

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Fourth Quarter 2018: *Oneness in Christ*
Lesson 5 The Experience of Unity in the Early Church

Read for this week's study

Acts 1:12–14; Acts 2:5–13; Revelation 14:12; Acts 2:42–47; Acts 4:32–37; Acts 5:1–11; 2 Corinthians 9:8–15.

Memory Text

“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Days of Preparation
- III. From Babel to Pentecost
- IV. Unity of Fellowship
- V. Generosity and Greed
- VI. Remember the Poor
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. Read the features which promoted early church unity in Acts 2:42. What do these four activities really mean in today’s terms? How do they foster unity? What is the key ingredient in spiritual unity? How do you know when it is OK to disagree within a spiritual community? (Sabbath Afternoon)
2. Read Acts 1:12-14. What did the disciples do during this period of ten days? What things must they have been doing that are not explicitly described in the text? What kind of activities would be contemporary equivalents? What would the Holy Spirit’s role in these activities be in our world today? How can we have the kind of experience with Jesus that they had, not having been with him face to face? (Sunday’s lesson)
3. Read Acts 2:1-15. What is the significance of this amazing event? Why did the Holy Spirit arrive in such a dramatic way? Why does the Bible story give a voice to those who were disputing the genuineness of the experience? Since the text doesn’t tell us directly, what is the likely location of this event? (Monday’s lesson)

4. Read Acts 2:42-47. What activities did these early believers do as a community? How did they handle their financial and social affairs? Why didn't the early church continue the practice of holding all things in common? To what degree is the Pine Knoll community like the early church and how is it different? How would one try to reproduce the Pentecost experience today? (Tuesday's lesson)
5. Read Acts 4:32-37 along with 5:1-11. Compare the behavior and attitude of Barnabas with those of Ananias and Sapphira. What do you think went wrong with this couple? What were their motivations to do what they did? What does their fate tell us about God? What is the "great fear" that came over the church all about? Do we need more of that today? What was God's purpose in causing or allowing it? How can one uproot covetousness and pride from our own lives today? (Wednesday's lesson)
6. Read 2 Corinthians 9:8-15. What does Paul say would be the results of the Corinthian Church's generosity? In what ways have you and your church experienced the benefits of generosity? What blessings come to those who give to others? In what ways could we duplicate the kind of project Paul was promoting to the Corinthians today? (Thursday's lesson)
7. Why do people love money so much? What does money represent that makes it so hard to let go of? (Friday's lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Jesus said, "I do not leave you orphans"—in the Greek— "You are not alone. The Spirit will come and guide you." After Jesus left, for the very first time they sat down and opened their Bibles and went to work. They actually began to think things through. But why do that, when you have the Lord visibly present? I mean, if the Lord were here tonight, and we should have a question, why should you go and get the books out? Why not ask him directly?

And Jesus says, "It would be better that I go, because you'll never grow up if you don't start thinking it through for yourselves." And so he says, "It's better that I go now. And you can't see the Spirit. If you want to consult the Spirit, you'd better open the books that he has inspired. You'd better read those." And as Ellen White says, "Even the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart must be judged by the Scriptures."

So he doesn't come as just a voice of authority. He comes with the authority of truth, which you will find in the Scriptures. And the men began to grow up, in the upper room. And when finally they realized that the authority of their message lay in the truth, which they found as the two men on the way to Emmaus did, by comparing the teachings of the Old Testament with the life and the teachings and the sufferings and the death of Christ. When they put that all together, at last they were ready to go. And then the Spirit showed himself. He'd been there all along. Who'd inspired the scriptures they were reading? Who was guiding them in the interpretation

of these scriptures? But when finally they put it all together and they were ready to go, then the Spirit appeared. Some say, "The Spirit came." No, they wouldn't have been where they were if the Spirit hadn't worked all along. Now the Spirit gave them visible endorsement.

"Now you're ready to go. Now you take the truth. And you're going to take it just as you found it. You're going to take the Bible." Look how Paul did that. "You're going to take the Scriptures out, and you're going to tie in with that the culminating revelation, based on the Old Testament, to be found in the way Jesus lived, the way he treated people, the way he suffered, and the way he died.

And then they really had authority and power, but not a visible leader. And that's the authority we have. So I think there were many ways, perhaps, in which it was better that Jesus go. And the one that appeals to me most is that they never would have grown up so long as he was there, and they could run to him and say "Is it this? Is it that?" And then, of course, they were preoccupied with being with him in the kingdom. "What position will I hold in the kingdom?" He said, "There are much more important things than that. I think I'd better go, and leave you to think this thing through." And they grew up. They still had some growing to do, as you recall. Peter had some growing to do. But in the end, he really grew up, didn't he. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in all 66 – Acts*, recorded April, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/59MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/60MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

It is the privilege of every earnest seeker for truth and righteousness, to rely upon the sure promises of God. The Lord Jesus makes manifest the fact that the treasures of divine grace are placed entirely at our disposal, in order that we may become channels of light. We cannot receive the riches of the grace of Christ without desiring to impart them to others. When we have the love of Christ in our hearts, we shall feel that it is our duty and privilege to communicate it. {RC 304.2}

The promise of the Holy Spirit is not limited to any age or to any race. Christ declared that the divine influence of His Spirit was to be with His followers unto the end. From the Day of Pentecost to the present time, the Comforter has been sent to all who have yielded themselves fully to the Lord and to His service. To all who have accepted Christ as a personal Saviour, the Holy Spirit has come as a counselor, sanctifier, guide, and witness. {AA 49.2}

When Christ ascended to the Father, He did not leave His followers without help. The Holy Spirit, as His representative, and the heavenly angels, as ministering spirits, are sent forth to aid

those who against great odds are fighting the good fight of faith. Ever remember that Jesus is your helper. No one understands as well as He your peculiarities of character. He is watching over you, and if you are willing to be guided by Him, He will throw around you influences for good that will enable you to accomplish all His will for you. {MYP 17.1}

God takes men as they are, and educates them for His service, if they will yield themselves to Him. The Spirit of God, received into the soul, quickens all its faculties. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the mind that is devoted unreservedly to God, develops harmoniously, and is strengthened to comprehend and fulfil the requirements of God. The weak, vacillating character becomes changed to one of strength and steadfastness. Continual devotion establishes so close a relation between Jesus and His disciples that the Christian becomes like his Master in character. He has clearer, broader views. His discernment is more penetrative, his judgment better balanced. So quickened is he by the life-giving power of the Sun of Righteousness, that he is enabled to bear much fruit to the glory of God. {GW 285.3}

In the secret place of prayer, where no eye but God's can see, no ear but His can hear, we may pour out our most hidden desires and longings to the Father of infinite pity, and in the hush and silence of the soul that voice which never fails to answer the cry of human need will speak to our hearts. {Pr 182.6}

Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God what we are, but in order to enable us to receive Him. Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him. {Pr 8.4}

When Jesus was upon the earth, He taught His disciples how to pray. He directed them to present their daily needs before God, and to cast all their care upon Him. And the assurance He gave them that their petitions should be heard, is assurance also to us.—(*Steps to Christ*, 93.) {Pr 8.5}

Keep your wants, your joys, your sorrows, your cares, and your fears before God. You cannot burden Him; you cannot weary Him. He who numbers the hairs of your head is not indifferent to the wants of His children. "The Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." James 5:11. His heart of love is touched by our sorrows and even by our utterances of them. Take to Him everything that perplexes the mind. Nothing is too great for Him to bear, for He holds up worlds, He rules over all the affairs of the universe. Nothing that in any way concerns our peace is too small for Him to notice. There is no chapter in our experience too dark for Him to read; there is no perplexity too difficult for Him to unravel. No calamity can befall the least of His children, no anxiety harass the soul, no joy cheer, no sincere prayer escape the lips, of which our heavenly Father is unobservant, or in which He takes no immediate interest. "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds." Psalm 147:3. The relations between God

and each soul are as distinct and full as though there were not another soul upon the earth to share His watchcare, not another soul for whom He gave His beloved Son. {SC 100.1}

Jesus said, "Ye shall ask in My name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father Himself loveth you." "I have chosen you: . . . that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you." John 16:26, 27; 15:16. But to pray in the name of Jesus is something more than a mere mention of that name at the beginning and the ending of a prayer. It is to pray in the mind and spirit of Jesus, while we believe His promises, rely upon His grace, and work His works. {SC 100.2}

By imparting to others the love and tenderness which God has so abundantly bestowed on us, we are to let our light shine. We should put every gift of God to the best possible use, making it a producer of good. {RC 198.5}

When we are faithful in making God known, our impulses will be under divine supervision, and we shall make steady growth, spiritually and intellectually. {UL 81.4}