

## **JESUS' RULES OF ORDER**

### **LUKE 22:24-27; ACTS 2:37-47**

“A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. And he said to them, ‘The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves...’”<sup>1</sup>

“When they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’ And Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.’ And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, ‘Save yourselves from this crooked generation.’ So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

**T**he transformation was incredible! In the Upper Room, on the eve of His passion, Jesus’ disciples were bickering, squabbling, jockeying for position. At Pentecost, mere weeks after this despicable scene, these same disciples demonstrate unimaginable power and supernatural harmony as the greatest revival in the storied history of the Faith breaks out!

We readily understand what happened in the Upper Room. The disciples were human; they were like us! They had their petty jealousies and they were fueled by raw ambition. Some of them had sharp memories honed to recall every wrong and each insult. Some of them were aggressive and exceptionally ambitious; they knew that if you don’t promote yourself in this world, no one else will. Most of them were jockeying for place and position in the kingdom just as would any decent Canadian. We can imagine the conversations that evening.

“I deserve the place of honour,” asserted one.

“You don’t deserve anything,” another retorted. “I remember how you behaved that time in Caesarea.” They had such long memories, recalling every slight—real and imagined.

The disagreement was so intense that Jesus had to intercede. “The road to greatness lies through serving,” He said. “If you want to be great, then live as though you are a servant.”

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible: English Standard Version**. Wheaton: Good News Publishers, 2001. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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What took place in the Upper Room is so typical of mere mortals. Despite our union with Christ, we are yet infected with the virus of “self.”

It is much harder for us to understand what happened at the festival of Pentecost. All those people gathered from many points of the globe; and there was a spirit of solidarity among the disciples. There is no fussing or bickering, only a witness to Jesus and all that God had accomplished at the cross. Then the Spirit of God fell upon them so mightily that the faithful ever since have celebrated what happened as part of its annual calendar of remembrance.

They moved from quarrelling to concert, from contention to unity. What happened? What could account for such a change? Luke, who reported both incidents, makes the reason perfectly clear. Between the Upper Room and the festival of Pentecost, between the quarrelling and the unity, they had two unforgettable experiences—the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.

These disciples had stood by and watched the Master as He was seized and delivered over to the Jewish leaders. They had seen the One whom they had followed for years, the One with whom they had walked and worked and eaten and slept, the One who had been their Master and teacher as He had been nailed mercilessly to a rough Roman cross and raised against the Judean sky. They had seen Him suffer while nailed to that rough cross. They had watched His life drain out drop-by-drop as His blood stained the sand and the rocks at the foot of the cross.

They had also been astounded by the news of the empty tomb, and by the risen presence of the Man who had met them everywhere—now here, now there; and they had marvelled as He told them He would never leave them, that His Spirit would be with them forever. That’s what had happened. The crucifixion and the resurrection had altered their lives forever!

It happens in every age, doesn’t it? A man is rough and unkind, cursing and drinking, bullying the weaker individuals around him. He meets the Saviour, comes up against the crucifixion and resurrection; then, his life and demeanour are totally altered. He is no longer at the centre of his universe—God is now central to life. He is no longer abusive; he is thoughtful and kind, he is transformed. The old devil in him gives way to a new angel that moves in.

The same thing happens to churches. They become worn-out, self-centred, quarrelsome. People argue over the most inappropriate things, inane issues. Then, they remember the crucifixion and the resurrection. “God forgive us,” they say, “we forgot what it was all about!” And they change! Christ again begins to live in and through them. They stop asking what God can do for them and they instead ask what they can do for God. They are overtaken by a spirit of love and gentleness, of peace and harmony and good will. They begin to whisper again about change and renewal, about doing the will of God. They remember Pentecost, and yearn for what happened then to happen all over again ... in them. What did happen at Pentecost?

**THE PEOPLE UNITED IN A SPIRIT OF ANTICIPATION** — Here we read the most astonishing statement: “When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place.” [ACTS 2:1]. This is astonishing because it points to an uncommon commodity in modern church life—unity. Others have made frequent note that the early believers united for ten days in prayer and Peter then preached for ten minutes resulting in the conversion of three thousand. The contemporary church prays for ten minutes and preaches for ten days and has the audacity to speak of a great revival if three people are converted. The revival in this instance is witnessed in the fact that one hundred twenty people united for ten days in prayer. The harmony preceded the power.

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***When we meet, an air of anticipation should be evident in our meetings.*** Anticipation such as described results in the outworking of hearts which are united in expectation that God shall be present. When we have united in prayer, when we have sought the same response from God, we will then find ourselves filled with divine expectation. Jesus promised His disciples: “Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.” [JOHN 14:13, 14]. Do we believe this promise? Do we expect Him to answer our requests according to His promise?

Of all the requests we might imagine that would bring glory to the Father through the Son, would not the request that He should meet with us find a place at the head of the list? Would you not assume that a request that we should see His power and glory displayed among us assume a priority on any list we might imagine? Would not the request that His Name should be magnified be of greatest importance? I suggest that were we to truly understand the glorious consequence that accompanies the presence of the Risen Christ with His people we would not permit any temporal and pressing responsibility of the moment to interfere with prayer and petition for that meeting. Dear people, God is clearly pleased when His people live together in unity within the church—and harmony precedes the glorious revelation of His Person. Underscore this truth in your mind—***harmony precedes the glorious revelation of His Person.***

A second aspect of the unity displayed within the apostolic congregation preceding Pentecost is that ***the believers endeavoured to know the mind of the Lord.*** ACTS 1:14-20 reads: “All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

“In those days, Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said, ‘Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.’ (Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) ‘For it is written in the Book of Psalms,

“‘May his camp become desolate,  
and let there be no one to dwell in it;”

and

“‘Let another take his office.’””

Notice how in this portion of Scripture Peter expresses full reliance upon the Word of God as he leads the disciples to discover the will of God. Peter makes a common-sense appeal for a response by the believers to Judas' suicide. Discontented with a mere appeal to logic, however, he directs attention to the Word of God. The big fisherman thunders “It is written,” in an appeal to the Word of God.

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Have you ever noted the number of times these first believers appealed to what is written in the Word to discover the mind of God on a given matter? Unlike so many modern churches these believers did not meet to merely conduct business and then expect God to somehow meekly ratify *their* decision. Consider a few examples beyond that already given. Stephen, the earliest Christian martyr, defending himself before the Sanhedrin appealed to Scripture to verify his accusations against the Jewish worship [ACTS 7:42]. Paul and the missionaries associated with him repeatedly appealed to the Word of God to validate their teaching [ACTS 13:29, 32, 33]. James appealed to the Word when he argued for freedom in the Faith for Gentile believers [ACTS 15:15]. When defending himself before the same Sanhedrin he had once served, Paul appealed to Scripture to acknowledge what would be appropriate action in the presence of the high priest [ACTS 23:5]. Later, defending himself before Roman authorities the Apostle made a similar appeal as the basis of his personal belief [ACTS 24:14].

I read the accounts of the first church which are recorded in the Acts of the Apostles and I am convinced that the early church believed the Word of God in a way that would embarrass professed believers today. Those early saints not only gave vocal consent to their agreement with the Word but their lives revealed that each member was committed to obedience to all that was written in the Word. They accepted the written Word as nothing less than the revelation of the mind of God. Because this faith guided them in their decisions, they dared not trifle with God's revealed will.

I am bold to say that when the church schedules a business meeting, each member of the congregation ought to be present. The business of the church is the business of God which He has entrusted to mere mortals; and that divine business is to be carried out in the power of His Spirit. We are not to depend upon mere intuition and the flesh to do the work of the Lord. Before ever we meet each of us should have spent time in prayer and in waiting on Him to discover His will. Thoroughly saturated with the Word, we should always ask how a given decision will honour God if it is implemented. We need to again take God seriously. Precious few decisions are of such character that they must be decided immediately without pausing to discover what God would have us do. That we are not prone to wait until unity of the Spirit is evident, serves as a serious indictment against us as professed believers in the sovereign God. Meetings will become exciting when we acknowledge His presence and seek His will.

There is yet a third facet to the expression of unity within the apostolic church preceding Pentecost: *these believers trusted that God would direct them in their search to express His will* [ACTS 1:23-26]. Let me ask you a disturbing question—disturbing because the question probes deeply into each Christian's heart. **IS GOD A PRIORITY IN YOUR LIFE?** I trust you answered "Yes" to that question.

Answer this related question which begs an answer: **DOES GOD TRULY RULE YOUR LIFE?** Again, I would pray that the answer you gave is an unqualified "Yes!"

Now, I challenge you to weigh a final question flowing naturally from the two previous queries. **WHAT IS THERE IN YOUR LIFE TO GIVE EVIDENCE THAT GOD RULES?** If the evidence is scant, or utterly absent, how can you maintain that God is a priority? The evidence that God was sovereign in the life of the early church was that these first saints acted as though He were very real, immediately present and vitally concerned that the people called by His Name reflect His glory. It is impossible to reflect the glory of God without submission to the presence of God.

***The believers remained united in worship and they continued in united worship.***

“[Those who were obedient to the call to be baptised] devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved [ACTS 2:42-47].

We confess that we are convinced that when we gather to worship God meets with us. Of these early Christians, it is said that though they were many, their hearts beat as one. For too many churches it might be said that though they appear to be one, many hearts are beating among them. Let us determine to be once more like these early saints and endeavour to honour God through seeking and finding unity in the Spirit. Let us determine that we will so live that when we meet it is with a spirit of anticipation as we await God's will revealed to us.

**THEIR MESSAGE GLORIFIED THE RISEN CHRIST** — The first church was entrusted with a message that glorified the Risen Christ. The believers were “*all* filled with the Holy Spirit” [ACTS 2:4] and they were specifically “telling ... the mighty works of God” [ACTS 2:11]. This is an essential piece of information for each of us who follow the Saviour in this day. Have you ever wondered why God has left you here? Perhaps you have wondered why God has not immediately removed believers from the earth as soon as they believe? As soon as we place our trust in Him and as soon as we are born from above, why would Christ not take believers home? As followers of the Christ, why are we here? Underscore in your mind this great, singular truth: ***WE ARE LEFT ON EARTH THAT WE MAY GLORIFY CHRIST THE LORD BEFORE THE WORLD.*** We Christians live to serve the True and Living God; through our brokenness we reveal His power.

This is a neglected teaching in this day so far removed from the early days of the church. Listen carefully to Christian radio programming and you will discover a disturbing theme. Watch Christian television programs and you will see a similar theme that leaves conscientious believers ill at ease. Read various Christian news sites and you will find a similar disquieting theme. The common theme in far too many of the messages presented by these programs and promoted through these articles, some might say the theme uniting much of Christian programming, is the exaltation of man. The message seeks to find comfort for man rather than equipping man for service to the Living God. Though a courtesy nod toward God may be included, the emphasis of the message appears to be mankind's exaltation.

Broadcast messages and printed articles often detail how a person may get wealthy, how an individual may conquer disease and pain, how a person may obtain greater prestige and an exalted presence in the world. All these centre on how man may exalt himself. Wealth is not of itself evil; money is neutral. The conquest of disease or victory over injury is not of itself evil; we properly rejoice at every such victory. Prestige and presence in the world is not of itself evil. However, that theme which repeats what I did or what I must do cannot exalt the Lord. This is the disturbing message of the contemporary religious world which should properly disquiet every conscientious saint.

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If God has been pleased to entrust money to me, may His Name be praised. In that instance, I must acknowledge that I am but an administrator appointed to the task of administering those goods for His glory. If God should choose to heal my body, then He should indeed be praised for His power and for His goodness toward me. Only let me offer the body that He healed to serve Him in such a manner that He may be honoured through the service offered. If God has chosen to confer on me a position of stature and respect in this world, I am obliged to understand that I hold that position for His glory. As one who occupies a position of trust and respect I will be responsible to use my life for His honour through influencing others to believe the same Gospel that I have believed and to receive the life which He alone can give. Whatever my lot in life, I am responsible to ensure that the True and Living God is glorified through me and through the service that I now offer up to Him.

No doubt the flesh is disturbed by the knowledge that God is far more likely to work in our weakness than in our strength. Paul addressed this subject frequently. On one occasion, he invested considerable time detailing something of his view of God's work in his life. He had just told a wanton church about the great revelations God has given him as he confronted their love affair with the Judaizers.

This is what the Apostle said. "To keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong" [2 CORINTHIANS 12:7-10].

It may be a source of encouragement if we were to recall the words of **JOHN 3:21**: "Whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God." Living by the truth we come into the light "so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God." We glorify God as we reveal His presence working in us. Should someone attempt to exalt us we are quick to state that it is God who gives us energy. It is God who gives us knowledge and understanding. It is God who instils in us the desire to know His will and the ability to clearly communicate that will. We cannot claim any power or strength or ability of our own; but we acknowledge His power at work in us.

Let's get practical for a moment. The message we give is seen in the manner of our life. The message we give is revealed through our response to the changing situations we face in life. The message we give is either that God is at work through us or that we are sufficient in ourselves. We recite **PHILIPPIANS 4:13**: "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." Do we really mean it? Is it a truth for us, or is it merely another verse? I take special note that it is "through Him" that "I can do all things." The other side of this equation is given by Jesus in **JOHN 15:5**: "I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." Since we know the Son always pleases the Father [see **JOHN 8:29**] we are confident that as He works through us we will likewise glorify the Father. This desire to see God glorified in our message and through our actions should control our life as a congregation just as it does in our lives as individuals.

**THE SPIRIT OF GOD SETTLED ON ALL THOSE PRESENT** — The disciples weren't expecting the Spirit to settle on them while they were praying. They were as surprised as we would be. Imagine thousands of people gathered for a religious celebration, the way we gather for Christmas or Easter; and suddenly, before they knew it, something life-changing happened, and all of them were changed! It was exciting and they acted giddy as though they were drunk.

We wouldn't want anything like that happening to us, would we? Not in our dignified settings for worship with stained glass windows, polished pews and pulpit furnishings. We pride ourselves on our self-control, our gravity, our individualism. We might find it necessary to call the ushers to escort anyone out who got too caught up in the Spirit of God. "You can do that sort of thing elsewhere," we say.

Nevertheless, I would like to be present just one time when the Spirit of God did take over in that way. What a remarkable, unforgettable experience it would be! Feeling the Spirit like a mighty wind rushing through the auditorium, shaking the doors and causing the chandeliers to swing wildly, sucking the air and rustling the pages of our hymnbooks and Bibles—**WOW! Annie Dillman** says in **Teaching a Stone to Talk** that we ought to wear crash helmets in church and strap ourselves to the pews because we don't know what a dangerous zone this is. I'd like to think she's right and that one of these days we're all going to be surprised and overwhelmed by the coming of the Spirit. When it happens, we'll rewrite our personal theologies and compose some new songs of worship, and the preacher will throw away the sermon he has prepared, and we'll all hug and weep and laugh, and we too will act giddy and drunk, because it will be unlike anything we've ever experienced.

Why must we read **EPHESIANS 5:18** as though it represented some strange theology? Why must we make every effort to explain away that one Scripture as though we were somehow embarrassed to even be associated with that teaching? Why do we ignore the Word of God? You do recall the command which Paul issued in that encyclical to the churches of the Province of Asia? "Do not get drunk on wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit."

Isn't it about time that each of us realised that God intends for us to reflect His power? Isn't it about time that each of us realised that God intends for us to be Spirit-filled? The danger of excess seems somehow less problematic to me than does the danger of neglect. How is it that we can ignore this clear teaching of the Word given through the Apostle to the Gentiles? We will avoid the drunkenness, but disobey the command to be filled with the Spirit.

I wish that each of us would determine in our hearts that we would not leave this place until we have received a mighty infilling of the Holy Spirit to remove the accumulated dross resulting from years of the self-life. I would that each of us would resolve to wait on God until He equipped us for service; then, in a spirit of confidence we would go out into our worlds prepared to witness in power and shake our world with a holy shaking.

The great blot against our church is that we can be explained. The community knows us and they can account for our actions. Sociologists explain our social structure as a church. Anthropologists explain our communal interactions and even our congregational activities. Psychologists explain our emotions and our responses. It is about time that God did something that cannot be explained! He has intervened throughout history in the life of the churches to perform a mighty work as the Spirit descended in power; I pray that He will do that again.

**EACH ONE SHARED IN THE MINISTRY OF WITNESSING** — The text is definite in stating that they all shared in the witnessing—each one seemingly speaking a different language or dialect. It was as if they were speaking the same language, when in fact the disciples were speaking dozens, perhaps even scores of languages. Their language that day was heard and understood by pilgrims representing multiple nations and districts all gathered in the Holy City.

The fact is that they *all* began to speak in other languages. It is essential that we recognise that each disciple present at that time participated in giving witness to the Risen Christ. Before you get too hung up on the experience of speaking in another tongue, consider that the text emphasises the fact that the people present *heard them*—what they were saying was understood! This is the important point too frequently overlooked. I consider this to be the miracle witnessed that day! Filled with the Spirit, we will speak—and *people will hear us*.

Today we speak and tragically not many people hear us. It can only be because we are not filled with the Holy Spirit. It is because we are filled with “self” and all the deficits which always accompany “self.” We hire a preacher to witness in our place, to visit the sick and the needy, to care for the work of telling others about Christ, all the while forgetting that the command of Jesus to witness was given to all the disciples. Jesus’ command to wait until endued with power from above was not restricted to a few—it was the heritage of all. I am not trying to shirk my responsibility as a pastor; I am making every effort to fulfil that duty. I cannot be thought a good pastor if I permit the flock to avoid sharing in the ministry of witness.

**THE BELIEVERS SHARED WITH ONE ANOTHER** — These early believers were so caught up in the Spirit and they were so happy with one another that they just opened their purses and their homes. They gave everything they had to the fellowship, holding it all in common for the good of the poor and helpless among them. We read: “All who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, [they were] attending the temple together” [ACTS 2:44-46a]. Can you imagine that? If that is hard to comprehend, consider that while “breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people” [ACTS 2:46b, 47a]. These people actually enjoyed being with one another! They were truly a community of the Faith; they were truly a communion.

Oh, there were one or two clinkers among them. A little later in the book of Acts we read about Ananias and Sapphira—the couple who decided to hold out a portion of their goods. They were struck dead for lying about it. It’s a good thing God hasn’t made that practice routine in the church! Nevertheless, most of them enjoyed the blessing resulting from sharing their goods and their lives. They pooled what they had to the glory of God and for the power of the Kingdom.

I don’t mean to suggest that it is necessary to take a vow of poverty to become a dedicated Christian; but I do mean that when our heart is right with God we will demonstrate compassion toward one another, being greatly concerned to fellowship with one another. Making a killing at work and boosting oneself up the ladder of success will become secondary to building up the saints in the spirit of holiness. The sacred text says of those first disciples that “they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayer” [ACTS 6:42]. They were denoted for being devoted.



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Just like couples, churches are more likely to have conflict over money issues than over anything else. People who can't get along over money in their own families come to church and get upset about money at the church. Either there isn't enough to carry out their desires and expectations or there is too much to be spent on immediate needs. In either case people disagree about the distribution of the money. Wanting to punish the decision-makers, or not feeling any sense of commitment to the rest of the Body, disgruntled church members will withhold their giving, all the while imagining that they are honouring God. Such an attitude is woefully wrong. There would be no problems about money if we each had the attitude of those Christians at Pentecost and opened our purses and homes in the confidence that God is going to take care of us in any case. We are prone to speak of *our* money and of *our* home, forgetting that God has entrusted all that we hold so that we may glorify Him through wise administration of those goods.

**THE CHURCH GREW IN NUMBERS AND IN POWER** — Do you know what happened at Pentecost as result of all these things—the Spirit coming upon them, sharing in the witness to the Risen Son of God and sharing with one another? They grew as a church—and I believe a case could be made that they grew as individuals. I encourage you to read very carefully what the divine text says of the early church: “The Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved” [ACTS 2:47b]. When were you last in a church where the Lord added daily to the number of that Body? Perhaps God does not intend this to be true for our day or for our church. But if not, why did He tantalise us with the revelation that He did so in Jerusalem following Pentecost? Surely God intends to build His church even today. Surely God intends to add to His church on an ongoing basis in this day.

We can gather a crowd, but it won't be a church. Announce that we will give away one hundred-dollar bills to the first two hundred guests and we will have a full house on a Sunday morning. When we run out of hundred-dollar bills we will run out of visitors. We can preach a message which promises ease of life and soothes the fallen heart of mankind and the building will be filled with people wanting to hear what is being said; but when we change the message to align with the Word of God we will just as quickly see the crowds melt away. We can affirm men and women in their sins and they will gladly come to adopt a religious veneer; but when we confront them with their wickedness they will just as quickly flee. When we are filled with the Spirit, sharing in the witness and sharing our lives, we will see God bless by giving people favourable attitudes toward us and God Himself will add to our number on an ongoing basis.

I suppose that some may raise an objection that God is not likely to act similarly in this day. Wouldn't you like to find out? Wouldn't you like to dare submit yourself to Him, seeking to allow His Spirit to so rule over our life as a congregation and permitting Christ to exercise real control over His church that we discovered for ourselves whether God is able to do the same today that He did two millennia past? Don't you wish we could speak from experience instead of speculation? I suggest that “[We] do not have, because [we] do not ask.” Moreover, I suggest that “[We] ask and do not receive, because [we] ask wrongly, to spend it on [our] passions” [JAMES 4:2, 3]. When did you last pray that God would fill you with His Spirit? When did you last pray that your pastor would be Spirit-filled? When did you last pray that the Spirit of God would control your life just for a day?

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It would be enough that they saw daily additions to the church, but we also read that they were “having favour with all the people.” I am not suggesting that the world will like us—the world hated our Master and I cannot believe that the world is going to like us. In fact, I caution you to be careful if you are seeking approval from the world concerning how you will live; we have received the caution from the Lord Himself: “Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets” [LUKE 6:26]. The text is careful to explain that they enjoyed “favour with all the people.” That word *favour* is translated from a little Greek word which is frequently translated *grace*. This first congregation of the faithful had the respect of the populace among whom they lived. These saints were provided the opportunity to explain what God was doing because they received an opening to speak.

This was a revival in the truest sense of the word. I don't mean that we should focus on how many people are added regularly to the church, although that feature is the inevitable result of revival. I mean that the fullness of the Spirit of God reigned over the people so that they worshiped with one heart and served with one mind and praised God as with one tongue. They were deeply concerned for one another and demonstrated their concern in practical fashion and they shared the ministry of witnessing instead of thinking that God had somehow instituted a division of labour within the Body. All alike shared in witness and work. All alike demonstrated compassion and concern. All alike united to glorify God. This was revival.

We can approach our church's business as so many isolated members—individuals grateful for an opportunity to speak our minds about reports of the boards and committees and grateful for an opportunity to speak our minds about what we like and don't like in our church. We can approach the business of our church in a detached manner which conveys a blasé spirit that reflects our lack of concern. On the other hand, we can approach the business of our church in the spirit of Pentecost, knowing that God is waiting to bless our congregation with spiritual power and divine excitement. We can pray for the Spirit to come upon us. We can determine that we will share in the greatest work ever entrusted to humankind, that work of advancing the Kingdom of God through witnessing to those with whom we work and through witnessing to our neighbours. We can joyfully fellowship, sharing our lives and sharing what we have with one another in the confidence that we are going to grow as result of our prayers, our working together and our sharing of our lives. It is up to us.

I challenge you to remember the early church and the vast difference between that quarrelsome meeting in the Upper Room when each of them wanted to get ahead of the others, and the wonderful experience at Pentecost when they were all overcome by the Spirit of God. The difference between the two is accounted for by the fact that between the Upper Room and Pentecost they had the experience of witnessing the crucifixion and the resurrection. They were with Christ in His dying and they were with Christ in His being raised up from the grave. The whole experience of the church revolved around what God had done in Christ; and it ought to be the same for us.

I recall a story which originated in the hills of eastern Kentucky. An old physician who had gone to that state in the days of the depression related the story about a new church building he had seen erected there. A small choir loft in the chancel doubled as a Sunday school room during the Sunday school hour. Before the choir loft was a simple platform and at the front centre of the platform stood the white oak pulpit.

**JESUS' RULES OF ORDER**  
**LUKE 22:24-27; ACTS 2:37-47**

There were three chairs on the platform, one large one in the centre and two smaller ones on the sides. The minister sat in one of the side chairs and the song leader sat in the other. Because no one ever sat in the big chair in the middle of the platform, someone wanted to know why they had it. “That,” explained the preacher, was “the Jesus Chair.” It was put there to remind the congregation whenever they gathered that the Lord Jesus was the unseen Guest at every meeting, at every worship service, in every situation.

The Jesus Chair! Maybe every church ought to have one. Then we wouldn't worry about Roberts' Rules of Order because we would remember Jesus' Rules of Order. Then we would be less like the disciples in the Upper Room and more like all those saints at Pentecost. The Jesus Chair would remind us of the cross and the resurrection—and they make all the difference in the world. Amen.