

Faithful to One Another
Acts 2:42–47

Welcome...

We are in week two of three-part series on Faithfulness. Last week was Faithfulness to God's Word and it did not yet listen to that sermon I would encourage you to go our website cornerstoneca.org or go to YouTube and listen to the sermon entitled Faithful to God's Word.

This week is Faithfulness to One Another. One of the great misconceptions about the Christian life is that we can faithfully follow Jesus Christ largely by ourselves.

Certainly, there are aspects of the Christian life that we practice individually. You should read your Bible by yourself. You should pray privately. You should personally pursue holiness. No one else can repent of your sin for you. No one else can believe for you. No one else can walk in obedience for you.

But the truth is you cannot faithfully live the Christian life by yourself. Because God never intended Christianity to be an individual pursuit. When God saves us, He doesn't merely bring us into a relationship with Himself. He also brings us into a relationship with His people.

Paul says in Romans 12:5: "so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another."

Think about that phrase, "Members one of another."

We belong to Christ, and because we belong to Christ, we belong to one another. And that is what I want us to think about today as we continue our series on Faithfulness. What does it look like to be Faithful to One Another?

Our text today is Acts 2:42–47. Let's read verse 37 thru 47...

The college football season has started. Have you attended a college football game? You are sitting with thousands and thousands of fans in the same stadium.

You are cheering together for the same team.

Maybe even wearing the same team colors.

High fiving people that you perhaps have never met before.

But when the game ends, most people walk away knowing virtually nothing about the people who were sitting around them. You shared an experience. But did not share a life. You are part of a crowd, but not necessarily a community.

And there is a danger that church can become like that.

We can gather in the same building.

Sing the same songs.

Listen to the same sermon.

Shake a few hands.

Talk for a few minutes.

And then go home without really knowing one another.

But that is not the picture of the church we find in the New Testament.

Acts 2 gives us one of the earliest pictures of life in the church. Peter has preached the gospel on the Day of Pentecost. We are told thousands were “pierced to the heart.” They repented, believed, and were baptized. Acts 2:41 tells us: “there were added about three thousand souls.”

Now stop and think about what that means. Three thousand people, most of them strangers to one another only hours earlier, are suddenly united by faith in Jesus Christ. They came from different backgrounds, different regions, different walks of life. And our text immediately tells us what these new Christians did.

Beginning in verse 42, “They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

And then Acts 2 describes what this fellowship looked like.

They worshiped together.

They learned God’s Word together.

They prayed together.

They shared their possessions.

They cared for needs.

They ate together.

They opened their homes.

They praised God together.

They shared their lives.

This wasn’t casual Christianity. Verse 42 says they “were continually devoting themselves.” And that is our subject this morning: Faithful to One Another.

Main Point: Acts 2:42–47 shows four commitments of believers who are faithful to one another so that we might grow together in Christ and display His transforming grace to the world.

Outline

I. Be Devoted to One Another — verses 42–43

II. Care for One Another — verses 44–45

III. Share Life with One Another — verse 46

IV. Display Christ Together — verse 47

My prayer is that by the power of the Holy Spirit we will be genuinely committed to know one another, love one another, encourage one another, pray for one another, and help one another follow Christ. I pray that if you are not a part of one of our Community Groups, you will start this next week and be blessed as well as be a blessing.

I. Be Devoted to One Another

Look at verse 42, “They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

The key phrase is: “continually devoting themselves.”

The Greek word carries the idea of persistence, perseverance, or continuing steadfastly in something. It is the same kind of word used elsewhere of persevering in prayer, of holding fast to something with unwavering commitment. These were not casual commitments. These believers gave themselves to these things. They didn’t dabble. They didn’t sample. They devoted themselves.

Luke identifies four areas of devotion:

The apostles' teaching.

Fellowship.

Breaking bread.

Prayer.

Last week we considered the importance of being faithful to God's Word, so I want to focus especially on the second word, "fellowship." The Greek word is *koinōnia*. Sometimes we use "fellowship" to describe almost any social interaction among Christians. We have coffee together and call it fellowship. We eat lunch and call it fellowship. Those things certainly can be expressions of fellowship. But *koinōnia* means much more. It speaks of sharing, participation, partnership, and having something in common.

And what did these Christians have in common? Jesus Christ. They had been saved by the same Savior. Indwelt by the same Spirit. Baptized into the same body. Committed to the same truth. And headed toward the same eternal home.

Their relationship with Christ created a relationship with one another. That is why Romans 12:10 commands: "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love."

Notice that word again: Devoted. Christian relationships are not supposed to be casual or disposable. We are family. Not family by blood, but family by the blood of Jesus Christ, which has purchased us and united us to one another in Him.

This is one of the fundamental differences between attending a church and belonging to a church. You can attend without being known.

You can attend without knowing anyone deeply.

You can attend without carrying anyone's burdens.

You can attend without anyone carrying your burdens.

You can attend without serving.

You can attend without encouraging.

But you cannot obey the New Testament commands toward "one another" without meaningful relationships with other Christians.

Consider just a few of the commands God gives us:

John 13:34–35 commands us to "Love one another."

1 Thessalonians 5:11 commands us to "Encourage one another."

Galatians 5:13 commands us to "Serve one another."

In Galatians 6:2 we are commanded to "Bear one another's burdens."

Ephesians 4:32 commands us to "Forgive one another."

James 5:16 calls us to "Pray for one another" and to "confess your sins to one another."

1 Peter 4:9 says "Be hospitable to one another."

Colossians 3:16 tells us to "Teach and admonish one another."

Scholars have counted nearly sixty "one another" commands scattered throughout the New Testament. Sixty commands that simply cannot be obeyed in isolation. You cannot obey those commands in a vacuum. In fact, just think about it: every "one another" command assumes another Christian is close enough to your life for you to obey the "one another" command.

You cannot bear someone's burden if you don't know what the burden is. You cannot encourage someone if you don't know where they are discouraged. You cannot pray meaningfully for someone if you don't know what they are facing. And you cannot teach and admonish one another if your relationships never move beyond superficial conversation.

Biblical fellowship requires proximity, relationship, and commitment.

That is one reason Paul repeatedly compares the church to a human body. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:21, There are many members, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."

Imagine your hand saying: "I really appreciate the body. I visit the body most Sundays. But I don't want to get too committed and too involved."

That would be absurd. A hand separated from the body doesn't become an independent hand. Instead, it dies. Cut off from the flow of blood, cut off from the nerves that give it feeling, cut off from the muscles that give it strength, a detached hand withers. It does not become free. It becomes lifeless.

The hand needs the body, and the body needs the hand.

Christian, you need the church. And here's the part we sometimes forget, The church needs you.

Faithfulness to one another begins when we recognize that God has joined us together as one body.

But devotion cannot remain merely a sentiment. It cannot stay in the realm of warm feelings and good intentions. Acts chapter 2 shows us what genuine devotion produces.

Verse 43 tells us, "Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles."

The life of this first fellowship was so genuine and spiritually powerful that everyone, whether inside or outside the church, kept feeling a sense of awe. They weren't awed by the church because of its buildings, programs, or anything reflecting human ability, but by the supernatural character of its life. It had a powerful testimony among the unsaved, not only because of the miracles done by the Apostles, but also because of the way the members of the fellowship loved each other and served the Lord. They were devoted to one another.

These believers were not simply together in the same place; they were attentive to the needs of the people around them. Their fellowship affected what they did with their time, their possessions, and their resources.

And that leads us to the second commitment of believers who are faithful to one another.

II. Care for One Another

Look at verses 44–45. "And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need."

There was an extraordinary work of God occurring through the apostles. Signs and wonders confirmed the truth of their message. But notice the effect upon the believers in verse 44. It says, "all those who had believed were together and had all things in common."

And then verse 45, “they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.”

The Bible is not teaching that Christians must sell everything they own or that private property ceased to exist. Rather, it is showing us something about the believers hearts. They cared more about one another than they cared about their possessions. When they saw genuine needs, they responded. Their fellowship became tangible. Their love cost them something.

This is a crucial point. Love that costs nothing is often nothing more than a feeling. Biblical love, the kind commanded throughout Scripture, is love that acts, love that gives, love that sacrifices. This principle appears throughout the New Testament.

Galatians 6:2: “Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.”

1 John 3:17 asks: “whoever has the world’s goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?”

Biblical love sees a burden and asks: “How can I help carry it?”

Sometimes the burden is spiritual.

Sometimes it is physical.

Sometimes it is emotional.

Sometimes the burden is financial.

Sometimes someone needs a meal.

Sometimes someone needs a ride.

Sometimes someone needs help moving.

Sometimes someone needs someone to sit with them in a hospital.

Sometimes a young mother needs someone to help with her children.

Sometimes someone who has lost a spouse simply needs someone willing to sit and listen and pray with them.

Sometimes a struggling Christian needs someone who will patiently walk beside him for months and remind him what is true and right from Scripture.

Think about mountain climbers crossing dangerous terrain while roped together. Why are the mountain climbers roped together? Why connect yourself to someone else? Because if one person slips, the others can help arrest the fall. The rope means that no single misstep becomes a fatal one, because you are not climbing alone.

At one point you may be the strong one helping hold someone else. But farther up the mountain, you may be the one who slips. That's a picture of life in the body of Christ.

There are seasons when you're strong and someone else needs you. And there will be seasons when you're weak and you need them.

There will be times when you help carry someone else's burden. And eventually there will be burdens you cannot carry alone.

This is why Galatians 6:2 does NOT say, “Make sure everyone carries his own burdens.” It says, “Bear one another’s burdens.” The very next verse, Galatians 6:3, warns us against the opposite temptation — thinking too highly of ourselves, imagining we are self-sufficient, that we have no need of the rope that ties us together.

But bearing another’s burden requires something of us. I have to know you well enough to know what your burdens are. And you have to allow yourself to be known well enough that I can help carry them.

The generosity of verses 44–45 shows us that these believers were willing to give what they had to care for one another. But in verse 46, it takes us even deeper. They didn't just share their possessions; they shared their lives.

Their fellowship wasn't confined to the temple or to a weekly gathering. It moved into their homes, around their tables, and into the ordinary rhythms of everyday life.

That brings us to the third commitment:

III. Share Life with One Another

Verse 46, “Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart.”

Notice the two locations. They gathered in the temple, and they gathered “from house to house.”

There was a large gathering and smaller gatherings. There was public worship and personal fellowship. And I think there is an important principle here for us.

We need both. And that is why the Cornerstone elders are asking each of you to attend a worship service here on Sunday morning and secondly, to attend a Community Group on Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday. The list of current Community Groups is in today's printed bulletin.

Think for a moment about what we're doing this morning. We're sitting primarily in rows. And rows are important. We gather together as the church to worship God. We sing. We pray. We hear God's Word preached. There is something irreplaceable about the corporate gathering of God's people, lifting their voices together, sitting under the preaching of the sufficient and authoritative Word of God.

But there are many New Testament commands that are difficult to practice sitting in rows.

It's difficult to bear one another's burdens in a row on Sunday morning.

It's difficult to confess your sins to one another in a row.

It's difficult to deeply encourage one another in a row.

It's difficult to know someone's struggles in a row.

It's difficult to counsel one another in a row.

So, we need rows when we gather to sing and to hear God's Word preached, but we also need circles where we can talk and discuss and understand and live out God's Word.

That is one reason Community Groups are important. Community Groups are not merely another program we put on the church calendar. They provide one practical context where we can begin doing what these believers did: sharing life together.

Look again at verse 46, “breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together.” They opened their homes. They shared meals. They spent time together.

And notice how verse 46 describes their hearts: “with gladness and sincerity of heart.” There was no pretense here, no performance. There was genuine affection.

This reminds me of Paul's words in 1 Thessalonians 2:8, “Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives.”

Paul didn't merely deliver a message to the Thessalonians and walk away. He gave them his life. That is the kind of fellowship Luke describes in Acts 2, and it is the kind of fellowship God calls us toward today.

But there is a challenge here.

You cannot experience that kind of fellowship without allowing yourself to be known. Some of us are very good at being friendly without being known.

“How are you?”

“Fine.”

“How’s the family?”

“Fine.”

“How’s work?”

“Fine.”

“How’s your walk with Christ?”

“Fine.”

And we can do that for years. We can sit in the same row for a decade and never let anyone close enough to see what is actually happening beneath the surface of our lives.

Think about driving a car – a little bit of an older car that does not have Blind Spot Monitoring technology that is so common in today’s cars. You can look into your mirrors and still have a blind spot. There may be another vehicle beside you that everyone else can see, but you cannot. No matter how carefully you check your mirrors, that blind spot remains, hidden from your own vantage point but visible to someone standing outside the vehicle.

Our hearts have blind spots too. Hebrews 3:13 says, “encourage one another day after day...so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”

Why do I need other Christians? Because sin is deceitful. There are things about myself I don't see clearly. I can rationalize sinful attitudes. I can justify bitterness. I can excuse pride. I can minimize anger. I can convince myself that I’m right.

And I need brothers in Christ who love me enough to say. “John Marc, I think there is something here you may not be seeing.” And you need believers who can do that for you.

Every Christian needs some mature believers who know him or her well enough to ask:

How is your walk with Christ?

How is your marriage?

What are you struggling with?

Where are you being tempted?

What are you afraid of?

How can I pray for you?

And we need to be willing to give honest answers. That is biblical fellowship. It is not a program. It is not an event on the calendar. It is a way of life, sustained day by day, in which truth and love meet in the context of real relationship.

But notice one more thing about the early church. Their fellowship didn’t merely affect them. Other people saw it.

IV. Display Christ Together

Look at verse 47, “praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

Their life together was God-centered, “praising God.” Their life together was visible, “having favor with all the people.” And their life together accompanied a powerful gospel witness, “the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

We should be careful not to turn that into a formula. The Bible is not promising that if we have good fellowship, God will automatically add a certain number of converts to the church. Salvation belongs to the Lord, and He alone grants growth. But he is showing us that the life of this transformed community was visible to the watching world, and God was pleased to use that visible transformation as part of His gospel witness.

That is exactly what Jesus said would happen. In John 13:34–35 Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Think about that. Jesus identifies something that should make His disciples recognizable: their love for one another. Not their doctrinal statements alone. Not their buildings. Not their programs. Their love.

The world knows plenty of division.

The world knows anger.

The world knows broken relationships.

The world knows bitterness.

The world knows selfishness.

The world knows people abandoning relationships when they become difficult.

So, the world should be able to look at the church and see something different.

People from different backgrounds loving one another.

Older believers loving younger believers.

Younger believers honoring older believers.

People forgiving one another.

People sacrificing for one another.

People carrying burdens.

People opening their homes.

People walking together through suffering.

People telling one another the truth in love.

People staying committed when relationships become difficult.

And the world should ask: “What produces that kind of love?”

The answer is: Jesus Christ.

Our love for one another becomes a testimony to the transforming power of the gospel. It is, in a sense, apologetic evidence — visible proof that the gospel we proclaim actually changes people, actually reconciles enemies, actually produces a community unlike anything the world can manufacture on its own.

And I want you to know — I have seen this. Not in theory. In the actual lives of actual people at Cornerstone.

I’ve seen it in the birth of a child — Community Group members helping a young couple prepare, being at the hospital with them, showing up with meals, with prayer, with a kind of joy that only comes from people who’ve been walking alongside a family through nine months of waiting.

I've seen it in a wedding — a group that has watched a couple grow through challenges, pray for them by name, and then stand and rejoice as two lives become one, because they were there sometimes for the whole story, not just the ceremony.

And I've seen it, perhaps most powerfully, in the death of a loved one — a group that weeps with those who weep, that sits in the silence when there are no words, that brings a meal on the day after the funeral and again three weeks later when everyone else has moved on but the grief hasn't. That is Romans 12:15 in practice. That is devotion.

There is one final truth we cannot miss. We will never faithfully practice the “one anothers” merely by trying harder to be nicer people. Willpower alone will not sustain this kind of love for the long haul. Our model and motivation is Jesus Christ.

Why do we love one another?

1 John 4:19, “We love, because He first loved us.”

Why do we forgive one another?

Ephesians 4:32, “forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”

Why do we serve one another?

Jesus said in Mark 10:45, “the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve.”

Why do we bear one another's burdens?

Because Jesus bore the greatest burden we could never carry ourselves.

Our sin.

Our guilt.

Our condemnation.

On the cross, Jesus Christ took our sin upon Himself and endured the judgment we deserved. He died. He was buried. And He rose again. And everyone who repents and places his faith in Jesus Christ is forgiven and reconciled to God.

In 2:21 Peter declared, “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Have you called out to the Lord? Have you trusted Jesus Christ to save you? Have you repented, have you turned from your sin and turn to the Lord Jesus Christ and asked Him to forgive you and save you?

But the gospel doesn't merely reconcile us to God. It creates a new people who are reconciled to one another. We are a redeemed community.

Christ loved us. So we love one another.

Christ served us. So we serve one another.

Christ forgave us. So we forgive one another.

Christ welcomed us. So we welcome one another.

Christ sacrificed for us. So we sacrifice for one another.

Our faithfulness to one another is ultimately a reflection of Christ's faithfulness to us. Every act of love we show a brother or sister is meant to be a small echo of the far greater love Christ has already shown us. We do not manufacture this love out of nothing. We simply reflect back to one another what has first been poured out on us.

What did the first Christians do after they were saved? They lived out **four commitments of faithfulness to one another so that they grew together in Christ and displayed His transforming grace to the world.**

They were Devoted to One Another — verses 42-43

Cared for One Another — verses 44-45

Shared Life with One Another — verse 46

Displayed Christ Together — verse 47

That's the kind of church we desire to be.
Not merely people who attend the same service.
Not merely people who sit in the same room.
But brothers and sisters who are:
Devoted to one another.
Caring for one another.
Sharing life with one another.
Displaying Christ through our love for one another.

So let me ask you: Are you simply attending church, or are you sharing life with the church? Will you come to Discovering Cornerstone in my home on Sep 27th and enjoy an evening where the elders explain the ministries of Cornerstone church and how you can be involved? Will you attend a Community Group that start next week?

We gather here on Sunday in rows to worship God and hear His Word. But we also need Community Groups where we can live out His Word. We need relationships where we can know and be known, love and be loved, serve and be served, encourage and be encouraged.

Because God never intended us to follow Christ alone. He saved us into a family. He placed us into a body. He made us members of one another.

And therefore, by the grace of God and because of the love Christ has shown us: Let us be faithful to one another.

Let's pray...