

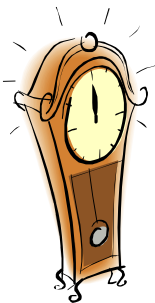
An Hour of Prayer?

By Mary Kane

What is the longest amount of time you've spent in continuous prayer? For me it's probably about 45 minutes to an hour. I have a lot of respect for prayer warriors who tirelessly dedicate themselves to lifting up the concerns of family, friends, and nation to God in extended prayer. The Bible contains many examples of those who devoted themselves to prayer. As we have learned from previous Bible studies, Jesus spent extended lengths of time in prayer (see [6:12](#), [Luke 5:16](#) and [Mark 1:35](#)).

Before we begin our study today, we need a little background information about "Jewish hours of prayer." To enlighten our minds, please read the following quote:

"The Mosaic law did not regulate the offering of prayer, but fully recognized its spontaneous character. In what manner or how far back in Jewish history the sacrificial prayer, mentioned in [Luke 1:10](#), originated no one knows. In the days of Christ it had evidently become an institution. But ages before that, stated hours of prayer were known and religiously observed by all devout Jews. It evidently belonged to the evolutionary process of Jewish worship, in connection with the temple-ritual. Devout Jews, living at Jerusalem, went to the temple to pray. The pious Jews of the Diaspora opened their windows "toward Jerus" and prayed "toward" the place of God's presence. The regular hours of prayer, as we may infer from [Ps 55:17](#) and [Daniel 6:10](#), were three in number. The first coincided with the morning sacrifice, at the 3rd hour of the morning, at 9 AM therefore. The second was at the 6th hour, or at noon, and may have coincided with the thanksgiving for the chief meal of the day, a religious custom apparently universally observed. The 3rd hour of prayer coincided with the evening sacrifice, at the ninth hour. Thus every day, as belonging to God, was religiously subdivided, and regular seasons of prayer were assigned to the devout believer. Its influence on the development of the religious spirit must have been incalculable, and it undoubtedly is, at least in part, the solution of the riddle of the preservation of the Jewish faith in the cruel centuries of its bitter persecution. Mohammedanism borrowed this feature of



worship from the Jews and early Christians, and made it one of the chief pillars of its faith" (*BLB*, Henry E. Dosker).

The *ESV Study Bible* states that these hours of prayer were not set up because of Old Testament Law but because of the traditions within the culture. I love how the faith of the Jewish people drove the culture. Working hours and business hours of faithful Jews were most likely arranged to suit the hours of prayer. God took priority over everything else.

Now that we are familiar with the Jewish hours of prayer please read Acts 3:1-10.

Where were Peter and John going (verse 1)?

At this point in time in church history, Jewish converts still met at the temple to pray. Our text states that they went during the *ninth hour* which would be about 3:00 pm.

Who was lying at the gate?

How long had he been lame?

The original Greek word for the word *lame* is *cholos* which means "deprived of a foot or maimed" (*BLB*). He had been created that way on purpose by God for a wonderful Purpose.

Where did he lay each day?

Wouldn't you expect something beautiful to happen at the Gate Beautiful? The double-door gate was 75 feet high and covered with plates of Corinthian brass. Josephus described this gate as being so beautiful that it "greatly excelled those that were only covered over with silver and gold. There is some debate concerning exactly where this gate was located in the temple. Some scholars place this gate on the western side of the Court on Women, others place it on the

eastern side. If the gate was indeed on the western side then it is possible that it was through this gate that our Savior first entered the temple when He was brought by His mother as a baby.

How did the lame man get to the Gate Beautiful each day?

What did he do at the gate each day?

Think for a moment about the following facts:

- ④ The lame man asked his friends to lay him at the *gate* each day.
- ④ While lying at the gate each day, the lame man spent his time *begging*.

Record any thoughts you have concerning the above facts:

I noticed that the lame man did not go to the Temple each day to pray; he went there to *beg*. Also, he did not ask his friends to take him into the temple; he asked to be laid at the gate. The gate would be the best place to beg as everyone entering the temple had to go through the gate. Keeping these facts in mind, I think perhaps the lame man had given up on God, but God hadn't given up on him!

Have you in some way been holding back from drawing closer to God? If your answer is "yes," what is the reason?

I'm willing to bet that if something is holding you back from drawing closer to God that *fear* is involved in some fashion. I used to fear that if I became too close to God that I would lose myself and become some kind of Christian robot; or that I would greatly dislike the life that God had planned for me. These lies were whispered in my ears by the

Enemy for the purpose of destroying God's will for my life. As I've drawn closer to God I've become *more* of who He created me to be and I have found great joy in His plan for my life. He came so I could have abundant life!

What is one step that you can take today to draw closer to God?

Please take another look at verse 4.

What did Peter and John do in this verse?

They "fixed their eyes" on the lame man. The Greek word used for *fix* in this verse is *atenizo*. Does this word sound familiar to anyone? If you did the Daily Bible Study, *In One Accord* you would recognize that this same Greek word described the attitude and posture of the Apostles at the Ascension of Jesus (see Acts 1:11). Perhaps Peter and John recognized Jesus in this situation and remembered our Savior's last instructions; to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Samaria and beyond.

I'm glad that Peter and John weren't so fixated on their prayer meeting that they missed an opportunity to minister to someone in great need. When we are committed to praying and following Jesus, the Holy Spirit will alert us to opportunities to bring healing and redemption to others.

What did the lame man do (verse 5)?



The lame man expected to receive _____ and _____ (verse 6).

But, what did he receive?

The lame man was just trying to make it through the day. But God had a different idea! "It is not the Church's business in this world to simply make the present condition more bearable; the task of the Church is to release here on earth the redemptive work of God in Christ" (*BLB, LaSor*). God wanted the lame man fully restored and healed. And that is exactly what God plans for you.

Is there something that you have been battling for all your life, something that you've given up hoping that could ever be healed or restored?

Perhaps it has been a very long time and you are tired. Please let me encourage you to continue hoping. Today can be the day that you finally forgive your parents or your husband or yourself for that thing that happened so long ago. Today can be the day that you quit smoking, quit complaining or quit focusing on yourself. Today can be the day that you make that phone call, take that step or start that new ministry. And please know that if God hasn't healed you from a physical challenge it's because there is a greater glory at stake. Can you continue on for His glory?

Sometimes I have thought that since I do not have a lot of money to start a big ministry that I don't have much to offer the lost of the world. Peter and John were not rich in silver or gold either, but they were rich in Jesus! If you have Jesus, you have all you need to start serving.

So what can I modern day believer learn from this section of scripture? Here are a few things that God showed me:

- 🕒 We need friends who will, day after day, take us to Jesus. The lame man's friends got him as close to the temple as he would allow. The rest was up to the lame man.

- ☞ When we are engaged in prayer, God will bring to our attention those who need His help. Remember to be on the look out for those whom God purposely places in our paths.
- ☞ Some times we need a handout; sometimes we need a hand up! This summer I was very happy to receive several home cooked meals when my son was injured. We needed help! In particular, I was very grateful to a few friends who also “fed” our souls by sharing scripture, prayer and direction.
- ☞ Give the lost what they truly need—Jesus!

How lovely on the mountain are the feet of those who bring Good News!

By Mary Kane

all rights reserved
copyright 2010