


**A Five-Day Devotional Journey**
**January 27 - February 2, 2008**

Acts 2:37-47

We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure.

2 Corinthians 4:7

## ReForm Community

### 1 Cut to the quick

**Read.** Acts 2:37-39 Message

Cut to the quick, those who were there listening asked Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers! Brothers! So now what do we do?" Peter said, "Change your life. Turn to God and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, so your sins are forgiven. Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is targeted to you and your children, but also to all who are far away—whomever, in fact, our Master God invites."

**Read.** Colossians 3:12-17 Message

So, chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline. Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offense. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you. And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it. Let the peace of Christ keep you in tune with each other, in step with each other. None of this going off and doing your own thing. And cultivate thankfulness. Let the Word of Christ—the Message—have the run of the house. Give it plenty of room in your lives. Instruct and direct one another using good common sense. And sing, sing your hearts out to God! Let every detail in your lives—words, actions, whatever—be done in the name of the Master, Jesus, thanking God the Father every step of the way.

**Think.**

- When's the last time you were "cut to the quick" by a spoken message? How did it challenge you? What did you do?
- Where do you sense a need for radical change in your life right now? What practical steps can you take to pursue this change?
- What is the place and function of baptism in the process of salvation/conversion? What has been your personal experience with baptism?
- What is the "gift of the Holy Spirit"? In what ways would you like to experience more of the Holy Spirit in your life?

**Pray.**

Lord, wake me from my complacency and inertia. Stir my heart with fresh fire to cry out with the 3,000 "What do I do now, Lord?"

**Live.**

Identify one area of your life in which you need to see radical change — and take steps to pursue it in a practical way.

The *Right Stuff* was a 1979 book followed up by a 1983 film detailing the story of the "Mercury Seven" — the first astronauts — as well as the parallel story of Chuck Yeager and his breaking of the sound barrier. The author of the book, Tom Wolfe, likened these men to gladiators from an earlier era who possessed the "right stuff" and received the honor and the glory of the people before going out to fight on their behalf.

A similar aura tends to surround the first church in those Pentecost days. Miracles happening, praises ringing, crowds gathering, barriers breaking, numbers soaring. Home fellowships basking in the light of oil lamps in upper rooms all over the city. Possessions sold left and right, the poor fed, joy contagious. The perennial quest to somehow reduplicate, to recapture, to return to the dynamic of that community, of those days, seems as compelling and just as elusive as the quest for the Holy Grail. We stretch, we structure, we restructure, we push, we pull, we try everything to "bring back that loving feeling."

Such a quest isn't necessarily a bad thing. It's healthy to seek current and relevant ways of pursuing healthy, vibrant community life such as these first disciples experienced. But it's certainly unhealthy to tilt at windmills, running roughshod over the existing church with its many evident flaws as we look for that perfect first century church experience.

The fact is we don't live in first century Jerusalem. This is not a church experience to be replicated. It is a life to be imagined and incarnated anew among us right where we live in our time and our space and our culture as a people bringing reformation to the world in a new generation, taking our place as a community of ReForm that has access to the same right stuff in the empowering of the Spirit and the inbreaking of God's kingdom.

## 2) This sick and stupid culture

**Read.** Acts 2:40 Message

He went on in this vein for a long time, urging them over and over, "Get out while you can; get out of this sick and stupid culture!"

**Read.** 1 Corinthians 7:23-24, 29-31 Message

All of you, slave and free both, were once held hostage in a sinful society. Then a huge sum was paid out for your ransom. So please don't, out of old habit, slip back into being or doing what everyone else tells you. Friends, stay where you were called to be. God is there. Hold the high ground with him at your side. I do want to point out, friends, that time is of the essence. There is no time to waste, so don't complicate your lives unnecessarily. Keep it simple—in marriage, grief, joy, whatever. Even in ordinary things—your daily routines of shopping, and so on. Deal as sparingly as possible with the things the world thrusts on you. This world as you see it is on its way out.

**Think.**

- How do we effectively "get out of this sick and stupid culture" while still living in it?
- Where in your life do you sense the strongest pull of our culture? What steps can you take to resist that cultural influence?
- Where do you sense a current need to simplify your life and renew your focus to not only escape a sick culture but to become a cultural "change agent" in bringing reform to it?

**Pray.**

Father, deliver me from cultural ruts that keep me from experiencing life in your kingdom as you intend.

**Live.**

Watch for ways to be a "culture change agent" today.

## 4) A wonderful harmony

**Read.** Acts 2:43-45 Message

Everyone around was in awe—all those wonders and signs done through the apostles! And all the believers lived in a wonderful harmony, holding everything in common. They sold whatever they owned and pooled their resources so that each person's need was met.

**Read.** 1 Thessalonians 5:12-15 Message

Get along among yourselves, each of you doing your part. Our counsel is that you warn the freeloaders to get a move on. Gently encourage the stragglers, and reach out for the exhausted, pulling them to their feet. Be patient with each person, attentive to individual needs. And be careful that when you get on each other's nerves you don't snap at each other. Look for the best in each other, and always do your best to bring it out.

**Think.**

- How often do you find yourself walking around in "awe"? What would you say is necessary for experiencing awe?
- What "wonders and signs" have you experienced lately? Where would you like to see some now?
- "All the believers lived in a wonderful harmony." How fitting is this as a description of your church? Your small group? Your home?
- What is the key to the selflessness evident in this community of believers? Which aspect of community in Paul's description (1 Thessalonians 5) do you want to see more of? Why?

**Pray.**

Lord, release my grip on my space, my time and my stuff; open my life today to those around me.

**Live.**

Randomly help someone in need today..

## 3) Life together

**Read.** Acts 2:41-42 Message

That day about three thousand took him at his word, were baptized and were signed up. They committed themselves to the teaching of the apostles, the life together, the common meal, and the prayers.

**Read.** 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 Message

Your body has many parts—limbs, organs, cells—but no matter how many parts you can name, you're still one body. It's exactly the same with Christ. By means of his one Spirit, we all said good-bye to our partial and piecemeal lives. We each used to independently call our own shots, but then we entered into a large and integrated life in which he has the final say in everything. (This is what we proclaimed in word and action when we were baptized.) Each of us is now a part of his resurrection body, refreshed and sustained at one fountain—his Spirit—where we all come to drink.

**Think.**

- What word would you use to describe this first church culture: a) exciting b) unpredictable c) chaotic d) busy e) life-changing f) claustrophobic g) \_\_\_\_\_ Why?
- Which aspect of this picture of community life are you experiencing most right now? Which do you hunger for the most? What can you do to help your church body/small group experience more of this?

**Pray.**

Lord, bring me to the end of a piecemeal and partial life and into a fuller experience of this large and connected kingdom life you have designed for me.

**Live.**

Share life with a small group this week.

## 5) Every meal a celebration

**Read.** Acts 2:46-47 Message

They followed a daily discipline of worship in the Temple followed by meals at home, every meal a celebration, exuberant and joyful, as they praised God. People in general liked what they saw. Every day their number grew as God added those who were saved.

**Read.** 1 Peter 4:8-11 Message

Stay wide-awake in prayer. Most of all, love each other as if your life depended on it. Love makes up for practically anything. Be quick to give a meal to the hungry, a bed to the homeless—cheerfully. Be generous with the different things God gave you, passing them around so all get in on it: if words, let it be God's words; if help, let it be God's hearty help. That way, God's bright presence will be evident in everything through Jesus, and he'll get all the credit as the One mighty in everything—encores to the end of time.

**Think.**

- What "daily discipline" did these believers pursue? What are some daily disciplines in your life?
- How do your meals (at home and with believers) compare with the meals of these early believers? What would you say are the key ingredients for meals being "a celebration, exuberant and joyful"?
- What seems to be causing growth in this body of believers? What are the implications for church growth today?
- What are some fresh ways you can "be generous with the things God gave you" in the community of faith?

**Pray.**

Father, let my words be as yours; let the help I give others be hearty and holy. Draw me out of patterns of isolation into more vibrant connection with others.

**Live.**

Share a meal with some other believers.