



The Upper Room Distinctives

WHY THE UPPER ROOM IS THE CENTERPIECE OF CIVILIZATION

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We are frequently asked, "What makes the upper room so unique—how is it different than a regular prayer meeting?" Acts 1 and 2 provides some distinctives of the upper room.

1. The Central Distinctive

The singular purpose of the upper room is to receive and minister to the manifest presence of Christ. Prayer meetings gather for a wide variety of reasons—to pray for our kids, our health and well-being, or our missionaries. The upper room prayer meeting, however, only has one purpose.

- a. Jesus gave the command to gather for one purpose—to receive God's presence.
"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
- b. The disciples gathered for one purpose—to receive God's presence. "They all joined together constantly in prayer." Acts 1:14
"All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit." Acts 2:4
- c. The disciples continued in the upper room for one purpose—to minister to His presence.
"We hear them declaring the wonders of God." Acts 2:11

2. Doctrinal Distinctives

While the upper room is certainly not the only prayer meeting with emphasis on the following Christian doctrines, these doctrines are nonetheless essential to every upper room.

- a. An unwavering focus on the ascended Christ.
"God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, He has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear." Acts 2:32-33

"The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.'" Acts 2:35

- b. An unshakable conviction that the Bible is the Word of God.
"Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through the mouth of David concerning Judas." Acts 1:16
"For," said Peter, 'it is written in the Book of Psalms.'" Acts 1:20
"This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel." Acts 2:16
"For David did not ascend to heaven and yet he said." Acts 2:34
- c. A wholehearted recognition of God, the Holy Spirit and a responsiveness to obey the Holy Spirit's leadership.
"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, for all whom the Lord our God will call." Acts 2:38

3. Sociological Distinctives

There is significant social diversity in the upper room that is unmistakable. An upper room may start homogenous, but soon it will become heterogeneous. Jesus calls for "a house of prayer for all nations." (*Mark 11:17*)

- a. Men and women.
"When they arrived they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus." Acts 1:13-14
- b. The 11 disciples whom Jesus trained, as well as those He did not train.
"...and with his brothers...a group numbering about a hundred and twenty." Acts 1:14-15
- c. All nations—from the north, south, east and west.
"Parthians, Medes and Elamites [north]; residents of Mesopotamia [northeast], Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia [east], Phrygia and Pamphylia [west], Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene [southwest]; visitors from Rome [west]; Cretans and Arabs [southeast]." Acts 2:9-11
"My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations." Mark 11:17

4. Methodological Distinctives

Once again, the upper room does not have the corner-on-the-market regarding the following methods, but every upper room is characterized by these activities and methods.

- a. The upper room is an open, not a closed group. It is characterized by hospitality and a welcoming heart. God gathers a wide range of people into the upper room and each person brings distinct gifts and value.

- b. Scripture is often quoted while praying in the upper room. In the upper room, we learn to plead the promises of God!
- c. Spiritual gifts are activated in the upper room. The upper room welcomes the revelatory and supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit. Not only do we honor the written word in the upper room, we also honor the prophetic word.

"All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them." Acts 2:4

"When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church."
1 Corinthians 14:26

"But if an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everyone is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all, and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God and exclaim, 'God is really among you!'"
1 Corinthians 14:24-25

5. Missional Distinctives

Every upper room is a nation-impact gathering. From the upper room in heaven through the upper room on earth, Christ fulfills His purposes among the nations. *"House of prayer for all nations"* means that both the nations are welcome and the nations are reached.

- a. *"My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations."* Mark 11:17

"Parthians, Medes and Elamites residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome; Cretans and Arabs [southeast]." Acts 2:9-10

"And about three thousand were added to their number that day." Acts 2:41

"The Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." Acts 2:47

"Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Acts 13:2

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