



UP FRONT 172

6 February 2026

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CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

A reminder that if anyone is wondering what becoming a member of the congregation involves, please speak to Gary, who would be pleased to enlighten you further.

CONNECT GROUPS

The Connect Groups are starting up again next week and the planned dates are as follows:

Tuesdays 2.00pm in Marion Jarvie's home in Greenacre Court on 10th and 24th February and 10th and 24th March;

Wednesdays 7.00pm in John and Jan Cross's home at 2A Stein Square on 11th and 25th February and 11th and 25th March.

All are invited to whichever group suits best. Material for the first meeting is attached below.

Acts 4:23-31 The Praying Church

It would be helpful to read all of Acts chapter 4 for context, although we will focus on verses 23-31.

²³ As soon as Peter and John were set free, they returned to their group and told them what the chief priests and the elders had said. ²⁴ When the believers heard it, they all joined together in prayer to God: "Master and Creator of heaven, earth, and sea, and all that is in them! ²⁵ By means of the Holy Spirit you spoke through our ancestor David, your servant, when he said, 'Why were the Gentiles furious; why did people make their useless plots? ²⁶ The kings of the earth prepared themselves, and the rulers met together against the Lord and his Messiah.'

²⁷ For indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together in this city with the Gentiles and the people of Israel against Jesus, your holy Servant, whom you made Messiah. ²⁸ They gathered to do everything that you by your power and will had already decided would happen. ²⁹ And now, Lord, take notice of the threats they have made, and allow us, your servants, to speak your message with all boldness. ³⁰ Reach out your hand to heal, and grant that wonders and miracles may be performed through the name of your holy Servant Jesus."

³¹ When they finished praying, the place where they were meeting was shaken. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to proclaim God's message with boldness.

The Old Hymn begins...

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered, or unexpressed;
The motion of a hidden fire,
That trembles in the breast.

Reflection Questions.

- Think about where you pray. Where is your favourite place to pray? (the place where you feel most comfortable being yourself with God)? Do you find it easier to pray alone or with others? Why?
- When Peter and John were threatened, they didn't keep it hidden away, they went to their friends and prayed (v23-34). Is prayer your "first response" or your "last resort"? What would be your automatic reaction? (e.g., speak to a friend, try to cope alone, or pray?) Why is it significant that they didn't start with a "strategy session" or a "committee meeting" first?
- Look at verse 24. They begin by calling God "Master" or "Sovereign Lord." How does reminding ourselves of God's position and power as Creator change the way we view our modern-day "threats" or pressures?
- In verses 29-30, they didn't ask God to make their lives easier or safer; they asked for boldness and for God's hand to move. If we're being honest, many of our prayers

ask God to fix our problems and make things better or easier. What would it look like to pray for boldness instead?

- What does "boldness" look like for someone who is naturally quiet or shy?
- The hymn says... "Prayer is the soul's sincere desire." Does prayer sometime feel like a chore rather than a connection with God?
- What do our prayers tell us about the "sincere desire" of our hearts?
- The hymn speaks of prayer as... "The motion of a hidden fire, that trembles in the breast." Have you ever felt that "burning desire" in prayer, or does your prayer life feel more like a "flickering candle"? How can we help one another "fan the flame"?
- The place where they met literally shook after they prayed. God shook the place to show He was listening and so their faith would be unshakeable. Have you ever had a moment—even a small one—where you felt like God was present and saying, *"I hear you, and I've got this"*? What was that like?

- And secondly, what about when this doesn't happen. How do we feel when it appears as though our prayers haven't been answered... or at least not yet. Have there been things you've stopped praying for because you stopped expecting an answer?

- If our group had a "shaking place" moment today, what's the number one thing we'd be asking God to do in our community, our church or our families?

Remember... Boldness isn't something we *have*; it's something God *gives* when we ask.

Let's go around and finish this sentence:

"God, give me the boldness to _____ this week."