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MAY 2017

The bedrock of stewardship

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.  Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved*.

**-Acts 2:42-47**

Wouldn’t it be great to live in perfect harmony with your neighbors? To have all that you need? To be more loving, more generous, more spiritual than you ever imagined possible?

Impossible? It seems so to many of us, yet this is how the first Christian community lived. Read the Acts passage (a lesson for May 7) again. Pretty amazing, huh? They lived with such love for one another that the very idea of property ownership was out of the question. They held possessions in common, and those who owned things sold them to give to the poor. What a radical vision of generosity and love for neighbor!

What could make a community so generous? Notice in Acts what God’s people are doing:

* Devotion to the apostles’ teaching
* Fellowship
* Breaking bread
* Prayers
* Sharing possessions
* Spending time in the temple
* Praising God

These are not only the foundation stones of every Christian community, but also the disciplines that every follower of Jesus Christ embraces to grow in faith and spirituality.

Perhaps not surprisingly, they are also the building blocks of good stewardship, both for an individual and for a community of Christ. The more people grow in faith and love for God and neighbor, the more generous they become. The reason is simple: As people draw closer and closer to God and their neighbor, the lure and attachment of money and possessions grow weaker and weaker.

In the first Christian community, the bond between God and neighbor was so strong, the folks could give up all they had for the good of others. And, of course, in the process of helping neighbors they also made themselves more secure because others were there to help them if need should arise.

We see the principle still at work today. Across the Christian church there’s a direct correlation between a congregation’s spiritual vitality and the generosity of its members. Congregations that are the most focused on Jesus and raising up disciples are the least likely to experience serious problems with money. Challenges, perhaps, but not crises.

So although every congregation needs thoughtful stewardship education and a diplomatic but unapologetic “ask,” more importantly we need to raise up disciples, focus on Jesus and build everything on bedrock of generous stewardship, as the first church did:

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. … Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people.*

*--Rob Blezard*

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