

## The First Priorities of The NT Church: Characteristics of a Healthy Body

**1. Scripture- Verse 42:** The people devoted themselves to the apostles teachings. **Proskartereo-** to earnestly devote to, to be continually and constantly towards a goal. **The new church became people of the Word.** The apostles teachings became the basis for their devotion and behavior. The Greek word is **διδάξα** (didache), which refers to teaching, doctrines, and instructions. This came to be known as the teachings of the apostles as a collected material. This was the teachings on Christian morality and doctrinal practices. In other words, discipleship happened immediately.

Jesus cautioned his disciples against false teaching and doctrines that could hurt their growth and destroy the church when it was started.

### Mark 8:15

15 "Be careful," Jesus warned them. "Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod."

NIV

\* Devote yourself to the proper teaching.

Look at the message that Jesus gave the church at Pergamum and how it relates to the church being in the culture. The church was literally in the city of Satan. They had to be so careful not to adopt their culture into the church.

### Rev 2:12-17

"To the angel of the church in Pergamum write:

These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword. 13 **I know where you live** — where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith

in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city — where Satan lives.

14 Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there **who hold to the teaching of Balaam**, who taught **Balak** to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality. 15 Likewise you also have those who **hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans**. 16 Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, **I will give some of the hidden manna**. I will also give him a **white stone** with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.

NIV

**Quote:** CHS- *“That very church which the world likes best is sure to be that which God abhors.”*

**“Devotion”** means to endure, to remain somewhere, to remain steadfastly with someone, to stick faithfully with someone; this is people who insist on something or stay close to someone.

It metaphorically refers to the disciplines of the Christian faith, especially to prayer.

- **Literally** – The text tells us that they had their **existence (εἰμί)** tied up into the continual, steadfast endurance with Jesus and His body – The church is the Body of Christ. Is that important to you?

**2.** The second thing the church did was **fellowshipped**. This is good ole **Koinonia**. We communicate, fellowship, distribute, and hang out together. If you are not in fellowship with the church, your devotion will be misplaced. Many believers fellowship more

with the world than they do with God's people. I happen to love my church and my people. **However, fellowship means so much more.**

As I read, please look at me and not at your bible for a moment. I will read a verse twice and I want you to see if you can hear the difference.

**Read text & explain context (No article vs. article): Acts 2:42**

**Acts 2:42**

42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.  
NASU

**Acts 2:42**

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

**Acts 2:42**

42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.  
ASV-Authorized Standard Version

**Acts 2:42**

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to **the** fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.  
NIV

**Acts 2:42**

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and **the** fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.  
ESV

## Acts 2:42

42 They spent their time in learning from the apostles, taking part in **the** fellowship, and sharing in the fellowship meals and the prayers.

Life among the Believers  
GNT- Good News Translation

- The difference is a **definite article** in the second grouping. The original has the article with it and also a unique Greek construction. The Greek text says:

- The apostles teachings
  - **The** fellowship
  - The breaking of bread
  - The prayers
- All my life I have missed the nuance of this verse.
- The people devoted themselves to **“the”** fellowship not **“to”** fellowship.” Yes, we love **to** fellowship, but that’s a by-product **of** “The” fellowship.

### **Listen carefully!**

To receive Christ as Lord and Savior means that you cross a line that you cannot go back over. You become a part of a new family. If you try to live a successful life as a Christian, but not participate, and not be devoted to the family, you will devote yourself to things not godly. You will drift just like the undriven boat. When you crash, you will crash into something solid. Why not live on the dock before you crash into it.

**Illustration:** When you bump into people in the market place that are out of fellowship with Jesus, and you share with them, and they are rude to you – it’s because they are drifting, and they ran into you – you are the dock. You are a solid entity that reminds them they have misplaced their devotion.

Some say that the building here, the people here, worshipping together, watching others sing and worship and pray, and participating is not a sign of spirituality and is unnecessary. What say you? Church?

I have been told by some that we are doing idol worship because we love these things and our building. Preachers brag and worship about numbers and buildings. Let me tell you that numbers are people, friend. One number is a soul going to heaven. This building is a permanent place God gave us so that we could reach the lost around the world. This is home to us for the time being. This is our sanctuary. How misguided can fools be?

**3.** The next thing the people did was have **some fellowship**. Do you see why the definite article is so important. Now Luke tells us not only about **the** fellowship but how **the** fellowship had **some** fellowship. Eating meals together is not just Baptist; it's biblical. Bonds are made at meals. Friendships are started and iron sharpens iron. You can't be challenged about your beliefs and lifestyle if you are not here. Maybe that's why people leave or don't show up. Spiritual growth takes place at meal times. Discipleship takes place at unstructured events. ***This is fellowship in the fellowship.*** Iron was sharpened at the men's skeet shoot. The women are about to get challenged and grow in the knowledge of Christ at their retreat. Many will be encouraged and problems will be solved. Friendships will be made. Bread will be shared. Life stories will be told. Many will fall into the rhythm of Woodlake. Fellowship weaves you into the rhythm of our fellowship.

**4. Prayer** was important to the new church Peter was leading. Nothing takes place without prayer. The early church was established with prayer.

## Recap:

### The Apostles Teachings:

- \* You will be as solid of a Christian as the teaching you get.
- \* Christendom is filled with ignorant Christians.”

**Persian Proverb** – “If the teacher be corrupt, The world will be corrupt.” Teach the Word, but teach it correctly.

- \* Stay with the foundation, the Word

**Fellowship:** The original says, “The” Fellowship – the Body. Their passion and commitment was to the family. We really are family and there are times that those in the body are closer to you than your filial relationships.

### The Breaking of Bread: Fellowship

Also Refers to the Lord’s Supper and true fellowship. (Greek) **Klasis (Breaking Bread)**. They observed the Lord’s Supper.

- \* There is a spiritual miracle that happens when we observe the Lord’s Supper together: We remember, confess, give thanks, and proclaim the Gospel. I adore the administering the Lord’s supper to you.

**Prayer:** Corporate prayer. The Body is supposed to pray together. Period! Wednesday nights at 6 pm.

**# 5- They had the fear of God: Verse 43 – They were captivated with awe and fear.** Many miracle mongers today feel as if they need to “liven” God up a bit. God needs no help to produce awe.

**Greek:** Filled with awe! **παση ψοχη φόβος- Upon every soul**  
**fear:** Fear, terror, reverence, respect, honor, astonishment, and amazement.

**JRG-** “The fear of God is better than any miracle you could receive; miracles don’t save, the fear of God does.

**My Definition:** When people see God doing great things that they cannot explain, it produces respect, reverence, and fear for God! The reference due His name!

\* God does a fresh work. God invigorates! Revival. All around the world, People are turning to God because of the death of Charlie Kirk. Many will miss it because they have no fear of God. Many people cannot even acknowledge a world-wide movement of God because of race, political views, or nationality. What a shame.

**Illustration:** One Sunday, you come to church, and you’ve been dry, unspiritual, and a bit dead. Maybe even the preacher and the whole church have been dead – all of a sudden, you sense a freshness, a movement, an excitement. God shows up and takes over!!! People get filled for a change. Awe and respect return. We seek the filling of the Spirit. When we get devotion we will see this. Amen.

**Quote:** As I spoke with a so called believer about church attendance and devotion, he said this... **You have mentioned showing up for Sunday and Wednesday services as if that’s the determining factor of one’s spiritual condition. Simply showing up a couple of hours a week at a church building to sit in (Sic) watch people sing and listen to a preacher doesn’t necessarily mean we’re spiritually well because there are plenty of lost people who do the same.**

I would like to go on record as saying that watching you worship with your family and seeing the kids raise their hands and worship and watching you all sing and pray, and reach for heaven gets me fired up and calls my spiritual heart to greater consecration. I love to see repentance and salvation come to the



house of the Lord. The visible presence of Jesus Christ in the room and the church displaying the manifold wisdom of God-satisfies my soul.

**Ps 73:16-17**

16 When I tried to understand all this,  
it was oppressive to me  
17 **till I entered the sanctuary of God;**  
then I understood their final destiny.  
NIV

**Greek: Teras- Wonders** – Associated with miracles or signs – Something that points to something else.

**Miraculous Signs - Sēmeion** (John uses this word a lot to describe Jesus as the sign working Son of God)– A miracle with a spiritual end in mind. Miracles show the ability and power of the doer and reflect back to God's power and purpose. Jesus had victory over the devil, disease, and death. I am still praying for God to do miracles and help my sheep to be sin free and made whole. But first priority is giving Him glory.

**Illustration:** I have often said that God is going to heal everybody at the church one Sunday morning and the people that are at home sleeping are going to miss it. A fresh wind blew through that the people had not seen in a lifetime from the Pharisees. Their Judaism became real and the OT prophecies and scripture became understandable. Christianity became a reality. If we had more fear of the Lord we could see some healings.

**Verses 44-47: Commitment to Fraternity.**

**# 6 Fraternity- Verse 44:** Have you ever seen people who are lost around a group of believers? They are out of place. They have nothing in common.



Have you ever seen a saved man with a group of lost people? Nothing in common, different language, different interests, etc. He's out of place; or he's supposed to be.

If you are not a part of the fraternity, you feel left out. You're odd. You do not understand.

A preposition, an article, and a pronoun... **ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό**. This idiom makes up the word **together**. This could be translated as among ourselves or together.

**All things in *Koinos***, “common.” Ordinary, customary, general.

The problem is we try to be in common with the wrong fraternity. Seeker sensitive churches try to make people a part of the **fraternity** without making them a part of the **family**. If you do not like the family, you may not be a part of it.

Let me tell you, I do not have anything in common with the world! Period! If you have commonality with the world, you have misplaced devotion. If you are comfortable with the people of the world you have a problem. Many times, I am not in fellowship with people that call themselves “Christians.”

Devotion is dangerous! Are you devoted to the fellowship or the cosmos – the world?

**Verse 45** – In the fraternity, love, grace, and charity abound. A spirit of giving abounds – sharing is prevalent. *People who say they want to build doctrine from the book of Acts change their minds when they come to verse 45. They want to reproduce Pentecost but they don't want to redistribute their wealth.* You will never hear Kenneth Copeland preach this correctly. Do you think he would sell his property and distribute his money to the poor?

**ktema**- estate, possessions.

**Huparxis**- goods, substance, wealth.

**diamerizo-** cloven, divide, part.

**chreia-** lack, business, want, necessary.

“Need” refers to employment or debt. They helped those who were out of work or in debt, or in need. Not lazy people, but folk who find their circumstances difficult. Those willing to work, in other words. **“The Fellowship”** helps others in the fellowship. Christianity had brought about persecution and many people were suffering for their faith. The people were in great need. Later, in the gospels, we see Paul taking up a love offering for the Jews in Jerusalem.

**Verse 46:** They went to church **daily**. They fellowshiped together. They ate together! We do that very well. They were of one mind **ὁμοθυμαδόν (homothumadon)- One accord. One- passion. If everybody serves, all get served.**

**They were fellowshiping in:**

**Fraternity Defined.**

- Unity, one mind
- Glad hearts
- Single or simplistic hearts
- Joyful and humble hearts
- Singleness of heart, focused

Show me a church in unity and I will show you a successful church. Unity is the single most important aspect of church life. A church in division is out of God’s will. A church in disunity cannot do the essential God-called ministries properly.

**Verse 47:** The unity brought praise – God gets the credit. The favor of God or grace was there. Grace with all people.

**Charis** – Grace or favor. That which causes joy or creates delight. Approval. This may be the last church that ever existed that was in total unity.

Don't be the cause of division. Just don't do it. Some people don't like unity, and they don't know how to seek the will of God. The worst part is they don't want us to have joy or God's will either. Many people don't fellowship, don't give, don't serve, stay away from **the** fellowship for months at a time, don't follow the apostles teachings, don't pray, and have little to know devotion to this fellowship. Then walk in the door and tell me what to do.

That's okay, I guess, if you want to be disciplined by God, but for goodness sake, keep your mouth closed about what the rest of us are doing. You have no right to criticize the rest of us for seeking God's will and having great devotion to the fellowship. If you are out of God's will in your own life, why would you try to advise the fellowship on how the church should be in God's will. Leave my sheep alone. Many people try to run or control the church and don't even know what a biblical church is. Many people with no ministry experience in ministry are the loudest when it comes to complaints.

My staff alone and I have over 130 years of ministry experience. If you add the preschool, children ministry, deacons, and SS teachers, it may exceed 250 years of experience. If you added other special events committees and elders, it may top 500 years of experience. Not to mention that we have been growing WBC for 20 years now. A lot of us here have some sweat and blood in the game. We love **THE** fellowship and our fellowship specifically. If you don't like our fellowship then find one you do like without trying to destroy ours.

### **Closing: A Healthy Devotion for The Fellowship**

- Apostles teaching, the Word of God. Obey it.
- Devotion to **The** fellowship.
- Participate and enjoy some fellowship.
- Give to the fellowship.
- Bring unity to the fellowship.

- Pray for the fellowship.
- Add to the fellowship.
- Don't fellowship with the culture.
- Come to the temple complex, regularly.
- Be joyful and humble.
- If you need to complain or be negative, don't.
- Then God will add to the fellowship.

**Quote:** “If what you are doing is not adding people, it's not from God.”

One week on *American Idol*, 38 million people texted in to vote for their favorite person to win. That's devotion, that's passion. 38 million people devoted their time to watch that show and participate. When Jesus comes, it won't matter one bit that they did that. I'm not saying that's sin to watch or participate in voting for your favorite person on a show. I'm just saying, “wouldn't it be great if Christians were more devoted to what really matters- the fellowship.

If all 16.2 million Southern Baptists, in 43,699 churches shared the Gospel this week – what would happen? What if all 16.2 billion members of SBC churches actually went to church this week.

I love WBC. I am devoted to it. I will give my life for the Kingdom of God. Will you? There is no greater cause.

**Warning-** There's danger in misplaced devotion.