



Acts: God in Action through Us

Introduction

“Christian discipleship demands radical socialism.”
Discuss.

This short passage is a summary description of the life of the Jerusalem church in the first weeks and months after Pentecost. At the conclusion of ‘that day’ 3000 people gave themselves to live under the rule of the resurrected Messiah, Jesus (see Acts 2:41).

Read Acts 2:42-47

1. What are the priorities of the church that the Holy Spirit birthed and empowered at Pentecost, as described in these verses? Imagine a week in the life of this community. What do you think it may have looked like?

What is ‘the breaking of bread’ (v42)? While this phrase can be used of sharing a meal together, it is likely that Luke is describing the community as celebrating some form of communion. In Luke 21:19 the same words are used as Jesus takes bread and breaks it. In Luke 24:35 it is used for the resurrected Jesus breaking bread as two disciples realised who he was. We can assume that Jesus’ practice of common meals was the foundation for this practice — they all ate and drank together as one group.

2. What attracts you to this kind of Christian community? What do you think you’d find challenging in this kind of community?
3. We read that the first Christians ‘devoted themselves’ to the Apostles teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. What would it mean for you to ‘devote’ yourself to these things? What would change?

As we consider the implications of this passage it is important that we remember we are reading a description of what happened, rather than a prescription of what *ought* to happen. While it is easy to see these four elements as generic components of Christian community everywhere, there are other elements in this paragraph which do not seem to be found elsewhere. Notice that the community sold property, pooled resources, and distributed these funds to the poor. Giving to the poor is a standard description of Christian community, but “living in common” only appears here in Acts 2. There is nothing in the Bible to indicate that, say, the Antioch church was pooling resources, nor does Paul give any such instruction to his churches.

The fact that these earliest believers were devoted to these activities daily is also unique in the apostolic period. There is no other group of believers who appear to have left their jobs to devote themselves to spiritual activity. In 1-2 Thessalonians Paul seems to instruct the members of the church to *not* retire from daily life and be daily devoted to teaching, fellowship, bread and prayer. 2 Thess 3:11-12 specifically tells people to go out and get jobs so that they are not a burden.

4. Why do you think we are quick to apply Acts 2:42 but not Acts 2:43 (miracles) or 2:44-45 (communal living) or 2:46 (meeting daily in the Temple Courts)? What is the difference between what is happening in Acts 2 and 2 Thessalonians 3? What difference does it make whether this passage is description or prescription?
5. How would you like your experience of Christian community to grow and change to be more like the apostolic church? How might your Home Group develop in order to achieve this? Of the suggestions discussed, what is one practical change you would like to embrace?