

Church on Fire.02. Gather for Fire

Today, we continue our study of the book *Church on Fire*, looking at Week 2

Week Two: GATHER FOR FIRE

“The first miracle of the ascended Christ was gathering His disciples into the upper room. The second miracle was pouring out His Holy Spirit into the upper-room gathering on the Day of Pentecost. The third miracle of the ascended Christ was to win three thousand Jews to faith in Christ in one hour.”

- “We all need to realize that without the first miracle, there would be no second or third miracle. It’s easy to overlook the first miracle - gathering together the 120 upper-room disciples into the God-encountering prayer meeting. This first miracle in the early church is the first miracle God wants to perform in your church, and it is our focus in week two of our adventure.”

“When Christ ascended to heaven, all He left behind on earth was a prayer meeting”

- Building the upper room is the first step in the strategic plan of Christ’s method. Without this pre-Pentecost prayer gathering, there would not have been Pentecost power, and there certainly would never have been post-Pentecost discipling of all nations.”

- “Week two of our thirty-one-day adventure is where you will begin to ink arms with other praying friends. You will begin to gather God’s people for worship-based, God-encountering prayer in an upper-room environment. Before you run off to reach the nations or even to love your neighbors, you will begin to gather and build an environment to welcome the manifest presence of Christ.”

Day 6 - COME UNDER ORDERS

“To build an upper-room, God-encountering prayer gathering for your church family will require teamwork.”

- The testimony of Jim Cymbala, pastor of Brooklyn Tabernacle:

- “One day Cymbala sensed God forcefully speaking to him deep down in his soul. ‘If you and your wife will lead my people to pray and call upon my name, you will never lack for something fresh to preach. I will supply all the money that’s needed, both for the church and your family, and you will never have a building large enough to contain the crowds I will send in response.’”

- “‘From this day on,’ Cymbala told his congregation, ‘the prayer meeting will be the barometer of our church. What happens on Tuesday night will be the gauge by which we will judge success or failure because that will be the measure by which God blesses us.’”

- “Within a couple weeks the Brooklyn Tabernacle began to see dramatic answers to specific prayers.”

➔ **“They experienced firsthand the reality of reaching a hurting world through a revived church. The reformation of Brooklyn Tabernacle did not start in a committee meeting; it started in a prayer meeting.”**

“When Jesus built His upper-room disciples, it was no easy task. So what did Jesus do to get these disciples into the upper room? He put them under orders: ‘On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for

the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit' (Acts 1:4-5)."

- "The word for 'command' is the Greek word *paraggello*, the strongest word for command in the Greek language. It means 'to put under military orders, to charge or mandate. When Jesus sent His disciples back to the upper room, He did not give them a take-it-or-leave-it suggestion; this was a command! They obeyed with immediate action: 'They went upstairs to the room where they were staying' (Acts 1:13)."

"Do not leave Jerusalem' was one of the classic seek-first-the-kingdom-of-God-and-all-other-things-will-be-added-to-you moments.

→ It establishes prayer as the disciples *first* work. Before we plan, preach, promote, make disciples or reach nations, we pray. We pray, and we receive. We receive power in the fulness of Christ so that we can then effectively fulfill all our other assignments."

"What does 'do not leave Jerusalem' mean to you personally?

- "What changes need to be made in your life and in your schedule for you to come under orders the way the disciples did?"

Day 7 - MINISTER TO THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD

"Today we are introduced to a life-giving principle that may be new to you - the high calling of ministry to the presence of the Lord."

- "If you intend to be an upper-room disciple, your first assignment is to minister to the presence of the Lord."

- "When Paul, Barnabas and a band of praying prophets gathered in the upper room in Antioch, they gathered for one solitary purpose: to minister to the presence of the Lord - 'As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, 'Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them' (Acts 13:2 NKJV)."

"We are well-familiar with the phrase *ministry for the Lord* or even *ministry to the Lord*, but we who recognize the manifest presence of the Lord are invited to respond to His manifest presence as the highest treasure in life."

- "When we recognize that we were made for His manifest presence, we have no problem lingering in His presence and enjoying every minute of it. 'One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life and gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple' (Ps. 27:4)"

"The concept of ministering to the Lord may be foreign to your experience, but it was not foreign to Jewish worshippers. In many places in the Old Testament, we see that priests were assigned to do nothing but to minister to the Lord."

- "David appointed Levitical priests to minister to the Lord (see 1 Chron. 15:2). The sons of Zadok were the Levites who were assigned to minister before the Lord (see Ezek. 40:46; Joel 1:9, 13; 2:17). Samuel learned as a youth to minister before the Lord (see 1 Sam. 2:11)."

- "In Christ we are all priests (see 1 Pet. 2:5, 9) who are given the same access to come boldly before the throne of grace and to minister to Him (see He. 4:16)."

“Ministering to the Lord is a make-it-or-break-it issue. You will never become an upper-room disciple, and you will never build a praying church until you learn to minister to the presence of Christ.”

➔ **“If you genuinely intend to welcome the manifest presence of Christ as a church family, it only makes sense that you need to first learn what it means to minister to his presence.”**

“Too many Christians view prayer as religious rather than relational.”

- “It is a kingdom principle that in the very act of being worshipped God often chooses to reveal Himself. As we minister to, or worship the presence of Christ, He will often reveal more of Himself to us.”

➔ **“Our first assignment is to minister to the presence of God.”**

“I am frequently asked, ‘What sets apart an upper-room prayer meeting from any other prayer meeting?’ Easy. Most prayer meetings have an agenda - pray for church ministries, missionaries, children and such. When we gather in the upper room, however, we have only one item on our agenda - to minister to the presence of the Lord.”

Day 8 - CLEAR YOUR CALENDAR

“The upper room is the crown jewel of Jesus’ discipleship ministry. It is also the closest we can get to heaven on earth.”

- “The membrane that separates heaven and earth thins out in the upper room. God draws near to His people as His people draw near to Him. “

“The upper room, or *huperoon* in Greek, is common throughout the Middle East. When Jesus told His followers, ‘Do not leave Jerusalem (Acts 1:4), they knew immediately where to go: ‘They went upstairs to the room [*huperon*] (Act 1:13).”

➔ **The tragedy of the modern church is that the crown jewel of Jesus’ discipleship ministry has largely become the flagrant omission. We need to learn again how to rebuild the upper room.”**

“Every room has five basic elements: a door, an atmosphere, walls, floor and ceiling. These same five elements are useful to describe the five features of the upper room. These are critical for us to understand if we are going to rebuild the upper room.

1. The door to the upper room is low - it’s the doorway of humility and obedience.

The disciples entered the upper room conscious of the own weakness. They came low before the Lord in obedience to His command, ‘Do not leave Jerusalem.’

2. The atmosphere in the upper room is unity.

It says of the upper room disciples, ‘They all joined together constantly in prayer’ (Acts 1:14). Why such unity? Simple. The single focus in the upper room is Christ, and when we encounter Christ, we no longer have any hidden agendas, no selfish ambition, no bitter jealousies, no elbowing for position or climbing over others to demand attention. The unity in the room is based on the fact that when we encounter the manifest presence of Christ, we have one purpose, one faith, one hope, one baptism and one Lord. We have unity.

3. The walls around the upper room are walls of separation that keep out distractions.

- These stone walls represent parameters of separation. Similarly, the early disciples - all 120 of them - canceled every other appointment they had on their calendar in order to make time to meet with Christ in uninterrupted, extended prayer and worship.
- For you and me to become upper-room disciples, we too need to erect walls of separation to keep out distractions from other commitments on our calendars.
- Upper-room disciples do not give God their leftovers and spare time; upper room disciples give God whatever time He wants. He deserves our best time.

4. The floorboards in the upper room rattle with anticipation.

- The early disciples were expectant when they gathered in the upper room because Christ had given them the promise of the Father (see Acts 1:4). Jesus had told them that He would clothe them with power (see Luke 24:49), and they believed it.

5. The ceiling in the upper room is wide open.

- This is a picture of an open heaven. It was into this first upper room in Jerusalem that God poured out His holy Spirit. ‘All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them’ (Acts 2:4).”

“The upper room today is conspicuously missing from too many of our churches.”

- “The most difficult part of building a praying church could well be deciding when to schedule your upper room, God encountering prayer meeting. In order for you to build a praying church, you will need to take dominion over your calendar.”

➔ **“It is important for you to make an appointment to meet with your Father.”**

Day 9 - SADDLE UP

“The best way to learn to pray is to pray with people who know how to pray.”

- “When God first put me under orders in the vise grip of prayer with a desire to learn to pray and to bring people with me, I didn’t know exactly where to start, but I figured that I could not go wrong inviting three people. Along with a few others, we, became a small core prayer group.”
- “I have grown tremendously from my mentors. I have been profoundly impacted through causal friendships and books. But without question I have learned more about prayer and advancing Christ’s kingdom from kneeling with my three trusted prayer partners, with whom I saddled up as in a posse fifteen years ago, than from anyone else on earth.”

“I have suffered through plenty of boring - painfully boring - prayer meetings. They were torturous for only one reason: they lacked the fire of God’s manifest presence”

J. Edwin Orr, a brilliant revival historian with three earned doctorates in the history of revival replied, “Whenever God is ready to begin something new with His people, He always sets them to praying.”

- “The single summary is profound. Noteworthy are its two main points: God always goes first, and He does so by mobilizing corporate prayer.”

“This principle that Dr. Orr clarified is rooted in one of Jesus’ favorite promises: “These I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer...For my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations” (Isa. 56:7)

- “Did you notice again that it is God who goes first and that He goes first by gathering His people in corporate prayer?

➔ **“Prayer is God’s primary work that will characterize the gathering of His people.”**

“Pray with your core group for protection, direction, and revelation”

- “We have discovered that these three prayers, while certainly not a magical formula, are biblical, strategic and significant.”

Day 10 - AGREE TOGETHER

“One of the reasons that our concept of church is skewed is because when we think ‘church,’ we think ‘building.’ Wrong. Church is not a physical structure but a relational gathering together.”

- “The word Jesus used for ‘church’ is *ekklesia*, which means “called out and called together.”

- “Jesus uses the word *ekklesia* in Matthew 18:17. He takes the principle of *ekklesia* to the next level by giving the disciples the kingdom principle of the power of agreement: ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. (18:18-19).’

“The power of agreement is not simply a minor side benefit for the church to enjoy; it is actually a major purpose for which the church exists - in order to advance Christ’s kingdom on earth and to overcome enemy forces. For this reason Christ has given us authority to bind and to loose.”

- “We have been empowered to bind what is evil and to loose what is good; to exercise authority in corporate prayer and in declarations of agreement. Allow me to provide a few examples of what we bind and what we loose:

<u>Bind</u>	<u>Loose</u>
Fear	Courage
Poverty	Provision
Violence	Peace
Sickness	Health
Deception	Truth
Darkness	Light
Bondage	Freedom
Confusion	Clarity
Foolishness	Wisdom
Unbelief	Faith
Hate	Love
Unforgiveness	Forgiveness

“Don’t underestimate the effectiveness of binding Satan.”

“The power of agreement is a blessing you can begin using now. Use the authority of binding and loosing with your prayer group.”

Further Questions from Week Two

- 1. Read Acts 1:1-14. What impact did Jesus' command "Do not leave Jerusalem" have on the early disciples? What significant kingdom principle do these four words teach us?**
- 2. What does it mean to "minister to the presence of the Lord" and why is this our first assignment?**
- 3. There are three examples in Scripture of individuals who were people of *one thing*. Using your own words, how would you describe a person of *one thing*?**
- 4. What are the five characteristics of the upper room that correspond to the five aspects of every room: door, atmosphere, walls, floor and ceiling?**
- 5. For you to be an upper-room disciple, what walls will you personally need to erect to protect your schedule and allow for extended times of prayer and corporate prayer?**
- 6. Have you ever had a prayer partner with whom you met consistently to seek the face of Christ? Who in your life right now do you think has a hunger for God whom you might consider inviting into a prayer partnership?**
- 7. Jesus tells us about the power of agreement in prayer in Matthew 18:18-20. Why do you think agreement is so effective?**