

The Unwavering Church

Devotes Herself to Prayer

September 14, 2025

Acts 1:12-26

Child Dedication

Let's continue in our worship this morning by entering into the time we've set aside for a child dedication. In our tradition, child dedication is a commitment made by parents and supported by the whole church family to raise children in the knowledge of Christ and the truth of His Word. It is an act of worship in which parents publicly acknowledge that their children belong first to the Lord, and it is a moment where the congregation affirms its responsibility to come alongside them with prayer, teaching, and example. So this is a worshipful time in which we are all reminded that children are a gift from God, entrusted to our care, and that we depend on His grace and the partnership of the church to nurture them toward faith in Christ.

Affirmation

Do you, as Christ's church, commit to come alongside these parents—encouraging, teaching, and modeling the faith—so that together we may raise these children to know and follow Jesus?

The congregation responds: "We do."

Prayer

Father, we thank You for the gift of children and for the joy of walking together as one family in Christ. We rejoice that You have called us not only to raise our own children but to share in the holy work of shaping the next generation to love and follow Jesus. Seal the commitments we have just made by the power of Your Spirit, and help us live them out with faithfulness and joy. Now, Lord, as we continue in worship, lift our eyes to You—the God who calls us His children—and let our praise rise from grateful hearts. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Introduction

(SLIDE - Title Slide) – In a month or so, our ministry staff team will be on a 2-night retreat. In preparation for part of our time together, we're reading a book by Patrick Lencioni (whom I mentioned last week) called *Working Genius*. Lencioni's conviction is that everyone has natural, God-given talents when it comes to work, and that there are six different types of talents, or geniuses, and each of them is required for accomplishing any kind of endeavor.

So, this week, I took the quiz, and my two “geniuses” are WONDER and TENACITY.

So I, according to Lencioni, am (SLIDE) “naturally gifted at and derive energy and joy from pondering the possibility of greater potential and opportunity in a given situation, and I am naturally gifted at and derive energy and joy from pushing projects and tasks through to completion to ensure that the desired results are achieved.”

Now, because I’m wired that way ... and because I’m an American ... when a problem drops in my lap, my reflex is usually to get moving. In my heart and mind, my initial response is to want to jump in there and “fix it.”

- If there’s conflict, I want to set up a meeting or write an email.
- If a ministry need comes up, I start planning a program or drafting a strategy.

What doesn’t come easily is prayer. Prayer becomes something I tend to tack on—like asking God to bless what I’ve already decided to do. Rather than turning that tenacity toward prayer, I turn it straight to the work. ***My natural assumption is that prayer is preparation or insurance for the work.***

I’m guessing you know this instinct well. Our culture tells us: “*Don’t just stand there, do something!*” We measure our value by output, our progress by speed, our success by results. And the church is not immune. We’re tempted to think the engine of the church is our programming, our planning, our production value.

But Acts 1 tells a very different story. The very first thing the church does after Jesus ascended was not organize, not strategize, not launch a campaign—but pray. (SLIDE) ***Because prayer is not preparation for the work—prayer is the work.***

I’m reminded of a story I read about Charles Spurgeon’s church in London. Thousands came to hear him preach, but when guests visited, they would be led to the basement prayer room—hundreds of people on their knees before the service. Spurgeon called it *the powerhouse of the church*. Why? Because he knew what Acts teaches: ***prayer is not preparation for the work—prayer is the work.***

Body

The Posture of Prayer (vv. 12–14)

Let’s look at how this unfolds in the remainder of chapter 1. Look at vv. 12-14. (SLIDE)

12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, which is near Jerusalem—a Sabbath day’s journey away. 13 When they arrived, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying: Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James. 14 They all were continually united in prayer, along with the women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

The disciples returned to Jerusalem in obedience, and the first thing they did was pull the believers in Jerusalem together to be “continually united in prayer.”

- The verb ‘**continually**’ translates from the Greek word *proskartereō* and it means to be ‘busy’ or ‘persistent’ in the activity, in this case, PRAYER. Luke is telling us that the disciples were committed to prayer in an ongoing fashion.
- ‘**United**’ translates from the Greek word *homothymadon*, a favourite word of Luke’s, which he uses ten times and which occurs only once elsewhere in the New Testament. In this context, the word implies not only that they were physically together, but they were also in agreement about their being in prayer and about what they were praying. They were of one mind, if you will, in their prayers.

Isn’t it fascinating that in the wake of the ascension of Jesus and the promise of the Holy Spirit, the disciples did not sit around and wait aimlessly, nor did they launch headfirst into preaching, singing, or serving. Rather, they prayed.

Why? (SLIDE) ***Because prayer is not preparation for the work—prayer is the work.***

Illustration

One of my favorite “all-time” movies is Apollo 13. There’s the pivotal moment in the movie in which the astronauts “rattle” the oxygen tanks and one of them explodes. The first words from Mission Control weren’t, “Fix it yourselves!” They were, “Stay on comms.” Why? Because survival depended on staying in constant contact with Houston. The church thrives the same way—by staying on comms. ***Prayer is not preparation for the work—prayer is the work.***

The Effect of Prayer (vv. 21–26)

This kind of prayer continued to inform and impress the work that the disciples knew they needed to do. As you can read in vv. 15 and following, Peter rose among the gathered believers and talked about how Judas’s betrayal and death were not random but fulfilled what God had already spoken through the Psalms. The church then recognized the need to replace Judas so that the Twelve might continue as faithful witnesses of Jesus’ resurrection.

Take a look at vv. 21-26, and notice their posture through the process. (SLIDES)

21 “Therefore, from among the men who have accompanied us during the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us—22 beginning from the baptism of John until the day he was taken up from us—from among these, it is necessary that one become a witness with us of his resurrection.”

23 So they proposed two: Joseph, called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. 24 Then they prayed, “You, Lord, know everyone’s hearts; show which of these two you have chosen 25 to take the place in this apostolic ministry that Judas left to go

where he belongs.” 26 Then they cast lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias and he was added to the eleven apostles.

Did you see the effect of prayer through this whole process?

- They were *dependent* on the Lord for determining the qualifications of the next person.
- They were *dependent* on God to show them who the person should be.
- They were *dependent* on God with the very process used to determine who that person would be (casting lots).

This is the impact of prayer on a person and on a church: (SLIDE) – ***it creates and cultivates a spirit of dependency on the Lord ... for Him to do His work in us rather than bless us in our work for Him.***

One of the great paradoxes of the Christian life is that dependence is not a liability to be hidden but a pathway to strength. Our culture prizes self-sufficiency, independence, and the ability to stand tall on our own. The Christian is called to treasure dependence.

Dependence strips us of illusions. It exposes how fragile our wisdom, willpower, and resources really are. Left to ourselves, we cannot save our own souls, conquer our own sins, or sustain our own faith. Yet in our inability, God proves Himself able. In our insufficiency, His sufficiency shines. When we are emptied of pride, we are filled with power from above. And prayer is dependence in action. (Slide) This means that ***prayer is not preparation for the work—prayer is the work.***

Conclusion/Application

If you are not yet a Christian, the most important step of dependence you could ever take is to stop trusting in yourself and start trusting in Christ. You cannot rescue your own soul, no matter how strong or spiritual you think you are. But Jesus died and rose again to save sinners just like you. Your response is not to do more, try harder, or clean yourself up—it is to call on Him in faith, confessing your need and trusting His grace. Today, you can take the first step of true dependence by surrendering to Him. Outside, we have members at the tables outside eager to speak with you about starting that life of dependence today. So, if this is you and you didn't come here today with someone who can begin walking with you in this, head to that table outside and we will begin walking with you in your new life.

For those of us who are believers, Acts 1 reminds us that the life of faith is sustained through prayer. (Slide is still up) ***Prayer is not preparation for the work—prayer is the work.*** It is how we remain on “comms” with our King. So let me ask: are your decisions, words, and actions flowing from time with Jesus, or just from your own effort? The practice of prayer is where dependence becomes visible. Lean into it daily. Pray honestly. Pray persistently. Pray dependently.

And as a church, Beech Haven, we must not mistake busyness for faithfulness. The early church didn't launch with programming, planning, or production—they launched with prayer. What if our greatest testimony to this city was not how polished our services are, but how prayerful our people are? What if the true powerhouse of this church is not the stage, but the prayer closet? Acts 1 shows us that the church that prays together becomes the church that depends together, and the church that depends together becomes the church that God delights to use.

Closing Prayer

Father, we confess how quickly we rush to action and how slowly we bend to prayer. Forgive us for trusting our own wisdom, our own plans, and our own strength more than we trust You.

Thank You that in Christ, our weakness is not a barrier but a doorway to Your power. Thank You that the cross proves once and for all that we cannot save ourselves, but You delight to save all who call upon the name of Jesus.

Lord, for those here today who have not yet trusted You, draw them now to the life of faith, dependence, and joy that is found only in Christ.

For those of us who know You, make us a people who stay on “comms” with You—not only in crisis, but in every season. Teach us to pray honestly, persistently, dependently. Let prayer become the engine of our homes, the rhythm of our days, and the heartbeat of this church.

We pray this in the strong name of Jesus, who lives and reigns forever. Amen.