

INTRODUCTION:

True disciples of Christ ABIDE, CONNECT, SHARE. We've discussed for the last several weeks that this is what we must do as disciples of Christ, and there is not an option to not do these things. We've also been learning *how* we ABIDE, CONNECT, and SHARE, which is our 5 Gs (God Time, Gather Time, Group Time, Give Time, and Go Time). We've previously noted that in order to ABIDE, we must have God Time, which should be our first and best. I hope that you've been taking your God Time seriously. Next, we saw that we need Gather Time, which is our time of Corporate (body of Christ) worship, where we gather together to exalt Christ, pray together, observe ordinances together, fellowship and be strengthened together, and encounter the Lord together. As we gather today to worship together and be formed and informed by His Word, we are going to discuss Group Time.

MAIN TEXT (Acts 2:41-47)

BACKGROUND

Luke wrote the book of Acts as a second volume to his gospel and covers from the resurrection and ascension of Christ to Paul's imprisonment in the 60s. At the point we begin today, the disciples have just received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and Peter has just preached the first sermon of the Church, resulting in as we see, 3000 souls come to Christ. Today, we will see from this passage and other that WE NEED COMMUNITY, WE NEED MINISTRY, WE NEED CONSISTENCY, and WE NEED MATURITY.

PASSAGE OUTLINE:

1. (2:41) So those who accepted his message were baptized, and that day about 3,000 people were added to them.
 - a. The first church was a mega-church overnight.

- b. Only the Holy Spirit could have caused that.
 - c. This was the gathered church. There had to have been groups immediately.
2. WE NEED COMMUNITY: (2:42) And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to the prayers.
- a. Devoted [*proskarteréō*, Strong's 4342]: "To continue to do something with intense effort, with the possible implication of despite difficulty—to devote oneself to, to keep on, to persist in."
 - i. A long-term protracted attention to these things.
 - b. Apostles' teaching
 - i. Those who followed Jesus in His earthly ministry and were taught by Him.
 - ii. I'm sure that they were not all teaching at the same time and place, because that would have been confusing.
 - c. Fellowship [*koinonia*, Strong's 2842]: literally partnership, participating in.
 - i. Psychology Today: Most conversations have no more than 4 people.
 - ii. One cannot fellowship with 3000 of their closest friends, or even 30.
 - d. Breaking of bread: This includes Lord's supper, but also just having a meal together.
 - e. Prayers: Prayer was integral to their spiritual life, as it is to ours.
 - f. A small group community is your best chance to know and be known. Don't want that? Is it about you?
3. WE NEED MINISTRY: (2:45) They sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as anyone had a need.

- a. This was not some first-century hippie commune. The community of believers knew each other's needs and met them.
 - b. How did these needs become known? Did someone mention them to the whole congregation? NO! Those that they were closest to knew and shared.
 - c. Ministry is not just about meeting practical needs.
4. WE NEED CONSISTENCY: (2:46) Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple complex, and broke bread from house to house.
- a. Note that the life of a disciple is a daily devotion.
 - b. They met in the temple complex for Gather Time.
 - c. Then they went to the various houses for Group Time.
 - d. We cannot follow Christ in isolation!
 - e. We are designed for community.
 - f. We need accountability: (Heb 3:12-13) Watch out, brothers, so that there won't be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart that departs from the living God. But encourage each other daily, while it is still called today, so that none of you is hardened by sin's deception.
 - i. (James 5:16) Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The urgent request of a righteous person is very powerful in its effect.
 - ii. This is definitely something that you don't want to do with the whole congregation.
 - iii. Satan wants to keep your sins hidden where they can grow and become more devastating. Jesus wants to expose them to the light so that they can be defeated!

- g. (Symons) Those who reject community often believe:
 - i. They are smarter than God (reject His design)
 - ii. They are stronger than they are (don't need help)
 - iii. They are more mature than they are (don't need to grow)
 - iv. Often, they are just spiritually lazy!
 - h. Community is where all the "one another's" come into play. There are 59 "one another's" in the New Testament.
 - i. Care, love, receive, forgive, pray for, teach...
5. WE NEED MATURITY: (2:47) They ate their food with a joyful and humble attitude, praising God and having favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to them those who were being saved.
- a. If you neglect community, then you are neglecting to meet with people who will hold you accountable for your attitude.
 - b. If you neglect community, you neglect opportunities to praise God and develop favor with people.
 - c. Also, if you neglect community, you miss opportunity to grow in maturity in Christ.
 - d. (Symons) "You cannot fully be in God's will if you're not connected to God's church."

CONCLUSION:

Remember that we have been talking about what disciples do and how they do it. You cannot truly connect if your only contact with other believers is at Gather Time. So how do we fix this?

1. Sunday School is not the answer. It's a great time of learning scripture, but the depth of fellowship is not available in groups this large.
2. Thursday morning Bible Study: We have ten and have a robust time of prayer and study. I'll be announcing a new study soon. That's a good time to join if you're available.
3. Discipleship group. I currently have a discipleship group picking back up tomorrow night. This group is closed, but when we're finished, we'll have three new disciple group leaders.
4. Field of Dreams: If I announce a new group, there will be forty different reasons that people cannot attend.
5. Ball in your court: If any five of you, member or not, who are not in a group already, can agree to a meeting day and time for a period of 8-10 weeks, I will commit to meeting with you for that time to see if we can get a group kicked off.

Maybe you're not connected to the church yet, maybe not even saved. Maybe you're questioning why you should serve Jesus. Or maybe today, you feel that tug that means that He's calling you to Him. If that's the case, please don't ignore Him today!