

WARM-UP

- Has there been a time your friends thought you were joking when you were serious? What happened?
- Do you prefer individual or team games? Why?
- Who is one person you can fully trust? Why?

WORD *¹About that time Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. ²He killed James the brother of John with the sword, ³and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also . . . ⁴And when he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out to the people. ⁵So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church. **ACTS 12:1-5***

The young church was facing a new, intense situation. Herod was persecuting the church leaders. He had James killed, then wanted to do the same to Peter. In response to this threat, the church prayed to God, who they knew was the only one that could save Peter. Though there are many aspects to prayer, what prayer lessons can we learn from the early church as they faced this particular circumstance?

1 | They prayed earnestly.

*So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church. **ACTS 12:5***

To be earnest means to be serious, even desperate. The believers knew that Peter was in an almost hopeless situation. They also knew they could do nothing but pray. One attitude of prayer we can learn from them is to pray earnestly in every situation—not a traditional prayer or a last-resort prayer. Praying earnestly to God means pouring our hearts out to Him completely. How does our faith cause us to approach God in earnest prayer?

2 | They prayed together.

*When he realized this, he went to the house of Mary . . . where many were gathered together and were praying. **ACTS 12:12***

The believers had gathered together to pray. Jesus Himself had told His disciples that if two agreed on anything they asked, it would be granted (Matthew 18:19). This is the power of praying in community as a church. Do you have a church community that you can pray with? How have you experienced God answer a prayer prayed in community?

3 | They prayed unceasingly.

When he realized this, he went to the house of Mary . . . where many were gathered together and were praying.

ACTS 12:12

The believers prayed till their prayers were answered. In fact, they were amazed that Peter had already arrived. They had faith that God would hear and answer their prayers. Paul wrote that we must *pray without ceasing* (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Like them, our prayer must be marked by its consistency and constancy. How does God see the prayers of His people (Revelation 5:8)? How does our faith in God encourage us to come to Him in constant prayer?

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APPLICATION

- Do you have a relationship with God that encourages you to approach Him in earnest prayer? Would you like to accept the relationship He is offering you and give your life to Him today?
- How can you pray earnestly and unceasingly? Think of some practical ways to strengthen the spiritual discipline of prayer.
- How can you pray together with a community? Ask God for godly relationships with people who will build you up in prayer and who you can also pray for.

