

## Establishing Churches 3 – Five Characteristics of this New Kind of Community

Acts 2:42-47 - 42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. 44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

### 1. A Community of Self-Sacrificing Love

- John 13:34-35 - 34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”
  - “love” = *agape*
    - 4 Greek words for love:
      - 1. *phileo* = emotional love... friendship, affection
      - 2. *eros* = love between a husband and wife... romance
      - 3. *stergo* = love between a ruler and his people, parents and their children, a master and his dog...
      - 4. *agape* = love that serves and gives of yourself
        - Used in Greek literature to describe one of the gods giving of him or herself to someone, showing them favor and supporting them.
        - Not about how you feel but about what you do. It's about showing love to another by laying your life down for them, serving them.

### 2. A Community of Radical Unity

- John 17:20-23 - 20 I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, 21 that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.
- It's not about being the same, but about being united in our differences
- Living in Unity is a Challenge – Corinth
  - Divisions between those siding more with Peter, with Apollos, or with Paul himself (1 Corinthians 1)
  - Divisions between Jew and Gentile
  - Divisions between people with differing gifts and talents (1 Corinthians 12)
  - Paul had to rebuke the Corinthians for the divisions in their church
  - “divisions” = *schisma* = a tear, a split... where we get the word “schism” from...
    - These differences, if we let them dominate, cause very real, very painful tears in us.
  - Paul's Solution: We are the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12)
- In Jesus Unity is Possible
  - Ephesians 2:11-16 - 11 Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— 12 remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility 15 by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in

ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, 16 and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

### **3. A Community Devoted to the Word of God**

- "they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching" (Acts 2:42)
- "every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching" (Acts 5:42)
- 1 Timothy 4:13 - Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching...
- Jesus Has the Words of Eternal Life (John 6)
  - Jesus gave a hard teaching...
  - John 6:60 - When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?"
  - John 6:66-69 - 66 After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. 67 So Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?" 68 Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, 69 and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God."