

# LIFE GROUP LESSON

When God Moves • Week of June 25

## Introduction

What happens when the Church prays ‘very earnestly’? God moves. The Lord may not move the way we expect him to, or when we want him to, or how we think he should move – but God moves. Count on it. Yet, the Lord may move *in us* before he moves in our circumstances. He may move us to confess and repent of sin, he may reveal a lack of faith, or have us deal with an offense we have been holding or anger we have been harboring. We, as well as individuals, for whom we pray, may first experience hardship or difficulty before God answers and opens a way through the trial. Still, God moves when we pray. And when God moves, we move with him – that is, if we want to experience the movement of God.

The Bible says: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). The same God who spoke in the beginning, and brought order and beauty to a world that was formless; the same God who called light to pierce through deep darkness, *still* has the power to speak light, order and beauty in the middle of what seems like pure chaos to us. God reveals himself to us through the Lord Jesus Christ who said, “I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won’t have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life” (John 8:12). Have you invited the Lord Jesus into your heart, into your world? He cares about you. And he has a work for you that goes beyond ‘blessing your mess.’ Will you join where he is at work? Upon his baptism, Jesus’ schedule was filled with calling and training disciples, healing, preaching and teaching. Yet, his mission was always the cross *and* the birth of His Church.

## Background

In a way, the book of Acts is still being written. The *Acts of the Apostles*, written by Luke and located just after the four gospels in the New Testament, is a record of Jesus’ promise to birth and begin to build His Church through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit! – who, by the way, was also with God in the beginning (see Genesis 1:1-2; Joel 2:28-29; Matthew 16:17-19; John 15:26-27). All of Scripture continues to unfold, many prophecies are still being fulfilled. The mission of the early church is our mission today – telling people about Christ and proclaiming this message “in the authority of his name to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem: ‘There is forgiveness of sins for all who repent.’ You are witnesses of these things” (Luke 24:47b,48).

In the book of Acts we see how discipleship was costly. Many believers were persecuted, some killed. After King Herod Agrippa had James (brother of John) killed, he also arrested Peter. But God had other plans for Peter. The Lord Jesus’ assignment over Simon Peter was not complete. This former fisherman and one of the first called ‘to follow’ had more work to do for his Lord and Savior. So as the church prays ‘very earnestly’ for Peter on the eve of Peter’s trial and possible execution, the Lord sends his angel to miraculously free this ‘Rock’ from the prison cell. Once Peter realizes his freedom is real and not a vision, he obeys the angel of the Lord and continues the work for which he has been commissioned. Friend, if God has work for you to do then *DO IT* – your faithful obedience is life and death for you and others around you.

## Read Acts 12:1-19

### 1. What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?

Pray more. The word ‘earnestly’ in v5 comes from the Greek word *Ektonos*, and is the same word used to describe how Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, and means ‘fully stretched.’ A similar word, *Ektenes*, is a medical term describing the stretching a muscle to its absolute limit before tearing. Thus, earnest prayer is ‘prayer stretched to absolute limit, constant, sincere’, according to our Teaching Team outline for this weekend’s message. If you are like me, there are times when I don’t know if I know how to pray like that. Let’s stop for a moment and ask what the disciples asked of Jesus: “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples” (Luke 11:1b).

### 2. With the help of the Holy Spirit, what are you going to do about what the Lord is impressing upon your heart?

Worry less. You know, worry accomplishes nothing. Remember Jesus’ words: “That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life – whether you have enough food or drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn’t life more than food, and your body more than clothing? Look at the birds. They don’t plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren’t you far more valuable to him than they are? Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? (Matthew 6:26-27). Instead of worrying, what should we do, according to Philippians 4:6-7?

*“Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.”*

3. How can we help you? For sure, one thing we need to do is “keep knocking”.

*“Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened” (Matthew 7:7).*

Though you may be discouraged, be persistent in your prayers. Don’t give up. There may be a reason (perhaps many reasons) why the Lord is not answering your earnest prayer the way you think he should. Know this: The Lord is working things out – behind the scenes – God loves you and cares about every detail of your life, and the lives of those for whom you are concerned. But the Lord’s goal in answering your prayer is not for worldly wealth and success, as we may think. The Lord’s goal over his children is far greater than that. We often quote Romans 8:28; but we should be quoting Romans 8:28-29. Just as Jesus learned obedience through suffering, his plan for us will include some level of discomfort. Are you still willing to love and trust him? Jesus’ scars say, “No one loves you like I love you!” His victory over death proves he will one day raise you to life. God is moving and the Father’s purpose is for you *to become like his Son*. One way God is sure to move in your life is through earnest prayer.

### One Year Bible Reading

June 25: 2 Kings 8:1-9:13, Acts 16:16-40, Psalm 143:1-12, Proverbs 17:26  
June 26: 2 Kings 9:14-10:31, Acts 17:1-34, Psalm 144:1-15, Proverbs 17:27-28  
June 27: 2 Kings 10:32-12:21, Acts 18:1-22, Psalm 145:1-21, Proverbs 18:1  
June 28: 2 Kings 13:1-14:29, Acts 18:23-19:12, Psalm 146:1-10, Proverbs 18:2-3  
June 29: 2 Kings 15:1-16:20, Acts 19:13-41, Psalm 147:1-20, Proverbs 18:4-5  
June 30: 2 Kings 17:1-18:12, Acts 20:1-38, Psalm 148:1-14, Proverbs 18:6-7  
July 1: 2 Kings 18:13-19:37, Acts 21:1-17, Psalm 149:1-9, Proverbs 18:8

# *when* GOD *moves*

Text: Acts 12:1-19

## PLAIN TRUTH

**When God \_\_\_\_\_, we \_\_\_\_\_ with Him if you want to \_\_\_\_\_ a God \_\_\_\_\_.**

- 1. Pray \_\_\_\_\_ . (be in prayer)**
- 2. Worry \_\_\_\_\_ . (be at peace)**
- 3. Keep \_\_\_\_\_ . (be persistent)**

**June 25, 2023**