

**May 21, 2006**  
**Patchogue Church of the Nazarene**  
**A Quest For Life – A Quest For God**

**Spiritual And Relational Vitality** (Based on *Leading Congregational Change* by Herrington, Bonem, and Furr)  
**Acts 2:36-47 NLT**

[Click here for the Notes that were in Sunday's Bulletin](#)

36 So let it be clearly known by everyone in Israel that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified to be both Lord and Messiah!"

37 Peter's words convicted them deeply, and they said to him and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?"

38 Peter replied, "Each of you must turn from your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 This promise is to you and to your children, and even to the Gentiles--all who have been called by the Lord our God." 40 Then Peter continued preaching for a long time, strongly urging all his listeners, "Save yourselves from this generation that has gone astray!"

41 Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church--about three thousand in all. 42 They joined with the other believers and devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, sharing in the Lord's Supper and in prayer.

43 A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. 44 And all the believers met together constantly and shared everything they had. 45 They sold their possessions and shared the proceeds with those in need. 46 They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity-- 47 all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved.

As I read these verse I can't help but notice that the early church had a vibrant sense of power that is missing from many congregations today. Acts 2:43, 47b (NIV) "Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles... And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." The vitality that was present created a sense of awe that swept over the believers and the impact it had on their lives was visible and powerful.

And as I read these verses I notice that there was spiritual and relational vitality (energy, liveliness, strength, life). Jesus described spiritual vitality like this: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all our mind" and He described relational vitality like this: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love God, love all is like two sides of the same coin. Unconditional love for others with all their idiosyncrasies is

impossible unless we have a deep sense of the presence and power of God in our lives. And the strongest indicator of our love for God is when we are loving others. This spiritual (love of God) and relational (love of neighbor) vitality is the life-giving power that faithful people experience together as they passionately pursue God and His vision for their life. Individuals and congregations long to experience this kind of power. And it is God's desire for His church to experience this life –giving power. How can it be achieved? The church described in Acts 2 had a unity of heart, mind, and spirit and God added daily to their number! We all wish to be a part of a congregation like that. How is it possible for the church today to experience the transforming power that was experienced by the early church?

We can not manipulate or force God into giving His blessing to us, but, on the other hand, God's ways are not hidden. God wants to reveal Himself, He wants to live in an intimate relationship with us, empowering us to serve Him.

So what will create a spiritual and relational vitality that will give power to the church:

1. Encounter God's Holiness. There must be an ongoing encounter with God's holiness. (vs 36-38) Peter was preaching and said, "So let it be clearly known by everyone in Israel that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified to be both Lord and Messiah!"  
*[Jesus suffered and died for your sins – you crucified Him – your sins. He is both Savior and Lord]*

(v37) Peter's words convicted them deeply, and they said to him and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?"

(v38) Peter replied, "Each of you must turn from your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Isa 6:1-4 NLT

In the year King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord. He was sitting on a lofty throne, and the train of his robe filled the Temple. 2 Hovering around him were mighty seraphim, each with six wings. With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with the remaining two they flew. 3 In a great chorus they sang, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty! The whole earth is filled with his glory!" 4 The glorious singing shook the Temple to its foundations, and the entire sanctuary was filled with smoke.

God is holy. There is no evil in Him. He is good, all good, all the time. He never has a bad motive. He is unconditional love, but He is also just and commands righteousness. He tells us what is right and demands that we do it. When we encounter the holiness of God we are humbled, convicted, and broken. And our response is to confess and turn from our sin. When we do we...

2. Experience God's grace

See the remainder of Isaiah's testimony in Isa 6:5-7 (NLT) Then I said, "My destruction is sealed, for I am a sinful man and a member of a sinful race. Yet I have seen the King, the LORD Almighty!"

Then one of the seraphim flew over to the altar, and he picked up a burning coal with a pair of tongs. He touched my lips with it and said, "See, this coal has touched your lips. Now your guilt is removed, and your sins are forgiven."

Isaiah had a new perspective on his own brokenness and sinful nature, and he was moved to express deep humility. Ultimately he experienced the gift of grace in the forgiveness of his sin.

The awareness of God's surprising love changes our hearts. We recognize that we are like everyone else...sinners. When we see ourselves as equals, we are more willing to embrace the spirit of unity.

### 3. Embracing Unity

(vs 41-42, 44-46)

Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church--about three thousand in all. They joined with the other believers and devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, sharing in the Lord's Supper and in prayer... And all the believers met together constantly and shared everything they had. They sold their possessions and shared the proceeds with those in need. They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity...

They were in the same boat. They acknowledged their sin and need for Jesus and experienced the grace of God. They saw themselves as equals, sinners saved by grace. This united them. They had spiritual vitality and it led to a relational vitality. Paul said, Eph 4:3(NIV) "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." And Phil 2:3-4(NIV) "...in humility consider others better than yourselves."

What we see in Acts is an embracing of unity and more than unity. Unity is important, but it does not describe or represent the fullness of God's plan. His desire is that we practice authentic Christian Community.

### 4. Engaging Community

God gives each of us a different role in the church, but the common purpose is (Eph 4:12-13 NIV) "...that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."

Living in community is a challenge, but it is also a powerful experience that can bring us back to an encounter with the holiness of God.

Spiritual and relational vitality will be become a reality through the cycle of Encountering God's Holiness, Experiencing God's grace, Embracing Unity, Engaging Community. And the flow moves in both ways at the same time. God's presence in the gathered community leads to a spirit of shared unity, saving grace, and hunger for God.