

ALL OF THE ABOVE THROUGH THE GOD OF LOVE

February 7, 2021

Overarching theme: John 20:21, "21 Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' In 2021, as DISCIPLES, we are SENT with the peace of Christ to share with others!

P = Prayer

E = Engagement with Others

A = Abundance

C = Compassionate Caring

E = Evangel

Instructions: When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.

Core Passage: Acts 4:31-34a (NIV)

³¹ After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

³² All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. ³³ With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all ³⁴ that there were no needy persons among them.

Commentary:

The effect of prayer for the early church was remarkable. The room in which the disciples were gathered shook as if an earthquake was taking place. This was one of the signs which indicated a theophany in the Old Testament (Ex. 19-18; Is. 6:4), and it would have been regarded as indicating a divine response to prayer. The point is, then, that God signified that he was present and would answer the prayer. Again the *Holy Spirit* came upon the disciples and they were given the confidence they desired to speak the Word of God.

Two facts characterized the life of Christian community. The choice of word (*company*) reflects the growth in size of the Christian group. Despite its size

it had a common mind and purpose; in other words, it was united in its devotion to the Lord (for the expression used see 1 Ch. 12:38). The other thing was the fact that nobody regarded his property as being under his own control but was prepared to regard it as for the use of the community as a whole. This way of putting the matter brings out the fact that the things which each person *possessed* evidently continued to be his own property until it was found necessary to sell them for the common good. The two characteristics thus described correspond broadly to the two great commandments of love (or devotion) to God and love to one's neighbour. It has also been noted that the phraseology used to describe them is reminiscent of that used by the Greek philosopher Aristotle in expressing ideals for human life in community. Christian ideals are none the less Christian for being also recognized by secular moralists.

Meanwhile, the apostles, as those especially called to be witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus, continued their witness *with great power* despite the religious authorities' prohibition of their preaching. The point is that they spoke in such a way under the guidance of the Spirit that their words were effective in leading other people to belief in Jesus. *Great grace was upon them all* may mean that the grace of God worked powerfully through them (6:8; Lk. 2:40).

– adapted from the Tyndale NT Commentary "Acts" pp 107-109.

Questions to Ponder for accountability in the group:

1. Perhaps your experience of prayer is not as dramatic as the one depicted in verse 31, but has there been a time when you **prayed** either alone or with others and had the powerful sense that God was at work? If not, is there another way that you have experienced God's presence in prayer? Discuss.
2. Verse 32 tells us that "the believers were one in heart and mind." Have you ever been in a group that was so **engaged** in community they experienced this kind of unity? If so, what do you think contributed to this?
3. Verse 32 also speaks of the abundant way that they shared. How would the 21st Century church compare with this 1st Century experience? What gets in the way of our growth in **abundant** sharing?
4. Verse 34a summarizes, *there was no needy person among them*. What would it take for the church today to practice that kind of **caring**

compassion? What would be the community impact of this kind of embodiment of the **evangel** (good news)?

5. Of the five P.E.A.C.E. practices described above, which do you practice most? Which one is a growing edge for you? Close by praying for one as you continue to practice P.E.A.C.E.

Activity for the life of a disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional and spend time pondering and meditating on the challenge.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: Acts 4:33-34a ³³ *With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all ³⁴ that there were no needy persons among them.*
3. Prayerfully consider how you can practice "all of the above" through the God of love. How can these practices become life giving ways of experiencing God's love and not just something else for your "to-do" list?
4. As you 'binge on your belovedness' this week, intentionally share God's love with someone outside your family.