



## Pray Like It Matters: Intimacy and Power Through Prayer (Nondisposable Curriculum) (Volume 5)

By Steve Gaines

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When I read the book of Acts, I am embarrassed. Why does our brand of Christianity look so insipid compared to the believers of the first century? Where has the power gone? Has God changed, or have we? We've all heard the cop-out that says, "The book of Acts represents a different dispensation." What a sad, self-serving attempt to excuse our current state of spiritual impotence! When we read Acts, we should yearn to experience a return to their brand of Christianity. Yet, instead of copying them, we seem content with copying other modern churches that are "growing." But why copy a copy when you can copy the original (the book of Acts)? In Acts, God was saving people every day. Communities were transformed. People were healed. Demons were cast out. Miracles were commonplace. Churches sprouted up across the Roman Empire. Persecution was faced and overcome. What made them so different? Some say they preached a purer Gospel. I disagree. Modern Evangelicals preach the same Gospel that was proclaimed in the first century. We preach that Jesus was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died an atoning death, and rose bodily from the grave. We preach that man is a sinner and stands guilty before God in need of salvation. We preach that God offers salvation by grace, through faith, in Jesus Christ alone, and the moment anyone repents of his sin, puts his faith in Jesus, and calls upon His name, that person is born again. That's the Gospel they preached, and the Gospel we preach. Our lack of spiritual power in Christianity today is not due to the sermons we preach or the songs we sing. Rather, it is due to our lack of prayer. We do not pray like it matters. Jesus and His earliest followers prayed like it was important. We pray like it is inconvenient or inconsequential. Prayer was their priority. It is our postscript. We plan more than we pray. They prayed more than they planned. We gather to minister to one another. They gathered to minister to the Lord in prayer and fasting. Our focus is earthly, horizontal. Theirs was heavenly, vertical. They were wise enough to "pay the price." All of this is why I have written this 12-week Bible study entitled *Pray Like It Matters*. I want to demonstrate from Scripture that every prayer we pray is significant. Through our prayers, God changes things. One life dedicated to prayer can do more good than any life dedicated to other so-called "noble," worldly causes. An individual follower of Jesus who is committed to

prayer is a fountain of life in a world of death. Likewise, the local church that becomes a house of prayer will be a spiritual powerhouse from which God's mighty miracles will flow exponentially. Prayer is what modern Christians and churches are missing? frequent, fervent, faithful prayer! Most Christians want to pray but don't know how. They are unable to carry on a simple, sustained, satisfying conversation with God. Thus, after a few minutes in prayer, they run out of things to say, get frustrated, and give up. Sound familiar? Just as infants must be taught to talk, Christians must be taught to pray. Once you know how, prayer will be fulfilling, refreshing, and even fun. A growing number of Christians today are aware that something must be wrong. They know there has to be "more" to the Christian life than what they have experienced. That "more" is found through the discipline of prayer. These lessons are a wakeup call for each individual, family, and church to become a "house of prayer." When we begin to pray like Jesus and His early followers, then we will witness the power they experienced. Today, we embark on what could be the greatest adventure of your life. Before we start, let's pray the prayer of the early disciples: "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1).

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**Pray Like It Matters: Intimacy and Power Through Prayer (Nondisposable Curriculum) (Volume 5)**  
**By Steve Gaines Bibliography**

- Sales Rank: #189384 in Books
- Published on: 2014-01-16
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 5.63" h x 1.00" w x 5.25" l, .26 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 114 pages

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#### **About the Author**

A man of prayer and a preacher of God's Word, Dr. Steve Gaines pastored churches in Texas, Tennessee, and Alabama since 1983 before coming to Bellevue Baptist Church in 2005 as senior pastor. He holds a bachelor's degree from Union University and a master of divinity and PhD from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has served on many denominational boards and committees, most notably the Baptist Faith and Message Study Committee. He was president of the Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference in 2005 and has been keynote speaker at many denominational events. He is the author of three books, *Morning Manna*, *When God Comes to Church*, and *Pray Like It Matters*. Steve and his wife, Donna, have four children and nine grandchildren..

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