

INTRO

- What is an unusual place you've prayed in or person you've prayed?

READ

- Acts 12:1-17

Qu: what is one thing that immediately strikes you as you read this passage?

REFLECT & RESPOND

As we close out Season 2 of our Unstoppable series, we end with a dramatic incident involving Peter. What does this incident teach us about prayer?

COMMUNAL & EARNEST PRAYER

Luke (author of Acts) makes it clear in v5 that the dire situation of Peter's imprisonment and impending execution (following James) was the catalyst for the church to pray, and their earnest prayer for Peter was the catalyst for God's power to deliver Peter from prison.

Qu: the early church devoted themselves to praying together. What are the challenges to praying together more regularly today? What are the advantages to praying together?

POWER OF PRAYER

This dramatic story also highlights the power of prayer over seemingly impossible obstacles. Luke contrasts Herod's power over against the church's power found in prayer. And its no contest! Do we believe prayer has this kind of power today?

The angel fetched Peter out of prison, but it was prayer that fetched the angel. — Thomas Watson

Qu: is there a time you can share when you experienced the power of prayer in your own life?

UNEXPECTED ANSWERS TO PRAYER

The incident also reminds us that, often, God answers our prayers in unexpected ways. The church had been praying for Peter but were in disbelief when he showed up at their prayer mtg!

Too often we pray with a clear idea of how we expect God should answer and that can set us up for disappointment or doubt. For instance, why did God deliver Peter but not James?

Our confidence in God to answer and act in response to our prayers must be tempered by realism, humility and the mystery of God's sovereignty.

God always answers your prayers in precisely the way you want them to be answered if you knew everything he knew. — Tim Keller

Qu: what helps you deal with unanswered, delayed or unexpected answers to prayer?

Finally, we must remember that in Jesus, we have One who intercedes for us continually, earnestly and powerfully (Heb 7:25), and His Spirit helps us when we don't know what God wants us to pray for (Rom 8:28).

RESPOND & PRAY

- Pray for a greater hunger and urgency to pray.
- Is there a situation you can earnestly pray for as a group?
- Pray for any specific needs.