
Witness Unhindered:
“How the Spirit Transforms a Crowd into the Church”
Acts 2: 42-47

Thoughts to Shape and Spark Discussion:

*“The priority for the Church is neither evangelism nor social action; it is to live under the lordship of Christ . . . As a Christian learns to live her life under the lordship of Jesus Christ, as she learns to adopt his perspective on money, sex, power, time and eternity and live her life in the light of these, then she will become the kind of person who provokes questions in the minds of her twenty-first century non-Christian neighbours.” - Graham Tomlin, *The Provocative Church**

“What is the normal Christian life? What are we hoping to see cultivated in people? We are constantly driving people to make a big splash. Once or twice a year, a group comes along with a plan to "take Auburn by storm". There is always a lot of noise and clamor, a lot of labor and money spent, and for a moment everyone (the Christians at least) look up to see what's going on. As quickly as it appears, it disappears. Some get excited and want to make more noise next year. But for the most part the noise fades and people go back to the business at hand. And that is where the church ought to meet people, in the "business at hand" - the ordinary, mundane duties and experiences that make up the larger portion of our lives. Jesus said the whole sum of Christian living was loving God and loving our neighbor. Did He mean for us to work that out in an arena or in our minute by minute ordinary lives? The more difficult and yet truest and most meaningful spirituality is that which deals with Jesus in everything . . . Many Christians will never notice or recognize this as ministry because it makes so little noise. So what. God brings extraordinary things out of the ordinary.” - Steve Malone

Themes and Questions to Guide Reflection and Response:

- What from the Scripture passage or the sermon made an impression upon you? Are there lingering questions to be answered or rabbit trails to be followed for you?
- Acts 2 portrays the church as having realized exponential growth from 120 people to well over three thousand people.
 - What is the difference between drawing a big crowd together and forming a healthy church?
 - What do you imagine the struggles were for this expression of the Church? How do you sense they were able to navigate the potential pitfalls?
 - Is Hope more than a crowd and an event? Are we knitting together as a church?
- What complicates committing to and thriving in a church for folks in our day?
 - How do cynicism and suspicion about the institutional church creep into your thinking?
 - On the flip side, a real struggle for some Christians is the idol of authentic community and creating an inner circle that fits our preferences and perceived needs. How is that equally dangerous?
- The passage and the sermon center upon 4 broad characteristics of a thriving, healthy church: learning, loving, worshipping, and witnessing.
 - Which presents the biggest challenge for you?
 - Which presents you with an opportunity to grow in your maturity and health?