

## WHILE THEY WERE WAITING - ORIGINS SERIES

### PART 1- THE WAY CHURCH SHOULD BE

---

Good morning Life Fellowship. It is great to see you again. This morning we are going to be in Acts Chapter 1, and we are going to look at this important passage. As we get ready to read it I just want you to kind of review with me a little bit about what a wild ride the followers of Christ have been on over the past several weeks. It has been quite stunning. It would be tantamount to riding a roller coaster. You know when you ride a roller coaster there is that period of waiting while everyone gets into their seats and belted in. And then there is kind of a slow takeoff as you go up, and then there is a pause. And I hate that pause at the top. Then suddenly there is a whoosh and you swallow your heart. There are curves and banks resulting in good times and bad times as you go through the loop de loop on the top. And that is life sometimes, isn't it?

Sometimes it is the best of times and sometimes it is the worst of times. For the followers of Christ it was the best of times when they came into Jerusalem in the triumphal procession. People were shouting '*Hosanna, hosanna, the Messiah is here.*' The disciples were excited when they gathered in the Upper Room for fellowship. They enjoyed the Passover meal. Jesus was there with them. He had washed their feet. What a spectacular message He was sending. John was reclining on Jesus' shoulder just blessed by His very presence.

It was the best of times and then 'boom' the atmosphere changed. Jesus looked at Judas and said, '*You right there, you are going to betray me. You are the one. You are the imposter.*' And all of a sudden dinner got really awkward as Judas fled the room. And everyone was like, '*What just happened? I wasn't expecting that.*'

And then all of a sudden it was good times again. They sang a hymn and then they went out and prayed together. It was the best of times one more time. But then the Passover meal kicked in and some of the disciples began falling asleep. The next thing you know here came a band of soldiers carrying torches in the dark. And Judas slips out of the shadows, walks up to Jesus, and kisses Him on the cheek. The next thing you know they are grabbing Jesus and there is total confusion and chaos. Peter gets his sword out and he whacks off Caiaphas' servant's ear. And Jesus tells Peter to '*cut that out,*' and He heals the servant's ear.

The next thing you know the disciples are in the shadows, and they are confused and frightened not understanding what was going on. They are dazed and feeling chaotic. Then they hear about the trial that is taking place before Herod in a kangaroo court where they find Jesus guilty. He is stripped, beaten, and hung on a cross. And the disciples look on the face of their Savior, the one who had been with them for three years and had just been washing their feet a short time before. And now they are standing there watching Him gasp for His final breath. They heard Him say, "***Father, forgive them,***

## WHILE THEY WERE WAITING - ORIGINS SERIES

### PART 1- THE WAY CHURCH SHOULD BE

---

*they know not what they are doing.”* And then as He dies they heard Jesus say, *“Unto your hands I commit my Spirit. It is finished.”*

What a turn of events. What confusion. What heartbreak. But three days later it was the best of times. He has risen. He has risen indeed. The tomb is empty. The grave has been robbed as we sang about this morning. It was the best of times again as Jesus came into the room with them, He sat with them at the sea shore, and He walked on the road with them. Wow, it was incredible! Then He tells them to meet Him over at Mount Olivet. The next thing they know He was being taken up into the clouds, and we looked at that last week. And He tells them to go back and wait for the gift He has for them as He disappears from their sight. It had been the best of times and the worst of times and the ride had been crazy, so now what happens?

And it is at this moment where we emerge into the Scripture in Acts Chapter 1 beginning in verse 12. Now I am going to pause periodically as I read through this, because there are many ways to approach this Scripture. There is so much richness in there, and our time is limited. So I hope you will continue this study because I want to give you some real practical applications and I need you to understand the scope of this section.

*“Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey away. And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying.”* Now you see that term ‘Sabbath day’s journey;’ what is that about? Is it how far you can walk in a day? Does it mean it is from the Sabbath day Friday at sunset to Saturday at sunset; is that what they are saying? No, actually a Sabbath day’s journey is revered to Judaism laws, Jewish laws. The orthodox Jews had so many rules and legalistic regulations during this time. For instance you could only tie a knot with one hand, you could only cook the day before, and you could only go a certain number of steps on the Sabbath. So that is what is meant by a Sabbath day’s journey, it was the number of steps you were allowed, which would have been about eight tenths of a mile.

If you have ever been to Jerusalem you know that it is a very compact city. You kind of look down and you can see almost all of it. It is not that far from the Mount of Olives down to the City itself and it would only be about eight tenths of a mile in distance. The disciples left the Mount and they went down to where the Upper Room was located and where they were staying.

Maybe you wonder what was special about the Upper Room. There is a place in Jerusalem called the Upper Room and I have been to it. It is not the actual room but perhaps it was in the general location. But in Jewish culture, particularly in the upper middle classes, and in the higher classes there would be a section of homes that were a

## WHILE THEY WERE WAITING - ORIGINS SERIES

### PART 1- THE WAY CHURCH SHOULD BE

---

little nicer. They weren't right on top of each other like they were in the poorer sections, and they would have a room above the living area. And that room would be used for celebrations, for banquets, and for family gatherings. It was also often used for people who were traveling. A family would come through and need a place to stay, and they would stay in these upper rooms. I think we would call it a family, or a rec room. Some of us just have this extra room where you can kind of just hang out. So the disciples gathered in this larger room in this villa, so to speak.

Next we see the attendees there. ***“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.”*** Now understand this is not Judas Iscariot the betrayer, but Judas the son of James. Judas was a common name then like Bob, Dan or Mike would be today.

***“All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and His brothers.”*** Now Luke is very careful to give us all kinds of detail here, and that is important. Luke's writing is fascinating among all the writers of the New Testament, because he tells us things that other people may not think we need to know. And sometimes people are so detailed that we think we would have left out some of those things. But Luke wanted us to get a sense of who was in the room. So there were the eleven remaining disciples, the apostles we would call them, and then we had the significant women in Jesus' life: Mary His mother and the other women which we are going to assume may have been Mary and Martha and Mary of Bethany. Those were the women we see referenced in Scripture. And we also see Jesus' half-brother that was there. So it was intimate, it was Jesus' family, His closest friends and the apostles. And we know his followers numbered about a hundred and twenty which is what the Scriptures will go on and tell us in a moment.

Verse 15: ***“In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said, ‘Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus.’*** And again this is not the Judas that is in the room; rather it is the Judas who betrayed Jesus.

***“For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.”*** And now you will notice here is a parentheses, at least in most versions, and this means it is a parenthetical statement. In other words this is information that is interesting to know and helps us to be informed, but it is not essential to the overall meaning of what is being taught here. ***“(Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out.”*** There's a

## WHILE THEY WERE WAITING - ORIGINS SERIES

### PART 1- THE WAY CHURCH SHOULD BE

---

pretty picture. *“And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)”*

Now maybe you are thinking, ‘*What was that? Why is that parentheses there?*’ And part of that is so that we understand first of all the conclusion of Judas, but also it was the context of some of the prophetic Scripture that told about what was going to happen to the person who betrayed the Messiah.

Maybe you are wondering that if Judas is already dead how would he be able to buy a field? And we have to understand kind of the context of how wording was done, particularly in this time. It is not unique to Scripture; it is just part of how writing occurred. But what Luke basically was saying was that the money that was paid to Judas to betray Jesus was used to buy a field. It was like he had purchased it only he couldn’t buy it because he was already dead. But what happened was the money was likely returned to the priests, and the priests didn’t want it because it was blood money. They didn’t want to touch it; they were holy Pharisaical religious types. So they just bought a piece of land with it, and were going to leave it there to see what happened.

And this piece of land was believed to be very close to where Judas had committed suicide. We know that Scripture tells us he went out and hanged himself. So we know he hanged himself, and yet it says here he fell headlong and his guts spilled out. And what most Bible scholars believe is that he hanged himself in an area where this historically is referred to, at least by tradition, to be hilly with cliffs and valleys. And some of the postulation that has occurred is that Judas hanged himself, the body remained there until it began decomposing, and then when he was cut down he fell down on the ground and his guts spilled out because he was decomposing, he was bloated and so forth. I am trying not to be too graphic but you get the picture.

Or it might have been that when he hanged himself the tree branch broke and he fell off of a cliff and perhaps fell onto the rocks below. But we know that this field that was purchased was called ‘the field of blood.’ This would be like buying a house where a murder had taken place. If you are a realtor you know that usually no one wants to buy that house. This was a marked field, a field known for what had occurred there. And it was the fulfillment of Scripture as we read here: *“For it is written in the Book of Psalms, ‘May his camp become desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it.’”* So no one wanted the field of blood.

Next we read: *“And let another take his office.”* So we know that there was a vacancy, an opening that occurred because Judas had been one of the twelve. I wish I could take time today to talk to you about the significance of twelve and how it is used throughout Scripture. You know there were the twelve tribes of Israel, the twelve gates of Jerusalem, and twelve stones were used to erect the altar. Twelve is just used all over

## WHILE THEY WERE WAITING - ORIGINS SERIES

### PART 1- THE WAY CHURCH SHOULD BE

---

Scripture, and God wanted this number to be completed. So another person was going to be needed to take this opening and bring the number back to twelve.

Look in verse 21. ***“So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when He was taken up from us - one of these men must become with us a witness to His resurrection.”*** So he is saying, ‘*Okay, we have eleven; we need twelve.*’ But what are the qualifications for this twelfth person; who is that to be? Well, they said it needs to be somebody who has been with us when Jesus began His ministry, since John the Baptist was baptizing and up to the point that Jesus ascended. Someone who has been there with us, but wasn’t among the original twelve.

And there were two names that came to light. Look in verse 23. ***“And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias.”*** These were the two men that emerged as leading candidates to become the twelfth apostle. Let me just pause here and say this. We use the word disciple in a general and important way and it is also referred to as the twelve disciples. Theologically, most accurately we should call them the twelve apostles, who were also disciples.

You and I are disciples of Christ, we are followers of the teacher; we are followers of Christ, that is what disciple means. But an apostle is a separate category and in this context apostle refers to someone who was there with Jesus when all of this was happening. They saw Him, they heard Him, and they were directly taught by Him. In other words they were not taught second generation, or third generation; we are the umpteenth generation away from the teaching of Christ in terms of when He was here. But these were people who saw and heard Him teach. They saw and interacted with Him personally. And that is what makes them apostles. So they had the eleven and then they needed a twelfth one.

Now you might be wondering, ‘*Well, what about the Apostle Paul?*’ And that is a great question because we know that Paul was saved after Christ had ascended. Paul was on the road to Damascus, and if you read that passage you will remember what was said to Paul, who was Saul at that time, as he was struck down. ***“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”*** Well, the only person that could have said that was Jesus. And so Paul indeed did have a personal interaction with Christ, which then qualified him at conversion to become an apostle.

So the apostles were this group of eleven, now to become twelve again, and then also the apostle Paul. And that is how come they are classified as such. Verse 24 says: ***“And they prayed and said, ‘You, Lord,”*** speaking to Jesus, ***“you know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and***

## WHILE THEY WERE WAITING - ORIGINS SERIES PART 1- THE WAY CHURCH SHOULD BE

---

*apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place. And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.”*

And it is very interesting that here we have the casting of lots. Maybe you don't understand about the casting of lots in Scripture. It is like chance, only because God is sovereign it isn't chance because He controls it. We see this used periodically throughout Scripture. Remember when Jonah was fleeing God and the men on the ship were wondering who was causing all the problems in the storm. They threw lots and it was Jonah. God used it then. And there are other passages in Scripture that we don't have time to go through them all where casting lots is used.

Remember they even cast lots for the robe of Christ. So casting lots is referred to several times throughout Scripture, but this was the last time; it is never referred to after this. And maybe you wonder why that is. Well, it has been postulated, and I believe this, that at this point Christ has made this decision. Also the Holy Spirit wasn't there yet. The Holy Spirit hadn't yet come to lead them. The Word of God wasn't complete yet. Today we have Scripture and we have the Holy Spirit so we have that direct communication from God right now. We don't have to depend on lots now, but at this point in selecting the twelve apostle Jesus made His will evident through the casting of lots and Matthias was chosen.

Interestingly, you never hear about Matthias again. He is never mentioned again in Scripture past this point. The job was complete, the task was done, but Luke still gave us all of these details in here. And he is painting this picture of what happened during this ten day period between the ascension and when the Holy Spirit arrives, these ten days of grueling, gut wrenching, confusing waiting.

And this is where I want us to focus in the time that remains this morning. Now I have to tell you that I hate to wait. I hate to wait in traffic, I hate to wait in lines, I hate to wait for anything. I just hate to wait. How many of you business people have been coming in on a Friday afternoon from a major city, and you are coming back home to Charlotte where you are supposed to arrive between 5 and 7 o'clock, and you feel the plane going this way and then that way. Have you guys that fly all the time had this happen? It drives me mad. And sometimes the plane will do that for 15 or 20 minutes, and I think my record was almost an hour. And then they announce that they could only go around a few more times or they would need fuel. And I don't

## WHILE THEY WERE WAITING - ORIGINS SERIES

### PART 1- THE WAY CHURCH SHOULD BE

---

understand it because it shouldn't have been a surprise that we were due to land. You see that sarcasm just flows from me like water sometimes.

And then finally you land and finally the trip is over. I just hate the wait. And yet we can see in this passage that there was a strategic period of time that God said to these one hundred and twenty people assembled in the Upper Room waiting: *'Not yet, don't get ahead of me. Don't go out the door. Don't start the ministry yet. Don't found the church. Don't even preach. Wait!'*

Ugh! Not an hour, not a day, not even a week, but ten days they waited for God to complete what He wanted to complete during the period of waiting, so that He could launch what He wanted to launch for the rest of human existence. If you are like me and you are impatient, you are a little tightly wound, you drink a little too much caffeine, like I did before the first service this morning, that you sometimes want to get ahead of God. It is not ready, aim, fire; it is ready, fire, aim. Or sometimes for me it is fire, aim, ready, you know, because I can be totally backwards. And wow, we can mess things up.

So I want us to look at this this morning. You understand the context, you see what is going on, there is a lot of stuff happening, but in the midst of it all the overall thing is, *'Yeah, we're doing this and we're doing that. We're praying, but let's get out of this place. Are we just going to sit here in this Upper Room with a hundred twenty smelly people from all over the place trying to come together? How long are we going to be stuck here? Let's go, I am chomping at the bit. We have places to go, people to see, souls to save, and sermons to preach; let's make it happen.'* And Jesus says, *'Wait until the Holy Spirit arrives. Wait until the plan is ready to be launched.'*

So let's look at it. The first step is 'Ready' and that involves that waiting. And I want you to remember this - even when God has asked us to wait for a while, He is still at work all around us. Even when God has asked us to wait for a while, it doesn't mean He has gone on vacation. It doesn't mean that He has forgotten about us. It doesn't mean that we are supposed to just sit back and do nothing. He is still at work all around us.

There have been times when we have had to wait as a church. Some of you are in waiting right now. We have waited for this building. Some are waiting for that person that they will marry. Some are waiting for their promotion. Some are waiting

## WHILE THEY WERE WAITING - ORIGINS SERIES PART 1- THE WAY CHURCH SHOULD BE

---

for their next job. Some are waiting to graduate from high school or college. Some are waiting for someone in their life who is important to them and they haven't responded to the gospel. Some are praying for a new opportunity. Some are praying for someone individually. Some are waiting for reconciliation that needs to occur in their life. Some are waiting for this answer to a burden that is absolutely consuming them all the time, and they feel like time is slipping by. They have a sense of urgency. They have a sense of impatience. *'God, why are you making me wait?'* But that doesn't mean that God isn't setting the stage for His greatest work in us that has yet to be performed. They gathered together, they prayed, leadership began emerging as Peter got up and said, *'Hey, while we are here, let's do this.'* And then eventually Matthias was selected.

They looked at Scripture and found what the prophets said. *'Remember our old friend Judas.'* They even dealt with and acknowledged the past. That is what I love about Luke; he gives us everything, warts and all. Throughout these passages, as we study this in the year to come, remember Luke doesn't spare any details. When the Jewish widows and the Hellenic widows, the Greek widows, were all ticked off with each other, being jealous and causing problems, Luke tells it. And do you know why he does? It is because sometimes life is messy. We are impatient, we get ahead of God, we fight over stupid things, and we get distracted. All these things happen, and I am sure glad Luke told us because he knew we were not going to be any different than they were. He identified a need.

They depended on God, *'Solve this one. We don't know if it should be this one or if it should be that one.'* They completed their team. They did all those things while they were waiting because even though it wasn't obvious to them God was at work in their lives. And we must be willing to wait.

Ten years ago I had something happen to me that I had never had happen to me before in my entire life - I was unemployed. Not by a choice of my own, but circumstances happened in the middle of the great recession, and I even had to short sell my house. I lost most of my life savings. But I was thankful that I had at least part time income through my faculty position at a university. I moved from South Florida to the mountains of North Carolina to a little home we had there that we had planned to live in when I retired someday.

## WHILE THEY WERE WAITING - ORIGINS SERIES

### PART 1- THE WAY CHURCH SHOULD BE

---

And for one year I waited. *‘What’s next, God. Did you forget about me?’* I literally told people in moments of despair that I didn’t know what I had done but God had put me on the shelf. I felt lost. I am a Type A man. Work gives me significance; it gives me a reason to get out of bed. *‘Why are you making me wait, God?’* I would literally think that I maybe had twenty years left, and if I lost a year it would be five percent of my supposed time left. I calculated it all out. I told God, and do you know what He said? *‘Wait some more, Dan. Wait some more.’*

And it was eight years ago this month, and I think it was this week that I got a call from a church in Cornelius, North Carolina that said, *‘We have a position open on our team and we think you might meet the qualifications.’* And the waiting was almost over. Three weeks later I accepted the job, and six weeks later I started. And I look back on that and say, *‘Thank you, God, for making me wait until it was a time that I was ready and that Life Fellowship was ready.’* And these eight years have been the best part of my adult ministry.

But man, I hated that waiting. I am not going to give you some kind of profound revelation, some kind of epic insight that I gained while I was waiting. No, it was grueling, and I hope I never have to go through that again. But I do want you to understand something, that in the midst of the waiting God was at work to complete His will for me and through me. And make no mistake it is His will and not mine that is setting the agenda.

The second thing is - *‘We have to aim.’* And aiming is learning. If you are going to aim a gun, you have to learn where the target is, you need to take note of the wind speed, the drop, and all the different elements. You calculate. And part of the waiting is the learning. Part of the readiness is the aim. Some of life’s most important lessons can be learned while we are on hold. So let’s not look at waiting as wasted time; but rather as learning time, when God specifically has given us the freedom to be able to learn about who He is and who we are, what His word has said, and what we need to do.

I often fill my life so full of busyness that I don’t have time to listen for, or even to God, and yet He wants patiently to teach me something. When I first started off my career in my 20s I was a high school English grammar and composition teacher. And I had seven different preparations for every school day with about a hundred and eighty

## WHILE THEY WERE WAITING - ORIGINS SERIES

### PART 1- THE WAY CHURCH SHOULD BE

---

students total. They were working me to death for \$240 bucks a week. It was crazy, but I didn't know better at the time.

As a stupid first year teacher I told all my students they were to write a book report every month, two pages, handwritten. And then I had to grade those. Ugh! What a moron I was. But I had committed to it, so I had to keep it up nine times over the course of the year. I had to grade their two pages, handwritten, on notebook paper that looked like a drunken chicken had written them with their toes. (*Laughter.*) And I had to try and figure out what these kids were saying.

Now basically you have two types of students. You have students that write like three words stretched out on each line just trying to fill the space up. Then you have the students like Dan Burrell who have more words than they have space, so they are crammed in from page edge to page edge. Those little red line margins on the notebook paper were just forgotten; they wrote edge to edge. And those students frustrated me to no end. And do you know why? It was because I didn't have a place to write my comments. There was no space for it. The lines were full.

On the other students' papers you could write along the side, '*You used a dangling participle. Commas are your friends,*' all of these different things that I wanted to write, but I couldn't do that on the other students' papers because the page was full. I would have to flip the page over and write on the back, and nobody is going to go back there to read the comments. Whenever they noted their score they were done. So I felt like I was missing a teacher opportunity.

But you know what? We do the same thing to God. We jam pack our lives so full of inconsequential activities that we don't leave God the space He wants to be able to write His inscriptions, His movements, His lessons, His heart on our lives. And sometimes it is like God has to hand us a fresh piece of paper and tell us to put our pencil down because He is ready to school us. That is what God has to do with me every once in a while. Sometimes He does it through illness, sometimes He does it with a loss of job, sometimes He does it through a sudden move, but every once in a while God is going to say to us, '*Hang in there for a moment, I have some teaching to do, and you have some learning to do.*'

We see throughout Scripture periodically how God will pause people's lives in a supernatural, but clear way, and sometimes outrageously so, to get them in a position

## WHILE THEY WERE WAITING - ORIGINS SERIES

### PART 1- THE WAY CHURCH SHOULD BE

---

where they have space to learn. Jonah's involved a trip in a whale. Moses' was on the back side of a desert. David, after Goliath, there was a long period of time before he was ready to be crowned king. Nehemiah was a cupbearer in the king's house before he could rebuild the wall.

Saul, then Paul, after his Damascus conversion still had to go through discipleship and learn what he needed to do for the rest of his life. After Peter's failure he had a time of isolation whereupon Jesus finally came and restored and reconciled him before recharging him and setting him free. Elijah spent time in a cave. Gideon was trimming his troops down time after time at God's direction until he got to the fighting force that God wanted. Joshua had to march around the city of Jericho for seven days, tooting horns, wondering what in the world that was all about.

The Israelites spent forty years in the desert wandering around, eating manna and quail. And those forty years were preceded by four hundred years of slavery. So let us not be surprised when God tells us to, *'Hang in there, Dude. We need to take a pause because you have some stuff to learn.'*

The people in the Upper Room learned. They learned first of all that they were subject to God's deadlines. They learned that God deals with wickedness as He had certainly dealt with it in Judas' life. They learned to rely on Scripture because they were quoting it. They learned that God's will wasn't going to be thwarted by Judas' or Satan's plans. The resurrection had not been thwarted.

They learned that every seat was essential. They needed a leader to make twelve. God still engaged among His people by showing them He could control what dice came up. The people were not ready to be released until the Holy Spirit was with them. We are not finished until God says we are finished. And He sets the plate for us. So remember this - part of being able to aim well is to learn well.

Now here is the last thing - and that's 'fire.' That is doing, that is leaving the barrel, out the door, onto the field. And if we want God's very best for our lives we must be willing to live according to His terms, because when we live according to His terms He will use us. We will get to do stuff that matters. Our efforts will not be in vain, nor will our waiting have been in vain.

## WHILE THEY WERE WAITING - ORIGINS SERIES PART 1- THE WAY CHURCH SHOULD BE

---

I want to close with these quick thoughts. Number one - we must not think of ministry in terms of what we can do, but in terms of what God is doing. As we look forward to planting a church, as we look forward to doing some of the initiatives we have talked about, as you look forward to using your spiritual gifts, your spiritual niche, think about the things that you should be doing. As you talk about your future, raising your kids, starting a new job, looking to do missions, whatever it is that you are getting ready to do, understand that God sets the agenda, not us.

So much of ministry today can often be designed to accomplish our objectives rather than God's. God's mission was, and always has been, to seek and to save that which was lost, to reconcile the fallen creation to Him. That is His number one passion, His number one mission. That is why Jesus came - to seek and to save those who were lost, and in doing so He gathers worshippers to Himself who enjoy the benefits and blessings of His presence. And if we want God's best for us we will need to remember that is His primary agenda.

His agenda is not world peace. His agenda is not that every person be happy. His agenda is not that every person have a spouse, or a career, or fulfillment. His agenda is none of those things, even though they are all fine things, fun things and wonderful things. But His agenda is that we would be reconciled with our Creator. That's it. And when we get our eyes off of that we will find ourselves spinning our wheels and doing things that really don't matter in the long haul. If we want God's best for us, we will be doing what God wants for Himself, and that is drawing others to a relationship with Him.

Number two - ministry done apart from the Word of God and the Holy Spirit is a complete waste of time. When we do stuff apart from the Word of God and the Holy Spirit we are wasting our time. Those folks in the Upper Room were energized, they were excited, they had been with Jesus, they had seen the Resurrection and He told them the best was yet to come. He was coming again, and when He did it would be the end of the age, yet they continued to be worried about the kingdom of God and other temporal things. And the bottom line was that none of that was going to matter if they weren't doing it based on truth, and empowered by God Himself.

We must constantly remind ourselves that the foundation of all that we do or desire or dream needs to be built on the foundation of Scripture. Our great architect, the Holy Spirit, works from the Scripture upward. He will never lead you contrary to

## WHILE THEY WERE WAITING - ORIGINS SERIES

### PART 1- THE WAY CHURCH SHOULD BE

---

the Word of God. But if you don't know the Word of God you can't know you are being led astray. You have to have that foundation. It is that great Canon, that great measuring device. The word 'canon' literally means 'plum line.' It is that thing that helps us to evaluate whether or not we are doing the right thing, whether we should be doing this, or what we are doing that we shouldn't be doing; it is that device that tells us that.

And that is why at Life Fellowship we must never get away from the faithful teaching of the Word of God. We must search the Scriptures. We must memorize it, hold it dear, lift it high, obey it fully, count its importance, and consult it often. Because it is on this book we can know the heart and mind of God as His Holy Spirit gives us enlightenment.

There are two things I want to point out to you because I want you to understand this - we try not to do things accidentally or coincidentally here. And I can't tell you all the things that go on behind the scenes, but every song we sang this morning was chosen some time ago based on this passage of Scripture and based on consideration and prayer. It is not like the Worship Team decides, '*Oh, we haven't done that song in a while; let's put that one in there.*' That is not what goes on. And I want you to notice when you sing the lyrics of the words, if you go to the top of the screen you will see Scripture references there. Those are the references that motivated our Worship Team to select those songs, and we hope you will think about them.

And do you know what I love? I love when Jason walks out here to start leading worship, because he doesn't do it with a songbook, he does it with the Bible. And good worship is always built on the truth of the Word of God. And I have to tell you that that is rare. Even in good churches among people I respect and worship leaders I love, that is a rare understanding of why we do, how we do and what we do. It begins with the Word of God and it is not accidental; we are sending a message. We don't even want to be subtle about it. It is not subliminal. The Bible matters. Therefore we teach it systematically, reinforce it, consult it, love it, cherish it, and lift it up because it is in this we learn the mind of God. So let's not do ministry apart from His Word.

Number three - ministry is messy and confusing at times, but that doesn't mean that God isn't at work. Boy, it's messy. I'm a mess, you're a mess, we are all messes, all right? There are things going on among people in this church that are just sad and

## WHILE THEY WERE WAITING - ORIGINS SERIES PART 1- THE WAY CHURCH SHOULD BE

---

difficult and tragic and stupid and aggravating and challenging, but with opportunities as well. Because even when life isn't clean, when sin leaves its mark it is because we are fallen, so we need focus and a foundation and direction. That is why we pursue God.

The people in the Upper Room had just witnessed a brutal execution and murder. Judas had betrayed them. Peter had let them down. Jesus had left dramatically. They were a man down on their leadership team and the leader had just disappeared in the clouds. These people must have had some serious PTSD. And even in life today people let us down. Sin overtakes us, people are plotting for our destruction, life isn't fair, politics impact us externally and internally, clarity is often lost in the debris of organizational dysfunction; yet in the midst of all this chaos let's make no mistake - God is at work.

What we see as the flotsam and jetsam after a tsunami of failure, addiction, heartbreak and deceit in our lives, God sees as the building material that will restore order, life, purpose, direction and meaning to what we have managed to break. So don't give up. God is still putting the pieces all together again.

Then finally as I close, sometimes when we are most anxious to do something, the best response is to simply wait patiently while God puts the pieces into place. For ten days they would wait. But those ten days followed forty days since the Resurrection. And those forty days had been preceded by three years of ministry. And those three years of ministry had been preceded by thirty years of life for Christ on this earth. And oh, the thirty years of Christ's life here on earth after His birth in Bethlehem were preceded by four thousand years of prophetic utterances and promises.

See there has been a lot of waiting until God's work here is complete. And in that waiting He has given us hope, and shared with us grace. Now He is waiting for that one more lost lamb, that one last coin, that one broken fisherman, that one messed up Lake Norman resident. He is patiently waiting. He is waiting for you.

We have zero control over the timetable; that is God's alone to set. But we do have control over whether or not we will be patiently obedient as we wait for the next phase of His project, the next chapter of His story, the next act in His play, the next move in His match against Satan. So while we are waiting, make no mistake, it is not waiting in vain.

## WHILE THEY WERE WAITING - ORIGINS SERIES PART 1- THE WAY CHURCH SHOULD BE

---

Maybe you are waiting this morning. You are frustrated, *‘Come on, God, let’s move this forward. I’m ready to go. I’m anxious. Where is the opportunity? Where is the ministry? Where is the spouse? Where is the answer to prayer? Where is my next assignment? Where is my next achievement?’* The hundred and twenty waited ten days. Ready, aim, and then we can fire, but not until God pulls the trigger.

What is it that God is having you wait for? Are you willing to release it and hold it with open hands and say, *‘Okay, Lord, in the Upper Room I go. I will stick among my friends, I will do what I am supposed to do, I am going to be learning, listening, watching and waiting. And then when you are ready for me to launch, your Holy Spirit will send me out with a roar.’* Perhaps you are sitting here and you are thinking, *‘You know what, I don’t know the Lord and I am just tired of waiting. And now I understand that He has a plan for me, and I want to join Him in that plan by trusting Him as my Lord and Savior.’*

In a moment we are going to stand, and when we do I want to urge you to walk right over here. There will be several people standing there, and you can just tell them that you want a relationship with Christ, that you want to be a Christ follower. They will know exactly what that means, and they will show you from the Bible what it means to become a Christian, a Christ follower. Don’t bring a pen, don’t bring a checkbook, you won’t need them. All you have to do is come just as you are for what God wants you to do.

Maybe you would say, *‘Dan, I’m in a period of waiting and I am losing my mind. I need someone to pray with me.’* Then just go over there and pray with someone. We have people who will hug you, love you, and pray with you. They will follow you with prayer. Or you can tell us about your needs on that Connect Card and we will pray for you this week. We have been praying for several of you who are going through some really tough times. Maybe you just want to come up to one of these crosses and pray, we need to take our needs before the Lord. That is what the people in the Upper Room were doing while they were waiting, they were praying.

Maybe you need to be reminded what they did at the Passover when Jesus said, ***“This do in remembrance of me.”*** You can take communion in the back or in the front. Whatever you do, take this moment right before we leave, this moment in time, and say, *‘Lord, I don’t want to waste my waiting.’* And ask Him to teach you what you need to know so that when He says, ‘go,’ you are fully ready. Let’s stand as we pray.

## WHILE THEY WERE WAITING - ORIGINS SERIES PART 1- THE WAY CHURCH SHOULD BE

---

*Father, we love you. Thank you for your Word. Thank you, Father, for helping us understand what you are doing as you complete your work, even though we sometimes get impatient while waiting. And when we feel like it is wasted time help us to understand that it is important time, because when we do things in our efforts they are meaningless, and when we do things in your power they matter for eternity. Father, help us to be patient while we are waiting this week. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.*

*The preceding transcript was completed using raw audio recordings. As much as possible, it includes the actual words of the message with minor grammatical changes and editorial clarifications to provide context. Hebrew and Greek words are spelled using Google Translator and the actual spelling may be different in some cases.*