



LIFE WITH GOD:

Life. Together.

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What was peer pressure like for you as a teenager? I remember the pressure to fit in and try to look cool. I wanted to have the right brand of clothes and I was always worried about my hair. Of course, it was never enough to make me fit with the cool kids, but I tried! Our community can lead us to dangerous things, but it can also be positive, depending on who your peers are!

The Bible includes a story of when peer pressure really got the Israelites in trouble. Moses had been up on the mountain with God so long that people began to grumble and complain. They even convinced Aaron to melt their jewelry into a golden calf. Then they sacrificed to it and said that this calf was the god that brought them out of Egypt! Seems crazy to us, but throughout history we see times when the crowds did some senseless things. In this case, God commanded the Levites to punish the Israelites with the sword and Exodus 32:28 says, "...that day about three thousand of the people died." It was a sad day, indeed!

We've been studying Acts 2 where God pours out the Holy Spirit. Read about Peter ending his message to the crowds in Acts 2:36-41.

- 1. What did Peter tell the crowds that they must do?**
- 2. What else is interesting about Peter's message to them?**

When the law was given to Moses about 3000 were killed because they rebelled against God. When the Spirit was given in Acts about 3000 were added to the church! This is an interesting parallel. Part of Peter's message to them was about how Jesus fulfilled the covenant promises to Abraham and David. When Peter says, "God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah," he is declaring that Jesus IS the fulfillment of these covenants! The crowd's response was that "they were cut to the heart" (v37).

Let's see what happens next. READ Acts 2:42-47.

- 3. Notice and list what these young believers did. What surprises you?**

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS DOING STUFF!

As we read about what the early church was doing, we have to remember that it is in the context of the Holy Spirit being poured out on them. Sometimes we read these things that were happening and we try to duplicate it. We want the recipe! This brings us to an important question to ask as we study the Bible, "Is this descriptive or prescriptive?" Here's what it means:

Descriptive- This is just describing what happened then.

Prescriptive- This is describing what happened and what we are also supposed to do!

You can see why this is important to understand as we read the Bible. It can be a very difficult question to answer sometimes!

4. **What are some descriptive things about the early church that don't necessarily apply to us?**
5. **What are some prescriptive practices about the early church that we are commanded to carry on?**

IT HAPPENED TOGETHER.

The key to learning how to apply Scripture to our own lives is to look for the timeless principles. What can we learn from these stories that we can also apply today in our own lives? One big theme that we see throughout is how these things happened as they did life with God *together*. The believers were assembled and after the Holy Spirit came, they met together even more!

Here are some principles we can draw out of this passage about how the believers did life together. First, something was happening that wasn't ordinary. They were *yielded* to the Holy Spirit and something new was happening! They were living with *common-unity*, or community. It says that they were eating together, sharing their possessions, and had the favor of others. There was a unity going on—even between people that were quite different and wouldn't normally get along at all!

6. **In what ways do we see people yielding to God and living in common-unity today? How can we do this better?**

Another trait that we see among the early believers was that they were *selfless*. This is not a surprise as we look at the example of Jesus, but what is surprising was how radical it was! They sold their possessions, gave to the needy, and shared what they had. Instead of living for themselves, they were sacrificially caring for each other and had a God-focus. They were in awe of the miracles God was doing and they praised God together.

7. **What is the most surprising act of selflessness that you've witnessed for the Lord?**

The way that the early believers lived was quite unusual, even in their day, but it was very *attractive* to those who saw how they were living. It wasn't hyped or forced, but came from a sincere change in their lives and through the power of the Holy Spirit. Others saw how authentic it was and wanted to join. Therefore the community *multiplied* and spread rapidly! In summary, "They were yielded community—selfless, God-focused, attractive, and multiplying!"

Community is a buzz-word these days, but some of that comes as a reaction to extreme individuality. The definition of *individual* has changed drastically over the past 300 years. Before this time, it referred to something that was unified and inseparable. They were part of a larger whole. In some ways, the focus on individuals has been good, but we must make sure we are paying attention to the importance of community. God designed our life with him to also be life together—with one another!

8. **Why is it so difficult to live in community today?**
9. **What are ways we can improve this?**

GOING DEEPER>> READ Ephesians 4:2-3 and meditate on how you bear with others in love. Then consider how it feels when others are humble, gentle, and patient with you.