

Bound Together **[Deeper Sheet 5.31.09]**

Read Acts 2

Imagine it. There's a large gathering. One of the apostles is giving a benediction. There are children screaming from the back of the room. A throng of overjoyed believers is dropping money and possessions into the communal purse. Others are counting money out of the purse. Some people are grinning from ear to ear. Some are weeping. Someone has passed out and is being attended to by a small group of people. And everyone is talking at the same time. It sounds like chaos, and yet it isn't chaotic at all because everyone seems to understand what is going on. They seem to possess a oneness of spirit. They possess a oneness of possessions and take their meals together, breaking bread from day to day. Everyone has enough bread.

Bread dominates public consciousness. The human implications of a lack of bread are often outrageous. Life expectancy in Somalia is 48 years. 33% of children under the age of five are malnourished. The annual household income is around \$650 a year. Is it any surprise, then, that piracy flourishes off the Somalian coast? Or that some people regard the pirates as heroes? When they succeed, there is bread. Yet at the same time, a large corporation recently received a bailout and then sent its executives to an expensive resort. People were furious. Too much bread and not enough—how can the two exist side by side? And what, if anything, can be done about it? The question has been around as long as bread. But the believers in Acts 2 seem to have found an adequate response: They began reorienting how they saw their lives and how they managed their bread.

The language of Acts 2 suggests that what was happening was more than just a mysterious social phenomenon. The believers were devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching. In Greek, the word *devotion* means doing something full-time. It has to do with full and complete commitment. That commitment was the essence of the fellowship of the believers. Fellowship, in Greek, is "*koinonia*" and has to do with the believers' shared commitment to taking care of one another's needs. The breaking of bread points back to Jesus' breaking of bread with his disciples. We're meant to see Jesus' sacrifice and ask ourselves "How can we do anything less than sacrifice for each other?"

Reorienting how we see our lives and manage our bread is about transformation of the heart. Everything ultimately belongs to God. But transformation doesn't stop with a heart changed toward God; it continues to a heart also changed toward others. Those who have and those who have not are bound together because their hearts have been utterly and completely transformed. When we're no longer consumed with anxiety and fear, we have the energy to love those around us. In fact, verse forty-six describes the people as having "glad and sincere hearts"—*glad*, literally meaning, "much leaping," and *sincere*, literally meaning "without a stone". Some people are leaping with joy. Others are limping along. What happens when those people are bound together? What kind of world does that lead to? Imagine that.

What words would you use to describe the gathering of believers in Acts 2? Have you ever found yourself in a similar kind of gathering?

How does understanding that everything belongs to God change the way you see your stuff?

What keeps you from being, like the believers in this passage, fully devoted and committed to other people?

How is what the believers do in this passage more than just giving money to people who need it?