

Nov 01, 2015



# Oaks Early Risers Bible Class

The Oaks  
Baptist Church  
Grand Prairie, Texas

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**FOOD FOR THOUGHT**

**THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:**  
In prayer, God can still our hearts and quiet our minds

**POEM FOR THE WEEK:**  
Teach me, Father, what it means to run to and have You as my sanctuary. Help me not to worry about the words I say, but just to express my heart to You and to nestle down close to You.

**SCRIPTURE FOR THE WEEK:**  
*7 Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice! Have mercy also upon me, and answer me. 8 When You said, Seek My face, My heart said to You, "Your face, Lord, I will seek (Ps 27:7-8 NKJV)*  
*(From "Our Daily Bread", Sep 16, 2014)*

**Series: THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY COMES ALIVE**

**UNIT: Spreading the Gospel**

**NEXT WEEK**

**Saved By Grace  
(Acts 15:1-12)**

## The Power of Prayer Acts 12:1-11

**Aim and Application of the Lesson**

The lesson teaches the blessings of **The Power of Prayer**. The **study's aim** is to have a greater appreciation for the role of prayer in our lives. The **study's application** is to pray with full confidence in the power of God to answer prayer.

*(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)*

**Lesson Introduction and Background**

The book of Acts is "volume two" of the books written by Luke, a companion of Paul (Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11). There is great value in comparing the stories of Acts with the accounts of the Gospel of Luke (the "former book," per Acts 1:1), for they were intended to be read together. Acts 12 relates the last of the big stories in the book's presentation of events centered on and around the first-century Jerusalem church. Jerusalem is revisited in Acts 15 (next week's lesson) and in chapters 21-23, but those sections focus on the results of Paul's travels rather than on the Jerusalem church as such. The actions in today's lesson occur within the time frame AD 41-44, more than a decade after the great Day of Pentecost. Two facts allow us to compute this. First, Acts 11:28 refers to a famine during the time of Emperor Claudius, who reigned AD 41-54. Second, Acts 12:23 notes the death of Herod Agrippa I, which occurred in AD 44. By the time of today's lesson, the church had weathered the crises of the imprisonments of its apostles (Acts 4, 5) and the death of Stephen (chaps. 6 and 7). It had expanded the reach of the gospel to Samaria (chap. 8), to Damascus (chap. 9), to Gentiles in Caesarea Maritima (chap. 10), and to the regional capital of Antioch in Syria (chap. 11). We can surmise that the Jerusalem church was still the hub of Christian activities and the home of most of the apostles (see Acts 8:1b). By the time of today's lesson, the apostles were veteran leaders and experienced teachers. Acts 12 presents a historical event in three parts. First is the arrest and execution of James, the brother of John. Second is the arrest and near-execution of Peter, leader of the apostles. Third is the cautionary conclusion of the death story of prideful Herod Agrippa I, grandson of the King Herod of Matthew 2:1 and Luke 1:5. There are several Herods in the New Testament. The one in our lesson had been sent to Rome as a child and raised in the imperial court with young Claudius. Herod was a reckless youth, and apparently fled Rome to escape creditors. He returned to Judea and eventually gained control of much of the territory previously ruled by his grandfather. How much time do you typically spend in daily prayer? a minute? five minutes? **The believers in Jerusalem pulled an all-nighter as they prayed "earnestly" for Peter while he was in prison.** Theirs were not quick prayers, sentence prayers, small prayers. If you read the rest of the story, you will find that many were praying when Peter showed up at the door of the house where they were gathered (Acts 12:12). They were praying so hard that they seem to have been annoyed at the interruption of Peter's knock on the door! We may not know of someone who is in prison for his or her faith, but we do know of other ways that people are locked up in their lives. Do you need to be released from something that has put you in spiritual prison? Do you have a friend or relative who needs spiritual freedom? **Are you willing to pray fervently (James 5:15-16) for that person, just as the church prayed for Peter? God hears and answers prayers.** God has the power to release us from all kinds of bondages.

*(Adapted from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)*

## NOTES AND CROSS-REFERENCES

### **PRAYER AIDS IN ENDURANCE OF PERSECUTION (ACTS 12:1-4)**

#### *Endurance of threat of death (1-2)*

Threat of death endured by overcoming the deception of Satan (1 Cor 15:22-28)

Threat of death endured because Jesus promises everlasting life (John 11:26)

Threat of death endured because Jesus brings life and immortality (2 Tim 1:10)

Threat of death endured because Jesus freed us (Heb 2:14-15)

Threat of death endured because Jesus swallowed up death (Isa 25:8)

Threat of death endured because Jesus took the victory away from death (1 Cor 15:54-57)

Threat of death endured because Jesus has mastery over death (Rom 6:9)

#### *Endurance of threat of imprisonment (3-4)*

Endurance of imprisonment by being faithful through Satan's testing (Rev 2:10)

Endurance of imprisonment by being prepared because it has been prophesied (Acts 20:22-24)

Endurance of imprisonment through rejoicing in sharing persecution (Luke 6:22-23)

Endurance of imprisonment through knowing Christians will be betrayed (Luke 21:16-17)

Endurance of imprisonment by realizing the world hates Christianity (John 7:7)

### **GOD RESPONDS TO PRAYER (ACTS 12:5-9)**

#### *Responds through attentiveness to the prayers of the Church (5)*

Attentiveness to prayers that are continually (1 Thess 5:17)

Attentiveness to prayers that are in the Spirit for all things (Eph 6:18)

Attentiveness to prayers that are faithful (Rom 12:12)

Attentiveness to prayers that are presented to God (Phil 4:6)

Attentiveness to prayers that are devoted (Col 4:2)

#### *Responds through the Angelic guarding (6-9)*

God sends His angels to protect those who are representing Him (Dan 6:22)

Angels stand by God's people (Acts 27:23)

Angels guard God's people's ways (Ps 91:11)

Angels guard God's people (Luke 4:10)

Angels minister to God's people (Heb 1:14)

### **PRAYER CAN RESULT IN DELIVERANCE (ACTS 12:10-11)**

#### *Deliverance from captivity (10)*

Through the grace of God, Jesus led captives free (Eph 4:7-8)

God sets prisoners free (Ps 146:7-9)

In the time of God's favor He will set the captives free (Isa 49:8-9)

God breaks the chains of slavery (Ps 107:13-15)

#### *Deliverance from unawareness through spiritual insight (11)*

Insight from God, which brings understanding (Phil 1:9-10)

Insight through examining the Scriptures daily to search for truth (Acts 17:11)

Insight through meditation on God's Word (Ps 119:99)

Insight through understanding the fear of God (Prov 2:3-5)