

The Upper Room: God's Revival Model

By Armin Gesswein

The Book of Acts is the greatest book on revivals which has ever been written – greater than Charles Finney's word or that of Jonathan Edwards – *God's own Word*.

I spoke one day to the Youth for Christ leaders at the Moody Church in Chicago about revival. Afterward, standing on the steps of that great church, Ken Anderson said to me, "Armin, you ought to write a book on revival." At once I said, "Ken, that book has already been written. It is the book of Acts!" It really surprised him.

I have read the Acts hundreds of times, and portions of it a few thousand times. Here is one of the plainest books in the Bible, yet I often miss or read right past what is very plain. In chapter one I read right past verse 4, in which our risen Lord gives His last and in a real sense, His most powerful, most commanding command. He actually "*charged*" them, a military term, "*not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father*" (ASV).

He literally commanded them to go to the Upper Room and to abide in prayer. And they did. In verses 14 and 15 we read that these all, about 120, continued in prayer and supplication.

Why did they do it? Because Jesus *commanded* it. Our trouble today is that we have not seen the Upper Room prayer meeting as a command of Jesus. We seem to have little authority when it comes to getting our churches into prayer meetings and all that God wants to do there. I have to say to congregations:

“If Jesus commanded you to go to prayer meetings, would you go?” “Well, yes,” they reply, “if Jesus told me to, I would go.” “Well, He does tell you, commands you, to go. Will you go?”

The Great Commission is our mission in the Church. We hold to that, and uphold it. And here is the last, most forceful and imperative of all His commandments, and we don't heed it, often don't even seem to hear it. This is a great part of our problem and weakness – getting corporate prayer and revival back into our churches (Acts 1:4).

In Acts 1 we have a full account of Jesus' last day on earth and of His last things, which are now to be our first things. **His last command becomes our first responsibility.**

Secret of the Upper Room

The Upper Room pattern holds the secret of it all. There the Lord shut about 120 people in a prayer meeting and gave them the keys to the kingdom of heaven. With it He gave us His masterpiece, and His master plan for revival. He at once made it the centerpiece of the New Testament, and of history – turning *history* into *His Story* for revival, and for everything else, including the fulfillment of His Great Commission.

One little prayer meeting of about 120 in an Upper Room in the city of Jerusalem is to do it all? Who would believe it? Who would have thought of it? No man! Men have tried to improve on that plan, but they always fail. “But, dear Lord, don't You have an alternate plan? A back-up plan, in case this one fails?”

Jesus could answer something like this: “No, I have no alternate plan. And My plan will not fail! That prayer meeting will do it all! It will be so powerful that even the gates of hell will not prevail against it. It will speedily become My Church, and I'm going to change the world with it. You just read the book of Acts and you will see how I do it!

“In fact, I did tell you. Were you listening? I told you in My last word on earth. I never spoke more plainly. Did you hear Me? *‘You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth’* (Acts 1:8 NIV). Didn’t you hear Me? I’m going to change the world through abiding prayer.”

How Are Our Prayer Meetings?

That’s the big question in all our praying for revivals. The acid test of New Testament revival is the Church. And the acid test of the Church and of the churches is prayer and prayer meetings.

The devil is no fool! He knows what’s going on in our lives, and in our churches. He also knows God’s plan. So he is very busy working overtime, to kill churches. All he has to do is kill abiding prayer and prayer meetings and that church is dead!

The Spirit of Prayer is the Spirit of Revival. The first revival in any genuine revival is a revival of prayer. The revival spirit leaves churches when true prayer meetings depart; and revival returns with the return of abiding prayer and prayer meetings. It’s that simple! And there is no other way.

Pentecost, let us not forget, came to a prayer meeting in that Upper Room and to those 120 Christians praying in one accord. There the Lord gave the standard, the pattern of revival, indeed, the pattern for every church since Pentecost.

Revival is not subtle – it is simple. Revival truth is the plainest truth in Scripture. All backsliding is from *plain* Scripture, not from all the prophetic mysteries we do not understand. Let us not complicate the message of revival!

The devil has decimated and all but devastated the prayer life

of Christians and of their homes and of their churches. Many churches still don't have prayer meetings. And where they do, they usually are the weakest, most anemic of all the many meetings.

But the Lord is changing this. Thank the Lord for the many new movements of prayer. We are on our way back to the Upper Room, back to the real, normal pattern of the Spirit-filled life for every Christian and for every church.

The Upper Room is God's own master plan to bring revival. That plan has not changed; it is still God's plan today. Will you go to the Upper Room?

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Armin Gesswein was a pastor and revivalist who founded the Pastor's Revival Fellowship. His book [With One Accord in One Place](#) is a modern classic that looks at prayer in the early church.