

27 April 2008  
Prayer & Prophecy - 5  
The Art of Communication Jesus' Way:  
Be Involved, Not a Bystander

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to PRAAYER.” Acts 2:42

“Jesus said; ‘Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me.’” Today the command of Jesus that sticks out to me is; ‘Follow me’. Jesus says; ‘follow me’, so I’ve asked each of the confirmees; ‘Do you want to follow Jesus as his disciple?’ They had two options; Yes or No. I’m pleased that they all said yes.

So they have Jesus command and have begun to keep it. That is worth getting together and celebrating.

That’s what happens at a wedding. Two people have said yes to sharing their lives together, so we get together and celebrate their love for each other. But it’s only the beginning. I shouldn’t say only, beginnings are exciting times because they hold the hope of so much more good to come.

Though I’d get someone what nervous if the husband or wife wasn’t sure about making the time to listen to the other. I’ll marry you, but I’m a busy person you know, so I’m not sure how much time I’ll have to listen to what you have to say. And because I’m busy, I’m not too sure how much time we’ll be able to spend together – after all I’ve got important things to do; like watch the news to keep up with current affairs. And I don’t know about all this intimacy thing. And you can’t be serious about me telling you what I’m thinking. You mightn’t like some of it! Yes I want to marry you and I’ll give you all the spare time and energy I’ve got.

Maybe that’s not the best way to live a healthy vibrant loving relationship.

All the confirmees said; ‘Yes, we want to be Jesus’ disciple. Yes we want to follow him.’ This really pleased me, because I know they all mean it.

Who wouldn’t want to be in a loving relationship with God. The Good News is that in Jesus, God has said yes to being in a loving relationship with us. I know he means it – Jesus has given his life that I might share his life with him.

Isn’t that a fantastic offer – in Jesus, God is asking you to share his life with him. Not as some stranger who you keep at arm’s length, (Stick your arms out and push the person next to you away. Then say to them; Jesus doesn’t want to keep you at arm’s length, and put your arm down so that they can move back next to you.) The good news is that in Jesus God has lovingly embraced us, and has opened the door that we might share life with him, that we might enjoy being loved by him and loving him.

In Jesus I know, with all my heart and soul, with total confidence, that this is what God is devoted to. He’s devoted to listening to me, to sharing his life with me, to building intimacy with me, to telling me what’s on his mind. In Jesus, God is devoted to living this relationship so that it flourishes as a loving one.

Of course I could be in a relationship and my actions could turn it into anything than a loving one. It could end up too painful to bear. Or I could simply ignore the other person and find they’ve drifted and become a stranger to me.

I was really pleased that each of the confirmees said, yes to following Jesus. Then I asked them to answer four other questions to help them continue growing in their relationship with Jesus.

These questions were based on Acts 2:42 which describes what the first followers of Jesus did to keep their relationship healthy and vibrant.

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” Acts 2:42 This isn’t something I’ve dreamed up, but what God has shown us.

So the first question was; how are you going to be devoted to the apostle’s teaching. In other words how are you going to ensure that you build into

your life time to listen to what Jesus is saying? Relationships flourish when people listen to each other. Disciples grow to be like the one they follow when they take the time to listen and learn. My plan is to spend at least half an hour each morning reading the bible and then applying the SOAP technique so that I hear and apply what Jesus is saying.

The second question was how will you have fellowship, how will you share life with Jesus and his family. You can't share life with Jesus and not share life with his brothers and sisters. Relationships are all about spending time together, sharing life together. Enjoy life together. Facing the pains of life together. Relationships are all about living life together.

You can't share life with others on your own!

So I asked the confirmees how that were going to share this life with Jesus and his community of faith. Notice the question wasn't will you come to a worship service for an hour a week and then ignore each other for the rest of the time. I asked them how they were going to share life with Jesus and his community of faith.

I was pleased when some of them said they'd seek to do it at school. Some thought they'd start a care group so that they would leave this relationship to chance.

I also encouraged them to come to 'youth group' as another opportunity to share life together, because as you rub-shoulders with each other you are able to find out what's going on in people's lives. I did say don't come to 'youth group' because there might be some good activity, come to love each other, and then the activity will be good.

That got me reflecting on my attitude toward sharing life with Jesus and his community of faith. Have I turned it into just going from one event to another but never really investing myself? How am I sharing life with Jesus and his community of faith?

The third question was about 'Breaking of Bread' that's how the early church referred to what we label as Holy Communion. The early Christians

sought a close, intimate relationship based on the risen Jesus and his love for us. In communion we don't talk about how Jesus loves us. We don't have a symbolic act which tells us how Jesus love us. Rather, in, with and under the bread and wine, Jesus loves us. Jesus is there, embracing us in his love. It's not a symbol, it's the real thing.

How on earth could I ever expect to love Jesus' community without his love? In Communion Jesus comes in person and embraces you in his love, so that you can keep his commands in his strength, rejoicing in the love you have to give.

How often do you want to be embraced in Jesus' loving presence?

The fourth question I asked the confirmees was on prayer. How, when and where were they going to take the time to get real with Jesus, sharing with him what was on their heart and soul. Yes, Jesus does want us to tell him what's on our minds. He's shared what's on his, and as we add some quiet time in prayer we're open to hear again what Jesus is thinking, because he's alive and has invited us into a living vibrant relationship.

Today isn't a graduation ceremony, because that would mean you've finished. Today is a major step in growing your relationship with Jesus, saying yes to Jesus' call to follow, and then having thought about your response, you're able to set about living this relationship, enjoying sharing Jesus' life with him, today, tomorrow for all eternity.

Let us pray.

Jesus we do want to follow you, thanks for asking. Help me to be faithful in listening to you, in sharing life with you, in feasting on your love, in telling you what's on my mind. Help me though the Holy Spirit to live this relationship with my all. Amen.