

## Peter Stood Up!

Acts 1:12-26 (key verse 15)

### *In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (a gathering of about a hundred and twenty)*

When we were little children we could not wait to grow up and be like the grown up people. We wanted to grow up so we too could make decisions as we wanted. However, it was those who cared for us who made decisions for us, decisions that also affected us. However, as we started to grow we started to have the freedom to make our own decisions, however at same time began to realize how it is actually not easy. We had to decide which career we want to take at the University, at University when a course started to be difficult or if we started to loose interest in what we thought we wanted to be and do, again we had to decide if we are continuing with or dropping that course for another one. While growing up we are continuously confronted with the question of what really do we want to be, questions that needs us to make decisions and take a clear direction. In my personal experience I am realizing that growing up as an adult is so much about making decisions. Same time decisions can be life changing, because whatever I decide sets the course of my life. And to make a decision I need to stand up for what I believe in or what am convinced of. It does not mean that the decision taken is the right one, however I have to stand up and make the decision. While as a child I thought like a child and relied on my parents, however growing up soon you realize a number of life changing decisions can only be made by you. We can seek advice from others but ultimately we have to stand up and make the decision that will set a particular course of direction in our lives. The question is, what do we base our decisions on or who do we consult for guidance in make life decisions? In other words what makes us stand up and pick a clear direction for our lives? However small or big. Most especially when we know we are not perfect and that in this world nothing is certain. Many times we feel its easier to rely on our efforts rather than the word of God and prayer so we do what we can. Same time we live in the body of sin, that has many kinds of temptations and sinful desires. Many times we are overcome by emotions and fear, and so we choose to just go with the follow. How can we stand up and be men and women who live for purpose and meaning? We want to learn through this passage what does it mean to stand up? Jesus had just left the disciples by ascending into heaven. As we learned last week he left them with a command to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit. They were left with not much, they still had their own personal challenges and the area was not a good situation for them. Yet they made the decision to wait as commanded. May the Lord help us receive one word of God so we too may stand up like Peter (an ordinary person like us with weakness) and lead a life of meaning and purpose for Jesus. Amen!

Through this passage let us learn the three ways on how Peter could stand up at the most critical time and lead. **Firstly, obedience to Jesus command.** Look at verse 12-13, *“Then they returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, which is near the city, a Sabbath day’s journey away. 13When they arrived, they went to the upper room where they were staying: Peter and John, James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James.”* In our last passage Jesus had commanded the believers to remain in Jerusalem so they may be baptized by the Holy Spirit. These were men of Galilee, so after Jesus ascension one would have expected them to return back to Galilee. However verse 12 says they returned to Jerusalem from the mount of Olives. It might have been attractive to return home because financially Peter was not necessarily in good standing. Jesus did not offer them salary or even classes on how to make money. Their pockets were probably empty. Peter was an expert fisherman going back to Galilee was a clear way he could make a living. In Jerusalem he did not have much skills to offer. Worse, in Jerusalem they were probably wanted by the religious leaders and soldiers on suspicion that they had stolen the body of Jesus. However, in spite of all these challenges they returned to Jerusalem. They chose to obey Jesus command and return to Jerusalem. By obeying Jesus word, they chose not to be backward thinking but rather forward thinking or forward looking. As long as we are in this world we will always

face challenges and troubles. However, if we choose to obey Jesus commands by holding on to his word, Jesus helps us to be future oriented and forward thinking. When we choose to obey Jesus over our fears I believe we can overcome challenges by faith. We can have living hope in his coming kingdom and then stand up for the cause of Jesus Christ. I pray that we may overcome and obey Jesus command by faith of being His witnesses to others.

**Secondly, unity of believers and prayer.** Look at verse 14, *“With one accord they all continued in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.* The believers were all in one accord and all continued in prayer. One accord means that, they prayed together or at the same time, because they all agree on what should be done. In other words there was no confusion, it was clear what had to be done and that time they were all in agreement to pray. Though they were coming from different backgrounds and the fact that Jesus was not physically with them, yet because of the resurrection of Jesus and their obedience to Jesus command, they could overcome their differences and became united through prayer. In the Kings James version verse 14a reads, *“These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication...”* the word supplication means, the action of asking or begging for something earnestly or humbly. They were united in what they asked for or were earnestly seeking. As though they were desperate. This is because of their waiting attitude on the Lord and their faith in what God promised them, the gift of the Holy Spirit. It was through this kind of praying through faith that they could overcome their differences and challenges. Through praying they could think more about the kingdom of God, the coming of the Holy Spirit and less about themselves and their worldly challenges. It is actually not easy to wait, we feel we wasting time and want to do something physical, something that we can measure so we may feel we moving forward. However, because of the resurrection of Jesus and God’s promise, they could all in one accord pray, in the difficult situation they all saw prayer as the most effective way to survive and obey Jesus command. They made a decision to devote themselves to prayer, in this way prayer actually became their lifeline in those days.

**Thridly, Peter stood up by holding on to the word of God, the scriptures.** Let us all read verse 15, *“In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (a gathering of about a hundred and twenty)”* It was in those days of praying in unity that Peter stood up among the brothers and be able address a particular problem decisively. How could Peter stand up so decisively, let us see what was in his mind, through what he said in verses 16-17, he said *“Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit foretold through the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus. 17He was one of our number and shared in this ministry.”* The betrayal of Judas to the Ministry of Jesus could have caused others to doubt God’s plans or world salvation. Others could have thought Judas spoiled Jesus plans for Jesus had appointed 12 disciples now they were 11. Others could have thought Judas surprised Jesus when he betrayed Jesus because he was chosen by Jesus to be one of his disciples. There was potential confusion that could have caused lack of direction and decision making for Jesus Ministry. However, Peter studied the scriptures very thoroughly and through much prayer he could be illuminated to see that Judas was actually a fulfillment of what the Holy Spirit had foretold trough David. David who had lived a 1000 years before the betrayal of Judas, through the Holy Spirit could foresee Judas betrayal. I think Peter was directed to these scriptures through prayer. He was not only praying but was eager to pray with the scriptures in mind. Peter through prayer could also discern the problem regarding Judas who betrayed Jesus. However for Peter it was the fulfillment of what was prophesied by David in the scriptures. This means that Peter prayed desiring to obtain understanding from the scriptures. And so he could see this problem and was able to solve it through the scriptures. This helped him understand what was really going on. In this way Peter could stand up in full conviction and authority of the scriptures. He heard God’s voice through the scriptures and could act decisively standing up.

Unfortunately in this world there are a number of religious leaders who put our Christian faith to disrepute. They claim to hear from God and then tell people what job to take, what to do, where to and so on. They do this not trough the scriptures

and a number times even contradict what the bible teaches. The Bible is the complete word of God, and God will never contradict himself, and so Peter through the scriptures could discern God's voice clearly and so stood up to solve the problem decisively. This also shows that whatever problems we may have in this world, through the word of God, God can give us a clear direction so we can resolve our issues decisively.

Peter did not stand up based on his own human confidence but rather on the authority of the scriptures. Look at verse 20, *"For it is written in the book of Psalms: 'May his place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in it, and, 'May another take his position.'"* Because of the scriptures Peter had a clear direction, Judas who betrayed Jesus had to be replaced. Verse 20b says, **May another take his position.** And so based on the authority of the scriptures Peter stood up to lead the appointment of Judas replacement. Look at verse 21, *"Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have accompanied us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from John's baptism until the day Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection."* Peter did not just go for the replacement of Judas, for the sake of replacing Judas. He was clearly guided by scriptures. He did not take this appointment lightly, firstly, he had to be a clear evidence of commitment, the person should have accompanied them the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among them beginning from John's ministry till Jesus was taken up. Two men were proposed, Joseph and Matthias. Secondly, they relied on God through prayer, for they knew only God knows man's heart, look at verse 24-25, *"And they prayed, 'Lord, You know everyone's heart. Show us which of these two You have chosen to take up this ministry and apostleship, which Judas abandoned to go to his rightful place.'"* As much as they knew the two men to have outwardly shown faith and commitment to following Jesus, only God knew their heart. Peter could stand up in replacing Judas even though there was uncertainty regarding their hearts, yet because he relied in God through prayer and his decision was based on the word of God, he could stand up and decisively solve the problem. Peter shows that standing up is not a matter of talent, human wisdom or human abilities but rather a matter on trusting and depending on God through prayer. They were not 100% certain about these men, however one thing for sure, God was leading Him to choose one man to replace Judas and so through the word of God and prayer they could be certain of the man to replace Judas.

Fundamentally Peter stood for the right cause. He was inspired by scripture, he was forward thinking and he relied on Jesus through prayer. In this world we will have much troubles that need us to make decisive decisions. We may have job problems, health problems, our studies not going well, family issues and so on. However, we can learn from Peter who even in such difficult time studied the scriptures to hear from God, prayed and then could stand up and lead a life of purpose and meaning. Moreover one of the fundamental problems in this world is sin and death. Not matter what we do we can never solve these problems. However through the bible we know Jesus had come to solve our life fundamental problem. And I am confident to say that all problems in this world springs from our fundamental problem of sin and death. However, Peter through prayer studied the scriptures and God illuminated a clear direction. He could then decisively deal with the problem and lead others in the ministry of Jesus Christ for world salvation. I pray that we may be men and women who stand up by studying the bible through prayer.

Peter was an ordinary believer, who had rejected Jesus three times and even struggled to believe the resurrection, even though Jesus had taught them about his resurrection. He was not perfect and had all life figured out. He might have thought he was a terrible failure, that nothing good will ever amount from him. However today, Peter stood up to lead a cause that ultimately would witness about Jesus to the world. I believe it is because the risen Jesus restored Peter's heart, through the word of God and prayer God can renew our hearts and vision. To be men and women who have clear life direction, which is to, to study the word of God through prayer so we may hear from him through the scriptures. This is how we can stand up

in this generation we are living in. Our generation is filled with relativism and skepticism. For example, we want genuine relationships but same time we do not want to commit, we fear many things and so we live by line, one leg in one leg out. Whereas any serious relationship, whether be it church fellowship, family, friends or in marriage there will be hurt and misunderstandings. We also find ourselves not wanting to make decisive decisions, we want things to be very clear to our satisfaction based on our standards. And so before we know it we are no different from the world, we end up going with the flow. Our Christian faith is also then based on how other Christians live. However, Peter stood up and made the decision to base his life on the scriptures through prayer. Through studying the scriptures through prayer he could make a clear decision of faith. He could solve the problem of his time decisively. He relied on prayer and hearing from God through scriptures. I pray that today we too may make decision of faith to stand up. May we stand up by deciding to study the word of God through prayer and measure our Christian lives based on the word of God. Jesus through the scriptures is calling us to be His witnesses in this world.

I must confess that I have not been a good witness of Jesus Christ. Many of my decisions lately have been based on what I think, trusting too much on my wisdom and abilities which led to unnecessary hurt and potential cause of division in ministry. However, I am learning through Peter who when faced with a problem instead studied the scriptures through prayer. He waited on the lord as he devoted his time and effort to study what God was saying through the scriptures. As he continued God could illuminate a clear direction to solve the problem. In this way he could help lead the ministry of Jesus Christ in a healthy way. I too want to stand like Peter, and through this passage I learn that I too should take a firm decision to study the scriptures through prayer most especially if I need to solve a heart burning problem, either in my family, ministry and at my workplace. This week after our study of the scriptures with the brothers, they asked that we pray for them to serve at least one bible student. I believe this was their way of standing up for the right cause of Jesus. I believe they too felt the fundamental sin problem of this world and God impressed upon them to seek at least one bible student whom they could study with. May we all stand up by making a decision to study the scriptures through prayer so that we may participate in the work of Jesus for world salvation and live meaningful lives in this world. Amen.