

LIVING IN RELATIONSHIP

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Acts 2:41-47

1. The passage we just read reveals the ongoing results of Peter's message and follow-up instruction on the Day of Pentecost.
2. Peter proclaimed both the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and emphasized that God had made Him both Lord and Christ.
3. Convicted (pierced to the heart, wounded in conscience) of their complicity in the death of Jesus Christ and the certainty of His resurrection and glorification they cried out, "Brethren, what shall we do?"
4. They were instructed to repent and to publicly identify with Jesus Christ through baptism because of the fact that their sins were forgiven.
5. Through repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ they would receive the confirming gift of the Holy Spirit and be saved from (out of) the perverse generation they were part of.
6. Those who received Peter's words demonstrated the fact by being baptized.
7. About three thousand souls were added to the church-originally about 120 persons.

Acts 1:15

15 At this time Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of about one hundred and twenty persons was there together).

8. Even a casual reading of Acts and the rest of the New Testament reveals that from infancy the early church was organized into local churches or assemblies to which new believers were added.
 9. Every once in awhile I run into someone who wants to argue that church membership is not taught in the New Testament when, in reality, most of the New Testament makes little sense apart from organized bodies of believers.
- NOTE: As we approach Thanksgiving one of the things I am continually thankful to God for is the institution of the local church as designed by God.
- NOTE: That said, like God's plan for the family, His plan for the church is not always realized.
10. This morning I want to focus on what continuously characterized the lives of these early Christians, because I believe what characterized their lives should characterized our lives and the life of every genuine body of believers.

I. Learning.

- A. They were continuously devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching.
- B. No church can be what God wants it to be without an ongoing commitment to understanding and applying the word of God.
- C. Several passages of Scripture immediately come to mind.

1. Eph 1:15-23

15 For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints, 16 do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers; 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. 18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be

enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might 20 which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 **And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.**

2. Eph 2:19-22

19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, **20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,** 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

3. Eph 4:11-16

11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; 13 until we all attain to the **unity of the faith,** and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. 14 **As a result,** we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; **15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.**

II. Leaning.

A. They were continuously devoting themselves to prayer.

B. Paul pointed out that all believers are to be devoted to prayer. Rom 12:9-13

9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. 10 **Be devoted to one another in brotherly love;** give preference to one another in honor; 11 not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; 12 rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, **devoted to prayer,** 13 contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.

C. Jesus taught that "at all times they (His followers) ought to pray and not to lose heart." Luke 18:1

D. Paul commanded, "Pray without ceasing." 1 Thessalonians 5:17

E. Sadly many evangelical churches have given up on trying to have a consistent and meaningful weekly gathering for the purpose of prayer.

F. Also the Devil will resist any commitment related to prayer whether personal or corporate.

III. Living.

- A. They were continuously devoting themselves to fellowship-interaction with each other.
 - B. Their involvement with each other took place publicly and privately. (Note verse 46)
 - C. Note also that every one of them kept feeling a sense of awe.
 - D. The KJV reads, "And fear came upon every soul."
 - E. One thing that does not characterize the life of most professing Christians and church services today is the reverential fear or awe of God.
 - F. I believe living in awe of God and the manifestation of God's power in and through our lives go hand in hand.
 - G. Their lives demonstrated gladness and sincerity of heart and the end result was that the Lord was adding to their number **day by day** those who were being saved.
- NOTE: Evangelism took place in the culture rather than just in the church house.

IV. Loving.

- A. Jesus made it clear that His love was to characterize the lives of His followers.
 - 1. John 15:9-10
 - 9 "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. 10 "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love."
 - 2. John 13:34-35
 - 34 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."
- B. Notice that the members of the early church cared for and sacrificially ministered to one another. 44-45
- C. This can happen only if every aspect of our lives is surrendered to the lordship of Jesus Christ. Luke 14:33
 - 33 "So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions."
- D. What happened here was not communism; rather it was a manifestation of mutual surrender to and trust in the Lord. Acts 4:32
 - And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them.

CONCLUSION

1. **Many professing Christians today do not understand the concept of being the church or they would not simply go to church.**
2. This is particularly true in the more developed countries of the world.
3. I believe that when God adds someone to a local body of believers His intention is that they invest themselves fully in that body.
4. Paul's comparison of the local church to a human body is one every believer needs to understand and take seriously. (See I Corinthians 12)
5. Every local church should also interact with and cooperate with other bodies of believers in advancing the Kingdom of God both locally and globally.