

The new church at Pentecost

People go through their schooling years, normally 12 years of them, being educated. Then the education process continues at university for another 3 to 4 years. In many cases people still aren't really prepared for their careers or even their lives as independent adults. This is because they have been fed a lot of head knowledge but haven't been empowered in practical ways to accomplish what they need to accomplish. This was even the case with Jesus' disciples who had spent about three and a half years with Him. They finished their training having been taught by Jesus both verbally and modelling what He taught. However they still felt unequipped to carry out the task at hand – what He had commissioned them to do. They needed greater enabling, greater empowerment, something transformational. Even Jesus knew that that's why he told them to stay in Jerusalem to wait for the empowering of the Holy Spirit to come upon them before they embark on the commission set before them by Himself.

Acts 1: 12 – 14; 2: 1 – 13; 38 – 41

There were three vital aspects to the initiation of the first church at Pentecost

1) Prayer

- The disciples, and others (about 120 people), gathered together “constantly in prayer”.
- "If you believe in prayer at all, expect God to hear you. If you do not expect, you will not have. God will not hear you unless you believe He will hear you; but if you believe He will, He will be as good as your faith." - Charles Spurgeon
- When Jesus told them to wait in Jerusalem for the gift promised by the Father they didn't take that as a mere “chilling out”. They understood that waiting as a time to really seek His face for the way ahead.
- No doubt they had fellowship and meals together but their priority was prayer.
- They joined together – their praying was corporate
 - This doesn't discount private personal prayer at all. In fact Jesus commanded us to go into our closets and pray.
 - Matthew 6: 6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.
 - However here we see the church gathered together in prayer as a body.
 - In Hebrews we are exhorted to keep coming together in prayer
 - Hebrews 10: 24 – 25 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another —and all the more as you see the Day approaching.
 - This verse follows other verses about having confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus. Hence this meeting together isn't merely for fellowship but for prayer.
- They joined together constantly
 - These days Christians meet for anything except for prayer
 - Most church prayer meetings are sparsely attended and we wonder why our churches are dying out.
 - Being constant in prayer gives us an indication of diligence and commitment to prayer. Not a half-hearted attempt at carrying out some religious duty.
- Prayer was the first criterion which saw the establishment of the first church because prayer is a demonstration of our weakness and our utter dependence on God.

2) Power

- Jesus told them that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon them
 - Acts 1: 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”
 - Note that this power is a power to be Jesus’ witnesses not to have power to do whatever we want.
 - It’s a power to enable us to bring glory to His name.
 - A power to testify of who He is and what He’s done for us.
- Then at Pentecost the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples and empowered them
 - It was then that this bunch of uneducated fishermen, tax collectors and zealots went out and brought glory to God.
 - They could never have done this in their own strength and power. They were completely transformed to fulfil the commission that Jesus had left them with. To go and make disciples of all nations.
- Being witnesses is more than what we say but what we have become to reflect what God is making us to be – Christlike
 - Galatians 5: 22 – 25 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.
 - Here Paul using living by the Spirit and belonging to Christ Jesus interchangeably. This is an indication of the transformational power of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives bringing glory to Jesus
- It’s important to remember that our lives are just as important as the message we carry
- A bad testimony discredits the Gospel message but a good testimony adds value to it.

3) Proclamation

- When the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples they didn’t sit inside and enjoy a Spirit filled praise and worship service. They proclaimed the wonders of God in the languages of the various nations present in Jerusalem at the time of Pentecost.
 - Acts 2: 7 – 11 Utterly amazed, they asked: “Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!”
- Peter, who had betrayed Jesus, stood up and proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus.
 - At the end of his message about three thousand people believed, were baptised and were added to their number.
 - From 120 to 3000.
 - The new church was born at Pentecost!
 - This was God’s doing not man’s

What it took for the church to be born was:

- Believers who understood their own frailty enough to commit themselves to God in prayer
- A reliance on the power of the Holy Spirit to do what we could never do to bring glory to God
- A proclamation of the wonders of God and His Gospel to all people