

11. The Book of Acts—2:42-45

(7/8/26)

We are currently in the third major section of chapter 2 which runs from verses 42-47, a section we're calling—**“The Practice of the Early Church”**:

Acts 2:42 (NKJV)

⁴² And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

This section gives us the *‘blueprint’* or pattern for church life—and I believe the main reason the early church was so strong and effective—it kept the main thing the main thing!

They didn't allow themselves to get distracted from the basics and lose their focus as to what Jesus called them to be and do.

“And they continued steadfastly...”—they did other things too, like the food pantry ministry—but these were the pillars upon which their church was built.

Acts 2:42 (NKJV)

⁴² And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship...

2. Fellowship—v.42

The Greek word here is “koinonia.”

It's a word we really don't have an English equivalent for—it's a word that basically means *‘having things in common’*—a word that is most frequently translated “fellowship” in the N.T.

Okay, but what does that look like in real life?

It's a word that describes the interaction of believers with one another in the early Church—in other words, it speaks of them sharing their lives and possessions with each other.

It speaks of their unity, their oneness—the intimacy they had and the love they shared practically with one another.

It describes lives that were interconnected with each other—lives that were dependent on one another.

Koinonia has a variant closely related to it, *koinonikos*, which means “generous.”

Those who are ‘in Christ’ (saved) have God’s nature within them—which means that because God by nature is generous so are His people generous with those around them.

We see this exemplified in v.44-45 and again in Acts 4:32-35—

Acts 2:44-45 (NKJV)

⁴⁴ Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, ⁴⁵ and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.

Acts 4:32, 34-35 (NKJV)

³² Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common...

³⁴ Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, ³⁵ and laid *them* at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.

Some teach from these verses that the early church practiced a form of Communism—that they lived a communal lifestyle and so should we live this way as Christians today.

Those early believers didn't practice Communism, they practiced 'commonism'—and there's a big difference.

Communism says: *"What's yours is mine—I'll take it"*; "Commonism" says: *"What's mine is yours—I'll share it."*

So, when we talk about fellowship—the Bible lifts up fellowship as being one with each other, as in really getting to know people in your church to the point where you know who they are and what they're going thru in their lives.

Or as many pastors today like to refer to it—the church needs to be a community.

That's important if we're going to fulfill what God has commanded us in His Word on this subject—*"Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love...distributing to the needs of the saints...Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another..."* (Romans 12:10, 13, 15)

One thing is for sure—you can't reach this level of closeness and intimacy if people don't spend time with each other, getting to know one another.

These early Christians met with each other throughout the week from house to house (Acts 2:46)—they ate together, they worked together, their lives were so closely intertwined with each other that when someone had a need the others knew about it and moved to meet that need.

It is impossible to achieve this level of intimacy with other believers from just Sunday morning service—you have to go deeper.

That's why we started the small-group ministry to do this very thing.

We strongly encourage you to be a part of a small-group—it is the best way to get to know people and reach a biblical level of fellowship where you can become a part of each other's lives.

Let me say it again, those early believers didn't practice Communism, they practiced 'common-ism.'

How do we know that the early church didn't practice Communism?

Acts 2:44-45 (NKJV)

⁴⁴Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, ⁴⁵and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.

The Greek is literally—“...and they were continually selling their possessions and goods, and were continually dividing them among all...”

In other words, they never just sold everything up front (all at once) and moved in together as some teach.

They still owned their own homes which they met in throughout the week, going from house to house eating together as v.46 tells us.

These possessions they were selling as needs arose were land holdings that individual members owned and extra houses that some owned which were sold to meet the needs of others.

Their sharing was completely *voluntary* (unlike Communism) and motivated by love not by commandment or constraint by the apostles.

Acts 5:4 (NKJV)

⁴"While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control?..."

This confirms that the selling of personal property was no command from God that those early Christians had to follow.

Pastor John MacArthur—

“... God has designed the family to be an independent unit. And that the church is made up of families that are living in a connected but not in a communal environment. Otherwise, when a family entered the church they would cease being a family in the biblical sense and everyone would come under the authority of a few elders which would be a perversion of what God intended the church to be.”

They did take new converts into their homes, but it wasn't a communal situation—so what was going on?

→ Explain the unique situation brought about by the 3,000 out of towners saved on Pentecost.

“Why don't we live this way today as Christians?”

One pastor—

“I suggest to you that we may very well see Christians living this way again, but it won't happen because someone says, “Here's a neat idea. ...” If persecution were to fall upon this country, which it may; if the economy were to collapse, which it might; if things really get tough, which they could, you'll be amazed how quickly and how beautifully the church will come together as it did in the Book of Acts. But until then, it's artificial.”

I want you to compare the kind of fellowship the early church had with what typically passes as fellowship in churches today across America and see how it stacks up.

We have become so independent, disconnected, and so superficial in our relationships with one another—that it has forced Christians to go and seek out counselors outside the church (some of whom aren't even Christians) to have someone to bear their burdens and listen to them share what they're going thru in the way of struggles and fears.

This is not how God designed His Church to function—which is as a family that loves and serves one another—

John 15:9-11 (NKJV)

⁹ "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. ¹⁰ If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. ¹¹ These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and *that* your joy may be full.

John 13:34-35 (NLT)

³⁴ So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. ³⁵ Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."

This new commandment became the heart of a new community—the family of God.

Once we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we are brought into a love relationship with Him and with other Christians that transcends race, geography and socioeconomics and joins us together as a single entity known as the Body of Christ.

In Christ, we have become brothers and sisters—members of a single family.

Ephesians 2:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God [built on His love],

1 John 3:16-18 (NKJV)

¹⁶ By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren. ¹⁷ But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? ¹⁸ My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

The Christian community, otherwise known as the local church, is a place where the love of God, the unity of the saints and the power of the Holy Spirit all come together to become a dynamic force for good—to bring the light and love of Jesus to a lost and dying world.

A single Christian, just like a single soldier, will never be able to defeat the armies of darkness that are amassed against us.

It's only when Christians unite in the power of the Holy Spirit that we will be victorious—even as Jesus promised, "*Against My Church the gates of hell will not prevail.*"

But understand, our strength is in our fellowship as Christian believers—and Satan knows it and is trying his best to keep Christians away from the local church on a regular basis.

Hebrews 10:24-25 (NKJV)

²⁴ And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, ²⁵ not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching [the Day of Christ's return].

We are commanded in Scripture to be in fellowship (koinonia) with other believers in a local church for the purpose of encouraging one another, keeping each other accountable and using our gifts to build up and edify one another in the local church as a whole.

One pastor said this—

“You say, ‘I don’t need koinonia, I’ve been a Christian for fourteen years. I’m as strong and tall as a redwood tree.’ Really? Think about the redwood tree: Redwood trees appear invincible, but in reality, a relatively mild wind can topple one. You see, above the surface, redwoods seem strong, but their root systems are very, very shallow. That is why they always grow in groves. Their strength comes from interlocking their roots with other redwoods.”

The early church was close knit, and it was because they continued steadfastly together in the teaching of the apostles, fellowship, Communion, and prayer (Acts 2:42).

Unfortunately, steadfastness is not a characteristic of many in the church today.

Many believers reflect the attitude of the following letter, purportedly written by a faithful church member—

Dear Pastor,

You often stress the importance of attendance at church. But I think a person has a right to miss now and then. I think every person ought to be excused for the following reasons and the number of days indicated: Christmas (1) Death in the family (3) Anniversary (1) New Years (1) Easter (1) Last day of school (1) July 4th (1) Labor Day (1) First day of school (1) Sleeping late (4) Memorial Day (1) Family reunions (2) Sickness (5) Vacation (3) Business trips (3) Unexpected company (4) Bad weather (6) Time changes (2) TV specials (3) Ball games (5). But you can count on us to be in church on the fourth Sunday of February and the third Sunday in August—unless it’s Leap Year, or we’re otherwise providentially hindered.”

We laugh, but that attitude is becoming more and more prevalent in the local church.

And now it's gotten worse since most churches are streaming their services over the internet.

Yes, it allows those who are sick or recovering from some kind of injury to see the service live—however it also encouraged people to stay home and watch the service on TV because it's easier and will allow them to stay in their PJ's with a cup of coffee in their hand.

And while that's convenient—it's not really biblical long term. (Comment)

But I think probably the main reason that many are staying away from the local church is because they are people who have been hurt, mistreated, ignored or had some other bad experience in a church somewhere which has caused them to get turned off to the idea of church in general and Christian fellowship in particular.

So, they stop coming to church altogether or else they keep going from church to church looking for the perfect church where they will never be hurt again—which doesn't exist.

It reminds me of the story of a man who was shipwrecked by himself on a desert island...(finish)

Sometimes it's not the church—it's us!

Remember, a church is just a group of sinners saved by grace.

Christians are far from perfect but are growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

This unfortunately means that churches aren't free from selfishness, gossip and petty bickering.

Problems and conflicts are bound to happen from time to time—hence the admonition in the N.T. telling us to be patient, loving, and forgiving of one another.

The solution for having a problem free church is easy—get rid of all the people!

But then don't expect to get any work done for the Kingdom:

Proverbs 14:4 (NLT)

⁴ Without oxen a stable stays clean, but you need a strong ox for a large harvest. [Comment]

And if we come together and there's a problem that hinders or even threatens to destroy our fellowship—we are not to bail out and take off, but we are to deal with the conflict or whatever it is that is hindering our fellowship—biblically, humbly, and in love.

Jesus even gave us the guidelines to follow for conflict resolution in Matt.18:15-20.

But we are commanded to labor (work hard) to stay in unity with one another in the local church—even as Paul admonished:

Ephesians 4:1-3 (NKJV)

¹ I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, ² with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, ³ endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

The cross is the key to all fellowship in the Spirit—

Matthew 16:24 (NKJV)

²⁴ Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

Fellowship is both vertical (God) and horizontal (other Christians).

And when you bring the vertical and the horizontal together, they form a cross—which should remind us that it's the cross that makes our fellowship with God and with each other possible.

James Montgomery Boice—

“Fellowship with God and true fellowship with others go together...Some people have said, *“The stronger your vertical fellowship is, the stronger your horizontal fellowship will be.”* If you find yourself out of fellowship with God, you will begin to find yourself out of fellowship with other Christians (especially with your spouse). If you say, *“I don't really like to be with other Christians very much. They all seem to be hypocrites.”* You will begin to drift off. But if you come close to God, you will inevitably find yourself being drawn close to other Christians. And it works the other way, too. If you spend time with other Christians, if you share a great deal with them, that fellowship will help to draw you closer to the Father.”

You say, *“But it's hard for me to make new friends in a church!”*

I understand that but Prov.18:24 says, *“If you want friends you've got to show yourself friendly.”*

If that's how you're still feeling, then listen to the words of this poem—

“Old friends are best, I do agree, but to this fact I'll hold; that everything must first be new before it can be old. That old friend whom you love so much; who's staunch and true and bold, was brand new on the day you met, though now you call him old. So, make new friends each passing day—the years quickly unfold; And new friends whom you make today...you'll soon be calling old.”

I wonder how many dear old friends we'll never know because we didn't make the effort to make them a friend in the first place?

(Mention Dan and Rich setting up chairs every Sunday morning for service)

Jesus told us that loving the brethren (with God's love made possible by close intimate fellowship)—is one of the keys to joy in the Christian life.

Biblical fellowship is not an end in itself, it's connected to a purpose—my spiritual growth to then help others come to know Jesus.

In the past people have asked us to organize special nights in the church where people can get together and '*fellowship*' with one another.

And we have refused because those events tend to stray from a spiritual focus and devolve into talking about politics, or business, sports, or even spreading discord and gossip.

We believe that fellowship in the church needs to revolve around spiritual endeavors (Bible study, marriage study, small group, equipping believers to evangelizing, etc.).

But listen, I'm not saying you can't go out with a Christian brother or sister to eat and talk about politics or sports or some other non-spiritual subject.

You just need to understand at that point you've left the realm of spiritual Christian fellowship and are now simply socializing with each other (not necessarily bad, but not spiritually beneficial either).

I remember reading a book years ago where the author, who was also a pastor, stressed the importance of having at least one older Christian in our lives who would be a source of wisdom, someone who can speak into our lives to challenge us.

The author said that there are basically three kinds of people Christians have contact with:

- *The needy*
- *The nice*
- *The necessary*

He said in ministry we tend to deal with the needy most of the time—those that can drain us of our time, energy and even our joy with their endless stream of problems.

He said the solution is to get recharged by limiting our time with these folks and making sure we also spend a fair amount of time with those older Christians that can build us up and challenge us toward change, progress and growth in our walk with the Lord—those who are necessary for our spiritual development (mentors).

The problem is we minister to the needy but then often only spend time with Christians that are at our own level of maturity—our friends and peers.

These are the people we enjoy being with—they're nice to be around.

And when we're with them, we have a good time getting something to eat, taking in a show or getting coffee.

And because our time with them has been enjoyable and we've talked about spiritual things a bit—we think they have been a benefit to us spiritually when in fact the 'nice' have a neutral effect on us spiritually.

In other words, they don't drain us, but they don't challenge and build into us either—and so they've had a neutral effect on our walk.

Author Warren Wiersbe—

“The word *fellowship* simply means “to have in common.” But true Christian fellowship is really much deeper than sharing coffee and pie, or even enjoying a golf game together. Too often what we think is “fellowship” is really only acquaintanceship or friendship. You cannot have fellowship with someone unless you have something in common; and for Christian fellowship, this means the possessing of eternal life within the heart. Unless a person has trusted Christ as his Savior, he knows nothing of “the fellowship of the Gospel.” In Philippians 2:1, Paul writes about “the fellowship of the Spirit,” because when a person is born again he receives the gift of the Spirit (Rom. 8:9). There is also “the fellowship of His sufferings” (Phil. 3:10). When we share what we have with others, this is also fellowship

So, true Christian fellowship is much more than having a name on a church roll or being present at a meeting. It is possible to be close to people physically and miles away from them spiritually. One of the sources of Christian joy is this fellowship that believers have in Jesus Christ. Paul was in Rome, his friends were miles away in Philippi, but their spiritual fellowship was real and satisfying. [When you have this mindset] you will not complain about circumstances because you know that difficult circumstances will result in the strengthening of the fellowship of the Gospel.”