

Sermon: Bold Prayer

IN *Opportunities to connect and pray as a group*

1. Tell of a time when you have seen yourself as 'bold'? or when have you seen someone else be 'bold'?
2. In your Christian life, do you spend most of your time playing 'offense' or 'defense'?

UP *Time that is devoted to the Word of God*

1. ** Review the story of Peter and John before the Sanhedrin (Acts 3:1- 26; 4:1-22) Why did they appear before these leaders?
2. Contrast the boldness of the Sanhedrin (4:15-17) and the disciples as demonstrated in their views: a) of themselves b) of God.
3. Why did Peter and John go 'back to their own people' rather than quickly leave Jerusalem? Who were these people? (2:42-47)
4. Pastor Ashwin outlined that 'Bold prayers are rooted in God's character, and Bold prayers are rooted in God's Word.'
Reread the prayer of the people, 4:24-30.
What attributes of God did they highlight? How did these match the prayer concerns they had? What Scripture did they recite? What was the purpose of recalling this particular Psalm? What enabled the disciples and their friends to be so bold? What did they specifically ask of God (4:29, 30)?
5. Identify the vertical sections and the horizontal sections of the prayer? What other petitions could they have brought before God? Why didn't they ask these? What was God's response to their prayer? (4:31)

OUT *Seek to be the Community of God's people in your community*

1. Pastor Ashwin: "Bold prayers are a cry for God's kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven."
What are some of the world issues that Christ-followers are facing today?
In what ways can these issues inform our prayers?
 2. Think of a prayer request that you have:
 - a) what attributes of God are relevant to the situation in your prayer request?
 - b) what Scripture(s) guide that request?
 - c) reflect on the attributes and the Scripture as you pray.
 3. If the Lord said to you, 'Ask me one thing right now, and I will give it to you' --
What would you pray for? What difference would it make in our world?
 4. The main thing for me in my prayer life this week will be
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5. Pray for one another and for decisions required at Centre Street Church as the congregation seeks to follow God's will.

** Study Guide for **Bold Witness** is at

<http://www.cschurch.ca/sermons/general-sermons-2017/bold-witness/>

THE WORD (NIV)

Psalm 2:1-3

Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? ²The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the LORD and against his anointed, saying, ³"Let us break their chains and throw off their shackles."

Proverbs 28:1

The wicked flee though no one pursues, but the righteous are as bold as a lion.

Jeremiah 32:27

²⁷"I am the LORD, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?"

Acts 4:23-31

²³On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. ²⁵You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David:

"Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?"

²⁶The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed one.'

²⁷Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. ²⁸They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. ²⁹Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. ³⁰Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus."

³¹After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

UP – IN – OUT reflect a balanced life including a focus on our personal relationship with the Father (UP), staying connected to the Body (IN), and reaching our world (OUT).

Sermon Study Summary

A few weeks ago, Pastor Ashwin preached from Acts 4 on 'Bold Witnessing.' We saw from the example of the Apostles, Peter and John, how to be bold in sharing our faith with others around us.

This week's sermon looks at how this boldness can be reflected in our prayer life. Prov. 28:1 says, "The wicked flee though no one pursues, but the righteous are as bold as a lion." When we are walking in right relationship with God, we possess an inner strength and confidence and we have nothing to fear.

Paul Coughlin wrote these insightful words: "Unfortunately, each generation has its preferred virtues, the ones they emphasize at the expense of others, leading to cultural, psychological and spiritual blind spots and deficiencies. Today within evangelical culture, we extol the gentle virtues often at the expense and even ignorance of the tougher virtues—none more key than courage and its fruits of fortitude, perseverance and especially strength."

<http://radio.focusonthefamily.ca/guests/paul-coughlin>

We even view Jesus as meek and submissive sitting with lambs and doting over children instead of the Jesus of the Gospels who had no problem speaking His mind and confronting the religious leaders of His time. Our generation has lost sight of courage as a defining virtue of Christians and how it underpins all other virtues!

Men and women of the early church were bold as lions. This was a church on the move. Ordinary people filled with the Spirit did extraordinary things because they were bold and courageous! We see this with Peter and John in Acts 4 when they boldly stood up to the Sanhedrin who sought to convict them for healing a cripple and testifying to the Resurrection of Jesus. The Sanhedrin leaders were so taken aback by their boldness that they released the disciples with a warning and a ban on any evangelistic efforts in the city. The early church could have disbanded at this very point, and returned to their old way of life! Instead, they gathered together in prayer to bring their needs before God. Two thousand years later, we can learn from them how to pray in boldness. (4:23-31)

The first century church was a small minority compared to the power of the Jewish religion and the strength of Rome. To respond defensively was to their detriment. Instead they relied on the most potent ammunition in their arsenal – prayer. After facing the Sanhedrin, Peter and John went back to their godly friends, their support system of other believers, and joined together in community to raise their voices to God, the source of their power. Their prayer is strategic, thoughtful and informed by Scripture. The prayer meeting in Acts began with an address to God as Sovereign. The Sanhedrin may have had a lot of authority. They could pass laws and issue edicts but in the end, their authority was subject to God's authority!

Jeremiah 32:27 says, "I am the LORD, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?" This is the same God to whom we pray – He is not perplexed by what seems like an impossible situation in our minds! There is no limit to God's power. Nothing is impossible for Him! When God becomes bigger our problems become smaller and our heart is filled with a deep sense of hope. **Bold prayers are rooted in God's character!** Before praying, think about a specific attribute or characteristic of God that would be relevant to your prayer request and reflect on it.

The next element of the early church's prayer is a reference to the Bible. Acts 4:25-26 quotes Psalm 2 which relates a situation faced by King David that is similar to their situation. The early church knew God's Word and used it effectively to help guide their prayers! Prayers become deep and rich when informed by Scripture. **Bold Prayers are rooted in God's Word!** Before you pray, read what the Bible has to say about the situation you are facing and use that Scripture to guide your prayer.

It is only after making reference to the attribute of God that is most relevant to their situation, and reflecting on a passage of Scripture that was parallel to their situation, that the early church is ready to make their petition. And what is incredible is they are not praying what we would expect them to pray! Their first petition is not to ask God to stop the persecution but to enable them to continue doing the very thing that got them into trouble – to be faithful and true to the evangelistic task. Their second petition is to beseech God for a demonstration of His power as never before. (4:30) The prayer of these early Christians is not our conventional safe prayer but a bold prayer that shook the very gates of hell. Verse 31 tells us, "31 After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. "

Pastor Ashwin repeated, "What God did for the early church, He can do for Christians today. Are you willing to follow the example of the early church both in your bold witness as well as in your bold prayers? ...If the Lord were to say to you, "Ask me one thing right now and I will give it to you," what would you pray for? And what difference would it make in our world?"