

## Reflective questions #171 for the pulpit message's Text 12 June 2022. 'The Spirit's Power in Community' Acts 2: 42-47

<sup>42</sup>They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. <sup>43</sup>Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. <sup>44</sup>All the believers were together and had everything in common. <sup>45</sup>They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. <sup>46</sup>Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, <sup>47</sup>praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

### Main Idea

On the Day of Pentecost, the Apostle Peter's ended his first and greatest recorded sermon [Acts 2:14-39], with these words in Acts 2:36: "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah." The Jewish multitudes were deeply convicted [v. 37] --*cried out to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"* They were convicted of the Lordship of Christ and of their own sin. Peter responded: *"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"* [v.38]. Peter then added that the promised gifts for all who truly believe extends even to the Gentiles = those to *"all who are far off"* [v.39]. So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. [vv. 40, 41]. The Apostles and the new flock were not left clueless or directionless. They are a community in which the Holy Spirit reigns. When the Holy Spirit reigns 1) There is **teaching** of God's word 2) There is **fellowship** with one another 3) The believers will **worship** God. These 3 essential characteristics are the keys to spiritual maturity and growth in the community of Christ, then and now.

#### 1. Teaching [v. 42]

- a) *"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching"*. "Devoted" means that "they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching." They had a single-minded devotion to the 3 traits of the first community. These three thousand new-born Christians were continually devoting themselves to God's Word from the apostles. They under the reign of the Holy Spirit. They were hungry for God's Word and just could not get enough of it.
- b) What did they apostle teach? The epistles had not been written yet. There were no written biographies of Christ at that time. What, did they teach? The phrase "the teaching of the apostles" describes the entire preaching of the apostles. Sermons were an integral component of the Sabbath services in the Jewish synagogues; they usually followed the reading from the Torah and the Prophets [cf. Luke 4:16–22]. The teaching of the apostles followed the same pattern. The content of this teaching can be gleaned, at least in part, from the sermons in Acts, particularly those of Peter. The apostles' teaching focused on Jesus' life, ministry, death, and resurrection, and on His significance in God's plan. In the book of Acts, the apostles will teach that God offers His messianic salvation not only to Jews, but also to Gentiles [Acts 2:21, 39; 3:26; 10:34–35, 36, 43, 45; 11:18]
- c) Where the Spirit reigns, a love for God's Word reigns. Those early believers studied the Scriptures. The Apostle Peter says, *"Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation"* [1 Peter 2:2]. "Teaching was the milk of the early church under the direction of the Holy Spirit".

#### 2. Fellowship [v. 42]

- a) *"They devoted themselves to . . . the fellowship"*. This kind of fellowship did not exist before the giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The Greek word [*koinonia*] used here for fellowship means partnership [Acts 2:42; 2 Cor. 6:14; 13:13; Gal. 2:9; Phil. 3:10; 1 Jn. 1:3] =participation, communion [1 Cor. 10:16]=aid, relief [Heb. 13:16;] =contribution in aid [Rom. 15:26]. It is not found in the Gospels. This is the first occurrence of the word in the New Testament. The root idea is "commonness" or "commonality." Every time this word is used in the New Testament, it denotes some kind of sharing—either sharing something with someone [2 Corinthians 8:4; 9:13] In Acts the emphasis of the word [*koinonia*] is on contributing or giving.
- b) The foundation of the early Christians' fellowship was giving. Acts 2: 44, 45 make this clear: *"And all who believed were together and had all things in common"* [v. 44]. "And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need" [v.45]. But, the early believers did not sell everything. Some still

had houses, as Acts 2: 46 indicates they still had homes: “[*They broke*] *bread in their homes.*” Also, in Acts 5 Ananias and Sapphira owned property. The point is, the fellowship of the early church rested on a mutual generosity and sharing. Fellowship cost something in the early church. Fellowship is not just a sentimental feeling of oneness. It is not merely food and refreshment. Fellowship comes through giving. True fellowship costs! So many people never know the joys of Christian fellowship because they have never learned to give themselves away. The truth is, we will have fellowship only when we make it a practice to reach out to others and give something of ourselves [Hughes].

- c) Furthermore, fellowship happens as we draw close to the Godhead. First John 1:3 says: “That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship [koinonia] with us; and indeed, our fellowship [koinonia] is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ”. When we experience fellowship [koinonia] with the Father and the Son, we draw closer to each other and enjoy fellowship [koinonia] with one another. 2 Corinthians 8: 4-5 records a beautiful example: The Macedonian church were begging for the privilege of participation [koinonia] in an offering, a contribution. Those particular believers were extremely poor, and yet they determined to practice fellowship [koinonia] by giving to others. How could they do it? It’s is because “...They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God they were able to give. That is fellowship [koinonia]. If you want to have fellowship? You must be a giver. When the Spirit reigns, God’s people not only relate to the Word—they relate to one another in “koinonia” and sharing.

### 3. **Worship [v. 42]**

Their worship consisted of two things: a) “the breaking of bread and b) the prayers.”

- a) The “breaking of bread” refers to the regular observance of the Lord’s Supper. After their main meal [“agape feast” 1 Cor. 11:20–34i], they would take the remaining bread and wine and engage in celebrating the Holy Communion. They “[continually] devoted themselves” [v. 42] to this. Christ and His atoning work were constantly before them [symbolized in the bread and wine of the Holy Communion]---as they daily bring their hearts in solemn and joyous contemplation before the Lord.
- b) Another way they worshiped was through “prayers.” The text most likely suggests specific prayers, probably both Jewish and Christian. The early believers suddenly saw the old formal prayers through new eyes and also, in their new joy, created new prayers for praise. When the Spirit reigns, the hearts of God’s people move toward Him, and their relationship with Him deepens.
- c) Acts 2: 46 gives a beautiful picture of the worship in the early church: “*Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts.*” It was both formal and informal, in “the temple” and “in their homes”. The communal meal could not be eaten on temple precincts, so they broke bread from house to house. The believers also had “glad and generous hearts.” There were not only solemn testimonies and hymns, but also laughter! In the early church they were full of joy.

### 4. **Evangelism became a natural outflow of the 3 things [the teaching, the fellowship and prayer] they did.**

“*And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved*” [v. 47]. Where the Spirit reigns, believers relate to the world—with outreach & evangelism. As the Word went out, “Awe came upon every soul” [v. 43]—not just because “*many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles,*” but because everything worked together to bring a profound sense of God. This awe was not terror, but something like Isaiah experienced when he saw the holiness of God and cried, “*Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips*” [Isaiah 6:5]. Such a response is the deep reaction of a “frail, fallen being standing before the true God of love and righteousness” [Hughes]. In the early church there was a sense of holiness much like that which the children of Israel had when Moses came down from Mt. Sinai—awe in the presence of Almighty God. “Nothing would promote revival more than a sense of awe before our holy God coupled with a sense of our own unworthiness”.

## **Bible Discussion Questions**

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| <b>Q1</b> | <p>a) <b>What are the characteristics of a church which is under the reign of the Holy Spirit?</b></p> <p>b) God gave the church the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit's arrival was audible, visible, and manifested itself in an outward demonstration of inspired speech. The event of Pentecost meant that the gospel was now able to reach the world through the power of the Spirit [D. Gould]<br/><b>Why do you think that the outcome of a Spirit-led church is reaching out to the needy &amp; evangelism?</b></p>                                                                           |
| <b>Q2</b> | <p>a) <b>How would you explain why the early Christians could attract others to Christ through their authentically transformed lives?</b></p> <p>b) Looking at the 3 traits of the early church:</p> <p>i) <b>What is CCR's greatest strength?</b></p> <p>ii) <b>What is CCR's greatest weakness?</b></p> <p>iii) <b>How do you think CCR can be more like the early church in evangelism?</b></p> <p>iv) <b>What changes do you need to make personally to be more like the early Christians?</b></p> <p>v) <b>How might you more fully devote yourself to the study of God's word and prayer?</b></p> |

## Notes for Leaders/Those leading the Word

### Main Idea

On the Day of Pentecost, the Apostle Peter's closed his first and greatest recorded sermon [Acts 2:14-39], with these words in Acts 2:36: "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah." The Jewish multitudes were deeply convicted [v. 37]: *When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"* They were convicted of the Lordship of Christ and of their own sin. They simply cried out, "**Brothers, what shall we do?**" Peter responded saying *"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"* [v.38]. Peter then added that the promised gifts for all who truly believe extends even to the Gentiles, those to *"all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call"* [v.39]. So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. [vv. 40, 41]. There is now added responsibilities for the apostles in shepherding the newly formed flock of "new-borns".

But the Apostles and the new flock were not left clueless or directionless. They are a community in which the Holy Spirit reigns. **What happens in the church where the Spirit reigns?** 1) There is **teaching of God's word**: The believers will relate to the God's word. 2) There is **fellowship with one another** [koinonia] 3) The believers will **relate to God in worship of God**. These believers were the new people of God, who were committed to the Lord Jesus Christ. **These 3 essential characteristics are the keys to spiritual maturity and growth in the community, then and now.**

### 1. Teaching [v. 42]

- a) *"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching"*. "Devoted" [προσκαρτερέω=proskartereō]= to persist; to be intently engaged in, attend constantly to [Acts 1:14; 2:42; Rom. 13:6]. This verse literally says, **"They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching."** It is very important that we note that they were "continually devoting" to the apostle's teaching. Because it governs the other characteristics of this community of believers where the Spirit reigns. They had a steadfast and single-minded devotion to the 3 traits of the first community. They have a continual devotion to their task. These three thousand early and new-born Christians were continually devoting themselves to God's Word as it came from the apostles. There were only twelve of them. They must be hard pressed. These new Christians, under the reign of the Holy Spirit, were hungry for God's Word. They just could not get enough of it.
- b) What did they apostle teach? The epistles? The epistles had not been written yet. The Gospels? There were no written biographies of Christ at that time. What, then, did they teach? The phrase "the teaching of the apostles" describes the entire preaching of the apostles. Sermons were an integral component of the Sabbath services in the Jewish synagogues; they usually followed the reading from the Torah and the Prophets and were often related to the latter [cf. Luke 4:16–22]. The teaching of the apostles followed the same pattern. The content of this teaching can be gleaned, at least in part, from the sermons in Acts, particularly those of Peter. The apostles' teaching focused on Jesus' life, ministry, death, and resurrection, and on His significance in God's plan [Dunn]. As Acts continues, the apostles will teach that God offers His messianic salvation not only to Jews, for whom there is now no other way to salvation open, but also to Gentiles [Acts 2:21, 39; 3:26; 10:34–35, 36, 43, 45; 11:18: Eckhard].
- c) Where the Spirit reigns, a love for God's Word reigns. Those early believers studied the Scriptures—God's communication to them. The backbone of a healthy Christian life is the teaching of God's word. Peter says, "Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation" [1 Peter 2:2]. Teaching was the milk of the early church under the direction of the Holy Spirit. When the Spirit reigns, God's people continually devote themselves to the study of his Word. But more than a "Bible-believing church" we are to be a "Bible-living church" [Richard Wurmbrand].

### 2. Fellowship [v. 42]

- a) *"They devoted themselves to . . . the fellowship"*. This kind of fellowship did not exist before the giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The **Greek word used here** =κοινωνία =koinonia] = fellowship, partnership [Acts 2:42; 2 Cor. 6:14;

13:13; Gal. 2:9; Phil. 3:10; 1 Jn. 1:3) =participation, communion [1 Cor. 10:16]--=aid, relief [Heb. 13:16;] =contribution in aid [Rom. 15:26] ---is **not found in the Gospels**. This is the first occurrence of the word in the New Testament. The root idea is “commonness” or “commonality.” New Testament Greek is called koine Greek because it was the common Greek of the day—the street language of the people. Every time this word is used in the New Testament, it denotes some kind of sharing—either sharing something with someone [2 Corinthians 8:4; 9:13 ---where it means an offering, collection, or contribution] or sharing in something someone else is experiencing. Here in Acts the emphasis of the word is on **contributing or giving**.

- b) The **foundation of the early Christians’ fellowship was giving**. Verses 44, 45 make this clear: “And all who believed were together and had all things in common” [v. 44. Greek=κοινός =koinos]. “And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need” [v.45]. The early believers did not sell everything. Some still had houses, as verse 46 indicates: “[*They broke*] *bread in their homes*.” Also, in Acts 5 Ananias and Sapphira owned property. **The point is, the fellowship of the early church rested on a mutual generosity and sharing**. Fellowship cost something in the early church. Fellowship is not just a sentimental feeling of oneness. It is not food and refreshment. Fellowship comes through giving. **True fellowship costs!** So many people never know the joys of Christian fellowship because they have never learned to give themselves away. They visit a church or small study group with an eye only for their own needs [hardly aware of others] and go away saying, “There is no fellowship there.” **The truth is, we will have fellowship only when we make it a practice to reach out to others and give something of ourselves** [Hughes] Thus fellowship is a work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the community [2 Cor 13:14: “*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship [koinonia] of the Holy Spirit be with you all*”].
- c) Furthermore, fellowship happens as we draw close to the Godhead. First John 1:3 says: “That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship [koinonia] with us; and indeed, our fellowship [koinonia] is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ”. When we experience fellowship [koinonia] with the Father and the Son, we draw closer to each other and enjoy fellowship [koinonia] with one another. I think the most beautiful illustration of this in the Bible is found in 2 Corinthians 8: 4-5: The Macedonian church were begging for the privilege of participation [koinonia] in an offering, a contribution. Those particular believers were extremely poor, and yet they determined to practice fellowship [koinonia] by giving to others. Why so? Because “...They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us. That is fellowship [koinonia]. If you want to have fellowship? You must be a giver. When the Spirit reigns, God’s people not only relate to the Word—they relate to one another in koinonia and sharing.

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**4. Evangelism: the outflow of the 3 things they did [the teaching, the fellowship and prayer]**

*“And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved” [v. 47].*

What happens in the church where the Spirit reigns? Where the Spirit reigns, believers relate to the Word—teaching. Where the Spirit reigns, believers relate to each other—fellowship=koinonia. Where the Spirit reigns, believers relate to God—worship. Where the Spirit reigns, believers relate to the world—outreach & evangelism. That is what God did for the 3,000 and what he wanted them to do for Him. As the Word went out, “Awe came upon every soul” [v. 43]—not just because “many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles,” but because everything worked together to bring a profound sense of God. This awe was not terror, but something like Isaiah experienced when he saw the holiness of God and cried, “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips” (Isaiah 6:5). Such a response is the deep reaction of a “frail, fallen being standing before the true God of love and righteousness” [Hughes]. In the early church there was a sense of holiness much like that which the children of Israel had when Moses came down from Mt. Sinai—awe in the presence of Almighty God. “Nothing would promote revival more than a sense of awe before our holy God coupled with a sense of our own unworthiness”.

**Bible Discussion Questions**

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| Q1 | <p>a) <b>What are the characteristics of a church which is under the reign of the Holy Spirit?</b></p> <p>b) God gave the church the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit's arrival was audible, visible, and manifested itself in an outward demonstration of inspired speech. The event of Pentecost meant that the gospel was now able to reach the world through the power of the Spirit [D. Gould]<br/><b>Why do you think that the outcome of a Spirit-led church is reaching out to the needy &amp; evangelism?</b></p> <p><b><u>Suggested answers/pointers</u></b></p> <p>a) 1) There is teaching of God’s word: The believers will relate to the God’s word. 2) There is fellowship with one another [koinonia] 3) The believers will relate to God in worship of God.<br/>The natural outflow would be that the believers will relate to the world by supporting those who were needy &amp; in evangelism.</p> <p>b) <b><u>See NOTES</u></b></p> |
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- Q2**
- a) How would you explain why the early Christians could attract others to Christ through their authentically transformed lives?**
  
  - b) Looking at the 3 traits of the early church:**
    - i) What is CCR's greatest strength?**
  
    - ii) What is CCR's greatest weakness?**
  
    - iii) How do you think CCR can be more like the early church in evangelism?**
  
    - iv) What changes do you need to make personally to be more like the early Christians?**
  
    - v) How might you more fully devote yourself to the study of God's word and prayer?**

**Suggested answers/pointers**

- a)** When a metal object is magnetized, it both undergoes change and stays the same. A magnetized object maintains the same size, shape, and weight. But it takes on new properties and interacts differently with the world around it. The Spirit's effects in the lives of humans may be compared to this act of magnetizing. When the Spirit descended on the early church at Pentecost, these Christians would have looked the same as before, but they possessed a new magnetism that drew people to them from different cultures and languages. The church led by the Spirit should be a magnetic place. Not all respond, however. As in the physical world, so in the spiritual realm, some are attracted to a magnetic field; others are repulsed by a magnetic field [D. Garland].
  
- b) Reflect and discuss.**