

Life Together

I. Slide1 Announce:

- A. Slide2 Baby Dedication: Thomas & Rebekah Krause. *Radiance Gloria Araceli Krause*.
- B. Slide3-6 Andrew P: STM. Women's Retreat. YAM's. (Title)
- C. Prayer: Lord give us, warm hearts, open hands. Help us to be soul-fully generous.
As we share with all we meet, a process instead of a presentation of Your Good News.

II. Slide7 Intro: Life Together [Christianity is 1st individual, then immediately social/communal]

A. Slide8a Church Life...what is it?

1. The English word church has many meanings: 1) a building, 2) an organization 3) a specific kind of Sunday event 4) all believers everywhere.
2. The Greek word *ekklesia* is gathering or assembly. Slide8b
 - a) It refers to *any gathering of God's people for mutual edification & growth through devotion to the apostles teaching, fellowship, prayer, worship and other activities*.¹
 - b) The early church met primarily in homes, but *ekklesia* refers to any gathering for mutual edification and growth, whether large or small.
3. What we learn from this is that biblical *ekklesia*-church is not a building or an organization, or even a specific large gathering on Sunday, but rather any gathering for mutual edification. Thus, small group gatherings in homes for Bible study, prayer and community are *ekklesia*-church, just as are large group gatherings in larger spaces.

B. Slide8c Is there a right way to do church?

1. Some say, If your church isn't getting bigger, it isn't healthy. Others, Your church can grow using these 10 easy steps. Others still, Going small is the only biblical way to do church (1st church was a mega-church. 1st churches were small). Some say, Drop the hymns and bring the change your church needs. Others, Keep the hymns and provide stability. Be relevant to your

¹ Timothy Keller, *Ekklesia*.

culture. Be countercultural. Be brave and get involved politically. Stay pure by being non-political...and on it goes. [key is *community/intimacy* whatever the size]

2. Let's stop looking for a **one-size-fits-all** way to do church. And stop insisting on it for others. After all, what we call **the early church** were really **the early churches**. Corinth, Jerusalem, Ephesus and Antioch were about as **different** from each other **as** the churches we have today.²

a) Maybe...there are at least as many **right** ways to do church as there are congregations. *But I don't actually think **grabbing coffee with a friend** necessarily defines church.* **Slide8d** So what are the basic's of church life? I see **4 key elements**, or **4 pillars** that will prop up the church for centuries to come.

C. **Outline:** Learn, Love, Praise, Proclaim.

III. **Slide9a LEARN (42a)** *they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching*

A. **Slide9b** It was as if the Holy Spirit opened a **school** in Jerusalem that day. Its **teachers** were the **apostles** whom Jesus had appointed. And there were 3,000 pupils in the **kindergarten!**³

1. Those new converts were not enjoying **a mystical experience** which led them to **despise their mind** or **disdain theology**. They sat at the apostles' feet, **hungry** to receive instruction, and they **persevered** in it.
2. Since *the teaching of the apostles* has come down to us in its definitive form in the NT, *contemporary devotion to the apostles' teaching* will mean **Slide9c** *submission to the authority of the New Testament*.

B. Many understand this as **a biblical sermon** at large group gatherings.

1. But the NT concept of *devotion to the apostles' teaching* includes more than just listening to a sermon, especially in our current age.
2. **Slide9d** Since the invention of the printing press, believers have had **personal access** to the Word of God in a way the earliest believers did not. [now w/*digital age*]
3. Devotion to the apostle's teaching can **take the form of** *reading Scripture, studying it, memorizing it, meditating on it, group discussion of the meaning of*

² Christianity today, Karl Vaters, January 21, 2017.

³ John Stott, The Message of Acts, 2:42.

Biblical texts, discussion of personal and practical life application of Biblical texts, etc.

- a) It is obvious that some of these activities are best accomplished **alone**, or in a **small group setting**. The phrase *devotion to the apostles' teaching* also carries with it the sense of *faithfully putting the teaching into practice*.

C. **Light** for the mind, **food** for the heart, and **passion** for the soul.

IV. Slide10a **LOVE** (42b) *and the fellowship*

A. *They devoted themselves...to the fellowship* (koinōnia).

B. *Fellowship/participation - to partner, to share in common interest.*

1. Slide10b It's a **Partnership** that involves **Participation**.

2. It's a *Spiritual Organic Community*. [organic = developing gradually & naturally]

C. Slide10c Koinōnia (from *koinos*, *common*) i.e. the common life of the church in **2 ways**:

1. **First**, it expresses what we *share in together*. This is **God himself**. Our fellowship is with **the Father** and with **his Son**, and fellowship of **the Holy Spirit**. Koinōnia is a **Trinitarian** experience.

2. **Secondly**, koinōnia also expresses what we *share out together*. What we **give** as well as what we **receive**.

a) Koinōnia is the word Paul used for *the collection* he was organizing among the Greek churches, and *koino-nikos* is the Greek word for *generous*.

b) Luke goes on to describe the way in which these first Christians *shared their possessions with one another: all who believed were together and had all things in common* (koina).

3. **Fellowship** then is what *we as believers share in together & share out together*.

a) Christianity is 1st *individual*, then immediately *social/communal/community*.

b) Christ 1st attaches the soul *to Himself*, then immediately *to others*.

4. * **If and when we are able financially...** I've desired for along time to be able to have on our property *places/spaces to promote fellowship*.

D. **We note** that even in Jerusalem *the sharing of property and possessions* was **voluntary**.

1. According to vs.46, *they broke bread in their homes*. So evidently many still had homes; not all had sold them.
 2. And, the **tense** of both verbs in vs.45 is **imperfect**, which indicates that *the selling and the giving were occasional*.
- E. No doubt, that Jesus still calls **some** of his disciples, *as* he did *the rich young ruler*, to a life of total, voluntary poverty. Yet neither Jesus nor his apostles forbade *private property* to all Christians.
1. We note, the Jerusalem experiment was **neither universal nor permanent**.
- F. Slide10d Chrysostom, *This was an angelic commonwealth, not to call anything of theirs their own. Forthwith the root of evils was cut out...None reproached, none envied, none grudged; no pride, no contempt was there...The poor man knew no shame, the rich no haughtiness.*
- G. Slide11 Christian **fellowship** is Christian **caring**, & Christian **caring** is Christian **sharing**.
- H. We must not evade the challenge of these verses. That we have hundreds of thousands of destitute **brothers and sisters** is a standing rebuke to us who are more affluent. It is part of the responsibility of *Spirit-filled believers* to **alleviate need** and **abolish destitution** in the new community of Jesus.
1. We are all called to generosity, especially towards the poor and needy.

V. Slide12a **PRAISE** (42c) *to the breaking of bread and the prayers*

- A. Their fellowship was expressed not only *in caring for each other*, *but in corporate worship too*.
1. It's the same language for **both practices** of the Lord's supper & sharing meals together...most likely **both** are in view. (they were practiced together)
 - a) This is my calling & biblical mandate to *eat all the time* when w/other believers :)
 2. Slide12b The definite article in both expressions (literally, *the breaking of the bread and the prayers*) suggests a reference to the Lord's Supper on the one hand (although almost certainly at that early stage as part of a larger meal) and prayer services or meetings (rather than Private prayer) on the other.
 - a) Slide12c Prayer answers the plea, *If only I could find somebody who could, at one & the same time, understand us & sympathize with us & yet be capable of standing*

in God's holy presence & know Him also. Martyn-Lloyd Jones, was a Welsh Protestant minister & medical doctor who was influential in *the Reformed wing of the British evangelical movement* in the 20th century. Approx 30 years, was *minister of Westminster Chapel London*.

B. There are **2 aspects** of *the early church's worship* which exemplify its **balance**.

1. **Slide12d First**, it was **both formal and informal**, **for** it took place both **in the temple courts** **and in their homes** (46). [*public fellowship - domestic fellowship*]
 - a) We can get understandably **impatient** with the *inherited structures* of the church. Maybe we long to see *reform according to the gospel*, **but** may it be in the spirit of *patient reform* *than impatient rejection*.
 - b) There is no need to polarize between the structured and the unstructured, the traditional and the spontaneous. We can have the **more formal and dignified services** of the local church **and complement that with** the informality and **exuberance** of home meetings. **The church needs both.**
2. **Second**, it was **both joyful and reverent**. *They received their food with glad and generous hearts.* [*in exultation [agalliasis] and sincerity of heart*]
 - a) It is right in public worship to be **dignified**; it is unforgivable to be **dull**. At the same time, their **joy** was **never irreverent**.
 - b) The combination of **joy** and **awe**, as of *formality and informality*, is a **healthy balance** in **worship**.

C. In Acts, prayer indicates *dependence on God, hope in the future, and desire for the advancement of God's work*.

VI. Slide13a PROCLAIM (47b) and the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

- A. So far what we've studied is *the interior life of the church*. We have not talked about the church's *compassionate outreach to the world*.
1. We are reminded of the **danger** of **isolating a text from its context**. On its own, vs.42 presents a very **lopsided** picture of the church's life. **This is why vs.47b must be added.**
 2. Those first Jerusalem Christians were **not** so preoccupied with *learning, sharing and worshipping*, **that** they forgot about **witnessing**.

B. Slide13b 3 vital lessons about local church evangelism:

1. Jesus did it. Yes, he did it through the **preaching** of the apostles, the **witness** of church members, the impressive **love** of their **common life**, and their **example** as they were *praising God & enjoying the favor of all the people* (47a) Yet HE did it.
 - a) He alone has the prerogative to admit people into its membership and to bestow salvation from his throne. [beware of self-confidence & triumphalism]
 - b) We should harness all the technology & knowhow God has give us, but only in *humble dependence* on Him as *the Principal Evangelist*.
2. Slide13c Jesus did 2 things together: *the Lord added to their number...those who were being saved*.
 - a) He did not **add** them to the **church** w/o **saving** them (no name-only Christianity), nor did he **save** them without **adding** them to the **church** (no solitary Christianity).
 - b) **Salvation** and **church membership** belonged together; *they still do*.
3. Slide13d Jesus added people daily.
 - a) The verb is an **imperfect** (*kept adding*), and the adverb (*daily*) puts the matter beyond question.
 - b) The early church's evangelism was not an occasional or sporadic activity.
 - c) Just as their **worship** was daily (46a), so was their **witness**. **Praise** and **proclamation** were both the natural overflow of hearts full of the Holy spirit.
 - d) We need to **recover** this *expectation* of **steady** and **uninterrupted church growth**.

C. Slide14a Looking back over this spirit-filled community, did you notice that it all concerned *the church's relationships*.

1. First, they were related to the apostles (in submission).
 - a) Spirit filled church is *an apostolic church, a NT church*, anxious to **believe** and **obey** what Jesus and his apostles taught.
2. Slide14b Secondly, they were related to each other (in love).
 - a) A Spirit-filled church is a *loving, caring, sharing church*.
3. Slide14c Thirdly, they were related to God (in worship).

a) They worshipped him in the **temple** & in the **home**, in the **Lord's Supper** & in the **prayers**, with **joy** & with **reverence**. A Spirit-filled church is a worshipping church.

4. Slide14d Fourthly, they were related to the world (in outreach). *John Stott*

a) No *self-centred, self-contained* church can claim to be Spirit-filled.

D. Slide15a Biblical teaching, loving fellowship, living worship, and an ongoing, outgoing evangelism.

1. Learn, Love, Praise, Proclaim.

E. Slide15b They worshipped daily, witnessed daily & the Lord added to the church daily.

1. Is your experience with the Lord a **daily** one?

F. Slide15c Questions: (take a pic) Which order would you put them in from most important to less important? - Which of the 4 is lacking in our church or in your life today?