

Cultivating Relationships, Strengthening Connections
#3: The Few to the Many to the Few
September 22-23, 2007

¹When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place ²Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. ⁵Now they were staying in Jerusalem Godfearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken.

⁷Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" ¹²Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?" . . . ⁴⁰With many other words [Peter] warned them; and he pleaded with them. "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." ⁴¹Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. ⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

"Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. *Acts 2:1-12. 40-47 TNIV*

Introduction Over the past two weeks, we have learned from Jesus own example why and how we must cultivate relationships with 'affinity groups" of fellow believers in

order to strengthen ministry and evangelistic connections to those outside the church. It is in the Acts account of the church's birth that we discover the genius of God's plan: the small group breeds the large group, which is then broken again into growing small groups.

- I. The Few Become the Many (vv. 1-12, 40)
 - A That small group of followers in whom Jesus invested most of his time-the apostles-were gathered together following his death and resurrection when the Holy Spirit fell upon them.
 - B Empowered by God's Spirit, the few went out to address the many who were in Jerusalem to celebrate the day of Pentecost and build the church.
 - C Because of the strength the few had taken from Jesus, one another, and the Spirit, the apostles were able to cross cultural barriers to reach the masses.
 - D Our goal is to be the church-a family of committed believers --in such a way that people are called to ask, "What does this mean?"
 - E. The few are always disciplined in order to reach the many!
- II The Many Become the Few (vv. 41-47)
 - A There will likely never be another day when the church multiplies as it did on Pentecost; the few lacked the infrastructure to accommodate the many.
 - B Fortunately the apostles were taught a strategy that was remarkably simple: grow larger and smaller at the same time.
 - C The keys to church growth were, indeed, simple; they are reflected in Columbia's Core Values.
 - D The early Christians understood that they could grow the church by worshiping in large groups as they studied fellowshiped, and prayed in small groups.

Conclusion: Again we discover that the key to building God's Kingdom on earth is to become larger and smaller at the same time as the few become the many and the many become the few in rapid succession. This is how we cultivate relationships within the church in order to strengthen connections to a lost world.