Sept 7 – Living the Supernatural Life – Part 3 - Untapped Power

1. Last week something remarkable happened during our worship service. We learned about the power of calling upon God to intervene in situations – because God has limited Himself in this world to the prayers of His people. Then, we heard the Lord tell us to pray that Hurricane Gustav, a category 4 storm with winds of 150 mph, that had killed 80 people in the Caribbean, would be “squashed.” So many of you joined in and with faith building prayers, asked God to intervene and prevent a disaster.
   a. I know that sounds pretty strange. I envisioned a crowd of people calling out, “squash that storm!” Yet at 9:20 am on Monday, a reporter for the Weather Channel, who was standing in the path of the storm outside of New Orleans stated, “it is remarkable, this storm had a powerfully well defined eye over Cuba and it is as if its eye has collapsed. The power has come out of this storm.” That sounds like an answer to our church’s corporate prayer.

2. Review:
   a. Last week when the service was over, Joe Fuger came up to me and shared an insight that literally blew me away. He said that he had always seen prayer as a tool to “ask God for something we want and hope He gives it to us.” He then added, “now he saw prayer as a means of bringing what God already wants into our earthly realm and lives.
      i. The picture became clear for me as well. It was as if we thought we were children begging our Father for a handout and suddenly we had realized that we are representatives called to distribute God’s gifts to others.
      ii. The implication is world changing in its possibilities! We are to pray in order to release what God already wants to do in our world!
      iii. We don’t name and claim it…that isn’t God’s method. We are distributors of God’s grace, of what He has accomplished, and prayer is how we make that distribution happen!
   b. We have been discussing living the supernatural life. We have talked about barriers to it, and we have been learning how we can actively allow the supernatural life of Jesus Christ to flow through us! It boils down to prayer.
      i. Prayer is releasing God’s desires and intentions into the earth “as it is in heaven.”
         1. GOD wants people saved. God wants people set free from slavery to addictions. God desires that people come to know His love.
         2. But it isn’t happening because we aren’t praying!
      ii. Prayer is the vital link for the Christian to experience the supernatural life on a regular basis.
      iii. If you aren’t experiencing the supernatural life, if you aren’t seeing God’s supernatural hand in your life, then it may well be that you aren’t praying…or maybe you aren’t in a relationship with God at all.

3. This morning I want to look at what happens when the church, the corporate body of believers gathers together to pray and experience the supernatural power of God. Last week we saw what happened when we prayed together, corporately, for God to intervene in a major hurricane that had the name “staff of God.” God called us to stand in the gap, and as a body of believers, we did so. And God acted.
   a. There is a lot of debate about drilling for oil right now. There is more untapped energy under the ground that we have tapped into yet. As long as it lays untouched, uncovered and undiscovered, it is only potential power.
   b. I want to say, Christians have a drilling problem. We have a great potential power that we haven’t tapped. And as a result, (not notes, but ppt) we have a power shortage in the church!

4. Acts 12: “I Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church in order to mistreat them. 2 And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword. 3 When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. Now it was during the days of Unleavened Bread. 4 When he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him to four squads of
soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out before the people. So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God.”

a. James was killed and since it caused a boost in his approval rating in the polls, Herod decided to make Peter his next victim.

b. I don’t know whether the church prayed earnestly for James...maybe they were caught off guard, but they weren’t about to let Peter die without interceding. They gathered together (we know that by the following verses) and prayed for Peter’s release.

i. What did that look like? How long did they pray?

c. V6-12 17 “The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. “Quick, get up!” he said, and the chains fell off Peter’s wrists. 8 Then the angel said to him, “Put on your clothes and sandals.” And Peter did so. "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me,” the angel told him. 9 Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. 10 They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him. 11 Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I know without a doubt that the Lord sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were anticipating." 12 When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. 13 Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer the door. 14 When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, "Peter is at the door!" 15 "You're out of your mind," they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, "It must be his angel.” 16 But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. 17 Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison.”

i. How long did they pray? Verse 12 tells us that Peter left the prison and went to the house of Mary where many people had gathered and were presently praying. (periphrastic imperfect. The praying apparently had been going on all night and a large number of the disciples were there).

1. They prayed until God gave them an answer. That is the object of travailing prayer. You pray and stay in the presence of God until He sends the reply.
2. Too often we pray as a church for a few things for a short time and then move on. If it is important, we are to pray for it until we hear the answer!

ii. Would you say that the church in Jerusalem corporately experienced the supernatural power of God? Yes!

iii. Would you say that Peter, the focus of their prayers, experienced the supernatural power of God? Of course!

d. The pattern that we find in the Early Church is that they prayed together and prayed often.

i. It is time for the Present Day Church to have a new emphasis!

ii. Its time for us to rediscover the power of corporate prayer.

iii. Praying by oneself is commanded in Scripture.

1. But we are also commanded to meet to pray together, and too often we forsake this calling.

2. A calculation was made concerning the amount of time that was spent in prayer during the Sunday morning worship service—all of 10 minutes? Not even close. Try again—Less than 2 minutes. And then, most of it is done/led by one person with others simply agreeing.
3. The Family Research Council noted that “Christians who visit the U.S. from some other lands are shocked to discover the prayerlessness that prevails in many of America's churches.”

iv. Jesus said, “My house shall be called a house of prayer...” - (Matt. 21:13)
1. “The core identity of the Church now and in eternity is to be a House of Prayer.” - Mike Bickle
2. “Any church without a well-organized and systematic prayer program is simply operating a religious treadmill.” - Paul Billheimer
3. It is in the corporate prayer meeting that God will do a great work

e. For the church to ignore corporate prayer is like saying, we only want to operate on battery power as Christians. We don’t want to plug into the grid!
   i. ILLUSTR: There’s a supposedly true story of a Welsh woman who lived in a remote valley in Wales. She went to a great deal of trouble and expense to have electrical power installed in her home. However, after a couple of months, the electric company noticed she didn’t seem to use very much electricity at all. Thinking there might be a problem with the hookup, they sent a meter reader out to check on the matter. The man came to the door and said, "We’ve just checked your meter and it doesn’t seem that you’re using much electricity. Is there a problem?" "Oh no" she said. "We’re quite satisfied. We turn on the electric lights every night to see how to light our lamps and then we switch them off again."
      1. Now, why didn’t this woman make more use of her electricity?
      2. She believed in electricity
      3. She believed the promises of the electric company when they told her about it
      4. She went to a great deal of trouble and expense to have her house wired for it
      5. BUT - she didn’t understand the potential of electricity in her home.
      6. AND SO, she used it’s power sparingly
      7. I believe that this is the way we use corporate prayer.
         a. We say we believe in it, but we avoid group prayers.
         b. We know of the promises God has made – Matthew 18:19 “Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven.”
         c. But the promises remain in heaven because we refuse to bring them to earth.
   ii. Why is this?
      1. Is it because we don’t know how to pray in a group setting? I suspect so.
      2. Is it because we are uncomfortable praying aloud, or think that we must if we participate? I have a feeling this is among our reasons.
      3. Some of us see corporate prayer as boring, having to listen to people pray on and on...but prayer isn’t supposed to be a boring chore!
         a. Isaiah 56:7 says, “…these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer.”
         b. I have to tell you, every Sunday morning at 8:30 am, a group of folks from Here’s Hope gather in the youth room to pray together. Among them is a teenager! If a teenager has the faith and courage to believe God’s promises of prayer, what is wrong with the rest of us?
   f. Just as individuals are to pray, we are to pray as a church body.
      i. I do want you to understand that corporate prayer is different than personal prayer.
1. When you join several other believers praying, you don’t get to pray long prayers. You pray short sentence prayers, and let the Holy Spirit build on the prayer through someone else.

2. **Corporate prayer is a lesson in cooperation.**
   a. It almost should be called “cooperative prayer” rather than corporate prayer.
   b. You cooperate with other believers and the Holy Spirit to pray for people, circumstances, and needs.
   c. It’s tough on people who are used to praying well by themselves, because they think they have to cover everything on their prayer list in one breath.
   d. (Oh Lord, bless my mother, father, save my neighbor, give John a job, save Mary’s marriage, protect our pastor, bless our church, give me a raise, take care of our missionaries, our government and president, fix my car, make my boss like me, and give us rain…whew).

3. With corporate prayer, we don’t fire a shotgun, we get 5 people (or 10, or 20) to all take aim with a single shot at a single target in succession.

4. Corporate prayer is an act of saturating a target or need with prayer.
   a. Like last week when our church corporately prayed for relief from the looming disaster.

5. In corporate prayer, I pray for something, the next person might or ought to add something to my prayer and cover it from a different angle. Our faith feeds the next person’s prayer.

6. Last week, an observer to our prayer said he could hear the faith building in each successive person who prayed for the upcoming storm.

   g. I had to ask myself, okay, why don’t we pray corporately together?
      i. I made my list that included all of the things we already talked about, “don’t know how, afraid, don’t have time, don’t understand it, etc.”
      ii. But as I looked through the bible and at our nation’s history, it seems that corporate prayer becomes a priority only when people’s hearts have been humbled, literally crushed, and they are willing to come back to seek the face of God together.
      iii. Unfortunately, it seems that it takes a crisis for Christians to decide to pray together. But it shouldn’t be so!
      iv. Every Thursday at 10:45 am (except this Thursday) we meet at church to pray together. Every Sunday at 8:30 am folks meet to pray. You can start your own prayer group and meet together to pray.
      v. How long will we only turn on the lights to light our candles instead of using the power God has given the church!

2. **The Power is there**
   a. About six years ago, something terrible happened to man named Sid Taylor and his wife Christy. It seems that one afternoon, Sid was underneath Christy’s car working on the steering linkage, when the jack that was holding the front end up suddenly gave way and the chassis of the car came crashing down on Sid’s chest. Not being able to breathe, he couldn’t call for help so he frantically kicked his toolbox over with his feet. Christy heard all the noise and ran from the kitchen to the garage and found her husband trapped underneath the car. Terrified, she ran back into the kitchen and called 911 for help. Sadly, before the fire and rescue squad arrived, Sid had already died of asphyxiation.
   b. And only six months later, a very similar tragedy occurred. A man was putting an exhaust system on his truck in the garage when, again the jack slipped and the truck came down on him. He was able to get out one short yell for help; his wife heard his yell and came running to see what was
wrong. When she came into the garage, she saw that the truck had fallen on her husband and he was only minutes away from death-- she didn’t run for the phone to call 911......nor did she go across the street to get the neighbors to help her. None of these common sense thoughts crossed her mind, she simply grabbed hold of the truck’s bumper, and this forty-six year old woman lifted the front of that truck up high enough for her husband to roll out from underneath it! Thanks to his wife, the man survived this incident with only two broken ribs and a whole new respect for the woman he’d been married to for twenty five years.

i. Needless to say, it required an awesome amount of power to save this man’s life--where did this power come from? Sure, it came from God.
   1. But a lot of unspiritual people would tell me; that’s not a miracle--- God didn’t do that--haven’t you ever heard of adrenaline? I still say it is the power of God.

ii. Now, why did I tell you both stories? Well, because the power to save was present in both instances, but it was only summoned in the second.
   1. The first lady looked at the car on her husband and used her head “knowing” that she couldn’t pick the car up and tried to get help somewhere else.
   2. The second lady saw her husband dying underneath his truck and knew only one thing; that truck was going to move. And with that attitude and faith, the truck did indeed move and her husband was saved.

iii. In the same way that most all of us have this extra boost of potential strength within our grasp through adrenaline, we also have another form of power available to us as Christians; power that is far beyond our capability even to comprehend.

iv. But, just like that first lady that failed to save her husband because she didn’t realize that this power was available, many Christians allow themselves to become victims of circumstance instead of claiming this power of God and becoming victorious through Christ.

v. Corporate prayer can unleash more power than the sun itself holds, corporate prayer can unleash the very power of God to impact our world, save the lost, and set captives free. Specific, corporate prayer, like that of the disciples freed Peter, shook the room in Acts 4, and caused an earthquake for Paul and Silas. Corporate prayer, like that done weekly at Brooklyn Tabernacle, where upwards of 400 people pray, has set countless men and women free. Corporate prayer must be the cornerstone of a church.

2. 1Corinthians 4:20 says; “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk....but of power.”
   a. Do you want to experience the supernatural life and power of Jesus Christ on a regular basis? Pray!
   b. Prayer is our tool to connect the supernatural power of God to the needs of our world.
   c. Andrew Murray, South African pastor and theologian once said, “God must Give, We must ask.”

3. Will you pray with us? Will you listen to the Lord to pray with others?
   a. Jennifer will be conducting an intercessory prayer study as a part of the Sunday morning prayer group.
   b. We can conduct a practical study and prayer time on Thursday mornings if you would like. We would like to form a prayer group in your home if you are willing to host one.
   c. What will you do? Will you turn out the lights and live in the candlelight…or will you be a part of turning on the power to the church!