

**Special Announcement**  
**Michelle Hernandez Memorial Service Next Week**

This week we'll focus on life in the community of early Christians.

## The Early Christian Community

### **Acts 2:42–47**

This week, we'll look more closely at the human aspect of the early church.

In the past two weeks, we focused on the Holy Spirit's role in guiding the direction of the church, but now we'll look at the day-to-day lives of the early Christians following the initial wave of conversions in Acts 2.

Being freshly acquainted with the power of the Holy Spirit and his power in establishing the church, they lived in a way that was informed by the passion inspired by the Spirit.

Understanding the lifestyle of an impassioned church can help us eliminate the distractions of modern complications and see what was (and is) most important.

The primary word defining the attitude of the assembled believers was "devotion."

They were not forced but compelled by desire. The first Christian converts were driven by devotion as well as duty. So often we are wrapped up in the idea that we "have to" read our Bibles, pray, or go to church. The fellowship and attention to the disciples' teachings, however, was something everyone present was eager to do.

# The Fellowship of the Believers

## Acts 2:42-47 ESV

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

This devotion was directed to four main practices: teaching, fellowship, breaking bread, and prayers.

First, they were intent on learning as much as they could about the Christ to whom they were now devoted. As Christ's witnesses, the disciples led the gathered in their learning.

We have weekly bible studies, Mens just started their bible study group, women have Wednesday night. General Thursday night

Second, they focused on the essence of the community's health by fellowshiping together, establishing peace and goodwill (v. 47).

Third, they emphasized the breaking of bread.

This may seem like it's included in the overall category of fellowship, as we'd now think of it. However, the language used in the passage suggests that it was united with the early practice of the Lord's Supper, breaking

bread in light of their new salvation. It was the first practice of the sacraments (or ordinances).

Finally, they devoted themselves to prayer, to fellowship with God himself.

Knowing the core values of an organization helps people within and outside of the organization understand the overall goals and direction. If you look at the website of a church or business, you'll probably find an "About Us" section. This outlines the primary values of the organization. In other words, if every auxiliary function were to shut down, these few items would remain as the most important things to continue.

If we look at these four primary devotions from Acts 2 as the "core values" of a church community, then we see that these are the four most important things a church body can do for internal health.

### **Core Values:**

#### 1. **Apostles' Teaching:**

The believers were committed to learning from the apostles, who were the primary teachers of the Gospel

### **1 Corinthians 12:28 ESV**

28 And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues.

There are reasons we have these sermons, There are reasons why we have bible studies.

How are we supposed to grow if we do not want to learn?

If you want to become a doctor, you have to go to school. As a matter of fact, you have to PAY to learn.

If you want to be a leader in the church, you will have to learn the word, study the word and fellowship.

## 2. **Fellowship**

I had a whole sermon about this last year on how important it is to fellowship.

Fellowship with God is the foundation for fellowship with one another. Sharing your everyday lives is the expression of the life you share in Christ.

### 1 John 1:3 ESV

3 That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

Fellowship with one another is another way we give God the glory.

The trials, the tribulations, the testimonies we have, is not to gloat, is not to be like “I overcame and got this as the reward”. Is the complete opposite.

We fellowship and talk about it to encourage each other, to share wisdom, To share how God helped us by Doing XYZ

## 3. **Breaking of the Bread**

Third, they devoted themselves to the breaking of bread. Nearly all scholars think that this is a reference to celebrating the Lord's Supper.

They didn't just do it once in a while. Remembering Jesus' death was so central to their lives that they did it all the time. But the breaking of bread meant more than that, because verse 46 says that "they broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts."

They didn't just meet together in large gatherings for worship; they also had small group meetings in homes. And eating together was a key part of that, because sharing a meal creates a bond, moves us toward reconciliation, even anticipates the heavenly banquet when we shall all eat and drink with Jesus.

#### 4. **Prayer**

"Every day they continued together in the temple courts,..." joining in the normal times of prayer in the Temple. Every day they worshipped God in prayer and praise. Further, says verse 43, God was obviously working in their midst. "Everyone was filled with awe and many signs and wonders were done by the apostles." Not only did they hear the Word of God every day, but they saw the hand of God regularly.

Anyone can pray and we can pray in many ways. We pray together when we gather for worship. We pray alone at home or at school or while we are doing a task at hand. Prayer is not like asking a genie to grant wishes, rather, prayer is communication with God. Talking to God about what is going on in our lives, our fears, our joys, our pains, our hopes and our dreams. Through prayer, we are drawn closer to God. We are shaped by God.

God wants to be in a relationship with us. And God wants us to be in relationship with one another. As the early Christians did this, they found that they could live this out by sharing what they had with those in need.

For anyone who has wanted to grow physically stronger, the method has always been the same: lift heavy things, and keep doing that for weeks, months, and years. We become stronger only by doing things that are right on the boundary of our abilities again and again, until those boundaries gradually expand.

### **1 Timothy 4:13-16 ESV**

13 Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. 14 Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. 15 Practice these things, immerse yourself in them,[c] so that all may see your progress. 16 Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your

Paul talks about the benefits of physical health and strength. He goes on to say, however, that it is surpassed by the value of spiritual health, which is valuable both now and in the life to come. We must take time to focus on these important “healthy faith exercises” as individuals and as a church, lest we grow spiritually sedentary, useless in the efforts of spiritual toil.

So in just a minute, I’m going to ask you all to close your eyes, so we can have a private moment. But first, look up here at the screens. In just a moment, I’m going to invite you to pray this prayer with me. You can pray quietly, under your breath, or you can sort of repeat my words to God in your mind. Or you could just say in your heart,

Jesus, I want to experience your mercy today. I believe that Jesus died on the cross to pay the price for my sins. I admit I’m a sinner in need of a Savior, and I’m inviting you to be mine right now. Come into my life. Forgive my sin. Live in me as my Leader from now on. I believe you are a God who is rich in mercy.