

**Sermon Study Guide Based on
Pastor Glen Weber's Message of August 9, 2009
"Homothumaden – In One Accord"**

[In today's message, we're going to look at one word – homothumaden that can bring great inspiration and meaning to us as we function collectively as the Church of Jesus Christ.]

[Topics: One Accord; One Passion; Unity; Bonded Together; Holy Spirit]

Excerpt: In Spokane, WA, where Pastor Glen pastored, there is a Presbyterian College called Whitworth College now a university located there. Once a month the Professor of Theology, from Whitworth would give a Bible study breakfast for pastors. He was an amazing man. He would stand up there and read from his Greek Bible and translated it into English as he went. This sermon comes out of one of his Bible studies, because it has a lot of meaning for us.

Now we have some great words in the faith – redemption, Savior, salvation, sanctification, justification, etc. Most of these are big theological words, which we may or may not have all the depths of understanding about.

But there are other words that have become so common in our culture that we don't even translate them. We use the Greek or Hebrew word. For example, *agape*, which we all know means love. *Shalom*, which means peace unto you. And *koinonia*, which means fellowship. *Abba* is another one. So we have these words have become part of our culture.

Now knowing words doesn't necessarily mean we know their meaning. Hebrew scholars throughout the years haven't understood the Old Testament. In fact, many Hebrew scholars at universities are actually atheists. The same is true in some Christian universities. They know the Greek very well, but they don't believe in God. To understand what God had in mind in the Scriptures takes inspiration by the Holy Spirit.

Today we want to explore the Greek word *homothumadon* and what that means to us. It comes from two words – *homo*, which means together or the same. And *thumadon* means wrath or more appropriately passion. So this is a word that expresses – together in passion. Where we have the same passion.

It's used 12 times in the New Testament; 11 times in the book of Acts and once in Romans. And it talks about the church and how the church connects together. Pastor Glen believes this is not only relevant to our congregation but also to all the churches within the body of Christ. Pastor Glen believes that God is doing something at this time that is different what has happened 20 years and before.

Before, pastors of different denominations didn't get together too often. And when they did, they didn't talk about theology or pray together except for an opening prayer. Over time, that's begun to change. A huge step forward happened in February of 1976 when Promise Keepers called together 17,000 pastors to Orlando, FL and had them participate in a two-day

worship service. That began to transform pastors because they suddenly realized that there are other people here, who love Jesus just like I do, but they love him differently than I do, and show that love differently than I do.

Now in the King James Version, *homothumadon* is translated “in one accord.” That is what God is doing in his church today. He’s drawing people together and churches together – not to become one gigantic conglomerate. But we come together to co-operate.

Many times in the past, pastors would stand up and preach against the church down the street. They’d criticize and tell what’s wrong with the church down the street. Pastor Glen recounted a three-day prayer meeting with various pastors that he took part in and at the end of the meeting one of the pastors began crying.

We asked him if everything was OK? And he said, “Everything’s not OK. After spending three says with you guys, I don’t know what to preach about when I go home, because all I’ve ever preached is what’s wrong all of with you. I thought you were the enemy. But I found out here you’re not the enemy. So I don’t know what I’ll preach about.” Now interestingly, the pastor was from the Church of God, Anderson, which is a denomination that was devoted to bring churches together. How ironic.

So churches weren’t in one accord. And various pastors began to work together and pray together in order to work together “in one accord.” Or as one translation says “with one heart.” Another one says “unanimously.”

Now that doesn’t mean we agree with every single doctrine with each other. Baptists still won’t speak in tongues, in most cases. And Pentecostals will. And that’s OK. But can we all at least come together to have one heart towards Jesus.

As a fellowship we need to participate in some of these things with other churches. We must understand that if we’re not part of the body of Christ in this community, we are wrong. We have to be a part of the body of what Jesus is doing in this community.

During these past few years and especially at last year’s denominational conference, Dan Rodgers went around saying, “We need to look and see what Jesus is doing in our community, and we need to join what he is doing.” Jesus is doing it with his church and so we need to join into that and be a part of that. Our congregation needs to have that kind of heart. So we need to ask, “How can we connect with others?”

That’s why on Saturday, August 29th, New Hope will have a booth at the Rose Bowl to co-operate with other churches and numerous government departments and say, “How can we make a difference in people’s lives?”

Now in the first chapter of Acts, you all know the story. Jesus has been resurrected, has spent 40 days with his disciples and then ascends into heaven. The disciples are left there and told to wait. And so they’ve been waiting for around 10 days.

Acts 1:14, "They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers." The phrase “joined together” is translated from the word *homothumadon*. They came together in one passion. They came

together in one heart in prayer. Prayer is something that really bonds us together and knits our hearts together.

And so Jesus' disciples and closest followers were crying out to Jesus asking him why are we waiting? What are they waiting for? And then when we go over to **Acts 2:1** we read, "**When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together (homothumadon) in one place.**" Yes, they were all bound together in one accord.

And all of sudden the sky opens up and tongues of fire come down from heaven and they begin to speak in foreign languages. All kinds of things happened as God poured out his power on the church. It was an amazing outpouring of the Spirit of God.

Later on in chapter 2 Peter gives his sermon. And at the end of the chapter, it says the believers did four things. What are those four things? They broke bread together, they fellowshiped, they prayed and they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching.

Acts 2:46-47, "Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts." It's interesting that when Jesus was here on the earth, he and his disciples only went to the temple a couple of times. Jesus went in and kicked out the money-changers, etc. Jesus didn't hang out much at the temple. But now believers are hanging out in the temple courts with this one passion of being bonded and unified together as a group in Christ.

Now we can come together and sit in this room and be 150 individuals doing our own thing and then go home. Or we can come in and become one in passion, one in heart. Now it's possible for someone to come in and be completely lonely and cut off even in our midst. We need to learn how to connect with others in that *homothumadon* mode that God is building into us.

Now we've been learning more about how the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are bonded in what we call this perichoretic union. The union that is so intertwined that you can't separate Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They are completely working together in this total unity and total passion that they have. And now we're talking about how God is sharing that with the church today and bringing us into that unity and passion like he did the early church.

Pastor Glen believes that we need to have a vision where we all together see what God wants us to do and how we connect together. It was amazing for Pastor Glen to see the teens and young people at the conference out in Glendora these past two days. They had such passion and such heart talking about how they can make a difference in the world for God and how God is working in their lives. It's exciting to listen to these 15 to 25 year olds talk this way.

In Acts 4 we see how Peter and John get arrested and were dragged before the Sanhedrin. But they were let go and we see that the brethren were paying for them together in a praying meeting.

Acts 4:23, "On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. 24) When they heard this, they raised their voices together (homothumadon) in prayer to God."

In the original Greek, it's not "they raised their voices." It's "they raised their voice." God heard this congregation of people praying together as one voice. It was heard as one voice because they were so bonded together, they were so connected together that they were praying together as one.

Isn't that awesome? Wouldn't it be wonderful if God heard one voice from the church in America? Instead of all these voices that are bickering and quarreling and putting each other down?

Pastor Glen was in a meeting with Ted Haggard as he was talking about the churches. And he said, "You guys compete with each other all the time. You're not on the same team. Let me prove it. Bring me the yellow pages."

They brought him the yellow pages and he starts reading the various church ads. The he read the lawyer's ads. And then he said, "I can't tell the difference between church ads and lawyer's ads. Everyone is competing to get each other's business. 'We've got the best worship'; 'we've got the best children's church' read these ads."

And then he said, "I notice something interesting. Nobody mentions Jesus in these ads. How come we're not all lifting up Jesus together? Instead, we're promoting what we have."

Acts 5:12, "The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together (*homothumadon*) in Solomon's Colonnade."

Here again we see that the believers were bonded together with one heart and one passion. And as we come together, Pastor Glen hopes that we make sure that we are connecting with one another and going into a deeper level of sharing our lives with one another. That will help us to stand together and move forward in the same vision of our congregation.

In Acts 8, we see that Philip went out to Samaria to preach the word because of persecution in Jerusalem. **Acts 8:4, "Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. 5) Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there. 6) When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said."**

They came into one understanding with him. Philip's message drew their hearts together. They began to be connected. That was church. They came into *koinonia* with one another.

At summer camp a few weeks ago, it was amazing to watch a bunch of kids, who've never been to any church of any kind, start to become of one heart after two or three days of exposure to God centered camp life. By the end of seven days, you can't tell who was church or unchurch because they've been drawn into that Spirit of oneness.

That's what church is supposed to be. We draw each other in. We reach out to one another. And we connect with one another. It's like our VBS program that's going on right now. We draw in those kids who are unchurch, love on them, and show them what God is doing.

Now the church hasn't always been that way. Has anyone read first Corinthians? Paul starts his letter by saying that you people have problems. And what was their problem? They were

divided. They weren't walking in this *homothumadon*. They weren't walking with one heart. They were lined up with various teachers. They were divided over spiritual gifts and other things. They were all divided. The letter to the Corinthians is a chastisement for them to come into one spirit.

Even today, statistically, many churches go through a split. Churches get divided. Members get all mad with each other. Unfortunately, the greatest way to plant new churches is through division. That's not what God intended. God didn't want the Corinthians bickering and quarreling over every little thing.

In Romans 14, Paul is exhorting them to get along. He said that he understood that some of them honored one day. And some think they ought to keep a holy day or a new moon, while others didn't. He said that was OK. He said that they shouldn't judge each other. It's the same thing with eating or not eating certain foods. That's OK, he said; just don't judge each other.

Romans 15:5, "May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus." You see, a spirit of *homothumadon* is not something we can work up ourselves. It's something God puts on our heart. That's why pastor Glen thought it was important to preach on this today. So that in our heart we get a stirring to be bonded with others. We need to ask ourselves, "How much am I in one passion with the people around me?"

Can you pray for other churches as you drive by their building? And pray that God would genuinely work in their church? That God would bless them? When you see a VBS sign, do you pray that God will move in that church? When you see a church is having a special service, do you pray for them and ask God to bless them, because we have that one Spirit in the body of Christ. Just don't just pray for New Hope.

We should have that unity of Spirit as we follow Jesus Christ. You've heard the description of a hub of an old wagon wheel. Every spoke that goes to the hub at the middle gets closer to each other. As every spoke goes towards Jesus, we all come closer together, don't we? We become more bonded.

You noticed when Katrina came up today to play the flute, what happened? Tuning. Cella, her accompanist at the piano, hit a note and Katrina tuned her flute. Now those of you who go to a symphony concert, what happens there? Tuning!

The first chair violinist comes out and gives the other strings a note. And then what happens? What sounds like chaos happens. They all tune in the middle of a lot of discordant sounds. Before long, there is silence, because now every one has their instruments tuned to first violinist.

Then the conductor stands up and the first notes of the concert sound beautiful, because they all tuned to the same note. That's kind of what this is talking about. Chuck Swindoll used this analogy. He said you could put 100 pianos in a room and tune each one of them to the same tuning fork. You don't have to tune them to each other. And when all the pianists sit down to play, all 100 pianos will be in tune.

And in a sense that's what we're all doing. We are tuning to the Holy Spirit to follow Jesus. We tune our life to him. But we do it in community. We can't do that very well all by ourselves. That's because we need to be bonded together.

6) "so that with one heart (*homothumadon*) and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." So that with oneness of feeling we will give glory to Jesus. One translation of verse 6 says that we should be unanimous as we glorify God. One of the reasons the church hasn't given glory to Jesus and as a result we're not impacting our culture any more or very little is because we have not been tuned to Jesus. We've been tuned to our denominational differences and how we are who we are, instead of saying who we are in Jesus Christ.

We need to think about what we have in common with other churches, not how different are we. We don't have to emphasize our differences. We need to emphasize Jesus Christ and what he's doing within us.

Agape is a word developed by Christians. It was not a common word in the Greek until the church came along. Homothumadon is a word that goes back to 300 BC. Demosthenes used the word when trying to get people in southern Greece to come together against the attack of Philip of Macedon.

He wanted them to meet in homothumadon – with one heart and with one passion to fight against their enemy. So it was originally a military word. It's also not a sociological word where people all kind of love each other and feel good about each other. No, it's a word that comes outside of us. It comes from God pouring it into us.

It's from that relationship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, that intertwining of thought and action where they have one passion, one voice. They always speak with one voice. The Holy Spirit doesn't say something different than what the Father says. And they are offering that *homothumaden* into the church through the Holy Spirit.

So in Acts 15, you have this huge division. And all the leaders of the church come together to talk about it. **Acts 15:2, "This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them."** And even Barnabas, often referred to as Mr. Encouragement, seemed to be a little ticked off about what was happening.

You can imagine the first couple of hours of that conference were very, very interesting. One side is promoting the Old Covenant. And Paul and Barnabas are saying we should promote grace. We no longer have to do those things any more. There was a sharp dispute going on. There were probably some raised voices.

Then Peter gets up and does the presentation, not Paul. He's supposedly the Old Covenant guy. He stands up and says, "You know what? I met this guy Cornelius and the Holy Spirit came on him. God has opened the door to the Gentiles. And so we don't have to do those Old Covenant things anymore. It's by faith now."

And then James, the head pastor of the Jerusalem congregation, states the decision that they are going to make. He said, "We just going to ask that the Gentiles don't eat things strangled, avoid blood and a few other basic things." Then we come to verse 25, where James is writing a letter to the churches.

25) "So we all agreed (*homothumaden*) to choose some men and send them to you with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul." James said that they all agreed. They came to *homothumaden*. They came to agreement in one heartfelt passion. Now isn't that interesting? Twenty-five verses before, it said they were in sharp dispute. And in the end, they have come to one heart and one passion.

Who in our lives that we've been in sharp dispute with do we need to come to one heart and one passion with? So who do we need to reconcile with?

26) " – men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." So James is saying that they are going to send out these men to spread the word that the apostles have come into agreement about this important issue. That was the turning point for the church. The church went out into the Gentile world in a greater way and they didn't have to teach them Judaism like keeping the Sabbath, etc.

Only if our denomination in 1995 had come into one heart before we moved forward. Unfortunately, we still have a lot of people who aren't of one heart. They still haven't chosen to say, "Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe I need to come into one heart in agreement of the same topic that they did back in Jerusalem. Maybe I need to accept that God changed the rules."

Now verse 28 is one of the most powerful verses in the Bible. **28) "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements:"**

How did they come to *homothumaden*? How did they come to one spirit, one heart, one passion? They all lined up with the Holy Spirit and prayed and asked him, "What are you saying?" – not what I think, not what do I like or feel good about, but what are you saying Holy Spirit?"

When we line ourselves up with the Holy Spirit, it's like tuning all those 100 pianos to that one tuning fork, isn't it? Like the first violinist, the Holy Spirit says here's the note. And then we should all tune to that note.

The problem is we, too often, tune to our own note. We have our opinion of how things should be. Instead of tuning to the note, we hang on to our note. And if we do that in an orchestra, pretty soon the conductor will say that you're out of here, because you're not tuned to the rest of us.

Homothumaden is Jesus sharing his relationship and life in the Trinity, as Son of God, son of man with us. He's sharing that back down through the church, so that we are truly the body of Christ – so that we will have the same passion as Jesus.

So that when people see us, hopefully they see Jesus. The "us" is not just those of us sitting here today but the whole Christian community. The Christians across America and the Christians across the world should be standing up as one voice, one body, one connection and saying, "We represent Jesus."

If we did that, then people would say, "Wow, I can look at one of you and you represent Jesus. You may not believe exactly the same thing, but you represent Jesus." Part of our

goal as a congregation is to connect with them. We need to bring new people into that *homothumadon* to where they become of that same passion we have.

Pastor Glen challenges us to ask God to draw us in. When we start muttering under our breathe about something, we need to ask is that the Holy Spirit or is that me guiding my thoughts? We need to ask, "Are we out of tune?"

Do we need to do some tuning and listen to the Holy Spirit? If we listen to the Holy Spirit, he will lead us to where we are perfectly tuned. Pastor Glen's goal is that even though we are many people, that we collectively lift up our voices to God as one voice. That we have one sound coming out of us, one unity, one passion that God offers us. That's really what it's all about.

Are we 150 people in this room? Or are we *homothumadon*? Allow God to flow in you.

Key Scripture: Acts 1:14, "They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers."

General Group Question: How would you explain the concept of *homothumadon*? Why is it important?

Additional questions for the entire group or in groups of two or three of the same gender (15-20 minutes). If appropriate, please pray for each other's needs afterwards.

1. How do members become in one accord with each other and with the church?
2. Why is it important for churches of various denominations to be in *homothumadon*?
3. What was the problem at the church in Corinth? What was the remedy?
4. Is the spirit of *homothumadon* something we can work up ourselves or is it something God puts on our hearts? Briefly explain your answer.
5. How would you explain to someone the analogy of tuning numerous pianos to one tuning fork in light of the concept of *homothumadon*?
6. What was so remarkable about the Jerusalem conference described in Acts 15?
7. How can you personally become better in tune with the Holy Spirit?