

Apostolic Studies Series- Restoring the Pattern

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1. There are many individuals and assemblies in the Body of Christ who label themselves and/ or claim to operate as apostolic, yet continue to conform to the traditional “church” pattern.
2. Upon studying the pattern laid down by the original Apostles, according to what they were taught by Christ, we can easily conclude that *“if we do what they did, we will have what they had.”*
3. Let us look at a passage of scripture which will give us a picture of the true pattern of apostolic ministry:

Acts 2:42-47:

42: And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

43: And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

44: And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

45: And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

46: And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

47: Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

By analyzing the highlighted portions of this passage, we discover the following:

1. There was a strong emphasis on *continuous teaching the word of God*, specifically the principles that the Apostles had received at the feet of Jesus (the “apostle’s doctrine”). Also implied in the verse is that as new members were added, they were instantly inducted into the program of discipleship. “Stedfastly” implies a pressing in the face of resistance- they didn’t “get tired of the Word,” as modern saints are wont to do, but continued on with studying, hearing, and teaching in the face of resistance.
2. *Fellowship* was an important part of these early assemblies- “love without dissimulation.” They saw the necessity of developing relationships past the superficial level. They realized the gravity of their calling and the impossibility of carrying it out without the forging of the type of strong and lasting bonds that would enable them to face adversity that would surely come in the days ahead.
3. *Breaking of bread* implies sharing as well as *communion*, or what we call the Lord’s Supper, which was not a religious ordinance, as we perform it today, but a “love-feast” in which the brethren ate and shared in remembrance of the risen Christ. This done out of obedience to the

command of our Lord was a powerful demonstration to the outside world of the guiding principle of the Kingdom of God- *“love one to another.”*

4. The early Christians obviously understood that **prayer** was essential to them carrying out Jesus’ command to “preach the gospel to every creature.” It is not accidental that wherever we see the power of God manifested in the book of Acts, it is the result of fervent prayer (Acts 1:24, 4:31, 2:1-4, 6:6, 8:15, 9:40, 11:5, 12:5-17, 16:25).
5. **“Fear came upon every soul...”** other translations say that they were “filled with awe.” There should always be reverence, respect and wonder when the power of God is manifested. It is easy to become so used to church and religious activity that we no longer have a healthy fear for the things of God, causing them to become common. I am convinced that one of the reasons that the early church was so powerful was because of this fear.
6. **“...wonders and signs...”** some commentators have stated that this indicates that only the apostles were filled with the Holy Ghost. Rather, because the apostles were then the primary teachers of the Word, their teaching was validated by signs and wonders (see also Mark 16:20). Also, this can possibly be seen as a validation of the apostolic gift as a foundational office (Eph. 2:20b).
7. The emphasis on unity (**“were together, and had all things common;”**), the selling of goods to meet the needs of others, (**“continuing daily with one accord”**), unselfishness, concern for others, all point to God’s desire to see His Kingdom function on earth as a self-contained unit, able to see to the needs of its people as well as a collection of individuals enmeshed together to make up a mighty whole, who in the power of agreement, impact the world. It is essential that the modern church grasp this principle. This is the one area where we have fallen far, far short of the mark.
8. **“...from house to house...”** The early church did not meet in church buildings, but mostly in individual homes, under the “cell group” concept. They occasionally met in the synagogue and/ or temple for large assemblies, but this was not the norm. They understood that the church was not an organization, as we have so structured it today, but an *organism*. These cell groups, like cells in the body, were designed to duplicate themselves, and spread, thereby contributing to the growth of the body. There were, at that time, no central ecclesiastical authorities, but each small group was autonomous, and without the “clergy-laity” distinctions that are so common today.
9. **Worship (“Praising God...”)** was very important to the early church. They understood the concept of the “priesthood of believers.” As former Jews now no longer under the Law, and later, Gentiles who had been excluded from fellowship with the true and living God, they took full advantage of the fact that “a new and living way” (*Heb. 10:19-20*) had now been opened for all men to enter into the presence of God. Also, there is the fact that without

having first had ministry before God, it is impossible to have authority before men (*see Acts 4:13*).

10. By following the pattern laid out for them by Christ, the early church achieved the following results:

- They obtained “*favor with all the people*”
- The Lord “*added daily...such as should be saved.*”

Marks of true apostolic ministry for further study:

- **Faith** (Mk. 16:17-18).
- **The Gospel Preached** (Mk. 16:20, Acts 14:7-10).
- **Unity of Believers** (Acts 2:41-47).
- **Plurality of Leadership** (Eph. 4:11, James 5:14, 1 Pet. 5:1-4).
- **Preparation for service and duplication of gifts** (Eph. 4:11).