

## **BE CONNECTED**

### **Acts 2:42-47**

Why did the first followers of Jesus seem to have such a dynamic influence on their culture?

They were empowered by the Holy Spirit

They were connected to each other

**Acts 2:42–47 (TNIV) — 42 They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 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, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.**

3000 people from all over the Roman Empire > Everyone in Jerusalem was struck by their connection to each other. Listen to what Jesus said --

**John 13:34–35 (NLT) — 34 So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. 35 Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”**

**John 17:20–21 (NLT) — 20 “I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. 21 I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.**

**Christians displaying love and unity is a primary source of influence.**

I strongly believe that one of the primary reasons that church does not have a more significant impact on our culture is that we have not demonstrated a spiritual connection to the followers of Jesus. We have demonstrated indifference, and sometimes even hostility toward our brothers and sister in Christ, when Jesus said that what will demonstrate to the world that we belong to Jesus by our loving unity with one another.

I’m sure all of us have known someone who claims to believe in Jesus but has no real connections with other followers of Jesus. NT one another

Being a member of a church or regularly attending worship does not mean that you are connected.

### **We have a tendency to focus on the wrong things.**

We focus on the speaker, the music, the facility, the organizational structure, insignificant theological details, and money.

If we are to have the influence God intends the church to have, we must get our focus off the secondary thing and focused on the primary things.

Luke give a list of the primary things in Acts 2:42-47 > Teaching of the Apostles, fellowship, meals, prayer, worship and sharing.

**The teaching of the Apostles** > 12 disciple been with Jesus for 3 years

**Matthew 28:18–20 (NLT) — 18 Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. 19 Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. 20 Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”**

This is often referred to as the Great Commission

**First, is a declaration of Christ authority.** That is certainly the heart of the good news, Jesus reigns, not Caesar, not the Republicans, not the Democrats, Jesus reigns.

**Second is baptism “.. baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”** literally, *immersing them in the Name of the Father and Son and the Holy Spirit.*

Finding an all consuming relationship with God

**Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you.** Jesus did not say teach them, so they can pass a thorough written examination of what I taught. He did not say teach them so that they might all agree on every minute detail of theology. **Teach them to obey** ... teach them to act like me. This emphasis on the Jesus life, is seen all through the NT. There are no section of the NT marked theology. Truth about God and his creation is scattered through the NT but every theological

statement is followed by admonition, because this is true you must live like this.

He commanded us to love each other. He commanded us to love our enemies. He commanded us to love those who were different from us. He commanded us to be generous and care about the weak and helpless. He commanded us to forgive those who hurt us. He commanded us to be humble putting others above ourselves. If you look at the church, over the last 1500 years, you would have to say those who claimed the name of Jesus has failed but there has been genuine pin pricks of light.

**Fellowship** This is the Greek word *koinonia*. **Fellowship was not something they did but something they were bound together by their love for Jesus and the Spirit of God.** They were deeply, spiritually connected with one another.

Because they understood the precious spiritual connection they shared with one another they longed to spend time together. They devoted themselves to eating together. Commentators debate whether *breaking bread* was sharing meal or celebrating communion. I suspect that they did not have the need to make that distinction. They would share meals in various homes and while they were eating they reminded each other how Jesus compared his body to the bread and his blood to the wine and they rejoiced in their forgiveness. We so often divide things that God never intended to be divided. We will be having a great time at a meal together and then someone will say or now we need to start the service now we need to do business.

Because they understood the spiritual connection they were free in sharing their physical possessions. They were caught up in the life of the Spirit understanding the connection they shared caused them to engage in irrational generosity. Everyone knew they deeply love one another because they shared everything with one another. **Love is demonstrated by giving.** If we love someone we give to them. We give them our attention, we give them our time and effort, we give them our money. Love without giving. is invisible and meaningless.

They prayed together and worshiped together. There is nothing that bonds us more as followers of Jesus is praying together. They poured out their hearts to God on behalf of one another. **Meaningful prayer together**

**requires a shedding of our religious facade/.** The first believers were so overwhelmed by what God was doing that they dropped the facades and became very authentic in their relationships with one another. If we are going to fulfill the NT call to community, we are going to have to sacrifice our tendency to put appearance over substance and become much more honest about our struggles.

The influence genuine Christian community had on me as a first-year college student.

One quote that I have found in the last couple years is from a book entitled, *Speaking of Jesus* by Carl Medearis. I have shared it before, but it is that on point.

***As Christians, we're faced with a problem difficult to see because it's so obvious. We're aware of Jesus, but we are obsessed with Christianity. We're stuck on its requirements and we're defined by its doctrines, caught in an endless struggle to find our where we fit, if we've "arrived" yet, and if we're doing it right. We struggle with sin, and yet, because of the boundaries, we're forced to decide between being honest about our feelings and hiding for fear we'll be judged. In this state, we're not living in the grace of Jesus. We're trying to maintain our membership.***

These early believers were obsessed with Jesus and wanted to connect in a genuine, authentic ways with one another. They loved being together because they were accepted for who they were. The truth is often Christianity, religion, organization, and structure, often get in the way of the genuine love and fellowship God intends the followers of Jesus to experience.

Now we should not feel too inferior to these early believers because the genuine, authentic fellowship only last in this sense for a matter of months. In **chapter 5** the first case of hypocrisy is exposed. In **chapter 6** ethnic animosity rears its ugly head. In **chapter 9** we see fear preventing the Jerusalem church from embracing Saul after his conversion. The fact that relational harmony and unity is a primary exhortation in every NT letter, reminds how difficult it is to practice genuine spiritual fellowship.

Let's review.

- 1) We focus our teaching on how to be more like Jesus.
- 2) We value our Spiritual connection with one another
- 3) We demonstrate that we value the spiritual connection we have with other Jesus followers, by acts of generosity and joyfully spending time together.
- 4) We are going to develop an accepting attitude that invites each other to shed our religious facades

Questions for reflection and discussion:

- 1) How well am I doing at applying the teachings of Jesus to my life?
- 2) In what specific ways should I be demonstrating that I deeply value my spiritual connection with other Christ followers?
- 3) What should be my first steps in becoming more transparent to other Christ followers?
- 4) In what ways might I be putting the Christian religion above following Jesus?