

Embracing the Promise, Engaging the Process

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Part 1: Never, Never, Never Give Up!
Part 2: Connected to Your Future
Part 3: Connected to Your 'Family'
Acts 2:42-47

Travel back with me 2000 years ago to an imaginary couple...newly married Joshua & Sarah...

Fictional depiction of a small group is not that far-fetched . Luke writes:

Acts 2:42-47 NLT

42 All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer.

43 A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. 44 And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. 45 They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. 46 They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity— 47 all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.

The people drawn into the message of Jesus found themselves in a new community. For some, their old one rejected them. But for all of them, a new belief led to a new family – a family with new traditions & new patterns

1. **Connected to Christ – Relational (They gathered in homes & shared meals)**
 - a. They became Believers – they entered into a personal relationship with God as opposed to a vicarious one – someone else approaching God on their behalf
 - b. *suffered or done by one person as a substitute for another; "vicarious atonement"*
 - c. Now, Christ offered a “vicarious” atonement for our sins, but we have direct access to God through HIM!
 - d. They were devoted (addicted) to Jesus!
proskartereo (pros-kar-ter-eh'-o); to be earnest towards, i.e. (to a thing) to persevere, be constantly diligent, or (in a place) to attend assiduously all the exercises, or (to a person) to adhere closely to (as a servant of)
(Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary. Copyright © 1994, 2003, 2006 Biblesoft, Inc. and International Bible Translators, Inc.)
 - e. He is more than a casual acquaintance – I am CONNECTED

- i. To join or fasten together.
- ii. To become joined or united: *two streams connecting to form a river.*
- iii. To establish a rapport or relationship; relate:

2. Connected to a Congregation – Formational (Spiritual Growth) (they talked about the teachings of Jesus)

- a. It was not just “community” the early believers were devoted to. They were also committed to growing in Christ!
- b. They wanted to be more like Him – formed in His image!
- c. As they huddled in the courtyard, they listened as Peter or John told the Parables, or the Sermon on the Mount – they talked about gracious living and being the same sort person on the inside as you are on the outside.
- d. As they gathered later in their homes they rehashed the apostles’ teachings
 - i. What does it mean to live a meek life (meekness, not weakness!)
 - ii. How do we show love to people who do bad things to us?
 - iii. Did Jesus really mean for us to forgive so many times we would quit counting?
 - iv. How do we demonstrate love to friends & family who have rejected us because of our beliefs?
- e. We think of the word *fellowship* – and our minds go to a damp, musty basement with linoleum tile, cold metal chairs & paper tablecloths!
 - i. Smells of lukewarm casseroles, cold rolls, etc.
 - ii. Not what Luke is describing here – an outward sign of their fellowship was their gathering for *breaking of bread*
 - iii. Food has a kindling effect – turns a lifeless, dull gathering into a party where everyone is participating (a Biblical precedent for coffee & brownies at a small group meeting!)

3. Connected to the Community – Missional & Multiplicational

- a. They increased – not because of some master plan for church growth
- b. It was organic! They intentionally shared their new-found faith & growth happened naturally.
- c. They became an attractive force in the city of Jerusalem
- d. Word spread of the generosity of believers, of transformed lives, and of extreme care for one another.

Do you want to connect?

- 1. To Christ
- 2. To Christ’s Church
- 3. To Community He Has Placed You In