

## **Hurry Up and Pray**

The importance of waiting for God's power.

*By Max Lucado*

Buried like a grass burr in Matthew's rose bed is this disclosure: "Then the eleven disciples left for Galilee, going to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him-but some of them still doubted!" (Matt. 28:16-17, emphasis mine). Three years of miracles weren't enough. Nor were forty days at the Resurrection Retreat Center. They'd seen Him vacate tombs and dictate weather patterns, but still they doubted.

We find odd comfort in the lingering doubts of the disciples. For we still have our own. And so we wonder, Does Christ have a word for those who linger near the dis-still-ery of doubt?

His "yes" resounds. And His instruction will surprise you. What He told them, He tells us. "Don't leave Jerusalem yet. Wait here for the Father to give you the Holy Spirit, just as I told you He has promised to do" (Acts 1:4, CEV).

Jesus' word to the doubting disciples? "Wait." Before you go out, stand still. Prior to stepping forth, sit down. "Stay here in the city until the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven" (Luke 24:49).

So they do. "They went to the upstairs room of the house where they were staying. ... They all met together continually for prayer, along with Mary the mother of Jesus, several other women, and the brothers of Jesus" (Acts 1:13-14).

They have reasons to leave. Someone has a business to run or field to farm. Besides, the same soldiers who killed Christ still walk Jerusalem's streets. The disciples have ample reason to leave ... but they don't. They stay. And they all stay together.

"They all met together continually." As many as 120 souls huddle in the same house. One day passes. Then two. Then a week. For all they know a hundred more will come and go. But they aren't leaving. They persist in the presence of Christ.

Then ten days later power came:

On the day of Pentecost, seven weeks after Jesus' resurrection, the believers were meeting together in one place. Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm in the skies above them, and it filled the house where they were meeting. Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4).

Doubters became prophets. Peter preached, and people came, and God opened the floodgates on the greatest movement in history. It began because the followers were willing to do one thing: wait in the right place for power.

We're so reluctant to do what they did. Who has time to wait? We groan at such a thought. But waiting doesn't mean inactivity - rather inHIMactivity. Waiting means watching for Him. If you are waiting on a bus, you are watching for the bus. If you are waiting on God, you are watching for God, searching for God, hoping in God. Great promises come to those who do. "But those

who wait on the Lord will find new strength. They will fly high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint" (Isa. 40:31).

To those who still struggle, God says, "Wait on me." And wait in the right place. Jesus doesn't tell us to stay in Jerusalem, but He does tell us to stay honest, stay faithful, stay true.

For ten days the disciples prayed. Ten days of prayer plus a few minutes of preaching led to 3,000 saved souls. Perhaps we invert the numbers. We're prone to pray for a few minutes and preach for ten days. Not the apostles. Like the boat waiting for Christ, they lingered in His presence. They never left the place of prayer.

Biblical writers spoke often of this place. Early Christians were urged to

"Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17, NASB)

"Always be prayerful" (Rom. 12:12)

"Pray at all times and on every occasion" (Eph. 6:18)

Remember the adverb continually that described the Upper Room prayer of the apostles? It's used to describe our prayers as well: "Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving" (Col. 4:2 NKJV).

Sound burdensome? Are you wondering, My business needs attention, my children need dinner, my bills need paying. How can I stay in a place of prayer? Unceasing prayer may sound complicated, but it needn't be that way.

Do this. Change your definition of prayer. Think of prayer less as an activity for God and more as an awareness of God. Seek to live in uninterrupted awareness. Acknowledge His presence everywhere you go. As you stand in line to register your car, think, Thank you, Lord, for being here. In the grocery as you shop, Your presence, my King, I welcome. As you wash the dishes, worship your Maker.

Though a rookie in the League of Unceasing Prayer, I sure enjoy the pursuit. I've discovered the strength of carrying on two conversations: one with a person, another with the Person. One can, at once, listen and petition. As a person unfolds his problem, I'm often silently saying, God, a little help here, please. He always provides it. I've also discovered the delight of regular drinks from His water cooler. Throughout the day, my thoughts are marked with phrases: Guide me, dear Father. Forgive that idea, please. Protect my daughters today.

Think about it: The Upper Room was occupied by 120 disciples. Since there were about 4,000,000 people in Palestine at the time, this means that fewer than 1 in 30,000 was a Christian.

Yet look at the fruit of their work. Better said, look at the fruit of God's Spirit in them. We can only wonder what would happen today if we, who still struggle, did what they did: wait on the Lord in the right place.

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