

Title: **"Sovereign Lord" - How to Pray When People Want to Kill You**
Text: **Acts 4:23-31**
Date: **November 12, 2023**

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Big Idea

Prayer can often be confusing. We don't know how to do it or even where to start. This is especially the case when we've run on hard times. But these early Christians can show us the way! We can summarize their prayer here with the acronym A-S-K. They begin by Adoring God for who he is and what he has said and done, especially through Christ. Then they Surrender themselves to him. And finally they Knock with their requests.

A - dore

When you're struggling, when you're in the thick of it, when you feel like you might not be able to go on, when it seems the whole world is against you and everything is falling apart . . . what you need in those moments more than anything is a fresh vision of God. When it comes to prayer, what you need first and foremost, isn't to be heard, but to *hear*; isn't to be seen, but to see . . . him!

Eugene Peterson writes: "[P]rayer is never the first word; it is always the second word. God has the first word. Prayer is answering speech; it is not primarily 'address' but 'response'" (*Working the Angles*, 45). Therefore, prayer can really only come into its own when it comes after the careful listening to God in his Word. Our words are spoken to God in light of his Words spoken to us.

S - urrender

The natural next step is to surrender. He is lifted up and we are lowered beneath. We see who he is—what he's said and what he's done. We get his heart, his love. And we trust him. We put our lives in his hands. "Your name be hallowed. Your kingdom come. Your will be done. You're the Master. We're your servants."

It's tragic how often we invert this when we come to pray. We act like prayer is the time when we get to tell God what to do. We set ourselves up like the master, and he's in the position of our servant.

That's not prayer, that's insanity. That's setting yourself in a seat you have no place sitting in.

K - nock

As John Stott puts it: "Only now, with their vision of God clarified, and themselves humbled before him, were they ready at last to pray." Now they could properly talk about their needs and make their requests. And notice: they don't pray for God to change their circumstances. They don't pray for vengeance on their enemies. They don't even pray for God to keep them safe. No. Instead, they ask that he would give them the courage to keep witnessing to the truth of Jesus even in the face of opposition. That's amazing!

And as a result they are "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 4:31). Jesus says of the Holy Spirit in John 16:14, that "he will take what is mine and declare it to you." The Spirit helps bridge the gap between head and heart. As we pray over the Scriptures and cry out for God's help on the basis of such things, when he comes and fills us with his Spirit, it's as if the penny drops, the Word settles in, we don't just have light, we have heat . . . and, in that, we have power.

So I would commend this pattern for prayer to you. Make use of it in your own times of trial and temptation. Adore, Surrender, Knock. Whatever it is you're dealing with—anger, bitterness, depression, lust, conflict, fear, etc. Find places in God's Word that address it. See who he is and what he says about it and how he brings help to us in it ultimately through Jesus. And trust him to do what's best. Put your life and your plans in his hands. And ask him for help, for the Spirit to come and bridge the gap between head and heart and enable you live faithfully even in the midst of the tough stuff. He will do it!



Reflection Questions

- Put yourself in the place of these early Christians. Upon hearing Peter and John's report, how would you be feeling? What would you be praying for? Would it look anything like theirs?
- Which of the three steps in prayer identified here comes easiest to you? Which seems hardest? Why do you think?
- How often do you let God's Word inform and direct your prayers? Why would this be important? How can you take steps to grow in this in the upcoming days and weeks?

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Our Mission & Values

Mercy Hill Church exists to help restore us to God, neighbor, and city through the good news of Jesus Christ.

FAITH: The Way Back to God | We are redeemed to enjoy intimate presses our church *upwards* in love

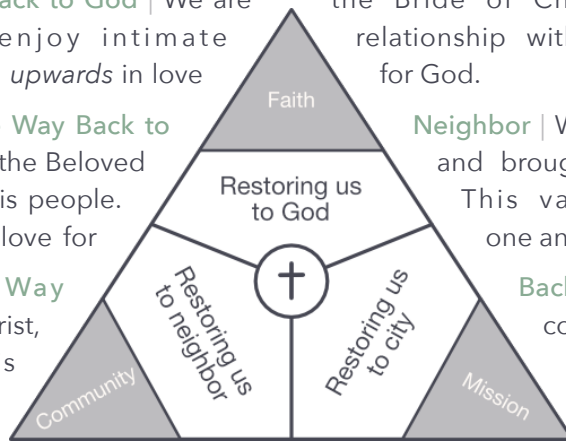
COMMUNITY: The Way Back to Christ, adopted in the Beloved relationship with his people. church *inwards* in love for

MISSION: The Way the Embassy of Christ, Savior to be his value presses our in love for the

the Bride of Christ, created and relationship with him. This value for God.

Neighbor | We are the Family of and brought into covenantal This value presses our one another.

Back to City | We are commissioned by the ambassadors. This church *outwards* unbelieving.



Your Next Steps

When approaching the Christian faith and life, it can be confusing to know where to even begin. Come find us at the Next Steps Table after the service—it would be our joy to help you along in the journey! And if you're a visitor, we have a special gift bag for you. Don't miss it!



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Welcome to Mercy Hill Church.
We are so glad you've joined us today!

Announcement Spotlight

Learning Lab - Evangelism & Disciple-Making

Come join us for our first Learning Lab next Sunday 11/19 immediately following the service from 12:30-1:30pm. It will be held on the church grounds. A light lunch will be provided.

Learning Labs are one-hour workshops which we'll periodically have to equip and empower our church to live out the Gospel in practical ways. While, by format, a one-hour Learning Lab will not be comprehensive, we will be introducing and bringing forth some important principles and practical application. We will also have recommended resources for those wanting to learn more about the topic(s).

Chris Keener will be leading this Learning Lab and he'll be addressing the topic of evangelism and disciple-making.

Please scan the QR code below to find a link to RSVP by Wednesday 11/15 so we know that you're coming!

If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to Joey at joey@mercyhillchurch.org.

Mercy Hill Kids Teacher and Helper Training!

Mercy Hill Youth Hangout

Prayer Village Sign Up!

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