

# Growing and Connecting

Connecting with You Church—part 2

February 23, 2020

## REVIEW FROM LAST WEEK:

Deepest connections with people are only possible with connecting meaningfully with God. Only He can meet the deepest desires and needs in the human heart. When we look to Him as our primary source of “life” we “tap into” the incredible reality to making deep connections. We can then begin to reflect that kind of intimacy with those around us.

## **DAY 1: Growing and connecting are to be done intentionally**

*Acts 2:40 With many other words he (Peter) warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." <sup>41</sup> Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.*

1. On the day of Pentecost, 3,000 people became Christians! These folks were “babes in Christ,” “newbies” in the faith. What is one to do after becoming a Christian? How do you grow as a Christian? What is important? The leaders of the early church gave us a pattern!

*Acts 2:42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*

<sup>43</sup> *Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.*

<sup>44</sup> *All the believers were together and had everything in common. <sup>45</sup> Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he 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.*

2. What activities seemed important to the young Christians?

3. Which of these activities are important to you?

4. How is your intentionality? (Note the word “devoted” in v. 42!). Is there anything you’d like to change to accelerate your growth in Christ?

## **DAY 2: We grow by applying and obeying the bible**

*Acts 2:42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*

1. The new Christians were “*devoted to the apostles' teaching.*” What strikes you about that?

2. What is your attitude about hearing teachers of the bible?

3. Unlike the early church, we have the privilege of having amazing access to the entire bible! Rather than just wait until Sunday to hear a biblical message, we can read our bible to speed up the growing process!

4. In the verses below, underline the benefits that strike you about learning the bible.

*Joshua 1:8 (RSV) This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success.*

*Psalms 1:1 (RSV) Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; <sup>2</sup> but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. <sup>3</sup> He is like a tree planted by streams of water, that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.*

*2 Timothy 3:16 (RSV) All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*

*1 Peter 2:2 Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, <sup>3</sup> now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.*

*Hebrews 5:14 (RSV) But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their faculties trained by practice to distinguish good from evil.*

5. What benefits of reading and applying God's word, the bible, struck you the most?

6. God uses the bible to “recalibrate” our hearts.

*Romans 12:2 (RSV) <sup>2</sup> Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

7. Our PCI 201 class is designed to help you learn different ways to read, study, and apply the bible to your life. Look for opportunities to sign up for the next class!

### **DAY 3: Doing life together, generously**

1. Why do some Christians seem to grow faster, while others seem to barely plod along?
  - a. The slow way to grow as a Christian is “on your own.” Initiative and intentionality do matter.
  - b. The faster way to grow is to add teachability and humility to your attitude, a hunger to learn.
  - c. The fastest way to grow is to surround yourself with people who model some aspect of Christlikeness that you need, who are more devoted to Christ than you.
  - d. Then, look for ways to minister, encourage others, serve and give. We grow by giving ourselves away.

*Acts 2:44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. <sup>45</sup> Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.*

2. What strikes you about what these new believers did?

3. Christianity is not a “solo sport,” like golf. Christianity is meant to be a “team sport.”

4. These young Christians found ways “to do life together.”

5. The example in these verses is not an example of “socialism.” Socialism is a government model that requires and/or forces the people to “share” with one another through the manipulation of taxes and wealth distribution.

6. In stark contrast, the early Christians voluntarily met the needs of people, not because they were forced to or “had to,” but because they wanted to!

7. This outward focus is reflective of what they had learned about Jesus Christ! They sought to emulate Him!

*2 Corinthians 8:9 (RSV) For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.*

8. Are you engaged with other Christians? Are you “doing life” with a few brothers and sisters in Christ? Is generosity a part of your new lifestyle?

## **DAY 4: Fellowship, food, “family,” and faith**

*Acts 2:46 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,*

1. A new kind of community was birthed at Pentecost, and continues to this day. You won't find this type of community anywhere else!
2. The blessings of community are torpedoed by our sin nature, the “me first” inclination that lies in the heart of every person. Only the gospel can overcome that inclination and weaken its hellish demands on others.

3. The following verses deal with the power of fellowship to help shape the life of Christ in us. Part of how we grow is seeing the example of others, and then wanting to emulate their example! In the following verses, underline the benefits of fellowship, and the power of example in helping us grow.

*Proverbs 13:20 (RSV) He who walks with wise men becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.*

*Proverbs 27:17 (RSV) Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.*

*Hebrews 10:24-25 (RSV) ... and let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, <sup>25</sup> not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*

*Hebrews 3:13 (RSV) But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*

*Philippians 4:9 (RSV) What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace will be with you.*

*1 Peter 5:2 (RSV) Tend the flock of God that is your charge, not by constraint but willingly, not for shameful gain but eagerly, <sup>3</sup> not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock. <sup>4</sup> And when the chief Shepherd is manifested you will obtain the unfading crown of glory. <sup>5</sup> Likewise you that are younger be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." <sup>6</sup> Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that in due time he may exalt you.*

*1 Corinthians 11:1 Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.*

4. How have you benefitted from seeing someone else's example?
5. Are you taking advantages of being around people who are examples to you?
6. Look for opportunities for God to use you as an example and encouragement to others!

## DAY 5: The stunning conclusion

*Acts 2:47 ... praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

1. This passage ends with a stunning three-part conclusion.
  
2. Conclusion #1: They were *praising God*. In a summary account like Acts 2:42-47 the writer is limited to what can be included. Praising God is not only a matter of worship but also a statement about the Christians' attitude about God and about life.
  
3. What strikes you about the people "*praising God*"?
  
4. Conclusion #2: they "*enjoyed the favor of all the people.*"
  - a. What does this tell you about their attitude toward people?
  
  - b. What does this tell you about the quality of their lives and character?
  
5. Conclusion #3. "*The Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*"

A ground swell began at Pentecost and continued from Acts 2 through Acts 7. What strikes you about Conclusion #3?
  
6. Note: Persecution hit the church hard in Acts 8. The reality of trying to be a Christian in a fallen world hit these believers hard. Some were arrested, some sent to prison, some killed.
  
7. As we finish our week, we are struck by the early church's commitment to grow spiritually and numerically.
  
8. What stays with you after this week's look at the early church?