

MAXIMUM IMPACT IN OUR WORLD

October 4, 2009

SERMON TITLE- ACTS-traordinary: Spirit-Filled Community

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The ACTS-traordinary life . . .

Spirit-fueled Community

(Acts 2:42-47)

The first fruit/miracle of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was the birth of **Christ-centered community** among the new believers.

The marks of this new Spirit-fueled community:

- Grounded in God's Word ("the apostle's teaching")

- Manifested in fellowship (Koinonia – sharing in the life of God together . . . where the vertical and horizontal relationships meet!)
 - Genuine INVESTMENT in each other - - characterized by sacrificial giving.
 - They saw each other as "brothers & sisters". They were family.

- Upheld in worship (sincere GOD-CENTERED worship. They understood it was about giving glory and honor to HIM)

- United in prayer (they prayed fervently, at all times, in all things. Their life together was fueled by prayer)

Results of this spirit-fueled life:

- Awe, wonders, miracles.

- Togetherness. Unity.

- JOY!

- Sacrificial sharing – out of joy and freedom, not compulsion.

- Favor with others – "and the Lord added to their number daily . . ."

Why do we not experience this same spirit-fueled life together today? What are the obstacles:

- No margins! Our lives are so busy and full.

- It's hard - - to invest deeply in the lives of others (and to let them into your own life). It

was hard and messy for them back “in Acts” as well.

- We don’t know very well anymore how to build relationships and share life. Intimate community does not compute with the busy separateness of our urban and suburban culture.

ENEMIES of community (and really the Spirit-filled life altogether)

- Individualism. The rugged spirit of America! but not the heart of the kingdom of God that reveals to me that I NEED OTHERS. I am created to be in relationship with others. I am not fully human if I try to live in isolation.

- Selfishness. The very heart of our sinful nature. The kingdom of God reveals to me that OTHERS NEED ME. I do not exist for my own needs and desires alone. I am created to give to others, share my life with them. The higher motivation for investing in community is not so much “what will I get out of it, but how can I be there for my brothers and sisters when they are struggling, hurting, under attack.

(Billy’s footnote)

Community is like a two-sided coin: It is a GIFT and also a CALLING (Jesus *CALLS* us to such life together; it’s not a suggestion!)

It enriches my life and also demands much of me.
I pursue it with JOY and also in OBEDIENCE.

“Lord, thank you for this gift, and help us to walk in it . . . with devotion, sacrifice, and joy!”

Reflections:

1. What obstacles to community do you struggle with the most?
2. Are you investing meaningfully in your community group, or do you just show up? Do you *even* show up?

How can you give yourself more fully to your group brothers and sisters?

3. Do you pray for those in your group outside of your meeting time?
4. Do you ever call others up to simply see how they are doing?