

Acts 2:42-47 | And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. <sup>43</sup> And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. <sup>44</sup> And all who believed were together and had all things in common. <sup>45</sup> And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. <sup>46</sup> And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, <sup>47</sup> praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

## Acts 2:42-47 | The Fellowship of Believers

This is an idyllic picture of the early church. I know we all want this. But it is such an ideal it sounds like its from another planet. Certainly another time. It's quaint isn't it? Like pictures of our parents in Camaros they bought for \$3,000. Good for them. I'll never experience anything like that.

I understand that this is an idyllic description of the early church. And that our tendency might be to right it off as merely good for them. But if we deny the ideals of scripture we are likely incorporating some other ideal. A gut response to this scripture is to wriggle our way out of it. Yes that's one way to do church. Perhaps it would help us see how ideal this picture of church is by hearing another ideal on offer.

"The most likely outcome is that AI and robots make everyone wealthy. In fact, far wealthier than the richest person on Earth. By this, I mean that people will have access to everything from medical care that is super human to games that are far more fun than what exists today." - Elon Musk

This is the ideal we are in a trancelike dive towards, its each of us totally isolated in our digital consumption pods as we're harvested by the machine for data on how we can be more satisfied in our most base desires by our robot slaves. Perpetual 2020. But I don't want to be a fool about this, the games will be far more fun than what exists today. Now that we can see both, I want to plainly recognize that every part of me that doesn't desire the ideal given in scriptures is foolish.

If you've been in church you've heard sermons on this text before. This is an easy pummel text for a pastor. I can take this and say, see you're not praying enough, see your not giving enough, see you're not evangelizing enough. That's not my goal. My goal this morning is just to help us actually want this and hate the things that take it from us.

### 1. Devotion

Acts 2:42 | And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

First the 3000 converts from Pentecost were devoted to four things. The teaching of the apostles, fellowship, breaking of the bread, and the prayers.

They are devoted. That means they are intentionally seeking these things out and they are not missing out on them when they are happening. These things take priority in their lives. If you are devoted to something it means other things don't happen. They would utter unthinkable phrases only reserved for the most saintly among us such as, "I can't make it I've got church."

We must recognize that the awe and wonder they get to participate in together does not merely happen to them but it flows from their devotion. If it didn't flow from their desire for it they wouldn't even like it when they got it. It's all a bit extroverted isn't it? In order to participate in the infinite satisfaction chamber you basically have to do nothing. It requires zero devotion. Of course this is trick, because later on you find out it required absolute devotion. Christianity however is not a trick. I do not get you to commit to one price on the floor and then take you back to the finance office to make four basis points. I tell you the cost upfront. This requires your devotion. You *pay* attention.

So devotion to what?

1. Apostles teaching: Just what Peter had explained to them at their conversion. God has made him both Lord and Christ this Jesus whom you crucified. You're a sinner, Jesus forgives you, repent, and he forgives you, and you become one with Christ. A member of his body. Now we learn to obey all that he commanded us as we are made disciples of Christ.
2. Fellowship: We are devoted to gathering together with one another. We do not forsake our own assembling together as is the habit of some but we consider how we are to stir one another toward love and good works.
3. The Breaking of Bread: This is not just eating together. This is the Lord's supper. Because it is not just the breaking of bread, it is the breaking of *the* bread. We gather together under word and sacrament.
4. The Prayers: This means they are praying together. They are praying *the* prayers. The prayers our Lord taught us to pray, and lifting up their praise for his grace and seeking his mercy for them and the body they have been formed into.

You guys, this is just church. They hear the authoritative teaching of the word. They fellowship together. They receive the Lord's supper. They pray. You see, these things are not far from you!

Acts 2:43 | And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.

Every soul was filled with awe. And many signs and wonders were being done through the apostles. Because Jesus is continuing his ministry through the apostles themselves. You'll notice this as the book goes on. The apostles will go out and do the very things that Jesus did. They will heal the sick and proclaim the kingdom of God. And they will be persecuted by the very people who Jesus was persecuted by. Jesus is establishing the authority of his church as he lays down the foundation through the apostles whom he chose to bear witness to him.

## 5. Generosity

Acts 2:44-45 | And all who believed were together and had all things in common. <sup>45</sup> And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.

From this devotion and awe at the signs and wonders they are witnessing their relationship to each other and to their possessions is completely transformed. We'll learn that people were selling plots of land in order to give to the church to be distributed to those among them who had need. This means that they had their relationship to their own future completely transformed. They were united as a family is united.

The homeless crisis is obviously a family crisis. But who they are in Christ had so fundamentally reoriented their relationship to one another that they treated each other as brothers and sisters. Their problems became each others problems. It must be said this is not by compulsion. If the giving is by compulsion it is not giving. If the Giving is the giving of other people's money it is not generosity. There is no generosity of spirit in voting for a higher tax to redistribute other peoples wealth. There could be some sort of prudence in it, but it is not generosity.

A family has a floor that they will not allow a family member to fall beneath. Its not articulated but its the reality. And our church has a floor that you will not be able to fall beneath as a member of our church. We must otherwise who are we? We take care of one another. The early church was saying I'll go all in on this. Now these folks were likely a part of synagogues together, but the wonder of what they'd seen meant they were going to invest in this fully. These are all free will offerings.

Acts 2:46-47 | And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, <sup>47</sup> praising God and having favor with all the people.

They went to church and they gave. But look how this becomes a whole of life training. They attend the temple, and they break bread in their homes. and receive their food with glad and generous hearts. Now people breaking bread in their homes is not really noteworthy. But don't you see, what they practiced in church they live out together in their

homes. The hearts they cultivated in fellowship they bring into their own homes. There is worship in the church and family worship in the home.

You see they have crossed over the Red Sea and they receive manna from heaven. They have crossed over the Jordan and the manna stops because they are eating the fruit of the land that God had given them. Their ordinary meals at home are no longer ordinary meals. Their glorious times of fellowship with one another and their families. They praised God and had favor with all people because the Lord had so graciously blessed them.

Yes this picture of the church is glorious and on first reading might seem so far away. But don't you see it is not far away at all. It's going to church, giving generously and meals in your home. This is deeply humane. I don't know if it promises games that are way more fun than the ones that exist today... but.

Look this is happening here. Is it fully realized? No but it is happening. And this is our best witness. This type of fellowship was newsworthy in 1st century Jerusalem. They're lives weren't centrifuges that flung them away from one another. How much more newsworthy is it now. The Lord attends this and adds people to it.

## 6. Expansion

Acts 2:47 | And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

The Lord is the one who grows his church. Jesus is still doing this. He is the one adding to their number. This is like a center of gravity that pulls people in as they see how rehumanizing the Lordship of Jesus Christ is. The promise of a godless utopia of unlimited "freedom" to have all our base needs met has given us pornography and fast food.

The kingdom must grow. This glorious beginning will lead to expansion. And expansion will lead to opposition, very quickly, and in the same way that Christ faced opposition. This is no fantasy land. But without this center of awe and joy together in worship in church and in our homes, and wondrous generosity the church would have faced the opposition and simply retreated. Instead the church will grow in the midst of opposition.

Satan wants you alone. He wants you scared. He wants you hoarding. He certainly doesn't want you with your brothers and sisters in Christ and he definitely doesn't want you to bring your kids. Look at what the gospel makes. It's edenic. And it is not far from each one of us. But it won't happen to us. We must be devoted.