

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. Malaysia/Rohingya Conf Update: How priv we are in Nepal. Julie/Ryan/Lar to Bang.
- D. 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?