

S E P T E M B E R 1 5 & 1 6 , 2 0 0 1

ANCIENT LESSONS FOR REAL LIFE

Learning the Cadence of the First Christians

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Lesson 2—Our Home Away From Home...

In the Midst of Heartbreak

Acts 2:42

The last several days been filled with horrific events and scenes that will be etched in our memories for the rest of our lives. It is a brutal reminder that we are truly not “home” yet.

Last weekend, we began the “next chapter” of Woodmen Valley Chapel together by taking a look at another group of Christ-followers who were starting a new chapter: the first Christians as they were becoming the church. We learned about one key that eased their ache of living in a fallen world as it also fueled their effectiveness in that world—their conviction that they had a “home” in Jesus Christ...but that they weren’t there yet.

Today, especially after the events of the week, it’s very appropriate to look at a second lesson they learned: as the body of Christ, they had a “home away from home.” After what many refer to as the birth of the New Testament church in Acts 2:1-41, verse 42 shows the essence of what being a “home” for one another—what “doing church”—was all about.

For followers of Christ, heaven is indeed our ultimate “home.” We’re not home yet, but it’s important to realize that we are not left to helplessly try to figure things out on our own or passively live with our heads in a religious bubble until we get there. During this in-between time—filled with a lot of hardship, pain and uncertainty—we have a home away from home, to which we are to devote ourselves. It’s called the church—an “outpost of heaven,” in Augustine’s words.

The authentic church is the body of Christ, the community of those who have been called out of the desert of condemnation and hopelessness, who have been placed in a dynamic oasis of grace through Jesus Christ. It’s an oasis in which I live and from which I minister in a thirsty world. But I must never forget that this oasis is not a stagnant place, nor a private place in which I am the only resident.

In the midst of a tragedy of any sort, but especially one of the magnitude of the terrorist attacks of this past week, it is vital that we not isolate ourselves from each other. Instead we must come together and relate with God and with one another. We are to be a “home away from home” for each other.

Even though we are not “home” yet, church is our home away from home, because within the community of Christ’s followers we enjoy at least two essential privileges:

1. _____ from our Heavenly Father
 (“the apostles’ teaching”)

2. _____ with our spiritual Family
 (“fellowship, the breaking of bread and prayer”)