

17. The Book of Acts—2:43-47

(8/26/26)

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 2:42–43 (NKJV)

⁴² And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. ⁴³ Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

The Greek word translated ‘**fellowship**’ is—*koinonia*.

It's a word we really don't have an English equivalent for—which means we have to use several words in the English to capture the meaning of this one Greek word.

It basically means ‘*having things in common*’—but what does that look like in real life?—

- *It means the sharing of one's life and possessions with another.*
- *It speaks of their unity, their oneness—the intimacy they had and the love they shared.*
- *It describes lives that were interconnected with each other—lives that were dependent on one another.*

Koinonia has a variant that is 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 Acts 2:44-45 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** [a form of koinonia],
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'—which means they shared their possessions with each other *voluntarily* out of love not by constraint or compulsion as is the case with a system like Communism.

So, when we talk about **fellowship**—the Bible lifts up fellowship as being one with each other, the sharing of lives together, 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.

Acts 2:46-47 (NKJV)

⁴⁶ **So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,** ⁴⁷ **praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.**

I think that one of the reasons those first century Christians were so strong and dynamic was because their lives were simple.

Most of them were slaves and as such they didn't have a lot of earthly possessions to distract them from the work of God and the building of His Kingdom.

“And they continued steadfastly...(in a few things)” v.42

1. *The Teaching of the Word*
2. *Fellowship*
3. *The Breaking of Bread (Communion)*
4. *Prayer*

Why go back to the first century to learn how to do church?

What better example to model the church after today than the first century church as recorded in the Book of Acts?

It was Spirit-filled, growing, dynamic, vibrant and full of life—characterized by great joy, love and good works toward one another.

It was the ideal church, and I believe the model for all Christian churches.

One author commenting on Church history had this to say on the subject—

“The most notable thing about the life of the early Christians was their vivid sense of being a people of God, called and set apart...”

The present world was but temporary, and their true life was in the future. Christ was soon to return, and the employments and labors and pleasures of this age were of small concern...

In the everyday life of Christians, the Holy Spirit was present, and all the Christian graces were the fruits. A result of this belief, theirs were not the everyday experiences of ordinary men, but of men lifted out of themselves and transported into a higher sphere.”

“And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” (v.47)

Evangelism was not a ‘direct pillar’ the early church was built upon but more of a *fruit* or a direct result of them living a verse 42 church life.

Now just because it says that “**the Lord added to the church those being saved**”—doesn’t mean they sat back and did nothing.

All it means is that everything they did was done in the power of the Holy Spirit Who was working through them producing fruit—which in this case was people getting saved.

I believe that the modern Church to a large extent has lost its way and has drifted off course.

For centuries sailors navigated their ships by using a single star—the North Star.

In Numbers 24:17, Jesus is referred to as “*the Star that shall come out of Jacob.*”

I believe that if we want to stay on course as Christians and as a church, we need to keep our eyes upon Jesus Who is the Author and Finisher of our faith.

Now having said that, what did Jesus do when He was on the earth? What did He focus on and what did He command us, as His followers, to do after He returned to His Father?

You could sum up the focus of Jesus’ ministry in one word—**people**!

He loved to be with people, to interact with people, and to help people.

What was Jesus most concerned about when it came to people?—their salvation:

Luke 19:10

“...for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

The thought of evangelism scares most Christians to death because they immediately think of going door to door making what salesman call ‘*cold calls*’—which *is* one method.

But what is interesting to me about this is that it doesn’t actually say they went out evangelizing where they went out knocking on doors or doing street evangelism.

I’m not suggesting they didn’t do any direct evangelism—(The Great Commission)

But the text seems to be saying that they simply lived the Christian life with all their heart, loving God and each other—“**and the Lord added to the Church daily those being saved.**”

If I read my Bible correctly it seems like the Holy Spirit is telling us that the greatest and most effective kind of evangelism takes place through the witness of transformed lives.

Matthew 5:14–16 (NKJV)

¹⁴ “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all *who are* in the house. ¹⁶ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

This is what’s called ‘**lifestyle evangelism**’—which refers to opening the door to a person’s heart by being a ‘*living epistle*.’—

2 Corinthians 3:2–3 (NKJV)

² You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; ³ clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, *that is*, of the heart.

Lifestyle evangelism must precede any kind of *verbal* evangelism otherwise people will just label us hypocrites and ignore what we say.

Lifestyle evangelism contains 3 main components—

1. *Transformational Evangelism*
2. *Relational Evangelism*
3. *Ministerial Evangelism*

1. Transformational Evangelism—Luke 19:1-10 (Zaccheus)

This speaks of a life transformed by the power of Jesus Christ where He has delivered you from alcohol, drugs or some other bondage.

People can argue with you about your doctrine—but they can't argue with the fact that what you believe has radically changed your life!

This is a very powerful witness and causes people to take notice.

2. Relational Evangelism—Mark 5:19

Mark 5:19 (NKJV)

However, Jesus did not permit him, but said to him, "Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you."

This speaks of building relationships with people; inviting neighbors over for coffee to get to know them.

If your kids are school age get to know some of their friend's parents—it's a lot easier to share Jesus with a friend than with a stranger.

"O but you don't know my schedule; I just don't have any time." (Use the 'red tags' and 'green tags' illustration—Explain)

3. Ministerial Evangelism—Acts 9:36-39 (Dorcus)

Acts 9:36 (NKJV)

³⁶ At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did.

I have found that simple acts of kindness can go a long way in making a person's heart receptive to the gospel.

Romans 12:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ Therefore *"If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."* ['bring them to repentance']

Along with lifestyle evangelism there is 'verbal evangelism' which also contains 3 components.

1. Testimonial Approach

When people tell me they don't know how to evangelize because they're not very knowledgeable with regard to doctrine, I always tell them to share their testimony.

You don't have to be a 'theologian' to share your testimony with someone and how God has changed your life.

Mark 5:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ However, Jesus did not permit him, but said to him, "Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you."

John 9:25 (NKJV)

²⁵ He answered and said, "Whether He is a sinner *or not* I do not know. One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see."

Paul used this approach 3 times in the book of Acts.

Just share what God has done in your life.

2. Scriptural Approach

One of the easiest and most effective ways to evangelize is by using gospel tracts.

Another way would be to let them read the gospel right out of the Scriptures using the ‘Roman’s Road.’

Romans 3:23 (NKJV)

...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Romans 6:23 (NKJV)

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 5:8 (NKJV)

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 10:9 (NKJV)

that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Romans 10:13 (NKJV)

For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."

Romans 5:1 (NKJV)

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

3. Invitational Approach

If all else fails you could simply invite them to church—to a Bible study or small group, or to our church picnic or women’s Christmas dessert).

Although this wouldn’t work with everybody, it will work with a good number of people.

John 4:29–30 (NKJV)

²⁹ “Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?” ³⁰ Then they went out of the city and came to Him.

The thing that made Jesus so different from the other religious leaders of His day (on a human level), was His compassion—and it was His compassion for people that made Him so appealing and caused people to be so drawn to Him.

Webster's defines *Compassion* as: *sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it.*

It's interesting how differently Jesus saw people in contrast to how others saw them. The scribes and Pharisees saw sinners, prostitutes, tax-collectors—but Jesus saw emptiness, sadness, despair, fear, lost souls that didn't know where to go for help.

Even the disciples didn't see people through Jesus' eyes.

- Jesus saw people—The disciples saw people.
- Jesus saw helpless, hurting sheep without a shepherd—The disciples saw only people.
- Jesus saw a harvest of souls for the Kingdom of Heaven—The disciples saw just lots of people who were a drain on their time and energy.

The difference was seeing through the eyes of the Spirit and not through the eyes of the flesh.

I think that was the biggest reason why Jesus was able to have such compassion for people—it was because He was able to look beyond the outward and into their hearts.

1 Samuel 16:7 (NLT)

⁷ But the Lord said to Samuel, "Don't judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The Lord doesn't see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

Proverbs 14:13 (NLT)

¹³ Laughter can conceal a heavy heart, but when the laughter ends, the grief remains.

Or maybe it's not that a person is always *joking* around but they're unfriendly and rude, the kind of person no one likes to be around—this also could conceal a lot of pain.

The problem is we don't often take the time to consider that; we just make quick judgments instead of taking the time to try to see them through Jesus' eyes—eyes of compassion.

One Christian author related this story—

"I read recently of a teaching hospital that found one of its young resident students had a marvelous effect on children. They responded to him with delight. They would do things for him and yield to his ministrations in a way that they wouldn't do for any other person on the staff. They assigned a nurse to discover what the secret of this young resident was. It wasn't until the second week when she was on night turn that she found out the secret. It was simply this: Every night on his last round he would hug and tuck in every one of the children. It was in that act of compassion, you see, in that act of sympathy, that he made his contact. And it's this--this sympathy, this compassion that belongs to Jesus--that reaches out to us. It's this that draws us to Him more than anything else."

It was Jesus' compassion for people that motivated His ministry to them—even when He was hurting and didn't feel like it—

Matthew 14:10–14 (NLT)

¹⁰ So John was beheaded in the prison, ¹¹ and his head was brought on a tray and given to the girl, who took it to her mother. ¹² Later, John's disciples came for his body and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus what had happened. ¹³ As soon as Jesus heard the news, he left in a boat to a remote area to be alone. But the crowds heard where he was headed and followed on foot from many towns. ¹⁴ Jesus saw the huge crowd as he stepped from the boat, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick.