

Good morning! When I came to Christ in the early 1970's, I came in the context of the Jesus Movement. The particular group I was in happened to be a Charismatic group and we made some mistakes. We were young---mostly teens and early 20's---but we were filled with excitement and enthusiasm. We looked for God to do amazing and supernatural things. Pam and I met some strange characters in those days when anything seemed possible. One of the criticisms that has sometimes been made of the Charismatic Renewal was that they had excesses. They emphasized the supernatural, sometimes in unbiblical ways. We certainly saw some of that, but we saw a lot of other things, too. On Pentecost, the people who received the Holy Spirit were criticized, too. Some people thought they were drunk at 9:00 in the morning, but when Peter preached his first sermon, the people responded. Let's drop in on them and listen in this morning:

Peter's words pierced their hearts, and they said to him and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?" Peter replied, "Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is to you, to your children, and to those far away—all who have been called by the Lord our God." Then Peter continued preaching for a long time, strongly urging all his listeners, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation!" Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all. All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer.

**Acts 2:37-42**

I like this, because it matches my own experience. When these people heard the gospel what was their response? Repentance. When I came to Christ nobody was preaching repentance that day---but we repented anyway! We didn't each go our own way, either. When the people in today's passage responded to the message, what did they do? They formed a community. Imagine three thousand people coming to Christ in a single day, a day in which there were no churches anywhere. They had no pattern for congregational life. No congregational organization or budget. They had no structure already in place for what a worship service ought to be, what they ought to do when they gathered. The Bible says, "*All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper) and to*

*prayer.*” When we came to Christ, we instinctively knew that we should be together worshiping the Lord, receiving teaching, sharing life together. Oh, I know the Church has lots of problems. Congregations often experience conflict. But when the Spirit comes, He draws us into community. We share life together. We care for one another, help one another, bear each other’s’ burdens. God often operates in and through a believing community. Are you part of such a group? If not, I’m not criticizing you. Maybe you have been hurt in church. Maybe you have lost respect for some leaders who were unfaithful. Maybe you don’t want people to know you that well. However much those things may be true, God has good things planned for you through His people. He wants to care for you and make you feel welcome in His family. I encourage you this morning to not give up on finding and being a part of a community of faith. Shared worship and fellowship are not just good things...they’re part of God’s plan for you!