

Mission 6 - Teachable

Acts 2:40-42

And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." 41 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

We have over the last month been looking at the nature and life of the early church

We have seen that a Christian is a person who has been radically changed and transformed.

This transformation is supernatural and Christ said that it was so profound it was akin to being 'Born-Again.'

Last week we started to ask ourselves the question, *what is a Christian?*

What is one really?

But what does the bible say a Christian is?

Not what does the media say

Not what does the latest Time Magazine poll say.

No the denomination we grew up in or the church our grandmother went to....

But the bible

And we are using as our reference the Book of Acts because it is a first hand account of the nature and character of this early church and these early Christians

We read this scripture and we highlighted v 42.

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

We noted 3 things about these early Christians.

They:

- a. devoted themselves
- b. to the Apostles teachings
- c. and to fellowship and the breaking of bread.

In other words they were:

- a. passionate
- b. teachable
- c. approachable and accountable

Last week we talked about how, to the early Christians,
Christ **filled** their life and
He was **central** to their life.

And because of this passion that they had, it caused a separation to take place in their life.

They became separate from their **past**,
Separate from their **sin**,
Separate from the **world**.

So now we come to the second area that I mentioned this morning.... the early Christians were teachable.

It is not good enough being separated **from** something you have to be separated **to** something.

It is not enough to say, "I am going to give up bad food."
You actually have to decide what food you are going to eat.

You can't just decide, I am no longer going to be unfit; you have to decide what you are going to do to become fit.

You can't just stop being something, you have to start becoming something

These early Christians didn't just separate themselves from their past, sin and the world.

They attached themselves to something.

They attached themselves to the Apostles

They did this by devoting themselves to and giving themselves to the Apostles teaching, submitting themselves to the Apostles doctrine, and making it their own

The times they lived in

Now when we read the account here of who got saved in these verses, we read that there were people from all over the world, many different and varied cultures.

Acts 2:9-11 ESV

(9) Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,

(10) Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome,

(11) both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians--we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God."

There were Parthians, they were great business people.

They had been a tremendous military force at one time.

A proud nation.

Great horsemen.

Very skilled.

Then there were the Elamites, the Medes.

Cultures that had also become a prosperous commercial people, a people of great history.

Then of course the Greeks. A people who loved art, the theatre, and sports.

The Jews themselves, lovers of education and debate.

The Romans, people who loved structure, law and festivities.

Yet when we look at these people and what was important to them.

When we look at their lives

When they formed the early church what did they give themselves to?
What were the things that were most important to them?

Did they give themselves to art?

Did they give themselves to start common interest groups?

Did they give themselves to social events or social gatherings?

Did they give themselves to political discussions or dramatic performances or art shows?

To Sporting endeavors?

Did they give themselves to good works or business pursuits?

No. There was nothing like that in the early church.

None of these were important to them any more.

Those things that once made up the center of their life, were not in the fringes

Church History

The funny thing is that when you have look at church history when we look at revivals in the past, all the things that we think are so fundamentally important today

All the things the experts tell us are essential to growing a church are the first things to fall away; they are the first to stop.

When a real revival hits, people want nothing but God.
They can't wait to get to church to worship God
They awake each morning to read their Word

Everything else stops.

I have been in some periods in church life where it has been like that

You hunger to gather
You long for the word
You can't wait to see the miracles

These people they cut out and blocked out the white noise that fills
their life.

So much of our lives are filled with things that are just not essential

So much of our faith is filled with things that are just not essential.

These people gathered everyday.

They got together in each others home, it is just that their life, their
being, their desires where based around something **other** than the
thing that they were delivered from.

Other than the things that were important to them before they got
saved

They just didn't drag their old activities, their world pursuits into
church and call it outreach.

They just didn't rebadge their sin, they left their sin behind.

A church that resorts to rebadging the world and imitating the world is
totally different from the New Testament church and the New
Testament Christian

Now, don't hear what I am not saying.

I AM NOT.

I repeat,

I AM NOT denouncing these things, I am just trying to show you that these things were not present in the early church.

These things were not of paramount importance to the early church and Christians.

Does this mean that these people didn't engage in them? No.

Does it mean they didn't go to sporting events or the theater? No

They all had a social life.

They all had a family life.

But these things did not consist of their church life.

What I am trying to highlight here is that you can get all that in the world, but that is not the function or the job of the church.

I am not advocating or trying to dictate your social life, I have far more important things to do than play entertainment director.

All I am trying to do is hold a picture before you of what the New Testament church looked like and what the New Testament Christians saw as important

Now as a church...

Do we organize social activities? Yes.

Do we encourage them? Yes.

Do we have sporting programs and groups? Yes.

But they are secondary to what we understand and see as the role and function of the church and Christians.

If you want entertainment, go see a movie.

If you want discipling as a Christian, come to church.

I am not trying to compete with the world. I am not in a competition with the world to entertain you, I am on a mandate from God to teach you and disciple you and equip you for a reformation.

“And they devoted themselves, they gave themselves passionately, steadfastly, continually, to the hearing, learning and studying of Apostles teaching, the Apostles doctrine.”

The Apostles Doctrine

So let's now look at what it is that they gave themselves to.

It says they gave themselves to doctrine they gave themselves to teaching

They were first **passionate**,
And the second thing, they were **teachable**.

Why?
Why did they give themselves to teaching?

Same teaching

The first thing that I think about is that these people came together because they had the same experience, but they stayed together because they believe and followed the same teaching.

There would never have been an early church if there were not a belief in the same teaching.

They had the same experience and
They believed the same message.

V 44 says, “All who believed were together and had all thing in common.”

Not just common goods
Not just sharing material things

They had all things in common
Their faith
Their love for Christ
Their beliefs – all things

Remember these people all heard. Peter.
They all listened to the Apostles

They had a common teaching,
They had a common basis for their faith and conversion,
This is what bound them together at the start and kept them together.

Now think about this,
What did the Apostles address at some point in all of the epistles?
What errors and problems continually arose?

Different doctrines.
None apostolic heresy, none a Apostolic teaching

Doctrine was the first thing that bound them together

Doctrine was the first thing that the enemy used to separate them

2 Thess 3:6

*Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, **that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us.***

1 Thess 2:13

*And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, **which you heard from us**, you accepted it not as the word of men **but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.***

1 John 2:19

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.

1 Thess 4:1

*Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, **that as you received from us** how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more.*

2 Thess 2:2

***Not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed**, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.*

What has always divided the church down through history?

Mixed, poor or erroneous doctrine.

What did the early church fathers continually fight against?

Mixed, poor or erroneous doctrine.

What ruins ministries still today?

It is just not sin or lifestyle. Those things are the fruit of mixed, poor or erroneous doctrine. They are an external manifestation of an internal problem

What splits churches still today?

Mixed, poor or erroneous doctrine.

What builds churches?

What builds Christians?

What builds a nation?

Sound, precise, and correct doctrine.

Because this is what built the early church and this is what still holds them together now

Again.

These people gathered together around a common experience.

What held them together was a common doctrine.

V 41

“They received the word and were baptized and they were added.”

The received the Word
They responded and submitted to the Word
Then they were added to the church

So why did these early Christians want preaching, why were they so hungry for teaching?

We live in a day and age where people no longer want preaching and they seem to despise preachers

People say we want a discussion, we want to dialogue, we want to sit down and you have to hear us out and enter into the debate

That will never build a church

There is a place for that, but please don't call that preaching.

Did these Christians have discussion, yes they did, daily.

They went from house to house

Talking about what?

Talking about what they had gathered daily in the temple to hear.

They wanted something more than just a discussion group.

The Jews where renowned religious debaters.

They were Greeks they discussed philosophy and religion all their lives.

No these people wanted something else

Why did they want this teaching?

Why did they desire it?

First of all, they were devoted to this teaching because they recognized, they needed it.

The things that they had heard Peter preach astounded them.

The miracles they saw, the moving of the spirit, everything overwhelmed them.

Their life, their being, their existence made sense for the first time

They hungered for more, they craved for it

Have you ever watched a baby feed?

It doesn't discuss the nutritional value of milk, it wants milk.

It longs to be feed.

It desires it and will carry on till it gets it.

It doesn't know why, but it is the only thing that satisfies it.

These new Christians, this early church knew that this message had saved them, changed them and transformed them.

And they wanted more.

1 Peter 2:2-3

*Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may **grow up into salvation**— **3** if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.*

If a new baby doesn't feed on the right food, it may grow in age, but not in stature.

It may progress chronologically, but not developmentally.

So it is with a Christian.

Pure spiritual milk leads a person to grow up into salvation.

It is not enough to say that you are eating, digesting, consuming some sort of spiritual food, you have to be eating the right spiritual food.

Have you ever taken your kids to an all-you-can-eat buffet That included an all-you-can-eat ice cream stand?

What do they eat more of?

Fruit and vegetables or chocolate sundae?

If you left them alone what would they only eat?

If you allowed them to choose their diet everyday, what would they only eat?

Would it help or retard their development?

So it is with us.

We need to ensure we are getting spiritually not only what we want, but what we need.

To the early church, this teaching, this doctrine had changed their lives.

They marveled at what they had never heard before and they wanted more of it.

To them, becoming a Christian and hearing the truth were the most astounding things that had ever happened to them.

All their life they had been hungry.

All their life they had thirsted.

All their life they had desired.

But now they had it.

They were hungry

They longed for it.

They wanted to grow up in their salvation.

The bread of life to fill them, and
Living water to quench their soul.

It is like I can see Peter standing there and saying...well that is all for
today, I can't give it to you all now, come back tomorrow...

Remember what it was like that for you when you were first saved?

You couldn't get enough of Jesus.
You loved His word.
You loved to worship.

For me it was never about the quality of the band or the sound, but
your desire for God.

Some of the greatest moves of God I have seen amongst people
have been in dusty school halls with a single out of tune guitar.

My greatest personal encounters with God have been alone in a
room with my bible and nothing else – an audience of one

And God stepped down
Hearts were lifted up and God stepped down

I don't understand why people ever want to graduate from a simple,
uncomplicated passion for Christ.

I don't understand Christians who want the minimal amount of
teaching.

The minimal amount of worship

The minimal amount of the Word

The just enough to get them by

It is like people want to survive on spiritual rations when there is a
feast in the Word.

Readers Digest use to take books and condense them.

They use to take great pieces of literal art and reduce them to a summary.

You would get a reasonable summary, but it would have no depth, no development. No true understanding.

Sometimes I think the modern church has become like that.

They have catered to the lowest common denominator, the bored, easily distracted, non-passionate person instead of bringing a person up, they have brought their expectations down.

I did a thesis a couple of weeks ago and I want to do it again today

I want to give you permission, in fact ask you to miss Sunday morning

If you are a once a week Christian
If you can only make church once a week
If it is a job issue
Or a life issue
Or a preference issue for you

Then I urge you, come to Wednesday night as we study doctrine and leadership

Then once that gets you and turns your heart towards heaven, come to Sunday night, our Supernatural Sunday night church and be a part of the miracles and the wonders that God does

BY then you will be ready to come back to Sunday am and be a total fanatic!!!

The second reason they were devoted to this teaching WAS because they didn't want to do suffer the Thomas Effect

These early Christians didn't want to be like Thomas.

Thomas missed church, he was away from church one Sunday and Jesus turned up.

These early Christians didn't want to stay away in case they missed something.

Last Sunday night the Holy Ghost moved and 80 something people received individual prophetic words from God.

Friend, that happens, when it happens.

When the Holy Ghost is in a place you never know what is going to happen.

These people in the books of Acts were not taking any chances. They did not want to miss anything.

And their faith, their passion, their hunger was the solid ground upon which God built.

They desired to change, they desired to learn

Why did they want more teaching, why did they want doctrine?
Why did they hunger and hang around to see the signs and the wonders?

They didn't need a healing; they wanted to see a healing
They wanted to learn to have God use them

How can I teach you to pray for the sick and see them recover if you are not here to see the sick prayed for?

They had become aware of their ignorance.

The murderous mob days before had been transformed by the power of the crucified Christ,

They realized that they needed to learn they realized that they were ignorant.

They need to change and suddenly they changed.

God help us from thinking we have ever arrived

Suddenly they were awakened.

Suddenly their world had been turned.

They were 'cut to the heart.'

They longed to understand more about this tremendous thing that had happened to them.

They needed to know.

But they where desirous to know not just for themselves, but to help others.

This is important; they need to know what they believed so that they could tell others

So they could teach others

So they could disciple

Thirdly the early Christians had a teachable spirit

They wanted to understand fully all that had taken place in their hearts and life and they were prepared to humble themselves, to discipline themselves, to submit themselves to learn.

Anyone who thinks too highly of himself or herself can never grow and develop.

1 Cor 3:18

Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise.

We should never allow ourselves to graduate from being a student, we should always thirst and hunger after knowledge and personal growth.

The life of Apollos

Lets look at the impact that being prepared to teach and being teachable can have on our lives and the lives of those around us.

Now the account we are going to read in just a moment is one of the most humbling accounts of having a teachable spirit and one of the most inspiring in terms of being prepared to teach, that I have found in the bible.

One of the first things that happen to a Christian is that they are convicted of their sinful pride.

One of the worst things that happens to a Christian is when they think they arrive.

You cannot become a Christian without being made humble.
You cannot grow as a Christian without staying humble.

Acts 18:24-28

Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures.

***25** He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John.*

***26** He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him and explained to him the way of God more accurately. **27** And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, **28** for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.*

Often there are people willing to teach, but there are not people willing to learn.

Often there are people willing to learn, but there are not people willing to teach.

Now think about this...

Look at what this says here

Lets look at what we know about Apollos....

He only knew the baptism of John. Namely – repent and be baptized the Messiah is coming shortly.

So Apollos heard John the Baptist preach, but had never heard of Jesus the Messiah

He heard about the coming messiah and was so moved, he left Jerusalem and started to preach about it and teach about it through out Asia

He had been preaching passionately and effectively for a long period of time.

He was competent in the scripture.

He had knowledge of God

He had a revelation, but it was limited
He was doing what he could with what he had

When this account takes place it takes place around AD 52-57 on Paul's 3rd missions journey.

We don't know how long John the Baptist had been teaching repentance in the deserts around Jerusalem

So we don't know when Apollos first heard the preaching and when he went out to tell others

But we can reasonable assume it was for maybe 25-27 years, maybe as many as 30 years

Now then consider this.

We have mention here of Aquila and Priscilla for the first time

Acts 18:1-2 ESV

(1) After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth.

(2) And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome

We know:

- a. They were Jews.
- b. They were tentmakers.

They may or may not have been Christians when they met Paul.

Let's assume that they were not, because we are not told that they were.

Paul meets Aquila and Priscilla in AD 49-51 and leads them to Christ and then spends maybe a year working in business with them – undoubtedly sharing and inputting into their life.

Some time later, maybe 12 months, maybe 6 years later they hear a preacher who has been preaching for at least 20 years.

They realize that he has never heard of The Christ

They say...*hey, what you are teaching is great – but it is only half the story.*

There is more, we need to fill you in.

How many people do you know in the ministry for over 20 years that would allow someone to sit and speak into their life?

And Apollos humbles himself

Admits that he doesn't know it all

Realizes that for say...20 years or 30 years he has been preaching only a partial revelation

I admire Apollos –

For being teachable,

For being open,

For being humble,

For desiring to learn, and

He was willing to learn.

And as a result of his willingness to be teachable his effectiveness greatly increased.

Apollos was willing to learn and Aquila and Priscilla were willing to teach

I admire Aquila and Priscilla – for not being intimidated by someone like Apollos. A mature, faith filled, fiery evangelist.

They realized that they had a revelation of Christ, and they wanted to share it and help someone with it – not beat them, but help them

Some of you need to stop being intimidated by others around you.

You have a greater revelation of Christ than was ever available to them.

Aquila and Priscilla had a greater revelation than was ever available to Apollos.

How selfish insecurity can be.

How limiting.

How prideful.

When we allow potential rejection to stop us from sharing the grace that Christ has released and brought into our life.

Now consider the impact that Aquila and Priscilla had on the body of Christ because, they were willing to share **their** revelation with Apollos.

Apollos would go to Achaia, which is in fact Corinth.

Paul had already established a church there.

Paul planted, Apollos watered... remember?

Apollos returned to Ephesus and met with Paul and was with Paul when he wrote this letter to the Corinthians.

Although Paul had been in Corinth for over 18 months it was Apollos teaching, knowledge and evident use of spiritual gifts that set that church on fire.

What if Aquila and Priscilla had said of themselves

“We are too young in the lord to teach this man of God.”

“He has been saved longer then I...”

“Who are we... he is such a dynamic preacher...”

The church in Corinth would not have prospered and Apollos would have lived his life never reaching his potential.

Conversely, what if Apollos had hardened his heart?

What if he decided he wasn't going to listen, wasn't going to allow this people to input into his life.

He would have faded into obscurity as a man preaching the baptism of John when the power of Christ was available to him.

He would have spent his days preaching an old revelation instead of a living.

Apollos had what all of these early Christians seem to have a soft, open and teachable heart

I want to give you six keys to cultivating a soft heart

How to cultivate a soft heart:

- 1) Realize that you will never arrive and God is wanting to continue to do a work in you
- 2) Be prepared to learn from the bad as well as the good situations in life
- 3) Be prepared to learn from the bad as well as the good teachers in life
- 4) Cultivate within yourself a desire to learn.
- 5) Remember that not being teachable comes from a spirit of pride, that is often based on rejection and insecurity
- 6) Have a thankful heart. Remember where you came from
- 7) Pick your teachers wisely

Jesus said that the student shall never rise above the teacher

Be careful about who is speaking and what they are saying

Pick whom you submit to with great care

Some people will want to speak into your life who have no place and no right to

I am not just talking physical people, but TV, books, radio.