

Everyday, Part 1

When sin entered the world, God asked Adam & Eve two penetrating questions – **"Where are you?"** and **"What have you done?"** Therapists have been asking the same questions ever since – one question exposes the present and the other exposes the past. It is a principle of time that we can't go back, but if we are willing to take an honest look at our present we can go forward in a new way!

As we enter into a new year, people usually think in terms of "New Year's resolutions" - promises they make to themselves to improve their lives as they "start over" with the clean slate of another year. Unfortunately, the statistics tell us that 87% of these resolutions won't be kept, and in fact most people don't ever expect to keep them when they make them! Instinctively, we already know that significant change doesn't happen just because we wish for it or promise it to ourselves - it only happens through a PROCESS that helps us take small steps toward our goals.

Nowhere is this more important or significant than in our spiritual lives. That's why at CCC we're starting 2010 with a series called "EVERYDAY" - so we can learn (or relearn!) some of the biblical steps that build us into disciples. None of them are dramatic. None of them are quick fixes. And none of them work if we only do them sporadically or if we quit after a week or two. But all of them are powerful if we just take a few minutes "EVERYDAY" to invest strategically in the only part of our life that will outlive our life! So, for the first six weeks of 2010 all of our age groups (adults, youth and children) will learn about these powerful, yet simple disciplines. Because some things you just need to do EVERYDAY.

Sow a thought, reap an action.
Sow an action, reap a habit.
Sow a habit, reap a character.
Sow a character, reap a destiny.

Remember the old computer acronym? GIGO – garbage in, garbage out. It works this way too – godliness in, godliness out.

The word "disciple" and "discipline" are from the same root!

Book of Acts – God's blueprint for building His church
Chapter 2 – First New Testament church service
Verse 38 – New Testament pattern for obedience to the Gospel

Acts 2:41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

Verses 42-47 – New Testament pattern for discipleship

Acts 2:42-47 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all *men*, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

Today we want to extract "five discipleship habits" from Acts ...

ENLIST (ministry)

VOICE (prayer)

EXTEND (evangelism)

READ (Bible)

YIELD (time, talent, treasure)

THE LORD "ADDED TO THE CHURCH DAILY" PRECISELY BECAUSE HIS PEOPLE DID THESE THINGS DAILY! THEY "CONTINUED STEDFASTLY" IN THESE HABITS, WITHOUT A BREAK – **EVERYDAY!**

If on the Day of Pentecost 3000 people were baptized in one day beginning around noon and only the twelve disciples did the baptizing, that is 42 people baptized by each one of the apostles every hour!

But the revival doesn't stop there! Luke's report tells us that most of the Pentecost converts were "men out of every nation" (Acts 2:5) – they went home and spread the gospel (the Bible later confirms this). That means:

- 1) The Jerusalem church started out as a missions-minded church!
- 2) The Jerusalem church also had a great revival at home!

After approximately three months of practicing these "discipleship habits" Luke gives another numerical report in Acts 4:4 – "and the number of the MEN was about 5000" – that would very conservatively put the number of converts at 15,000 (each man representing also a wife and a child). That means they had about 130 converts every day just in Jerusalem! And the revival didn't stop there ... it continued EVERYDAY ...

Acts 6 begins to use the word "MULTIPLIED" instead of "ADDED" to refer to their growth rate ... and we also begin to see opponents of the church converted to truth (that has always been in the NT pattern!) ...

Acts 6:7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

As we enter a new decade 2000 years later, we find ourselves in a world where two philosophies are at war. The first philosophy is the Jesus way. It is a world of sacrifice, submission, humility, and patience. It is the worldview where God is at the center and his disciples live for Him and for others. In the Jesus way, it is not about us, it is about God. The other philosophy (which dominates today) is the consumer culture. It is a world of consumption, assertiveness, speed, and fame. In the consumer world it is all about me. In the Jesus way Jesus is the center — in the consumer way, man is the center.

The consumer culture creates the consumer church, which gives us consumer Christians. The consumer Christian culture is about receiving benefits and getting into heaven. Its story is about man rather than God. It is about an environment of instant gratification, the teaching of scripture into neat formulas, and worship centered on personal needs and taste. It is about Christianity without any sacrifice. The consumer Christian culture makes us become more, and Jesus become less. It had its beginning in the Garden of Eden when Satan manipulated Eve into disobeying God while believing she was enriching herself!

These worlds are at war — they are mortal enemies. The alarming thing is that many good Christian people live without ever knowing they have been seduced by their culture. They haven't been reminded that they cannot serve both philosophies.

Matthew 6:24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

One great myth of consumer Christianity is that after a period of time we know enough and have cleaned up our life enough that we can get by without practicing the discipleship habits — the kinds of actions that build our dependence on God. The discipleship habits require us to take repeated actions over and over again. And consumers don't like that.

Another great myth of consumer Christianity is that individual rights, individual thoughts, individual needs are paramount. This is a serious shift from the Jesus way that values community or, in Bible terms, the congregation. The congregation is the local home base where the Christian life is formed. It is where our identity is developed. The congregation is not about us—it is about God. God's plan is to create a new community where his disciples learn to love him by loving one another. The operating biblical metaphor for worship is sacrifice. We gather to contribute to one another's lives. We come to the altar to sacrifice, to serve, to set aside our personal agenda. We, like Jesus, then choose to live the life of submission to others, to put their needs equal to ours, even more important than our own.

Consumerism in the business sense is a concept based upon customer satisfaction, which is the key to any successful commercial enterprise. The product or service must be tailored to the wants and perceived needs of the customer, or there is no sustainable profit. The consumer rules, because where there is no customer, there is no profit and, therefore, no business. **But God rules in biblical Christianity.**

One person came out of church service complaining, "I didn't really care for that." "Good," said a friend, "because we weren't worshipping you."

Every Apostolic church in the 21st century has an opportunity to have a revival like they had in the 1st century. But it doesn't happen just because we preach the same DOCTRINE. It only happens when we have the same level of DISCIPLESHIP. It will not happen because we make one commitment in one service. It will only happen if we live this EVERYDAY.

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The Pareto Principle (also known as the 80-20 rule, the law of the vital few, and the principle of factor sparsity) states that, for many events, roughly 80% of the effects come from 20% of the causes ...

Property – 20% of the people own 80% of the land
Sales – 20% of the customers buy 80% of the product
Products – 20% of products produce 80% of profit
Reading – 20% of the book contains 80% of the content
Speech – 20% of a presentation gives 80% of the impact
Job – 20% of our work gives us 80% of our satisfaction
Time – 20% of our time produces 80% of our results
Problems – 20% of the people take up 80% of our time
Donations – 20% of the people give 80% of the money
Party – 20% of the people will eat 80% of the food
Organization – 20% of the people do 80% of the volunteering

As we move further and further into a "consumer culture" even the 80-20 rule is changing. One school of thought now refers to the "10-90 gap" and another scholar suggests that we are now seeing the "99-1 rule"!

THE 80/20 PRINCIPLE IS NOT AN APOSTOLIC PRINCIPLE!

Are you going to make 2010 about what you GET from church, or about what you GIVE to the church? The local church is the hope of the world!