

An article in The Boston Globe claims that our "demand for instant results is seeping into every corner of our lives." ... The need for instant gratification is not new... but our expectation of "instant" has become faster. ...The article states:

Retailers are jumping into same-day delivery services. ... Smartphone apps eliminate the wait for a cab... a date... or a table at a hot restaurant. ... Movies and TV shows begin streaming in seconds. ... But experts caution that instant gratification comes at a price - It's making us less patient ...

We've come to expect things so quickly... that researchers found people can't wait more than a few seconds for a video to load. ... One researcher examined the viewing habits of 6.7 million internet users. ... How long were subjects willing to be patient? ... Two seconds. ... After that they started abandoning the site. ... After five seconds, the abandonment rate is 25 percent. ... When you get to 10 seconds... half are gone." ... The results offer a glimpse into the future. ... As Internet speeds increase... people will be even less willing to wait for that cute puppy video. ... The researcher... who spent years developing the study... worries someday people will be too impatient to conduct studies on patience.

The topic of our concern this morning... which comes from our passage of Scripture... is one that is a problem for many... and one that is getting worse year by year - WAITING !

We all know that waiting is necessary and beneficial for the believer.

Isaiah 40:30-31 (ESV)

Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

But waiting never seems to be easy... does it...? ... In a culture like ours... we tend to be impatient... restless people. ... Slowing down and waiting... appears like a waste of time.

However... Eugene Peterson... a theologian who I admire... reminds us through his paraphrase of the Bible (the Message)... in Romans 8:22-25... "Waiting does not diminish us, any more than waiting diminishes a pregnant mother. We are enlarged in the waiting" During a time of waiting... God is vibrantly at work within us. ... Waiting is a period of learning. ... The longer we wait... the clearer our understanding becomes about Him for whom we are waiting.

So how do we engage in this necessary activity... that is becoming increasingly elusive to us... as we live in such an instant society...? How might you and I cut across the trends of our modern culture... so that we might enjoy the benefits that God would have for us...?

We come to a passage today in our study through Acts... where we find the followers of Jesus waiting in THE upper room... Through their example... we will learn four procedures to apply to our own periods of waiting... that will greatly enhance the likelihood of our success.

Some who are listening to this... have been waiting a long time on the Lord to turn the heart of their child or loved one... from their rebellion against the Lord. ... Many of us have loved ones for whom we have been praying and waiting... to see them turn their life over to the Lord. ... You may be praying and waiting for a financial situation to improve. ... Your's might be a wait for an improved health condition. ... Perhaps it is a decision... for which you want to know God's will for your life... or to have Him open a certain door.

How can your period of waiting enlarge you...? How can you ensure that God will be vibrantly at work in you...? ... My prayer is that today's passage will encourage you in your wait... that it will give you hope and sustain you... and that you will leave here today with a strategy to employ.

Last week in Acts chapter one... we studied the passage where Christ taught His disciples one last time. ... He corrected their understanding of what their aim should be... in His physical absence from them. They are to be focused on being His Spirit led... Spirit empowered witnesses.

After His final instruction... and as Jesus ascended... Acts 1:10 said "*They looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up*". The ascension of Christ (no doubt) was a sorrowful experience for the disciples... so no wonder they "*looked steadfastly*" upward when Christ left. ... Then suddenly... "*Two men stood by them in white apparel.*" ... (The angels are called "men" because they came in human form.) ... These angels had been sent to speak to the disciples... to help them make the transition from the ascension to their Christ-called duty.

Then the angels spoke: "*Men of Galilee, why do you just stand here looking up into Heaven...?*" ... In other words... gazing upward to heaven was not doing their duty. ... The angels went on to say... "*This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven.*" ... This promise would be a great encourager and motivator for the disciples... who immediately obeyed.

Acts 1:12

Earlier... Jesus had told them to wait in Jerusalem... for the promise of the Father... which would be the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Now... as I pointed out before... this would not have been such an easy instruction for them to follow. ... Jesus had just been crucified. An angry mob cried out for it. ... Circumstances were not favorable for Jesus' followers in that city where He told them to wait. ... Furthermore... most of the disciples were from Galilee... which was way up North. ... They had lives... and careers up there... not in Jerusalem.

But as inconvenient as it was for them to obey... they did! ... Our first procedure for waiting on the Lord is to obey what we already know... He wants us to do.

Sometimes... we want to see God act first... give me what I want... and then I'm going to obey You, Lord. ... "God... give me a better job... an enhanced level of income... then I'll start tithing..." ... "God... if You would fix this strain that we are experiencing in our marriage... then I will start witnessing to others more..." ... "Give me more energy... God... and I will start getting up earlier every day... and have my quiet times with You..."
Make it more convenient... Lord... THEN, I will obey!

Are you waiting on the Lord for something in your life...? Start obeying Him NOW in matters that might not be all that convenient – but you know He wants you to do.

John 14:21 (ESV)

Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him."

Think of the walk back to Jerusalem after the angels told them to quit looking up and to get going. ... "Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet... a Sabbath day's walk from the city." ... Maybe this walk started out subdued... with feelings of being overwhelmed and stunned by the Ascension. ... I think because of the way Luke in his Gospel account describes it... that some probably were hardly aware that their feet were on the ground. ... Perhaps some pinched themselves. They returned to Jerusalem with great joy—mega-joy!

Look how Luke... who wrote this book we are studying (Acts)... described this same event as he closed his Gospel. ... (Same human author – same event.)

Luke 24:51-53 (ESV)

While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God.

They obeyed the inconvenient command – with joy! ... And notice how they did not just stay in the upper room and wait. Luke 24:53 says that they went back and forth to the Temple to worship there... as well. ... So... not only did any fear of a backlash from Jesus' crucifixion stop them from their obedience to stay... they even worshipped in the Temple!

If you are waiting on the Lord... joyfully and boldly obey Him... while you wait. ... And let me warn you. You won't have much joy... if you merely try to obey Him with an "I'll-do-this-for-You-and-then-You'll-owe-me attitude... before God. ... That will never work anyway! Don't ever think that you can make God beholden to you.

Acts 1:13-14

Our first procedure for waiting on the Lord... is to obey what we already know. ... *Unity* is at the center of our next one. ... "They all *joined together* [**with one accord**," verse 14 says]... constantly in prayer."

This is amazing! ... Eleven disciples — strong-willed men... the kind who argued over who was going to get the best seat in the kingdom... and who refused to wash one another's feet. ... Then we also have Jesus' brothers... who had earlier been so skeptical... that they flat-out rejected the messiahship of their brother. (Now... they no longer did! ... Seeing Him alive... after the resurrection made a difference.) ... Jesus' mother and a whole houseful of women—rich, poor, chaste, unchaste— were also present. ... "*All*" of them were of one mind—literally, "of one heart and mind" ... with a joyful... expectant belief.

I like the point that Warren Wiersbe makes in his commentary about this...

How easy it would have been for someone to bring division into this beautiful assembly of humble people! The members of the Lord's family might have claimed special recognition, or Peter could have been criticized for his cowardly denial of the Saviour. Or perhaps Peter might have blamed John, because it was John who brought him into the high priest's house (John 18:15-16). John might well have reminded the others that he had faithfully stood at the cross, and had even been chosen by the Saviour to care for His mother. But there was none of this. In fact, nobody was even arguing over who among them was the greatest!

The Lord is pleased to pour his Spirit upon believers who are living in unity. At the end of Acts 4, the Church is described as being "one in heart and mind," with the result that "much grace" and "great power" came upon them (Acts 4:32-33). The breeze of the Holy Spirit refreshes the life of those who

dwell in unity—those who through faith in Christ forgive... make restitution... and seek the healing and affirmation of others.

I have a joyful confession to make to you right now. ... Last Thursday I was trying to enjoy a prayer walk. I like to take breaks from my study and walk circles around this auditorium... praying and meditating on what I had just read. ... On Thursday I was trying to do this... and seeming from out of nowhere a thought popped into my mind... “Contact your older brother, Harry.” As I tried to pray... I tried to push the impression out of my thoughts. ... I remember thinking... “I don’t know how I would do that... Lord...” You see... the last time we communicated... he ended it by saying that he would be blocking me from his email and other forms of communication... But more than that... I just didn’t want to push through and try to initiate any contact. ... He lives in California... and I happily live up here in Oregon.

Sometimes when my wife and I would drive home from church... Patti would ask me... “Did you think of anybody when you wrote that sermon...?” It wasn’t often... but anytime she would ask that... the sermon made her think of my brother... Harry... and our need to be reconciled. I would always give my best justification... as to why I did not need to try to reconcile. It usually went along the lines of a cheap proof that I had forgiven him... and therefore we can go on with our lives... and Harry could go on with his. ... Patti would then retreat back into her waiting and I know that she was also praying... and watching for another opportunity... when I might be more receptive.

Last Thursday as I argued with the Lord... another thought popped into my mind. *“Go to Harry’s web page. You know the address. Lay your sacrifice down here at the alter... go and be reconciled to your brother... and then come back and resume your worship...”*

So I went back into my office... closed the door... typed in the address of his web site into my computer... and it all made immediate sense. ... His web page was full of blogs where he was writing about what God was teaching him. ... My heart was immediately warmed that he was in fellowship with the Lord... and that he wanted to reach out to others with how God was developing him. ... Then I started to cry... because much of what he was impacted by... was the same material that has been a strong influence in my life – Henry and Richard Blackaby’s Experiencing God materials. ... God was sovereignly using the same thing... independently in the lives of two brothers who did not want to have anything to do with each other. ... But the real kicker for me... was the blog that I happened to read. ... He wrote about the need to be reconciled to one another as believers... that it is not optional! ... After a few more tears... I sent him an email... hoping that it would get through. ... I asked him to forgive me for my attitude and for holding onto my cheap justifications for remaining estranged.

That evening I checked my email. Harry had replied. It was a short note. My brother (who I have never known to be an emotional person) said that his eyes were too full of tears to respond... but that he would as soon as he was able. ... The next morning I found his second reply. He told me that when he wrote that blog about reconciliation... he was thinking about me. He also told me that God was working on his heart about how he has

thoughtlessly offended several people in his life. He told me about a mutual friend of ours... a fellow believer who has been praying for us to be reconciled... and he asked if he could forward my email to Mike... to encourage him.

God... Who was already at work in my brother... Harry... said “Go and be reconciled...” I struggled with God... but He said... “I will even make this easier for you... Go to his web site...”

Is there someone in your life that you need to be reconciled with...? ... A friend...? a family member...? a former co-worker...? a person you used to attend church with...? someone from your distant past...? If you are waiting on the Lord... there is no better time. Through faith in Christ forgive... make restitution... and seek the healing and affirmation of others.

Is there something you are waiting on God for in your life...? #1. Obey Christ in everything... #2. Make restitution with anyone who you need to be reconciled with... #3. Engage in persistent prayer.

I would like for you to take notice of the phrase in verse 14... “devoting themselves to prayer...” This was some lengthy... prolonged... and steadfast praying. Luke throws a word in here that means... they continued... persevered... endured... persisted... stuck to praying. They would not cease or stop praying. ... (Unless they took a break and went to the Temple to worship. But then came back and fell back down on their knees...)

Persistence is the key. ... A hurried request soon forgotten and unrepeated will produce no fruit. ... Jesus taught this principle... with the story of the

man who went to his neighbor at night... to borrow food for an unexpected guest. He only received what he wanted... because of his repeated banging on the door. Look how Jesus applied this parable...

Luke 11:8-9 (ESV)

I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs. And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

Persistent prayer is the prerequisite for spiritual blessing and renewal. Everywhere you look in Scripture... whenever God intends to display a powerful act of His mercy... the first thing He does... is to set His people to prayer. The idea of "prevailing prayer" presents a key to powerful praying - praying without giving up until the answer comes.

But why do we need to keep on praying? ... Is God so reluctant to answer our prayers... that we have to keep on asking him? ... No... not at all! ... He is not reluctant to give... but often we may not be ready to receive his gift. Prayer makes us ready... because when we pull close to God... our hearts become attuned (sensitive) to His will.

Furthermore... prayer is a way of engaging in spiritual warfare against Satan and his forces. ... Battle language is often used for prayer throughout Scripture (for example... Rom. 15:13; Col. 4:12). ... Immediately after Paul's famous exposition on spiritual warfare in Ephesians... he writes...

Ephesians 6:18 (ESV)

praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

In other words... prayer is a form of spiritual warfare. God in his sovereign wisdom has chosen the best time for sending an answer to prayer... until then... we "should always pray and not give up."

Often... as in the case of an adult but rebellious child or an unconverted spouse... we can do little directly to change the person. ... Advice and rebuke may only worsen the situation. ... But we can persevere in prayer for them. ... History is abounding with examples of answers to such prayers.

In November 1844... George Mueller began to pray for the conversion of five individuals. ... He said... "I prayed every day without one single intermission... whether sick or in health... on the land or on the sea... and whatever the pressure of my engagements might be." ... After eighteen months of such praying... the first of the five was converted. ... Five years later the second came... and the third after another six years. ... In his sermon... Mueller said that he had been praying for thirty-six years... for the other two... but they still remained unconverted. ... His biographer says that one of those two "became a Christian before Mueller's death and the other a few years later."

If you are waiting on the Lord for something in your life... our example today teaches us... #1. To obey Christ in everything... #2. Make restitution with anyone who you need to be reconciled with... #3. Engage in persistent prayer. ... And now we are ready for the next one... #4 is... to prepare for any change that God would have us make.

Our waiting for God's answers... often brings us to uncomfortable changes in our life. ... As the 120 followers of Christ waited in the upper room... they had some unfinished business... that they needed to take care of. ... They had to revisit... and deal with... the tragic and embarrassing 'business of Judas'. ... His betrayal of Jesus and of them all... must have continued to linger at the back of all their minds as a dark... even shocking... assault on their fellowship. ... Even the glory of resurrection could not totally eliminate it from their memories... and with the ascension now behind them... and with it... the realization that there would be no further 'meetings' with Jesus... the horror of Judas and his actions... would have reasserted itself for them all. ... It had to be addressed... and they proceeded to confront it.

As we read this next portion of our passage... notice how Peter confronts the need for this uncomfortable change. Peter will do three things.

(1) *He brings the issue right into the open.* ... He refers to his wickedness and the horrific judgment that had overtaken him: **he fell headlong... and his bowels came gushing out.**

(2) *He sets the failure of Judas within the overruling will of God, but not in a way that excuses him:* **the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago.** ... Despite the deep mystery of Judas' action, and the raw sense of shock and defeat it registered for the apostolic group... God had not been finally thwarted in His purposes. ... Indeed even Judas' hideous act of betrayal of the love of Christ for him had been foreseen... it was prophesied... God remains Lord of all... even of desperate acts of failure. ... No failure... of whatever proportion... by whatever person... can thwart the will of God. ... He is... and forever will be... Lord of all.

(3) *He acknowledges the deep personal pain for them all... and even... possibly... some lingering sense of responsibility they may have felt. ... Judas... after all... had been **one of our number and shared in this ministry.** ... But this must not paralyze the band of Christ's followers from making required change.*

Acts 1:15-26

I think we need to deviate just a little from the main thrust of our passage – What to do while waiting on the Lord – because these verses... that we just read... raise several momentum-stopping questions. If we do not stop and consider the problems that they stimulate... some people may come away with a few ideas that the Bible is teaching something... that it really isn't.

We will come back to the topic of what to do while waiting... but here are three issues that we first must address. #1. They cast lots in making their decision... Is this a viable way for us to determine God's will for us today...? #2. Why was it necessary for there to be 12 apostles...? Why did Judas have to be replaced...? #3. By choosing Matthias... did they jump the gun...? Was the selection of Matthias a mistake... when God would have instead wanted them to wait for the Apostle Paul...?

(Let's begin with the first question.) Some have tried to link question one and three together... using both... to come up with a common answer. If this procedure was of God... why isn't church business conducted in this way now?... And here is how they blend the two questions... If this method is not to be used now... how could it have been legitimate then? ... Did Matthias really become the twelfth apostle... or was this the first major

postascension failure of the church. Did their use of a worldly method negate the true Apostleship of Matthias...?

Throughout the Old Testament the lot was the normal means of discerning the divine will... when a prophet was not available. ... It was the means of decision on the Day of Atonement... and was how the land had been divided by Joshua. ... Centuries later... when the returning exiles wanted to know God's mind... they still used it ([Neh. 10:34](#); [Neh. 11:1](#))... More important than the historical examples... are the instructions of Proverbs...

Proverbs 18:18 (ESV)

The lot puts an end to quarrels and decides between powerful contenders.

Proverbs 16:33 (ESV)

The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.

Those gathered in the upper room had every reason in terms of both biblical precedent and biblical teaching to believe that God would make his will known through the lot. ... There was nothing incorrect in their procedure.

But... something very important to know... is that this the last time... that we read about believers using dice to determine God's will. ... The reason is that in the very next chapter... Acts chapter two... the Holy Spirit falls. ... From this point on... we see the church empowered by the Spirit. ... God speaks through that Spirit. ... Omens from God... like Gideon's fleece... the Urmin and Thumen... and casting lots... were relegated to history. ... So No... We who live in the church age... have this direct connection with

God... and we no longer have to copy the means... that were necessary... for the first ten days after Jesus left.

Question #2... Why were 12 Apostles necessary...?

It was necessary that twelve men witness at Pentecost... to the twelve tribes of Israel... and also that twelve men be prepared to sit on twelve thrones... to judge the twelve tribes (Luke 22:28-30). ... From Acts 2-7 ... the witness was primarily to Israel... "to the Jew first"... Once the message had gone to the Gentiles... this Jewish emphasis began to decline. ... That explains why... when the Apostle James was martyred... he was not replaced (in Acts 12). ... Why? ... (He was one of the original 12... just like Judas... who they had to replace...) ... Because the official witness to Israel was now completed... and the message was going out to Jews and Gentiles alike. ... There was no more need for 12 Apostles to give witness to the twelve tribes of Israel.

Question #3. Did they make a mistake...? Should they have waited for the Apostle Paul...? Those who believe the answer to this question is "yes"... often cite for their evidence that we never again hear from Matthias in Scripture. This is the last mention of him. This is pointed to as substantiation... that God corrected their mistake... by sending poor 'ol Matthias into an obscure anonymity... He is not part of the rest of Christian history.

But this is a bad argument. You see – except for Peter and John – none of the original 12 are mentioned again. It isn't just Matthias... who we never hear from again.

Paul made it clear that he was *not* to be classified with the Twelve (1 Cor. 15:8; Gal. 1:15-24)... and the Twelve knew it. ... If the Twelve thought that Paul was supposed to be one of them... they certainly did not show it! ... In fact... they refused to admit Paul into the Jerusalem fellowship... until Barnabas came to his rescue! (Acts 9:26-27) ... The 12 Apostles ministered primarily to the twelve tribes of Israel... while Paul was sent to the Gentiles (Gal. 2:1-10).

No... I do not believe that Paul was meant to be the twelfth apostle. ... Peter and the other believers were in the will of God... when they selected Matthias... and God gave His endorsement to Matthias... by empowering him with the same Spirit... when the Holy Spirit fell at Pentecost.

OK... now back to the intent of our passage – What to do if you are waiting on God...? ... #1. To obey Christ in everything... (no matter how difficult) ... #2. Make restitution with anyone who you need to be reconciled with... (no matter how difficult) ... #3. Engage in persistent prayer. ... (no matter how difficult) ... and #4. prepare for any change that God would have us make... (no matter how difficult)

I close with this story that I love... from Christian Psychologist... Dr. Larry Crabb... when he was a toddler.

One Saturday afternoon, I decided I was a big boy and could use the bathroom without anyone's help. So I climbed the stairs, closed and locked the door behind me, and for the next few minutes felt very self-sufficient.

Then it was time to leave. I couldn't unlock the door. I tried with every ounce of my three-year-old strength, but I couldn't do it. I panicked. I felt again like a very little boy as the thought went through my head, "I might spend the rest of my life in this bathroom."

My parents—and likely the neighbors—heard my desperate scream.

"Are you okay?" Mother shouted through the door she couldn't open from the outside. "Did you fall? Have you hit your head?"

"I can't unlock the door!" I yelled. "Get me out of here!"

I wasn't aware of it right then, but Dad raced down the stairs, ran to the garage to find the ladder, hauled it off the hooks, and leaned it against the side of the house just beneath the bedroom window. With adult strength, he pried it open, then climbed into my prison, walked past me, and with that same strength, turned the lock and opened the door.

"Thanks, Dad," I said—and ran out to play.

That's how I thought the Christian life was supposed to work. When I get stuck in a tight place, I should do all I can to free myself. When I can't, I should pray. Then God shows up. He hears my cry—"Get me out of here! I want to play!"—and unlocks the door to the blessings I desire.

Sometimes he does. But now, no longer three years old and approaching sixty, I'm realizing the Christian life doesn't work that way. And I wonder, are any of us content with God? Do we even like him when he doesn't open the door we most want opened—when a marriage doesn't heal, when rebellious kids still rebel, when friends betray, when financial reverses threaten our comfortable way of life, when the prospect of terrorism looms, when health worsens despite much prayer, when loneliness intensifies and depression deepens, when ministries die?

God has climbed through the small window into my dark room. But he doesn't walk by me to turn the lock that I couldn't budge. Instead, he sits down on the bathroom floor and says, "Come sit with me!" He seems to

think that climbing into the room to be with me matters more than letting me out to play.

I don't always see it that way. "Get me out of here!" I scream. "If you love me, *unlock the door!*"

Dear friend, the choice is ours. Either we can keep asking him to give us what we think will make us happy—to escape our dark room and run to the playground of blessings—or we can accept his invitation to sit with him, for now, perhaps, in darkness, and to seize the opportunity to know him better and represent him well in this difficult world.

Wait with the Lord. It will be worth it!