

Group Notes 19 September 2010
St Matthew's Day

Welcome - Ice Breaker

What has the Pope's visit said to you personally or to the UK as a whole?

Word - Sermon Summary: Read Acts 2:42-47

Acts 2 describes the early church as it came new from the hand of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. From it comes St Matthew's statement of values: *We want to be an Acts 2 Church, valuing Awe, Unity, Generosity, Hospitality and Growth.* George reminded us on Sunday that there is a cost to being an Acts 2 Church, that the Holy Spirit wants to take charge and this will disrupt the complacency of our quiet routine. So how can we stop the disruption, put a lid on the Spirit's working and make sure we don't become an Acts 2 Church so we can continue to enjoy a quiet life?

- Lack of Awe – don't pray for the services beforehand! Don't pray for the leaders! Don't come expecting God to speak to you or to be at work when we meet together! Stick to routine! Avoid enthusiasm at all costs! Then God won't turn up in Church and start making uncomfortable demands of you. And don't join in anything outside your Sunday service: an hour a week is quite enough for God.
- Disunity – Don't stay for coffee after the services – you might get sucked in to engaging with other people! Don't have fun with other churchgoers! Above all, don't join a home group because that's where people really can get down to the serious business of loving one another, supporting each other and praying for each other as the Bible says. Instead, make sure you have only negative things to say about each other. Your complaints and moaning will soon kill off any sense of unity.
- Ungenerosity – remember that the church doesn't deserve your hard-earned cash, or your time, or your efforts. They would only be used on things that would make us into more of an Acts 2 Church, like children's work or outreach, bringing more disruptive people into our services. So don't get carried away by exciting visions of how the church could move forward with a bit of investment in ministry and don't be moved by the needs out there! Instead, keep your money in your wallet and your body on the couch.
- Shabby hospitality - what right have those strangers to turn up in our services? They don't know how to behave properly in church, no doubt they'll have children who will run about and make a noise, some of them might even smell. So freeze them out! Don't talk to them and avoid eye contact. Don't help them if they look lost or don't know where we've got to in the service.
- No growth - above all, never invite anyone to come to church with you! Statistics show there are millions of people in the UK who would come to church if only someone asked them. Millions! We'd soon be overrun with new people and we'd have to change things to meet their needs, and then where would we be? Even more above all, don't get involved with the healing ministry because more than anything else that gets people excited about God and brings in others.

If however we actually do want to be an Acts 2 Church then we need to reject George's advice and do the opposite: Pray like mad for our services, pray for the leaders, come expectantly and be enthusiastic! Join a home group, stay for coffee, and consciously decide you are not going to join in with moaning and criticism! Get involved and give money, time and effort to the things you have vision and calling for! Look out for new people, befriend and welcome them! Invite people to come to church with you, pray that God will really speak to them and pray for a renewal of the healing ministry among us. It's going to be exciting!

Let's ask God to make us an Acts 2 Church and see what the Holy Spirit does.

Word 2 - Discussion Questions:-

If St Matthew's Church were an animal, what animal would it be?

Do you agree that becoming an Acts 2 Church can be challenging or even threatening for some people?

- What do you think makes people resistant to life in the Holy Spirit?
- How far can we go in trying to keep such people on board without ending up stifling the Holy Spirit ourselves?

On a scale of one to ten, rate St Matthew's on each of the five areas in our statement of values, ie

- Awe
- Unity
- Generosity
- Hospitality
- Growth
- In each area, do you think we are improving, or getting worse? In what ways?
- What can we do to improve still further?

Look at the suggestions for things we can do if we want to be and Acts 2 Church. Which ones would you be able to prioritise, individually or as a group?

Worship Ideas

Make a list together of ways in which St Matthew's has blessed or encouraged you in the past year.

- Give thanks to God for the good things He has done.
- Pray to rededicate the life of our Church to God.
- Don't forget to rededicate yourselves and your own part in the life of St Matthew's: we are the church!
- Print out this prayer and say it together as a prayer of rededication if that would be helpful:
 - Lord, take our thoughts and think through them, take our words and speak through them, take our church and minister through it to the people around us, take our hearts and set us on fire with love for You. In the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Works / Witness

We have some excellent opportunities for witness coming up soon, for example *Back to Church Sunday* (26 September) and the Alpha course (starts 7 October). Share the names of people you would like to invite with you on Back to Church Sunday or who you could bring with you to the Alpha Course. Pray for these people together.