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August 12, 2018 “And Awe Came Over Everyone”

Being the Church for the 21st Century

The believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to the community, to their shared meals, and to their prayers. A sense of awe came over everyone. God performed many wonders and signs through the apostles. All the believers were united and shared everything. They would sell pieces of property and possessions and distribute the proceeds to everyone who needed them. Every day, they met together in the temple and ate in their homes. They shared food with gladness and simplicity. They praised God and demonstrated God’s goodness to everyone. The Lord added daily to the community those who were being saved. *Acts 2:42-47*

Questions in this GPS marked with an arrow bullet point are particularly recommended for group discussion. Group leaders may add other discussion questions, or substitute other questions for the marked ones, at their discretion.

God’s goal: “fully grown” people spiritually

MONDAY 8.13.18 Ephesians 4:12-16

The apostle Paul wrote that no one follows Christ alone. Finding that unity with Christ and one another is a challenge to our human nature, so God calls us to honesty and accountability. We can help one another to become spiritually mature so that nothing can knock us off course. “Personal growth and community growth work together here so that mature believers contribute to a mature church. The energy for each aspect of this is supplied by Christ.” *

- Changing the world by building God’s kingdom calls us to take our faith beyond just one weekend worship service. How do you nurture spiritual maturity in yourself and others in your day-to-day life, building up the body of believers in love? “Paul sees growth as increasing in discernment and discretion, which helps believers avoid being taken in by false shortcuts to growth.” ** How can you motivate yourself and others to press on toward spiritual maturity when it isn’t easy or quick?
- So “God’s goal is for us to become mature adults...measured by the standard of the fullness of Christ.” The passage went on to say one key to helping each other grow is “speaking the truth in love.” Which do you find harder as you relate to others: speaking the truth at all, or doing so in love? What can help you grow toward maturity in both of those dimensions?

Prayer: Lord God, dwell in my heart. Keep me daily growing more mature in you. Thank you for your love and grace—the safe environment in which I grow best. Amen.

* Timothy G. Gombis, study note on Ephesians 4:16 in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 369 NT.

** Timothy G. Gombis, study note on Ephesians 4:14 in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 369 NT.

“God made it grow”

TUESDAY 8.14.18 1 Corinthians 3:3-9

The young Christian churches in Corinth were splitting into factions. The apostles Paul and Peter, an early Christian preacher named Apollos, even Christ himself (!) were being invoked to “bless” one

group's superiority over another ([1 Corinthians 1:11-12](#)). Paul "walked his talk" about the value of each Christian's gifts (cf. [1 Corinthians 12](#)). He wrote that, although he and Apollos had played differing roles in building up the church in Corinth, they both served God, and any glory for what they had done was God's.

- Scholar William Barclay wrote, "This... means that *you can tell what a man's relations with God are by looking at his relations with his fellow men*. If he is at variance with his fellow men, if he is a quarrelsome, argumentative, trouble-making creature, he may be a diligent church attender, he may even be a church office-bearer, but he is not a man of God." * Do you know one or more people who shine at drawing people together, rather than driving wedges between them? What does this standard tell you about your relations with God?
- How many different people or events drew you to faith, and nurtured and grew that faith? In what ways did God work through all of them? (Some research suggests that it may take on average fifteen different "touches" to move a person from unbelief to faith.) In what ways has God equipped you to be a difference-maker (in overt or subtle ways) for Jesus?

Prayer: Dear God, I love you. I want to honor you. Sometimes I forget the link between how I treat other people and how I honor you. Help me draw people together rather than driving wedges. Amen.

* William Barclay, *Daily Study Bible Series: The Letters to the Corinthians (Revised Edition)*. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, revised edition 1975, p. 30.)

Jesus: the key to having life

WEDNESDAY 8.15.18 John 20:29-31

John wrote this gospel late in the period when the generation of the apostles was dying. He told of Thomas' refusal to believe unless he saw Jesus ([John 20:24-28](#)). Jesus said, "Happy are those who don't see and yet believe," because if people didn't trust the testimony of those who'd seen Jesus, the faith would die out. We don't see Jesus as the apostles did. But an eyewitness wrote this gospel so that we may believe as he did and have eternal life.

- John and the other gospel writers didn't write for abstract reasons. No—"these things are written so that you will believe that Jesus is the Christ, God's Son, and that believing, you will have life in his name." Scholar William Barclay wrote, "We must read [the gospels], not primarily as historians seeking information, but as men and women seeking God." * How has reading the Bible, and other material based in it, drawn you closer to God? (Interested in reading the Bible with others? [Click here](#) (cor.org/disciple) for information on Disciple Bible studies.)
- We may think faith was easy for Jesus' disciples, because "they could see and hear him." But John went on to write that "Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples didn't realize it was Jesus" (John 21:4). That happened at other times, too (e.g. [Luke 24:13-37](#)). What settings, situations, or spiritual practices help you trust that Jesus is with you, even if unseen?

Prayer: Loving Jesus, keep speaking to my heart through the witness of the people who knew you when you walked this earth. Grow my capacity to believe in your presence with me always. Amen.

* William Barclay, *Daily Study Bible Series: The Gospel of John—Volume 2*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, revised edition 1976, p. 280.

Jesus, the clearest revelation of God

THURSDAY 8.16.18 John 14:6-10; 15:1-14

John recorded that Jesus, on the night before his crucifixion, told the disciples, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father." He used an image familiar to Israelites to stress the importance of staying connected to him. Israel often saw themselves as part of a vineyard God tended (cf. [Psalm 80:8-18](#),

[Isaiah 5:1-7](#)). Jesus movingly adapted that idea. As his followers stayed united to him like branches to a vine, Jesus said, their lives would bear the kind of fruit God sought. As Christ-followers, we commit, not to a set of ideas, but to the person of Jesus.

- If you imagine a story in which one branch from a vine or tree decided that it didn't need the vine, and could "go it alone," you realize that branch would soon wither and die. How does your personal Bible reading, prayer, service and worship reinforce your connection to Jesus? In what ways do other Christians help keep you "in Jesus"?
- Jesus asked, "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been with you all this time?" It is still possible to go to church for many years, to know many facts about the Bible and the church, and yet not know Jesus. For how much time have you been around Jesus and his message? In what ways do you wish to grow deeper in knowing Jesus, not just knowing about him?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, keep me connected to you today. Let me be a branch through which your divine love can flow freely to bless the lives of other people around me. Amen.

An awe-inspiring quality of life

FRIDAY 8.17.18 Acts 2:42-47

The very first Christians lived out their faith as a relatively small group, living in a city that had crucified their Lord. But the apostles' teaching, prayer, sharing life and a radically generous spirit shaped them and bound them together. From their earliest days, they shared in ways that showed they were part of something bigger than just a tiny sect. The lives they lived, and the message they shared, have changed the world for the better in powerful ways for over 2,000 years now.

- What challenges do you face when it comes to connecting with others and contributing to their well-being? What holds you back? Prayer, fellowship, devotion to the apostles' teaching, and radical generosity were the foundations of the early Christians' powerful impact. In which of these areas do you sense God inviting you to grow as we move into a new year of opportunities for growth?
- Pastor Lloyd John Ogilvie wrote, "The final miracle of the Holy Spirit on that day of Pentecost was the birth of the church. You may wonder why I call that a miracle. It is because I know human nature. Next to the transformation of persons, the second greatest miracle is oneness with others who have been transformed." * In what ways has the Holy Spirit helped you bridge differences with other individuals in your church family? In what ways is bridging differences with other congregations part of Resurrection's mission?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for the generous model those early Christians left for me. Help me to live with the same spirit of sharing and caring they showed. Amen.

* Lloyd John Ogilvie, *The Preacher's Commentary Series, Volume 28: Acts*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983, p. 72.

Showing honor in mutual concern

SATURDAY 8.18.18 Romans 12:4-10, 1 Corinthians 12:24-27

In New Testament times "'Lowliness' was not considered a virtue by the Greeks but was viewed as weakness. Sometimes this negative meaning appears in the NT, as when Paul's opponents at Corinth remarked about the 'weakness' of his personal demeanor (2 Cor 10:1)" * It's not surprising that new Christians in Corinth, who'd grown up in that Greek culture, got into disputes about whose gift was most valuable to the church. For the apostle Paul, love was an intensely practical, real-life quality. He always urged his converts to exercise all their God-given abilities in love, in ways that showed honor to one another as a guiding principle.

- Paul wrote this lovely description: “If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part gets the glory, all the parts celebrate with it. You are the body of Christ and parts of each other” (12:26-27). That is one of our goals for every class, small group, even mission working group at Resurrection. That is what we mean when we use the churchy-sounding word “fellowship.” When have you been part of a group, in church, school, work or elsewhere, where this kind of love and mutual caring existed? When have you belonged to groups where love and mutual caring were conspicuously absent? How did the presence or absence of this kind of love affect the group’s success in accomplishing its mission? Which type of group was more likely to attract other gifted people to join in its work?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I want to make a difference in the world, to be a force for good. Grow in me the love and humility that will allow my gifts and abilities to truly bless others and build your kingdom, not mine. Amen.

Family Activity: As children, youth and many adults head back to school soon, commit to greeting God with joy and gratitude every morning! Encourage each family member to begin each day saying these words to God: “Yes!” and “Thank you!” Let your family know that by saying “Yes” to God, we are saying “Yes” to the gift of a new day, the opportunity to serve others, the privilege to grow in faith, and a willingness for the Holy Spirit to shape our hearts and minds. When we say, “Thank you!” we are giving praise and glory to God and celebrating all of God’s many blessings! Begin each precious day as a family with “Yes!” and “Thank you!” and celebrate each day as a gift from God.

* Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids, ed. *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997, p. 962.

Prayer Requests – cor.org/prayer Prayers for Peace & Comfort:

Carol Dietrich and family on the death of her mother, Majorie McDaniel, 8/4

Lisa Holliday and family on the death of her grandmother, Majorie McDaniel, 8/4

Kathy Meyers and family on the death of her father, Geroge Brady, 8/5

Lori Diffendaffer and family on the death of her husband, Joel Diffendaffer, 8/5