spirit of creativity, can that be used to direct our focus and praise to Him?

Themes to pray over

- Ask God to enlighten us as how to worship Him in areas/ways besides music
- Pray to see Him and celebrate Him when hearing His word and fellowshiping with His people

A prayer for us all

Heavenly Father, I want to grow spiritually and be more like You. I choose to trust You in times of adversity knowing that You are working things out for my good. Renew a right attitude within me by Your Spirit. I pray God for our church to praise You in ways that draw my heart to Your glory and honour. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Heart Question

- What are some ways that you personally worship the Lord that could be shared with the church family?

Additional Resources

<https://justdisciple.com/worship-without-music/>

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Weekly Theme - Praying For the Direction of Hope Fellowship

Today's Idea - expand / change / the health of current ministries?

Scripture - Eph 4.11-16, Col. 2.16-19

Change is rarely fun because it causes us to stretch and experience some growing pains. In the passages listed above, Paul speaks of the Body of Christ and how it grows. At Hope Fellowship, we want to grow spiritually and numerically and in all likelihood we need to change a little bit to realize the growth that God desires of us. But, we don't want to change for the sake of change, we may need to change to be better positioned to add to God's Kingdom. So let's pray toward that.

Today, as we speak of change, let's again scan the words of Karl Later from his PIVOT blog on the Christianity Today website.

- 1 - Define the shallow end of the pool. This is where everyone gets their feet under them and can define the common ground of the church.
- 2 - Embrace the common ground. What do we like about church? Then strengthen it. What do we hate (Karl's words remember)? Then let's start the turnaround process as God leads us.
- 3 - Touch the bottom of the pool. We need to remember why we are here...The common heritage, the Scriptures, the relationships with each other and most importantly, glorifying Jesus.
- 4 - Make waves together. As we move to the deep end of the pool together, we'll make some waves and be a team....and start a wave for Jesus.

We want to experience the change for Kingdom building together, as God leads. Again, let's pray toward that.

Themes to pray over

- Ask God to show you what the common ground of Hope Fellowship is
- Pray for what direction(s) we need to move toward to better fulfill our mandate from the Lord
- Pray for plan to unfold as we step out in faith

A prayer For Us All (from Charles Wesley)

*Almighty God, You who called the universe into being, You who formed our inmost being and called us to be your people:*

*We give you thanks for you constant presence. Through seasons of constancy and even change, you are with us – calling us into deeper waters, calling us together in your spirit of unity, calling us out of ourselves into the world to serve others.*

*Grant us faith as we may be called into new waters, that we might hold fast to unending love and mercy as a buoy – a love that promised to hold onto us even as we go where your Spirit leads us. Amen.*

*Heart Question*

Does change excite or scare you? Why?

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