

## **VBS WHAT!!!**

### **The Fellowship of the Early Church**

**Our main focus will be taken from: Acts 2:41-47 and Acts 4:32-35.**

But before we turn there I would like to take a little time to first look into Acts chapter 1 because Acts chapter 1 gives a kick start to Acts chapter 2, It is important that we look into this lesson in the context of what is unfolding in Acts 1. This makes all the difference in how we understand and process the word of God any time you look through any portion of scripture. Context is everything! Part of the role of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ is how to process and handle the word of God as Paul would admonish and remind Timothy in **2 Timothy 2:15** **Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.**

**Acts 1:1-8 in my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach**

**Until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.**

Let's stop here and look at three of his appearances.

**- John 20:19-20 On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord**

**- John 20:26-27 A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"**

**Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."**

**- John 21:1 Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias. You know the story?**

**(We can see clearly that Jesus gave many convincing proofs that he was alive!)**

**Acts 1:4** On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about.

**For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."**

**So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"**

*(The disciples just didn't get it yet!) They were looking for an earthly kingdom and ruler to kick Roman tail!) You can clearly see the difference between Peter in Act Chapter 1 and Acts chapter 2? The difference is the indwelling of the (HOLY SPIRIT)*

7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

**Now let's jump over to Acts chapter 2**

### **The Holy Spirit comes at Pentecost**

**Quick history,** Pentecost was a unique historical event, It had never happened before, and it will never happen again. In his famous Gospel preaching sermon on that day Peter said, "But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel" (**Acts 2:16**), and he began to quote the prophecy from **Joel 2:28-32**. What had begun on that day was the unfolding of the fulfillment of that prophecy. **Joel 2:28-32** **'And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the LORD has said, among the survivors whom the LORD calls.**

Many Jews had come to Jerusalem for the Passover and also for the celebration of Pentecost, which was the Feast of Harvest, which came fifty days after the Passover. Some have estimated that as many as two million Jews may have come from all over the ancient world to participate in these important celebrations. None of them expected to be there for a much longer period than the customary feast days, and they probably would have journeyed home very soon thereafter. However, when the miracle of the Pentecost occurred and people began to be converted to Christ, those plans suddenly changed. They did not have New Testaments to take home with them to teach others their new-found faith. Because of this, these new Christians remained in Jerusalem to sit at the apostles' feet and to learn from them

**Acts 2:1-8 when the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.**

**Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? How is it that each of us hears them in his own native language?"**

Isn't it interesting that at the celebration of the harvest also called the feast of weeks, a religious festival, that there would be 14 God fearing Jewish nations from all over that would gathered at one place, (*isn't it cool to see how God has timing, and meaning.*) *God was ready to jump start the world evangelism campaign at this special historical time in history!* Peter full of the Holy Spirit was give the keys to the kingdom, preached for the first time on that day the Gospel message **Acts 2:38 -40 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off-- for all whom the Lord our God will call." With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation."**

**Now we are going to get into the main subject of this lesson. Please turn with me to Acts 2:41-47.**

### **The fellowship of the believers**

#### **Acts 2:41-47**

**Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common.**

**Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. 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, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.**

**Family let's see how this type of Fellowship can be applied in the church today.**

Let's break this scripture down. They **devoted** themselves to the apostle's teaching which is the word of God is. We need to be disciples who are feeding our souls daily with spiritual food from the word of god so we can grow and be more like Jesus, doing our quiet time daily is important for growth. By applying this we will all be like minded and in fellowship with God and each other.

**What did they also devote themselves to?** They devoted themselves to the **fellowship** of the saints.

The definition for the word fellowship: It is defined as: people working together for a common goal or purpose, a joint participation in a common enterprise or towards a common goal.

Companionship, or to have company, a community of interest, activity, a company of equals or friendship, membership, and partnership. **Isn't that what we are doing family- working together towards a common goal?**

## **Family how can true fellowship be demonstrated today?**

### **Some practical Examples are:**

-We can demonstrate true fellowship by being loyal to each other and devoting ourselves to the church, meeting daily just like the first century Church did, that's why we have Sunday worship, Wednesday night bible classes and Friday night devotionals, mentorship meetings, fellowships, harvest campaigns etc. sharing our faith to grow the church, seeking first the kingdom and having our spiritual family's best interest in the forefront of our mind. These are opportunities and venues for us to be together.

### **- Let's talk a little about in house Fellowships.**

- I remember as a young Christian one of my first fellowships was with my brother Bert. Bert being more spiritual knew how to get onto spiritual dialog.

- I remember being invited to The Greens house in Queens for a getting to know you fellowship.

There was singing ,little cards were made, favorite scripture were shared and we went around the room to give everyone an opportunity to speak about themselves and we got to know each other with a topic.

-The Luhrs family host a once a month pot luck fellowship, Dave dose mini mock lessons

- Our family has played great biblical games at our Fellowships like the Gospel of John and Bible Outburst. This is a great icebreaker. Everyone loves to get competitive!

- Sometimes we get comfortable and it seems easier to invite the same people over, but we are not getting to know others. Get out of your comfort zone!!!

-My wife and I are just recently getting into the mindset of hosting a fellowship at least once a month. Inviting people we have never had over or even had an opportunity to fellowship with. We are trying to get to know our family!!!

- Don't wait for someone to invite you over. Host your own Fellowships. Open your home and get to know your brethren.

Let's take advantage of these opportunities; they are for our good and for our growth. Amen!

**Hebrews 10:25 says Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another-- and all the more as you see that Day approaching. Amen!**

**Proverbs 27: 17 as iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.** When I think of this scripture I can't help but think of my filet knife, over the course of its life it gets dull. When it needs sharpening it must come into contact with the sharpening stone. In the same way over the course of our Christian walk we need to rub off on each other and be in contact with each other so that we can remain sharp and focused and this is done through fellowship. Amen!

We can also see clearly that the first century church came together on the first day of the every week to **break bread** and remember Jesus death on the cross and to worship him as one Body and one mind. This is true worship and true Fellowship with the Body, for we worship our God in spirit and in truth. Amen!!

**They devoted themselves to Prayer.** We should also be devoting our time to prayer. And be a congregation that is praying the prayer request list and praying for the Saints.

**Ephesians 6:18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.**

**James 5:16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.**

We know this is true we have seen it firsthand. Let's be prayer warriors and tap in to the power of prayer. We need to be praying for open heart for lost souls, praying for each other, praying for our leaders. We should also be giving thanks to God in our prayers for all the many blessings we have in Christ Jesus. This is Fellowship!

**All of the believers where together and had everything in common.** Church, don't we also today have a lot in common like the first century church did? We have a common goal, a common hope, and a common joy in the truth of God's word, and a common mindset, and of course we have this common love for each other and this is what binds us all together in the lord! AMEN.

**John 13:34-35 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another, by this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."**

**•Family, while we cannot have Pentecost again, can we restore the zeal, joy and fellowship exhibited by early Christians?**

Think about this, when we are being active in sharing our faith and someone comes to the lord we are restored with zeal and encouragement, **when we are making it a habit to fellowship and use every opportunity to meet together then we can restore and exhibit that same fellowship.** -When we experience trials and adversity in our walk with the Lord, and if we see them as opportunities to grow in our faith and love, then we can experience that joy.

**James 1:2-4 consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.**

**Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.**

**•Brothers and sisters, How can unity for which Jesus prayed be achieved today?**

***John 17:20-21 Jesus prayed. "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me?"***

*-Jesus prayed that we will all be one, as he and the father are one. He also prayed for today's Christians to believe the message (the word of God). Unity can be achieved within the body of believers by obeying our leaders so their job will not be a burden. **Hebrews 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.***

*We understand the church is made up of many congregations of people we are held together by a common faith; we are parts of the whole, the universal church of Christ. Wherever on this globe that men honor Christ and his word and worship according to it we are the family of God-brothers and sisters in the Lord.*

We all have in common the fact that ***we have the same father and same brother***. We are family! We are the body of Christ! That is deep. That is tight. If we get to know one another, share with one another and be active in each other's lives along with being in tuned with God's word ***we will have true unity*** in the Church today and that's true fellowship.

**Let's talk a little bit of the outpouring of compassion of the early Church (Acts 2:44-45).**

How could this massive number of people be provided for? Notice that no command and no apparent direction were given to the Christians to sacrifice for the good of all. The wording would imply a spontaneous outpouring of generosity. Luke, the historian of Acts, records that; "Now all who believed were together and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all as anyone had need" (**Acts 2:44-45**). Later Luke informs us that, "Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of these things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common" and "Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need".

**Lets read it from the Bible**

**Acts 4:32-35 all the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and much grace were upon them all. There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet and it was distributed to anyone as he had need. Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement), sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.**

**Family, Should the material sacrifices of the early Christians be practiced today?**

-Of course. We are called to be living sacrifices. We are still the same church today, tomorrow and always. In the Old Testament fellowship offerings were animal sacrifices. ***In the New Testament the church age, we are called to be Living sacrifices.*** Giving and opening your home is not always easy. It can be work- both physical and financial. Again we are sacrificing our time and money to the glory of God to help our brethren in need.

**Vs. 34-35-There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet and it was distributed to anyone as he had need....**

As you can see the first century church did not consider their possessions their own. It belonged to God and they believe that. It was clearly seen by their generosity with others.

My family and I have personally seen this being put into practice first hand at work here at the Long Island Church of Christ, The generous outpouring of love and compassion and monetary support.

When I lost my job in 2008, we had no income. It was members like you who gave with a cheerful heart. You allowed God to use you and you gave and KEPT on giving. How many of you on a weekly basis would come up to me and say how you doing, what do you need. Your support saw us through that tough time. You were with us for the long haul. However long we needed that help. That impacted us tremendously. That allowed us to see Jesus working through you.

When we have the mindset that everything we have belongs to God then we don't mind sharing it with others and we do it joyfully.

**2Corinthians 9:10-15 says, Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness.**

**You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!**

Family, when we put this good work into practice we are bringing glory to God and letting our light shine before man. We are not just **"talking"** we are also **"doing"** and putting into practice Gods word which is not always that easy. But we do it with the Lord and we do it by faith, and it becomes an overflowing joy in many expressions of thanks to God.

In conclusion I would like to share this closing scripture in light of this lesson on Fellowship. This pretty much sums it up!

**1John 1:5-7 this is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.**

Amen!