

Acts 2c

Life of the early church

42 This is a description of the fledgling church. Historians and sociologists struggle with the sudden explosion of Christianity. They have tried to explain it in numerous ways. The world looks for answers in anything other than a miracle. Sociologists want us to believe that people are influenced to accept a faith because of our desire to fit in with the people we associate with. That is the exact opposite of what happened on Pentecost. Thousands heard a message about a man who had lived among them. 3000 accepted the message and were filled with the Holy Spirit and many mocked and went on their own way. These were not people weak in faith who were looking for another religion. They were devout Jews who had at great expense traveled to Jerusalem to celebrate a religious festival.

These instant converts suddenly put their life on hold and stayed in Jerusalem to learn about life of Jesus who they had just accepted as Messiah. Put yourself in their shoes. Imagine dreaming of a deliverer who would restore the glory of your nations distant past and deepen your understanding of God. Suddenly you realize He already came, but you rejected Him because you misunderstood the concept of the kingdom of God. Now you realize it is a heart transformation and the infilling of the Spirit of God. You would be anxious to return home and tell your family and neighbors of your discovery and experience, but first you would want to know more about what Jesus' life and teaching.

They devoted (to continue earnestly) themselves to the four things mentioned in verse 42. First is the Apostle's teaching. It is first because it is of primary importance. Now the Apostles would begin doing what Jesus had called them to do. They relayed the sayings, sermons and miracles of Jesus to the spiritually hungry church. The Apostles themselves were just beginning to understand why Jesus had to die and be raised. Jesus' classes on being the fulfillment of the Law, the Psalms and the prophets no doubt ranked high on their list of essential teaching. In numerous sermons throughout Acts, we will read that "Jesus did so and so in fulfillment of the words of the prophets". It was important that they understand why the kingdom was not what they were expecting. Ultimately the teaching was what became the four Gospels and what we read in the rest of the New Testament. The New Testament is the Apostles' teaching.

Fellowship was number two. When we meet with other believers we share what we are learning with one another and encourage each other. Testimonies and spiritual revelation should be the main topics of our conversations. (Hebrews 10:24,25) Every time a certain friend saw me, he would ask what the Lord was showing me. It was always a blessing to share with him and receive from him too. That is fellowship. We stimulate each other to grow in the Lord.

These common meals together, sometimes referred to as love feasts, included communion. Communion brings us all to the same essentials of our faith. It humbles us all, making us all equals at the foot of the cross, recipients of the grace

of God. When the church permitted slaves in Europe to take communion, it wasn't long before slavery disappeared. (1Corinthians 10:16,17) At the communion table we forsake our petty grievances against one another and remember all that Christ has forgiven us. We examine our heart, forsake our guilt, and receive the mercy that the atoning blood offers us. We stand united as Jesus' body, forgiven sinners, loving one another, with gratitude for all Jesus did for us.

The fourth commitment was to prayer. This implies corporate prayer together asking for God to move in the earth. Many kept their Jewish custom of going to the Temple 3 times a day to pray. Traditional prayers included blessing and praising God. They also prayed for boldness to share the good news they were being taught. We have an example in Acts 4. Colossians 4:2 exhorts the church at Colossae to be like this great beginning, devoted to prayer. (Ephesians 6:11 and Romans 12:12) These four ingredients are what made the church so effective and influential. They are the same four ingredients that make us different from the world, inviting to the seeking heart.

43 A sense of awe (*phobos* – holy terror) stayed with them. Have you ever had a taste of that, when you know what is happening is supernatural and must be God actively intervening? They saw all the miracles and signs the Lord did through the Apostles. This was a confirmation to them that the teaching they were receiving was indeed from the Spirit of God. (See verse 22) Jesus continued to do the miraculous through His Apostles. (John 14:10-12; Hebrews 2:3,4)

44-46a They were not in a commune as some imagine. There was nowhere to house that many. When festival-goers came to Jerusalem they were dependent on local hospitality. They came together in the Temple courts to be taught and to worship. If someone had a need, those had extra shared. If someone had property, they sold it so that needs could be met. This was all out 100% dedication with complete unity of heart and mind. They knew they were kingdom people that were preparing to go out and share the new kingdom message of forgiveness and redemption through the death and resurrection of the Messiah. This was radical generosity. Are you that serious about being in the Kingdom of God? It was not something that continued after the initial training of 8000 as they returned to their communities as bearers of the Good News. (2Corinthians 8:14,15)

46b-47 Joy permeated the experience and all were completely sincere. The word in Greek means smooth, without stones. There were no stones of selfishness in their hearts. (Philippians 2:1,2) The impact of that unity, joy, and sincerity was that others wanted in on it. A joyful, sincere, unified church is inviting. People want to experience what you have. Every day new believers were added. Do it again Lord, and start in me!