

United in the Upper Room: Prayer Before the Power

I was thinking this past week of some of the most irritating or annoying words in life.

The Doctor will be with you shortly

Please Hold

Please use our automated menu to assist us in serving you better

Road Construction Ahead

Do you have a minute so I can tell you about an exciting new product?

The reason that these statements are so annoying is because most of us are not very patient when we have to wait. But these are little inconveniences. There are times in life when we're asked to wait that are much more difficult.

for healing of family relationships

Waiting for employment doors to open

Waiting for direction in a life decision

Waiting for God to heal

Waiting for God to meet a financial need

Waiting to see all our children come to saving faith in Jesus

Sometimes our faith requires "active waiting." The disciples knew the task Jesus had called them to. They knew they were supposed to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth.

But they also knew they were supposed to stay in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit came, even though they didn't know when that would happen.

They Obeyed the Lords Instructions.

They Stayed in Jerusalem waiting expectantly.

The great thing about these who gathered is that they did what the Lord told them to do.

It would have been very natural to go home to their hometowns.

It would have also been very natural for them to try to begin doing what Jesus told them to do: **to begin to reach out to the world.**

But the first thing He told them to do was to wait.

They were to wait for the power of the Holy Spirit. And even though it would have been easier and more natural to do just about anything else . . . **they waited, and they spent their time preparing.**

Have you ever got frustrated when God doesn't act on your timetable? When you pray for something, or feel led to do something, but the pieces just aren't coming together.

Rather than get discouraged, we should recognize that God's delay has a purpose.

Acts chapter one gives us some insight how to handle the times when we have to wait for God's direction.

The disciples had been told by Jesus to stay in Jerusalem and to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

They didn't know how long they were going to have to wait.

God sometimes plans a delay in our lives for a purpose. It's when we spend time waiting on the Lord that we learn to trust Him.

With their futures put on hold the time of waiting could have been quite stressful. **Look at what they did during this time.**

They Prayed – Verse 14

The book of Acts opens with a remarkable picture of the early followers of Jesus. Their Lord had ascended into heaven. The promise of the Holy Spirit had been given, but it had not yet been fulfilled.

They stood between a completed promise and a coming blessing. What did they do while they waited? Acts 1:14 tells us, *"They all met together and were constantly united in prayer."*

This verse reveals one of the greatest secrets of spiritual strength: God's people accomplish the most when they learn to pray together.

We're told that all the disciples went into Jerusalem and met in an upper room.

Apparently, it was a large room because in verse 15 we're told that Peter spoke to 120 people!

The disciples did not scatter and attempt to face the future alone. They met together. **They understood that the Christian life was never intended to be a solitary journey.**

There is strength in fellowship, encouragement in companionship, and blessing in united worship. When believers come together around Christ, they remind one another of God's promises and strengthen one another's faith.

They were constantly united in prayer. This was not a one-time prayer meeting. It was not an occasional exercise. Prayer became their continual response to uncertainty.

They didn't know exactly what lay ahead, but they knew who held the future. Rather than relying on their own wisdom, they brought every concern, every question, and every hope before God.

The word constantly suggests perseverance. They prayed day after day.

Too often we pray once and then question when answers don't come immediately.

The lesson we can draw from our text is that God's people need to learn to wait prayerfully, trusting that God is working even when His timing differs from our own.

This verse highlights that they were united in prayer. In other words, their hearts were centred on a common purpose. Their focus was not on personal agendas but God's will.

In verse 14 we're told that they joined together constantly in prayer. **What was the content of their prayer?**

Were they praying for the Holy Spirit to come?

Were they seeking the Lord for strength and wisdom?

Were they addressing the needs of their own hearts?

Were they dealing with their own fears?

We don't know. I suspect if we did know what and how they prayed, we would tend to make it into a formula for effective praying.

What we do know for sure is that they continued in prayer. They were persistent.

In the time of waiting they did not give up. They continued to confess their sin, worship the Lord, and lay out their concerns before the Father. They kept at it.

The Bible is filled with examples of people who prayed and didn't give up.

Think about Abraham as he waited for the promised child.

Moses as he wandered in the wilderness, Joseph as he was confined in prison.

David as he evaded the pursuit of Saul. Job as he wrestled with the question why?

Habakkuk who sought the Lord when He did not understand, the exiles of Israel as they waited to return to their homeland.

There is an uncommon strength that comes from praying with others. When God's people are together in heart and mind, they place themselves in the pathway of God's blessing and power.

The Christian church was born not in a preaching service but in a prayer meeting.

I take from that the following truth: **Whenever God wants to do something great in the world, He first stirs His people to pray.**

When God wants to touch a family, a church, a city or a nation, He begins by moving His people to pray.

Prayer Is Always the First Stage in God's Plan to Change the World.

In this case God wanted the church to learn how to pray.

And not just to pray in general, but to learn how to pray together.

I truly believe that God gives some people the gift of prayer just like He gives others the gift of music.

They know how to pray the way some people know how to make beautiful music. Over the years I have been privileged to hear Christians who blessed others with their gift of prayer.

My old gospel choir director Marriott Davison. Man, you wanted to hear his passionate prayers.

But most of all there was Mrs. Gault. I can hear her yet as she stood up to pray at Carrick Baptist Church. **She seemed to transform when she prayed.** She was a quiet unassuming lady whose prayers lifted you heavenward when she prayed.

It's hard for me to know what to say about that except that I stand in amazement at such a gift and such a dedication to God. **We know that God doesn't gift all his children in the same way.**

One teaches, another sings, another cooks, another serves on a committee. And so it goes. We aren't all alike, which is good because how boring the church would be if we were all cut from the same cloth.

Even if you don't have the gift of prayer, you can learn from those who do.

It's significant that this season of united prayer immediately preceded Pentecost. Before the Spirit was poured out, before thousands came to faith, before the church began its worldwide mission, there was a praying people waiting upon God.

Great movements of God have often begun in the same way. Revival, renewal, and spiritual awakening are usually born in the prayer rooms of faithful believers.

The early church discovered that prayer was not merely preparation for the work of God, **it was the work of God. Their united prayers opened the door for divine power and blessing.**

May we follow their example. For when God's people are united in prayer, they place themselves in the very path of His power and blessing.

This verse challenges us today. When faced with uncertainty, do we panic or pray? When confronted by difficulties in our families, churches, or communities, do we depend upon human solutions alone, or do we gather with God's people and seek His face together?

When we're called to wait, may we turn to prayer. The Lord has the answers we're looking for.

How often though do we come before the Lord in prayer and then walk away?

I wonder how often our prayers are like that to God. We ask Him for guidance, we share with Him a struggle but leave His presence before He can extend His comfort.

Let's get back to our text. Their praying was ...

Unanimous—"all joined together constantly"

Acts 1:14 says they were all together. Here is an overlooked secret of the early church. Over and over again Luke stresses that what they did, **they did together**. All of them. **United and unanimous.**

I'm all for praying alone, secret prayer, quiet times, and going to a solitary place to talk to God. **Jesus did that often and so should we.** We need to pray, and for most of us, true prayer begins as we cry out to God from the depths of our soul.

But that's not the only kind of prayer the Bible mentions. **There is a time and place for God's people to come together unitedly and unanimously to cry out to God.**

Why is united prayer so important? The answer is; by praying together we can encourage each other to seek the Lord. When one person gets weary, another through prayer can lift him up.

Harmonious—"all joined together constantly"

The King James translates with the lovely phrase "*in one accord*." It's a musical term that means to strike the same notes together.

We all know what it is to listen to a choir sing beautiful music, and then without warning, someone hits a wrong note.

When the early church prayed, there were no wrong notes, no secrets told behind closed doors.

When people don't like each other, they can't pray together very long.

Clearly division and disunity withhold the blessing of the Holy Spirit.

Congregations cannot be empowered until they are of one mind and one heart, loving each other as Christ has loved us.

True Christian unity is one of God's best gifts. When churches lose it, how hard it is to get it back again. But genuine unity is a bargain price for what can happen through Pentecost power.

Continuous—"all joined together constantly"

Our text says they prayed "**constantly**." It means that when they prayed with determination.

Why the stress on praying unanimously, harmoniously, and continually? The answer is simple: Acts 1:12-14 gives us a pattern for how the church should operate in every age.

Nothing that matters has changed across the centuries. Superficially we're much different than that tiny band in Jerusalem. We have so much compared with the little they had.

There are nearly 2 billion Christians in the world instead of several hundred. We have our vast libraries filled with Christian literature and they didn't even have the New Testament.

We have millions of churches, they had one congregation in an upper room.

They Searched the Scriptures.

Searching Scripture

It seems clear from verse 14 that that they studied the scriptures to see what God would have them do.

We come to that conclusion from verses 16 and 17. Peter rises to talk to the group and say,

Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through the mouth of David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus. He was one of our number and shared in this ministry.

Peter quoted a verse from Psalm 69 and Psalm 129. He used these texts as his argument that they needed to replace Judas as one of the disciples. **In the time of waiting, they were listening for Gods voice in His word.**

The Bible doesn't speak to every issue directly, but it does give us principles that can be applied to most every issue.

In the times when we're forced to wait in God's waiting room, we should spend our time praying and reading the Bible with focused attention, listening for Gods instruction.

Here's a good principle: **If you don't know what to do, do what you know you should do.**

They Waited Expectantly Acts 1:4-5

The disciples were not merely filling time. They were waiting because Jesus had made a promise.

There is a difference between: Waiting hopelessly and Waiting expectantly

Christian waiting rests upon the promises of God.

We don't wait wondering **If** God will act. **We wait believing He Will act.**

Conclusions: Let's wrap things up.

The disciples entered the upper room as a frightened group of believers.

Ten days later they emerged filled with the Holy Spirit and turned the world upside down.

What happened between those two moments?

They prayed. They waited. They trusted. They obeyed.

Before God sent power, He prepared His people.

Perhaps today you find yourself in God's waiting room. **Don't waste the waiting.**

Pray. Stay faithful. Search the Scriptures. Encourage one another.

For God's delays are never God's denials.

In His perfect time, He will fulfill every promise He has made

At one time or another we will all find ourselves in the waiting room of life. These are important times. How we handle the times in the waiting room will often be the key to how deep our faith goes.

Prayer prepares us to hear from God and meeting together as believers is important.

A body of believers who can encourage us, instruct us, challenge us, and hold us accountable.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach us to be people of prayer. Give us hearts that seek You continually and faith that trusts Your perfect timing. Help us to walk in unity with fellow believers and to depend upon Your strength rather than our own.

May our homes, our church, and our lives be marked by earnest and united prayer. As You worked powerfully through the early church, work in us today for Your glory.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.