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Acts of the Apostles

Living Praise Presbyterian Church - Home Cell Group Bible Study Feb-Jul 2001



LEADERSHIP

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He trained His Replacements

I personally witnessed the downfall of an executive director who had ruled a huge organization for nearly twelve years, largely through smoke and mirrors. When his incompetence finally came collapsing down on him and he was relieved of his command, there was quite a mess to clean up. The problem was, it wasn't just his incompetence that had to be corrected. He had multiplied himself by hiring people who were far less qualified, and hence less of a threat, to him in every area. This organization had a core of incompetence that, like a cancer, had infiltrated every department and nearly caused the demise of the entire organization.

By contrast, Jesus as a leader was eager and intent on getting people he felt could replace him. "Greater things than I have done shall you do," he promised. Jesus did not hoard or guard the power of his office. He kept teaching and sharing and demonstrating it so team members would learn that they, too, had the power to do what he had done.

In order for him to be so generous with his power, Jesus obviously had to have been extremely secure. He repeatedly affirmed and clearly understood his standing with "the Chairman of the Board." He never doubted that, when it was all over, he would be sitting at the Head Table. His job was to fill that table and make sure others were sitting with him.

Florence Littauer is an amazing woman who has written over thirteen books, one of which, *Personality Plus*, has sold over 300,000 copies. I attended one of her seminars and was surprised when she came on stage with about twenty-six other authors - each of whom she had helped to write their *own* books. She stood there with all those authors and said, "If you think I am proudest of my books, you are wrong. I am most proud of the people I have helped to become writers themselves." She didn't define her success in terms of her products, but in terms of the people she had trained. Had she been an insecure author, she might have tried to lessen the competition. But in fact, she was busy training her replacements.

Jesus trained his replacements.

From *Jesus as CEO* by Laurie Beth Jones



Hudson Taylor, famous missionary to China, said, “Man is moved by God through prayer alone.” We see the power of God demonstrated in this passage in response to the prayers of his people. More importantly, we also see the kinds of leadership displayed by Herod and Peter. One preyed on others like an enraged and hungry animal. The other prayed for his followers and taught them to do likewise. The results of these two kinds of leadership was evident by the consequences both saw in this chapter.

REFLECTION:

Have you seen God respond to a group of people who were earnestly praying? What have you learnt if you had?

DISCOVERY:

1. Read Acts 12:1-25. Describe the main characters in this passage. How do they each respond to what is happening to and around them?
2. What seems to motivate Herod's actions (vv1-5)?
3. What does the church's response to James' death and Peter's being in prison (vv5&12) demonstrate about prayer?
4. If you were Peter, how would you have been affected by it?
5. Why do you think the praying Christians reacted as they did to Peter's return?

RESPONSE:

- A. When have you been like those who told Rhoda, “You are out of your mind” (v15)?
- B. The earnest prayer of the church significantly affected the outcome of events in this chapter. How is your motivation to pray influenced by this truth?
- C. Why do you think most churches have problems getting their members to come for church prayer meetings? Do you attend? Why or why not?
- D. Summarize chapters 1-12 by listing the themes that have run throughout the chapters and what you have learned about these themes.



One night as he looked down upon the people walking in the dark, he was struck by the futility of it all. He thought of the sun. *He gave me everything I needed. I served a purpose. I was warm. I was content. I was...I was what I was made to be.*

Suddenly, he felt the old familiar warmth. He turned and there was the sun. The sun had never moved. “I’m glad you’re back,” the sun said. “Let’s get back to work.”

“You bet!” agreed the moon.

The coat came off. The roundness returned, and a light was seen in the dark sky. A light even fuller. A light even brighter.

And to this day whenever the sun shines and the moon reflects and the darkness is illuminated, the moon doesn’t complain or get jealous. He does what he was intended to do all along.

The moon beams.

From *When God Whispers Your Name* by Max Lucado

A Practical Exercise: Pray for Your Pastors

Here are twenty Scripture-based prayers to pray for your pastor:

1. I thank you, Father, that Your eyes are on my shepherd and Your ears are attentive to my pastor's prayers and Your face is against those who plot evil against my pastor (1 Pet. 3:12). For I know that in all things You work for the good of _____ (your pastor's name) who loves you (Ro. 8:28). Who can accuse this pastor who is daily interceded for by God's people through Christ Jesus Himself (Ro. 8:33-34)? Therefore, in all things my pastor is more than conqueror (Ro. 8:27). Thank you, Lord.
2. Lord, I pray for discernment in exposing any schemes of the enemy against my pastor. Show our congregation how to pray against all powers of this dark world and spiritual forces of darkness in heavenly realms. And, Lord, protect us as we wage warfare on behalf of our pastor (Eph. 6:11, 12).
3. Father I thank You that no weapons formed against my pastor will prosper. Every tongue raised against my shepherd will be cast down. Rumors and gossip will be turned aside. For _____ will be still before the Lord and wait on You. My pastor will dwell in the shadow of the Most High God and will be delivered from terror, darts of doubt, and physical ailments (Ps. 91:5-6). Set Your angels about my pastor (Ps. 91:11) and no power of the enemy shall harm him/her (Lk. 10:19). Thank You, God forevermore!
4. Lord, let _____ have a discerning mind to prioritize the precious minutes in the day. Let my pastor discern what is most important and be guarded against the tyranny of the urgent (2 Cor. 11:14; 1 Jn. 4:1).
5. Father, allow my pastor to glory only in the cross (Gal. 6:14). Keep my pastor from pride and pity. Let the cross be his reason for ministry.
6. Jesus, keep my pastor holy in every way (1 Pet. 1:16). Protect my shepherd from seducing spirits especially when he/she is tired and hard-pressed. Give him/her comrades to help protect him/her, and to share with in personal holiness (Jas. 4:7). As my pastor draws near to you, draw near to my pastor (Jas. 4:8).
7. I pray that the eyes of my pastor may be enlightened to know the hope to which we are called and know the riches of our glorious inheritance in the saints. Let my pastor know the incomparable great power which is in us who believe (Eph. 1:18-19). Let _____ see the full revelation of Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:12). Place in him/her a desire to know Christ and the power of His resurrection (Phil. 3:10).
8. Lord, I lift up the lives of my pastor and his/her family. Place them in the shelter of the Most High to rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, You are their refuge and fortress. You will preserve their family time. You will cover their home. Your faithfulness will meet their financial needs in Christ Jesus (Phil 4:19). You will command Your angels to guard them as they travel and as they minister. You have said, "I will be with (them) in trouble, I will deliver (them) and honor (them). With a long life, I will satisfy (them) and show (them) my salvation" (Ps 91:15-16). In Jesus' name I ask that You will cancel all assignments of the enemy against them.
9. In Jesus' name, I speak to church hurts, abuse, and ungrateful forces to move. I speak to mountains of criticism and inordinate expectations to be cast into the sea. I speak to stress, excessive phone counseling, and fatigue to be cast into the sea, and I believe every need, vision, and dream of _____'s will be completed through Your guidance (Mk. 11:22-24; Phil. 4:19).
10. Forgive those who hurt _____ and speak against him/her, and may my pastor walk in forgiveness and may he/she also seek forgiveness if he/she has wrong anyone (Eph 4:32-5:1). Guard my pastor from futile thinking (Eph. 4:17) and a vain imagination. Let every thought be taken captive to obey Christ (2 Cor. 10:3-5).
11. In Jesus' name I call on You to bind the fear of failure and the fear of humankind (Jn. 14:1). Let _____'s confidence not be eroded by the daily resistance to the gospel or his/her vision. Allow my pastor to fear You more than people.
12. Father, heal my shepherd's heart of any grief caused by ministry. Bestow on my pastor a crown of beauty instead of ashes and anoint him/her with the oil of gladness instead of mourning. Clothe my shepherd with a garment of praise instead of a spirit of depression. I call my pastor an oak of righteousness, a planting of the Lord to display Your splendor (Is. 61:3).
13. Keep my pastor in the midst of good and exciting worship. Keep my pastor from the traditions of men and religion which hold the form of godliness, but deny its power (2 Tim. 3:5). Give _____ a vision of heaven (Is. 6; Rev 4).
14. With my shield of faith I plead on You to cover my shepherd's mind to quench all flaming darts of doubt or vain imagination or mental distractions (Eph. 6:16; Col. 2:6-8). Let the mind of Christ be strong in my pastor (1 Cor 2:16).
15. Lord, I stand against the enemies of my pastor's prayer life: "busy-ness" (Acts 6:2-4), compulsions, compromise (Acts 5), unnecessary phone calls, chronic counselees, fatigue, sleepiness (Mt 26:41), appetites, television, late meetings, over-commitments, and doubt. Let nothing hinder _____'s time with You. Let my pastor rise up to seek You (Mk. 1:35), pray with other pastors (Acts 1:14), and pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17). Give my pastor the time, the desire, and the place to pray (Acts 16:16). I rebuke in the name of Jesus any distractions from my pastor's devotional life.
16. Bless my pastor with rich study time (Acts 6:4; 2 Tim. 2:15).
17. As _____ preaches, let him/her proclaim Jesus Christ (Col. 1:28). Let my pastor's preaching be in the energy of the Holy Spirit.
18. Lord, by Your Holy Spirit, anoint _____ to preach, and bring apostolic results (Acts 2:37). As my pastor speaks the Word, let signs follow confirming Your Word (Mk. 16:20). Anoint _____ with truth (Mt. 16:17). Let people be cut to the heart and accept Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.
19. Lord, as You have promised, grant my beloved shepherd lasting fruit (Mal. 3:11; Jn 15:16). Let these fruits become disciples who in turn make other disciples. Bless my pastor with disciples who grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.
20. Lord, keep my pastor in the fear of God. Let my pastor not fear obstacles and barriers including unreasonable people (Prov. 19:23). Give _____ boldness to confront sin and church controllers. Honor my pastor's stand for You. Rescue him in time of needs. Lord, I claim Psalm 35 for my shepherd.

Sources:

Laurie Beth Jones. **Jesus as CEO.**
Irving Jensen. **Acts - A Self-study Guide.**
Max Lucado. **When God WHispers Your Name.**

Adapted from *Preyed On or Prayed For* by Terri Teykl