

DEVOTIONAL

UNITED IN PRAYER | JANUARY 3, 2021

GRACE
FELLOWSHIP

Discussion Starter: How would you explain the importance of prayer to a new Christian?

The Book of Acts records several instances when the early Christians were united in prayer:

- **United in prayer in the upper room**

“And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. ¹⁴ All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.” (Acts 1:12-14)

First, notice the emphasis that Luke (the writer of the Book of Acts) places on the harmony among the early believers in prayer—he says they were devoting themselves to prayer with “*one accord*” (v.14). The idea of being in one accord is being of the same mind. Unity among believers is a top priority of God for His church. Ephesians 4:3 says we are to “*maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*” *God established the church on “one body and one Spirit...⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” (Ephesians 4:4-6).*

Discuss: Why is unity in the body of Christ so important?

Discuss: What are some ways we can be sure to prioritize unity in our church?

Discuss: How can prayer help to maintain unity in our church?

Second, notice the variety of people who were united in prayer in the upper room in Acts 1:12-14. This makes their praying “*in one accord*” even more remarkable!

- Men and women (v.13-14),
- Jesus’ family members: his mother Mary and His half-brothers James, Simon, and Judas (v.13),
- Mature believers—apostles Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew (v.13),
- Mathew who worked for the government (v.13), Simon the zealot who worked against the government (v.13),
- Former skeptics James, Simon, Judas, Thomas (v.12)!

Discuss: What is it about prayer that unifies believers from vastly different walks of life?

- **United in prayer after Pentecost**

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”
(Acts 2:42)

Discuss: Notice the four tasks mentioned in Acts 2:42 that the early Christians were devoted to: 1) The apostles’ teaching, 2) fellowship, 3) the breaking of bread (this could refer to fellowship meals and/or communion), and 4) prayer. In what ways do each of these tasks create a special unity among believers?

- **Church leaders united in prayer**

“Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.” (Acts 3:1)

The early church was made up primarily of Jewish people who became followers of Christ. Thus, they maintained some of their Jewish practices, such as praying at the temple at 9:00 am, 12:00 noon, and 3:00 pm. Just a few weeks earlier, while Jesus’ body was in the tomb, Peter and John were hiding in a room in fear of the Jewish authorities—they would not have gone near the temple! But after Jesus rose from the dead, ascended, and sent the Holy Spirit to indwell His followers, Peter and John displayed boldness in preaching the gospel everywhere, including at the temple.

Discuss: Do you have a favorite place, time, etc. to pray?

- **Christian families united in prayer**

“When our days there were ended, we departed and went on our journey, and they all, with wives and children, accompanied us until we were outside the city. And kneeling down on the beach, we prayed.” (Acts 21:5)

Paul was saying goodbye to Christian friends in the city of Tyre. Notice that families—including fathers, mothers, and children—went to say farewell to Paul and to pray with him.

Discuss: How would you advise new parents to make prayer a priority in their home?

Discuss: Why are praying families important for the spiritual health of a church?

For Further Study

Stronger Together, Weaker Apart: Powerful Prayers to Unite Us in Love by Tony Evans

The Prayer That Turns the World Upside Down by R. Albert Mohler

Prayer Articles at www.crosswalk.com