

Speaking to the soul



The church

All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper) and to prayer. Acts 2:42

The early weeks of the Church must have been amazing. The pouring out of the Holy Spirit had totally transformed everything. From a small group of disappointed and frightened believers, there was now a large number of believers fired up with a determination to change the world. These verses in Acts give us the first clues of what the Church looked like, and this verse spells out three key aspects.

Firstly, the believers needed teaching. The Christians in Jerusalem were probably all from a Jewish background, so they needed to be shown how Jesus was the fulfilment of their Scriptures. They also needed to be reminded of Jesus' teaching, because they had all heard different parts of it. It was decades later that the Gospels were written, although people had almost certainly started to write down some of Jesus' sayings.

Secondly, the Christians got together to eat. Sharing meals is a wonderful way of deepening relationships, and this was a key feature of Church life from day one. At some of these meals, they specifically met to remember the death of Jesus in the way he had commanded at the last supper. Christianity is never just a set of doctrines and beliefs. It is a way of life lived in community, and these first Christians were quite clear about that.

Thirdly, the believers met together to pray. They knew they had an enormous challenge in front of them and, although

their numbers were growing, they lived in a society which was fundamentally opposed to their beliefs. They needed God's continual strength and inspiration for the road ahead.

Times have changed, and Christianity is no longer brand new, but our needs are just the same as those first believers. Living in a sea of cynicism and materialism, we still desperately need good teaching, deep fellowship and an ever-growing commitment to prayer.

QUESTION

What should be the priorities for the Church today?

PRAYER

Loving God, thank you for the privilege of being part of your Church. Help us to learn from the faith and commitment of those first Christians. Amen

Photograph - St Mark's Parish Church, Lisburn

