

The Difference Between Hay & Straw

Lessons From the Ranch

Acts 2:42-46

Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. .. All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵Selling 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, ⁴⁷praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Introduction

I. Key elements for spiritual growth

- A. Last week: Surrender
 - 1. Wesley Covenant prayer (say it every day for rest of series)
 - 2. When was best time to plant a tree?
- B. This week: Fellowship
 - 1. What is the difference between Hay and Straw?
 - 2. Hay has nutrient and seed; is for feeding and growing.
 - 3. Straw is stalk, used for bedding and comfort

II. What kind of church are we?

- A. A church of straw
 - 1. Even the first little pig taught us you can't build a house of straw or the big bad wolf will huff and puff and blow it down!
 - 2. You've heard of a "straw man" argument
- B. A church of hay
 - 1. Are we a church of straw or hay?
 - 2. A church built for comfort...or for feeding?
- C. The Difference Between Hay and Straw: Growth
 - 1. The 5-10-Link rule

III. The New Testament Church

- 1. Devoted to teaching and to fellowship
- 2. Breaking of bread and to prayer
- 3. Cared for one another
- 4. Big gatherings in temple; small groups in homes
- 5. "And the Lord added to their number"... growth

Conclusion: "I am the vine; you are the branches. John 15:1

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Monday - Spiritual growth requires biblical knowledge. Pray today for our students who start school in search of knowledge...and their teachers! The Bible speaks often about knowledge. Knowledge of God is the greatest knowledge (Prov. 9:10) and is the chief duty of humankind (Hos. 6:6). This knowledge of God is not simply theoretical or factual knowledge; it includes experiencing the reality of God in one's life (compare Phil. 3:10) and living one's life in a manner that shows a respect for the power and majesty of God (compare Jer. 22:15-16).

Tuesday - In the New Testament one knows God through a knowledge of Jesus Christ (John 8:19; Col. 2:2-3). If you haven't already signed up for a bible study this fall, get on line and do it now. *Disciple Bible Study* and *Alpha* are long-term classes (approximately 34 weeks) and are in a small group setting...great for making long-lasting friends and digging deeper into the Word of God! You will see many other short-term bible studies available aimed to meet your schedule and spiritual needs. The apostle Paul closely connected knowledge to faith. Knowledge gives direction, conviction, and assurance to faith (2 Cor. 4:14).

Wednesday - Knowledge is a spiritual gift (1 Cor. 12:8) which can grow, increase, be filled, and abound (Phil. 1:9; Col. 1:9-10; 2 Cor. 8:7). It consists in having a better understanding of God's will in the ethical sense (Col. 1:9-10; Phil. 1:9), of knowing that God desires to save people (Eph. 1:8-9), and of having a deeper insight into God's will given in Christ (Eph. 1:17; 3:18-19). But though Paul recognized the importance of knowledge, he also knew that it could be a divisive factor in churches such as at Rome and Corinth where some Christians claimed to be more spiritual because of their knowledge of spiritual matters (Rom. 14:1-15:6; 1 Cor. 8:1-13).

Thursday - Paul argued that knowledge *puffs up*, but love *builds up*, and the knowledge exercised by the "strong" in faith could cause the "weak" in faith to go against their Christian conscience and lead to their spiritual ruin. Knowledge can be misused (1 Cor. 8). **Love is more important than knowledge (1 Cor. 13)**, yet knowledge is still a gift, necessary for Christian teaching (1 Cor. 14:6) and for Christian growth toward a mature faith (1 Cor. 8:7; 2 Pet. 1:5-6; 3:18). "Love" is truly experienced in a home-based small group. Here at Trietsch they are called LIFT (Living In Faith Together) Groups. Contact the church or go to the Connection Center to get in one – you'll love it! Remember – knowledge is to strengthen your faith; not to show off your 'smarts'!

Friday - Look at your notes from last Sunday's sermon. Remember that as well as knowledge, spiritual growth requires *fellowship*. It is too hard to do it alone, and that's why we have the church, *Acts 2:42-46*. It is also why Jesus used the metaphor of the 'vine and the branches' *John 15* ... there is just something about being "connected," in Christian Fellowship. Look over the "Connection Center" information next Sunday and find ways you and your family can grow spiritually...together! It will really help you to sign up for *Class 101* to learn more about the covenant which 'connects us all' at Trietsch.