

A TRANSFORMED CHURCH

CONNECTING & REFLECTING

- (i) What is one thing you can thank God for in the last week?
- (ii) Who have you shared with about what you learned in our last study?
- (iii) Which three people are you praying for to come to Christ?

The transforming work of the Holy Spirit impacts individuals by taking them from a life of sinful selfishness to a life where they are surrendered to Christ and led by the Holy Spirit. Martin Luther was striving to be right with God. He entered a monastery and became a monk. He underwent rigorous disciplines to live a holy life. He kept a whip over his bedroom door for flogging himself every time he sinned. Yet he kept sinning. He later said that if you had knocked at the door of his heart and it opened to you, there you would have found Martin Luther seated with his garment of hair, shaved crown of his head, and whip over his door. But after his conversion to Christ if you had knocked at the door of his heart and entered you would find none but Christ enthroned! How has Jesus Christ transformed your life?

The Holy Spirit transforms families. He elevates mothers and fathers to the sacred charge of caring for, leading, protecting, teaching and training their children so that they willingly volunteer themselves to be servants of Christ and His Church.

There is a tale told of an English country church in the 1800s that had grown cold. The author calls it, "The Wesley Church". Sin had pervaded the small congregation in two of its most insidious forms: *worldliness*, and *self-righteousness*. It's new minister was a 25 year old man wise beyond his years. He began to teach on Second Corinthians 4:1-7. As he taught about the light of God, he showed that this light exposed worldliness, but he also noted that this light was displayed in "earthen vessels". Those who had the light of God's salvation, were not the light, they were simply the lantern (earthen vessel) of that light. The effect of this ministry was that those trapped in worldliness (drunkenness, fornication in particular) made a public confession to the church and repented. Those in the death-grip of self-righteousness were empowered to confess publicly their hypocrisy and repent while asking the church for forgiveness. The tale goes on to tell that the entire village was deeply impacted. No longer did they sense that the congregation of Wesley Church were looking down at them. One of the repentants said that he previously scorned the village atheist, but he now looked at him with compassion and understanding. It wasn't too long before that atheist was in the Wesley Church Sunday by Sunday worshiping the God he had vainly protested against.

1. What lessons can we see in Acts 2:42-47 for a church today?

2. What do we learn about the value of the church meeting in small groups as well as together in the larger congregation from Acts 2:42-47?
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3. Based on Acts 2:42-47, what was the role of the original church leaders and how does this compare to what we expect of “pastors” today?
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4. Reading on in Acts 6, the church was forced to add leaders. Why? What was their role? Why weren’t the apostles expected to do this role? What lessons from this can we apply today for a church?
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5. How was the efforts of the first Church a *partnership* with the Holy Spirit based on Acts 2:43?
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6. How should we, the church, partner with the Holy Spirit today?
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Being a “Spirit-led” church involves attention to the Word of God and prayer (note Acts 6:4). This must be the primary dual role of a pastor who leads a church. But Acts 2 shows us that the church was able to provide practical and physical support to each member through meeting in homes where believers could pool and share their gifts (note Romans 12:4-6).

7. How was the church in Revelation 3:15 described? What might that have looked like? How can this condition be avoided by a church?
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The Holy Spirit wants to transform every church into a community of fully devoted, caring, gifted believers who reach out, worship well and hunger to know God. His transforming work takes place as the church meets together in small groups *and* together in the larger congregation. Let’s be a Holy Spirit transformed church!

Amen.