



Rebirthed Community

Weekly Group Bible Studies

Introduction:

As the Holy Spirit came upon the early church, they truly become a “rebirthed community”. The Spirit catalysed a transformation in God’s people, making them a community who refreshed each another and their neighbours!

The following studies focus on six qualities of the early church that led to a refreshing impact on the Christian community and those around them.

As you reflect on these studies individually or with others, consider how we might grow these qualities in our congregation as we gather in large groups, small groups or even one on one interactions. What part might you play for us to be a rebirthed community?

Study 1: A Praying Community

A) Relate

Share about a time you had an especially powerful prayer time. What happened? What was it like? What impact did it have and what impression did it leave on you?

B) Read Acts 4:23-31.

C) Reflect

At this stage of the early church, the disciples appeared apprehensive and uncertain about their future, but one instruction they were given was to “stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). So with one accord they devoted themselves to prayer (Acts 1:14).

When the day of Pentecost arrived, the early church was gathered together in one place when the Holy Spirit came in power like the sound of a rushing wind, and divided tongues of fire rested on the believers. They were filled with the Spirit and began speaking in other tongues. Many surrounding onlookers miraculously heard these tongues in their own language, and as Peter arises to address them to speak of Jesus, 3000 respond to his message and are baptised that day.

The passage we will unpack points to another gathering of prayer. Notice what God does as His people pray. Let’s pray the same will happen amongst us!



D) Respond

1. What motivates the disciples to gather in prayer in Acts 4:23?
2. The prayer of the disciples covers many topics. What stands out to you?
 - a. God the Creator (Acts 4:24)
 - b. God and His Kingdom (Acts 4:25-26)
 - c. God is Sovereign (Acts 4:27-28)
 - d. God opens doors for the Gospel (Acts 4:29)
 - e. God is the Healer and Miracle Worker (Acts 4:30)
 - f. God emboldens His people to speak about Jesus (Acts 4:31)
3. What do you notice that they don't pray for that you might have prayed for?
4. What are the similarities between this gathering and at Pentecost?
5. As you read these accounts, how do you long for God to move in your life and community? How does this inspire you to pray more with others?

E) Rely

- In 2's or 3's share what you long for God to do reflecting on the disciples' prayer.
- Pray together for God's kingdom to flourish, for gospel doors to open, for God's power to move and for boldness and courage to share Jesus.
- Encourage each other to courageously talk to someone about Jesus and His word this week.



Study 2: A Repenting Community

A) Relate

When you think of the word: “Repent”, what comes to mind for you?

What have been your experiences with the concept of repentance?

B) Read Acts 3:19-21 & James 5:16-20

C) Reflect

In the preceding verses, a man who was lame from birth was miraculously healed in the name of Jesus by Peter and John. The healed man walks, leaps and praises God. The crowds start to gather around the trio and Peter begins to address them. After proclaiming Jesus, Peter urges his listeners to repent describing powerful things that happen when we do. The Hebrew word for repent focuses on “Turning back to God”. The Greek word focuses on “Changing our mind”. As we reflect on these passages, consider the power of repentance as a community practice.

D) Respond

1. Peter explains that three things happen when we repent (Acts 3:19-20). How would you describe these three things and why are each so important? What do each mean to you personally?

2. In his letter, James is encouraging a culture of confession and prayer in the church. Why do you we often hold back from confessing our sins to one another?

3. What is the outcome of confession and prayer, and why are both so important (James 5:16-20)?

Read 1 John 1:5-10

4. According to John, what is the refreshing outcome of walking in the light (1 John 1:7) as opposed to walking in the darkness (1 John 1:6,8,10)?



5. How do we continue to walk in the light and what reasons we can be confident of what God will do when we confess our sins (1 John 1:9)?

E) Rely

- Take a moment to think about and share:
 - The obstacles to confession:
 - In your life;
 - In your small group or church community.
 - Areas that you need to surrender to the Lordship of Jesus.
- In prayer:
 - Surrender these things and your life to God in prayer.
 - Confess and pray for one another that healing, forgiveness and fellowship might flow.



Study 3: A Sharing Community

A) Relate

Share an example of generosity you or someone else experienced in Christian community. What happened and what impact did it have on everyone involved?

B) Read Acts 2:42-47 & 4:32-35

C) Reflect

In this period of history, there was a very significant gap between the rich and poor. Imagine the early church gathered: extremely wealthy individuals alongside penniless slaves and everyone in between. A radical generosity swept across the church moved by compassionate love and care for one another. As we reflect on these passages, consider the impact a “sharing” culture had on those in the church and those around the church.

D) Respond

1. How would you describe the quality and attitude of sharing in Acts 2:44-45?
2. What impact did these things have on their neighbours (Acts 2:47)?
3. How does Acts 4:32 expand on the sharing culture growing in the church?
4. What does Luke describe as the result of God’s grace at work (Acts 4:34-35)?
5. How Proverbs 11:25 reveal the dual refreshing impact of generosity?
6. What principles can we draw from the radical generosity that we see in the early church that we can apply to our lives today? (Note: It’s important that we discern how God is calling us to express this radical generosity, and not assume that God calls all of us to communal living. Radical generosity was expressed differently across the early church in different cities, and not every church lived communally).

E) Rely

Share about:

- Situations of need you are aware of in the church community;
- Some ways you might be able to share with those in need;
- Ideas to grow a radically generous culture in the church.



Commit to grow in practical generosity to others in the church and pray that generosity might grow in one another and across the church, that we might refresh one another in the name of Jesus.



Study 4: A Serving Community

A) Relate

Share about a time someone served you (or others) that was meaningful for you.

B) Read Acts 6:1-7

C) Reflect

The early church had already established a ministry to the poor distributing food to widows of Hebrew and Greek backgrounds. In ancient times, widows were especially vulnerable in society often with no one to advocate for their needs or provide them with the security they needed. As we unpack this passage together, consider how serving is refreshing and how your serving might refresh others.

D) Respond

1. What are the different ways to serve that we observe in Acts 6:1-4?
2. Why do you think is it important for us to understand where we should focus our serving (Acts 6:2,4)? What is the danger of being distracted?
3. What processes can help people step into serving (Acts 6:3,5-6).
4. What do you think could have happened if the Apostles took care of the problem in the ministry themselves instead of empowering the community to serve?
5. What was the impact of sharing the responsibility of serving across the church (Acts 6:7)? Who do you think was refreshed as a result of this?

E) Rely

Share about:

- What areas you are currently serving or are interested in serving and how that journey is going (Whether in the church or outside the church).
- What you believe God may be calling you to focus on, and whether there are things distracting you from that serving focus.
- How you might be more focused on how God is calling you to serve, and/or how you might encourage others to serve in His kingdom.

Pray for one another and the church, that we might grow a culture that serves to refresh one another.



Study 5: An Encouraging Community

A) Relate

Share about a time when someone's encouragement significantly impacted you or a time when someone took a risk to vouch for you.

B) Read Acts 4:36; 9:26-31; 11:25-26

C) Reflect

Throughout Acts and the Epistles, we see the early church had a culture of encouragement. Whether it was disciples visiting other Christians or Church communities; a letter to a church; or a disciple investing in a younger disciple; encouragement was a strong and healthy part of this rebirthed community. We will focus our attention on Barnabas' example whose name meant "Son of Encouragement", as a case study of the encouragement we can grow in the Church.

D) Respond

1. Saul had a dramatic conversion, but prior to this, he was infamous for being a persecutor of Christians. Understandably, many Christians were suspicious and fearful of Saul. How does Barnabas encourage Saul and the Apostles (Acts 9:27)?
2. What impact did this have for Saul and the Church community (Acts 9:28-31)?
3. In Antioch, a growing number of people came to believe in Jesus through the outreach of believers who had been scattered due to persecution. As Barnabas visits this growing community and sees God at work, what actions reflect his encouraging nature (Acts 11:22-26)?
4. The opportunity arose to re-visit the churches planted on their missionary journeys, but Barnabas and Paul disagree about bringing Mark along. What principle stands out to you about the difference between Barnabas and Paul (Acts 15:36-39)?
5. In summary, what principles about encouragement can you draw from the example of Barnabas to be encouragers and to grow a culture of encouragement in Church?



E) Rely

Share about:

- Anything that might hold you back from being an encourager;
- Believers who come to mind that need encouragement OR people God is putting on your heart to encourage;
- What you might do to encourage them;
- Ways you can grow in being an encourager;
- Ideas of how to grow a culture of encouragement at church.

Pray for one another and for those needing encouragement that God might encourage them through you and through the church community.



Study 6: A Reaching Out and Embracing Community

A) Relate

Share about a time when you received a warm welcome from others into a new group or new community. What happened and what impact did that have on you?

B) Read Acts 11:1-18

C) Reflect

At His ascension, Jesus declared to the disciples that they would be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth. Yet according to the Jewish tradition and interpretation of the law during that time, a Jew was considered unclean if they associated with or visited a Gentile. So strong was this tradition ingrained in Peter that God had to give him a repeated vision and supernaturally send people to fetch him to reveal that God's plan for His kingdom and community is to be an embracing community of Gentiles. As we unpack this narrative, consider how God is calling us to reach others, especially those we may consider inappropriate to associate with.

D) Respond

1. Why were some believers so upset about Peter's ministry to the Gentiles (Acts 11:2-3)? Why did this matter to them so much?
2. Do you find anything interesting about Peter's vision during the rooftop prayer session? What do you think was God's main message to Peter (Acts 11:5-10)?
3. What role did the Holy Spirit play in this narrative (Acts 11:12-17)?
4. What was it that convinced the gathered believers that God's intention for His church was to reach out to the Gentiles as well?
5. What principles can we draw from this narrative to apply to our context?



E) Rely

Share about:

- What may hold you back from reaching out to people outside of the church;
- What would help you to reach out to people outside the church;
- People who come to mind or that God is putting on your heart to reach;
- One simple step you can take to reach out to others.

Pray for:

- The Spirit to reveal people on God's heart He would like to reach through you.
- The Spirit to speak to people in your life to draw them near to Jesus.
- Open doors and boldness to reach out and love people outside of church.