

**Alderwood Community Church**  
**December 6, 2009**

**When Facing A Crisis**  
Acts 4:23-32

**1. Get together with other believers. (Vrs. 23-24)**

A. We need to belong to a group of believers. “to their own people...”

“So in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others... Be devoted to one another in brotherly love.” Romans 12:5,10

There is strength in numbers:

“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.” Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

Sad irony is that when we need other believers the most, is when we stay away! (Stray..marriage)

**B. We are called to be interdependent upon one another. (1 Cor. 12:12-27)**

“they reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them...they raised their voices together in prayer to the Lord..”

“Now you are the body of Christ and each one of you is a separate and necessary part of it...the eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I don’t need you!’ And the head cannot say to the feet, ‘I don’t need you! On the contrary, those parts that seem to be weaker are indispensable...If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.”

1 Corinthians 12:27, 21-22, 26

**C. We are to be united in (1) our devotion to Jesus Christ and in (2) the accomplishment of our mission.**

“their own people (23)...they raised their voices together (24)...all the believers were one in heart and mind (32).”

**2. Pray this way. (Vrs. 24-31) (An incredible model of prayer for us.)**

A. Acknowledge God’s Sovereignty and creative power. (24) (God you are...)

*“Ah, Sovereign Lord, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. NOTHING is too hard for you.” Jeremiah 32:17*

Sovereign- “despot”- a ruler who exercises absolute power either benevolently or abusively. A fresh reminder to themselves that God is the true authority, not the Sanhedrin who threatened them.

It gave them comfort in God’s Sovereignty knowing that God is in complete control of all events. It also gave them comfort knowing that the opposition they were facing was all part of God’s plan.

We need this reminder every day. We tend to be near sighted/myopic ? (define and expand...)

Jesus taught his disciples to begin their prayer with, “*Our Father who is in heaven...*”

What this does... (1) It puts God in his rightful place. (2) It gives us the proper perspective. (3) It expresses our dependence on God, it puts us in the right position.

Your view of God has a huge impact on your prayer life.

Because of an improper or inadequate view of God, we...(have a casual approach to God.. only use him when we need him...treat him as if he is obligated to us...

Laced with tones of sarcasm are the words of Wilbur Rees:

*“I would like to buy \$3 worth of God, please, not enough to explode my soul or disturb my sleep, but just enough to equal a cup of warm milk or a snooze in the sunshine. I don’t enough of him to make me love a black man or pick beets with a migrant. I want ecstasy, not transformation; I want the warmth of the womb, not a new birth. I want a pound of the Eternal in a paper sack. I would like to buy \$3 worth of God, please.”*

Jonathan Aitken, a former Member of Parliament in Great Britain, compares his early relationship with God to that with a bank manager: “I spoke to him politely, visited his premises intermittently, occasionally asked him for a small favor or overdraft to get myself out of difficulty, thanked him condescendingly for his assistance, kept up the appearance of being one of his reasonably reliable customers, and maintained superficial contact with him on the grounds that one of these days he might come in useful.” When convicted of perjury and sentenced to prison, Aitken decided to pursue a more personal relationship.

## **B. Appeal to God’s Word. (25-26) (God you have said...)**

*“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.” Ps. 119:105 (It helps me see!)*

Psalm 2 is a messianic psalm, but this is the first time its words have appeared in Acts. The psalm is a record of human rebellion against God and God’s response to it.

This passage reminded them that people will always “futilely resist God” and his anointed one, but God alone is the true Sovereign. What the “kings of the earth” did in that psalm is precisely what the Sanhedrin had been doing. They had done it with Jesus. Now they were doing the same thing with the disciples.

They guided their response to the crisis (the threats to never speak the name of Jesus) by the Word of God.

We need to continually grow in our ability to “think biblically”. That comes from increased exposure, study and meditation on the Word of God.

In Psalm 73, Asaph was discouraged and questioning his faith. He said, “*When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny.*” (16-17)

When we ponder the Scriptures our minds are transformed. (Rom. 12:2) This gave us a renewed and clear perspective.

*“Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.” Romans 12:2 (NLT)*

### **C. Apply God’s Word to your situation. (27-28)**

So they viewed God, not only as Sovereign God over creation and revelation (his Word) but also over history, their own history.

This is not a fatalistic attitude.

The early church strongly believed in God’s sovereignty and His perfect plan for His people. But note that they did not permit their faith in divine sovereignty to destroy human responsibility, for they were faithful to witness and pray. It is when God’s people get out of balance and overemphasize either sovereignty or responsibility that the church loses power. Again, we are reminded of Augustine’s wise words, “*Pray as though everything depends on God, and work as though everything depended on you.*”

Practice: Give some scenarios of different crisis and walk through an example of prayer with Scriptures to apply.

### **D. Ask God! (29-30)**

Only now, with their vision of God clarified, and themselves humbled before him, were they ready to pray.

If we first acknowledge God's sovereignty and creative power, and appeal to God's Word and apply it to our situation, by the time we make our actual request from God it is likely to be very different than when we started to pray.

**(1) To take notice of your situation. (29)**

Notice that they did not ask God to punish or annihilate their enemies, nor did they ask God to remove the negative circumstances.

**(2) To give you grace to obey. (29)** *“enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness.”*

They are not playing the “victim card”. They describe themselves as “your servants” indicating they were ready to do God's will and that they were aware that they are part of a “bigger plan” than their personal comfort and even safety.

Their prayer was for the grace to “defy the threats” and speak God's word with great boldness.

Philip Brooks wrote, *“Do not pray for easy lives. Pray to be stronger men and women. Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers. Pray for power equal to your tasks.”*

**(3) To bring glory to Himself. (30)**

Essentially they are praying for God to “continue what he had been doing” just as he did when he healed the crippled man which ignited the opposition to them.

**E. Anticipate that God will answer. (31)**

Conclusion:

**Give time to actually Pray-** Congregation Sing: *He Is Able*