

WEDNESDAY BIBLE FELLOWSHIP

Christ Church, Crouch End Hill

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No: 23

Acts Chapter 2: 41-47

Acts Chapter 4: 23-35

INTRODUCTION

As a result of the unforgettable experience of Pentecost and Peter’s speech, about three thousand turned to God in repentance and faith. They received a fresh start, a new life in Jesus through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It turned their values and life-style upside down. Today we look at what made them so different and ask ourselves how far we should be like them.

AIM

To discover the effect of new life in the Holy Spirit on the life-style of the first Christian community.

Read Acts 2:41-47 and Acts 4: 23-35

Questions for discussions

Re-read, individually, Acts 2: 44-47 and 4: 32-35 and jot down your first reactions. List verse numbers and your comments against each symbol.

	Verses	Comments
!! This surprises me
?? I would like to know more
★ I think this is important
We need more of this in our group

» Go round the group and each say what you noted on the first symbol. Go round again on the second symbol and soon. Briefly discuss your comments.

- **Fellowship is a much used word. Reflecting on your own experience of being in a group, what do you appreciate about belonging to a Christian fellowship group? Tick the points below which are true for you. Add anything else which you think is important.**

- Listening to someone teaching Sharing oneself with the group
- Praying for one another Working at something together
- Having a large number of people Learning together
- Everyone taking part Caring for one another in practical ways
- Getting together over a meal

- **What hinders fellowship? Circle the factors which you think prevent a group from experiencing real fellowship. Add anything else you feel is important in a Christian small group.**

*openness *ignorance *formality *elitism *unreality *pride
 *disagreement *conflict *jealousy *gossip *criticism *fear *honesty

» What was the attraction of the early church? (Acts 2:47) What were the hallmarks of its fellowship? (Acts 2:42-47 and 4:31-35) What things today make the church attractive?

- **Peter and John had been arrested for their preaching. They were discharged on condition they never again spoke about Jesus. The reaction of the believers was to pray. (Acts 4:23-31) What did they pray for?**

- a)
- b).....
- c)

- **What strikes you as particularly significant about how they prayed?**
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» How has God answered your prayers? Can anyone share instances of answers to specific prayers?

- **“They were all filled ... and began to proclaim...” (Acts 4:31) How was it that these new Christians were so ready to explain their faith to others? Tick what you think helped them to**

grow. Tick again what you feel helps you to grow. Add anything else which helps you.

- Personal prayer and Bible study. Attending church services
- Prayer and Bible study with others Listening to a testimony
- Talking it over with a friend Taking time to reflect
- Belonging to a united group

• 'Church' in the New Testament described actions not buildings! It stood for what the believers did when they met together in a particular locality. In what ways is our church different from the first Christian Church? _____

• Jesus said, "By this will all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." What united these first followers of Jesus? How could we be that different today? What would be needed in our group if this was to become a reality? Collect practical suggestions about this (e.g. ways of praying for each other, helping each other etc.) Decide on some you can act on. _____

• The early church grew in numbers (2:47) — why do you think that happened? Should we expect churches to grow in numbers — is it realistic? Where is the church growing? Why do you think this is?

• The Lord added to the church" (2:47). How much of the responsibility for people coming to faith lies with God and how much with us in sharing the Good News? _____

• How would you have reacted to opposition to the Christian faith? How did the disciples react? What sort of prayer did they make? What can we learn from the balance of its contents? (4:23-31)

• What was the attitude of the first Christians to their possessions? What things do we find it easy to lend or share? What do we find hard? What makes the difference? (You might like to make a list of your possessions and mark those you would find it easy to lend or share and those you would find it hard to do so.)

- The church met the needs of its members. What sort of needs should the church of today meet? Is it doing so? Do we let people down? Are there things we could be doing differently or better?
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NOTES

CHAPTER 2

v.42 The four elements listed here were probably the key elements of early Christian worship. The role of the apostles in teaching is seen to be important. They had been with Jesus and had been commissioned by him. Their teaching is regarded as authoritative. The New Testament is the record of that teaching to which we should give heed. The word for "fellowship means 'sharing' and could refer to the way they shared their possessions or to their relationship with one another and with God (see 1 John 1:3). Breaking bread" was the way a Jewish meal began, and the first Christians did share meals, but almost certainly here it is a term for the Lords Supper (see Acts 20:7); there is no other reason for isolating just this part of the meal. "The prayers" means their own time of prayer together (see 1:14).

w.44-45 Jewish sects such as the Essenes and the Qumran community practiced joint ownership of possessions. The picture in Acts does not go that far but suggests a generous use of one's own possessions for the good of the whole. It was not compulsory (see 5:4).

v.47 This verse has one of the few references to praise in Acts; by and large the church is described as meeting for learning and prayer. The church's evangelism continues. It is God that adds new members to the church. Becoming a Christian is still described as "being saved", leaving behind the sinful people who rejected Jesus and joining God's new covenant community.

v.24 The effect of persecution was to unite the disciples, who turned to God in prayer. "Sovereign Lord" is in Greek 'despotes' which suggests a ruler with arbitrary power. It stresses that no earthly ruler, however great, can challenge his power, the power seen in his creation of all that exists.

w.25-28 This is a quote from Psalm 2, which spoke of God's anointed one, the Messiah. It is seen to be fulfilled in the way that the kings and rulers of the Gentiles and the people of Israel, in the shape of Pontius Pilate and Herod, had Jesus crucified. In so doing they fulfilled the words of the Psalm in accordance with God's plan. Nothing is beyond his control.