

Acts 2:42-47:

Luke uses 'summaries' throughout this book in addition to the strategic growth summaries that we noted. This passage is a great insight into the life of the early church, acting as a bridge between the stories of the Day of Pentecost with Peter's sermon (2:1-41) and the story of the healing of the lame beggar and Peter's second recorded sermon (3:1-26). This short passage describes a vibrant, dynamic yet disciplined community.

At Pentecost, 3,000 people, from all over the known world, were added to God's Kingdom. It is a likely fact, that by this description of church life in Jerusalem, many responded favourably in the city. We know that the church was God-honouring, Christ-centred and Spirit-filled. How was this new life expressed?

1: THEIR ROOTS WENT DEEP:

V.42: **"and they devoted themselves to"** Cp. 1:14 "they devoted themselves to prayer". The word is used in v.46: "attending/attaching to" meeting together at temple and in homes. "Devoted" indicates discipline, which is not an enemy of spontaneity but its safeguard.

And what were these roots that went down deep?

"the apostle's teaching": See Matt. 28:18-20 with Eph.2:20; 1 Cor 3:11.

The apostles spoke the word of God, the word of Christ and this message is life-giving, faith-strengthening and disciple-maturing. Scripture immersion is usually a great joy for the Christian, supplying hope, comfort, assurance and understanding.

"fellowship": koinonia (Greek). This sharing together in Christ in each other's lives. It points to family and friendship. Both. Is this facet underestimated in church life today? (see 1 John 1:1-10)?

"the breaking of bread": This might not be as decisively clear as we first think. It probably meant eating meals together (v.46) but the Lord's Supper was also referred to as the breaking of bread. We know from 1 Cor.11:17ff. that the Lord's Supper took place in Corinth in the context of a communal meal. Peter and Jude mention the agape meal or 'love feast', which was a practice in the early church (2 Peter 2:13; Jude 12). This takes it away from an undue formality, where communion is only held in 'church buildings' with 'holy' utensils and elements. There is no difference between the 'communion table' and the 'kitchen table', pointing to a relaxed but serious meal. The Lord's Supper can be celebrated by earnest believers anytime and anywhere.

"the prayers": some think that this refers to set times of prayer at the temple, which is supported by 3:1, where Peter and John go to the temple at the "hour of prayer, the ninth hour". But if there were set prayer times, there were spontaneous ones, too. e.g.. Act 4:23ff, 12:5. Both are good and right. Prayer/witness both occur nearly 30x in Acts alone, a healthy balance whereby believers talk to men about God in witness and talk to God about men in prayer.

2: THEIR HEARTS WERE AWED.

v.44: **"and awe/fear came upon every soul and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles."**

"Awe" is a good translation for the word 'phobia'. For the 'fear of the Lord' is not the cringing fear of an abused slave but the wonder, respect and, thus, the respectful, AWE-ful fear of the Holy God. The awesomeness of God is seen in His encounters with e.g. Jacob (Gen.28), Moses

(Exodus 3 etc.), Daniel, John (Rev. 1). In Trefecca, in the 1859 Revival, in a chapel meeting the benediction or closing prayer was given and nobody moved for an hour, so real was the tangible, felt presence of God. Like Jacob they could say, "Surely God was in this place!"

Signs and wonders continued after the apostles (see Augustine of Hippo whose church in the early 4th Century recorded about 400 miracles including healing) up to today. We might say that there was a decline of miracles, historically, but not a ceasing of them.

Jim Graham: 'We preach from expectation; the early church preached in explanation.'
Would that we could. With God all things are possible.

3: THE CHURCH WAS UNITED.

V.44-47a : "and all who believed were together and had all things in common. " and they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing proceeds to all as any had need.

The early church did from the heart what the Law had commanded. The Spirit was present. The poor and vulnerable were cared for. It does not mean that 'communal living' becomes the norm for the church but communal care should be. Note the present continuous tense: "were selling".

This means it wasn't a one-off.

v.46-47a : " and day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they receive their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favour with all the people."

"Together": see 1:14 2:1; 4:24;5:12; 15:25; Rom.15:6 (Greek:'homo' and 'homuthumadon').

They attended the temple AND homes. (See 1:14,2:42-' for "attended". It has the has sense of commitment. Do we? The church has central gatherings AND satellite gatherings. How do we do? Are we "together"?

Practically: small groups- why not attend one? Some reasons why not:

Ill health?

Ageing-tired at night?

Children-no babysitter?

Work commitments?

These can be perfectly understandable barriers (but apathy is not on the list) and there are some suggestions to help overcome them:

Alternative meetings could be Breakfast time/ morning/.lunch/ Afternoon- are these good workable alternatives.? Locations can be flexible as we look to put our roots down deep.

"breaking bread": supper including the Lord's Supper!(as above).

"Glad and generous hearts": these go hand in glove. A glad heart is generous and vice versa.

"Praising God and having favour with all the people": they looked upward and spread outward.

4:THE LORD ADDED TO THEIR NUMBER:

v.47b: " and the Lord added to the number day by day those who are being saved."

There will be a massive influx in Acts 4:4 as the result of Peter's explanation of a miracle and the resultant opportunity to preach Jesus. But it seems that there was this steady growth, daily.

And so into this joyful atmosphere people came, tasted the powers of the Age to come and were being saved. New life abounded.

QUESTIONS:

- 1: "Together" or "of one accord": how important is unity or togetherness in church life?
- 2: How does or might a small group work for you?
- 3: Have you experienced awe in the presence of God?