What Made the Early Church Different?

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Several times throughout the book of Acts, we see how the Holy Spirit caused significant changes in people's lives. With the students we work with, we have also seen how the Holy Spirit has done a significant work in their lives. He has accomplished in a moment things that under normal circumstances would have taken months, even years.

> ...what made the early Church different? The Holy Spirit, and a complete dependence and fulfilment found in Him.

Practices of the Early Church

This has really brought a heightened sense of the significance of the Holy Spirit's role in our lives. Here are some of the things that stood out for me regarding the work of the Spirit this year:

Living in a Place of Overflow

Jesus said that he who believes in Him will have streams of living water flowing out of their innermost being (John 7:38). With this He was referring to the Holy Spirit. It is interesting how rarely Christians really live in a place of overflow. Yet Jesus promised us that what has been

made available for the believer is a constant overflow of His life – regardless of the season or what we are going through.

Walking in Dependency on God

The second thing that stood out for me is that Jesus said that He can do nothing on His own accord, but only does what He sees His father doing (John 5:19). Jesus, who is equal to God, did not even move on His own initiative, but walked in full dependency on His father. There is a new hunger among us to occupy ourselves only with that which God is busy with. Likewise, we are aware that we are no longer walking as the blind, trying to feel our way forward or unable to see what our Father is doing. But we have the Spirit, and as we wait upon Him, He will show and reveal to us where the Father is at work.

Demonstrating the Power of God

Lastly, we have, to a greater degree, become aware of the massive difference between trying to do the work of God in our own strength versus allowing His power to be displayed. In times past, we realised that there were natural inclinations to gravitate towards the things we can do without God – we are now challenged to do the things that only God can do. It is sometimes so easy to hide behind explaining the Kingdom but never demonstrating it. Paul says that his ministry was not mere words, but demonstration (1 Corinthians 2:4). Even though we see that there is a place in His Kingdom for explaining, it can never be apart from demonstrating the Kingdom. We are trusting God for more demonstrations of His Kingdom in our midst and in our going out.

So to answer the big question, what made the early Church different? The Holy Spirit, and a complete dependence and fulfilment found in Him. Together as a team, we have been privileged to go on such an exciting adventure with God and at times witness the most amazing demonstrations of His Kingdom. I trust that we, together with our wider friends and family, will truly seek to have the reality of the Holy Spirit in our midst, and see the book of Acts playing itself out in our current days.