

**Slide 1**

# **God's New Community**

## **ACTS 2:42-47**

### **Introduction**

1. Last week we looked at the beginning of the church as Luke records it for us here in Acts 2.
2. The words he wrote in v. 41 still amaze me:

**Slide 2**

“So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.” (Acts 2:41, NASB95)

3. Suddenly there were 3,000 baby Christians in the church, not physical babies, but spiritual babies.
4. What were the apostles to do? There were only twelve of them.
5. Don't you know there were nights when they finally crawled into bed completely worn out.
6. What did they teach?
  - a. The epistles? There were none. They hadn't been written yet.
  - b. The Gospels? Those didn't exist either.
7. Most likely they taught the Old Testament scriptures and what they said about Jesus. They probably also shared the things which Jesus had taught both publically and privately.
8. Here at the end of Acts 2, Luke shares with us the life of the early church and the characteristics it possessed.
7. In these verses, Luke shares with us four distinguishing traits which marked these early Christians.
8. In our lesson this morning, I want to encourage all of you to make it your goal as a congregation of God's people to emulate them.

[One of the first things Luke tells us is that the church established on Pentecost was . . .]

**Slide 3**

## **I. A Learning Church**

### **A. "THEY WERE CONTINUALLY DEVOTING THEMSELVES TO THE APOSTLES' TEACHING" (v. 42)**

1. One might say that the Holy Spirit opened a school in Jerusalem that day.
2. Its teachers were the apostles whom Jesus had appointed.
3. Notice Luke's statement "they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles teaching (v. 42a).
4. Those new converts sat at the apostles' feet, hungry to receive instruction.
5. They devoted themselves to this new teaching.
6. The Holy Spirit constantly authenticated their message by the miracles He caused to take place "through the apostles" (v. 43).
7. I wonder if Peter thought back to these days, when he wrote his first letter to some of these same Christians who have been dispersed throughout Asia Minor, and said, "like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord" (1 Peter 2:2-3, NASB95).

**Slide 4**

### **B. YOU AND I NOW HAVE THEIR TEACHING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.**

1. Today, thanks to apostles like Matthew, John, Peter and Paul, the historian Luke, and other men like Mark and James we have in written form the New Testament.
2. Though we are almost 2,000 years removed from those days which Luke records here, our devotion to the apostles' teaching requires that we submit ourselves to the authority of God's Word.
3. We become like our brothers and sisters of old as we study and obey the teachings which we find therein.
4. Paul told Timothy to "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15, NASB95)

**Slide 5**

## II. A Loving Church

### A. "THEY DEVOTED THEMSELVES . . . TO FELLOWSHIP" (v. 42)

1. Not only did these new Christians devote themselves to the apostles teaching, they also devoted themselves to fellowship.
2. The word fellowship comes from a Greek term (κοινωνία), a word which is not found in the Gospels.
3. This is the first time it occurs in the New Testament.
4. It has to do with that which we share and have in common with each other.
5. The church which met together in Jerusalem had "the great quality of togetherness" (Barclay).

**5a**

### B. WHAT IS IT THAT WE HAVE IN COMMON

1. When you or I look at people who are physically related to one another we notice certain similarities:
  - a. Similar height and build.
  - b. Their facial features or hair color are alike.
  - c. It is likely they even have some of the same mannerisms.
2. You and I as Christians we have certain things in common.
3. There are certain things which we each share in together and other things which we share out together.

**Slide 6**

4. We each *share together in* . . .
  - a. God, the Father and Jesus, His Son

"And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3b).

"God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:9).
  - b. The Holy Spirit

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all” (2 Corinthians 13:14).

c. Our faith

“I pray that the fellowship of your faith may become effective through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you for Christ’s sake.”  
(Philemon 6, NASB95)

**Slide 7**

2. What we *share out together*.

“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.” (Acts 2:44-45;NASB95)

- a. This includes what we give as well as what we receive.
- b. These first Christians “began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all” (Acts 2:45a;NASB95)
- c. Luke said, “They gave to anyone as he had need” (v. 45).
- d. Later, as the church continued to grow, Luke wrote, “For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales” (Acts 4:34, NASB95)
- e. Fellowship is more than just a sentimental feeling.
- f. It is more than a meal together or a fun time here in our Enrichment Center.
- g. Fellowship comes through giving. True fellowship costs us something.
- h. In his first epistle, the apostle John put it this way:

“But 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? (1 John 3:17).

- h. John Stott in his commentary on this passage describes this attitude and action of those early Christians in this way: “*Christian fellowship is Christian caring, and Christian caring is Christian sharing.*”

**Slide 8**

### III. A Worshiping Church

#### A. "THEY DEVOTED THEMSELVES . . . TO THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD AND TO THE PRAYERS (v. 42)

1. There was one more thing to which those Christians devoted themselves — it was to “the breaking of the bread and to prayer” (v. 42).
2. “The breaking of the bread” — a reference to the Lord’s Supper
  - a. Not only were they remembering the salvation which Jesus had purchased through His own death.
  - b. They were constantly reminding themselves that He was coming back for them.
3. “The prayers” — they prayed together on a regular basis, perhaps daily.
  - a. These early Christians first went to God in prayer before going out to the world.
  - b. They were able to meet the problems of life because they first met with Him.

**8a**

#### B. LIKE THEM, WE TOO MUST HAVE THE SAME BALANCE TO OUR WORSHIP

1. Their worship was *both formal and informal* (v. 46).
  - a. It took place both
    - 1) “in the temple” — large groups could meet in Solomon’s Portico, which ran along the east side of the outer temple court.
      - a) This is very likely where they heard the apostles teaching.
    - 2) “from house to house” — in their homes
      - a) Because the communion could not be eaten in the temple precincts, they most likely gathered in various homes.
      - b) Here they could sing the new hymns of a Savior who had now redeemed them.
  - b. As the Lord’s church today, we need both.

**Slide 9**

2. Their worship was also *both joyful and reverent* (v. 46).

a. There is no doubt as to their joy

- 1) They are described as having gladness and sincerity (simplicity) of heart (v. 46)
- 2) Because God had sent His Son into the world, and had now sent them His Spirit, they had plenty of reason to be joyful.
- 3) Besides, “the fruit of the Spirit is . . . joy” (Gal. 5:22)
- 4) Every worship service should be a joyful proclamation of the mighty acts of God through Jesus Christ.

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

b. Their joy was never irreverent

- 1) Just as joy in God is an authentic work of the Spirit, so is the fear of God.

“Everyone was filled with awe” (v. 43).

- 2) God was in their midst, and they knew it.
- 3) They bowed before Him in humility and wonder.

**Slide 10**

## **IV. An Evangelistic Church**

### **A. “AND THE LORD ADDED TO THEIR NUMBER DAILY THOSE WHO WERE BEING SAVED” (v. 47)**

1. Those first Christians in Jerusalem were not so preoccupied with learning, loving and worshiping that they forgot about sharing the good news.
2. The Holy Spirit is a missionary Spirit who created a missionary church.

**Slide 11**

**B. THE EVANGELISM OF THOSE EARLY CHRISTIANS INVOLVED THREE DYNAMICS**1. *The Lord was their principal evangelist.*

- a. Luke tells us that it was “the Lord” who “added to their number.”
- b. He did so through . . .
  - 1) The preaching of the apostles.
  - 2) The sharing of the good news by the church members.
  - 3) The impressive love which they demonstrated for one another.
  - 4) Their example (v. 47a).

They were “praising God and having favor with all the people” (v. 47a)

## b. What are we to learn from this?

- 1) Jesus alone is the head of the church.
- 2) He only has the prerogative of admitting people into its membership and bestowing salvation from His throne.
- 3) Our evangelization of the world will not be through the triumph of human technology, but our humble dependence on our Lord as the principal evangelist.
- 4) As Paul points out in 1 Corinthians 3:6 , we can “plant” the seed of God’s Word and “water” it, but it is God who causes the growth.

**11a**2. *Salvation and church membership were inextricably linked together.*

- a. Luke tells us that Jesus did two things at the same time (v. 47b).

“And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47b).

- b. The Lord did not add people to the church without saving them (no nominal Christianity).
- c. Nor did He save people without adding them to the church (no solitary Christianity).

**11b**3. *Evangelism was not an occasional or sporadic activity.*

- a. “The Lord was adding to their number day by day” (v. 47b).
- b. Every day, the church was growing — new Christians were being added to their number.
- c. We need to recover this expectation of steady and uninterrupted church growth.

## Conclusion

1. The marks of that first Spirit-filled community all involve the church’s relationships.
2. Our goal should be to become more like these first Christians by . . .
  - a. Submitting ourselves to the teaching and authority of God’s Word.
  - b. Loving one another, even as our Lord has loved us (John 13:34).

### Slide 12

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.” (John 13:34, NASB95)

- c. Worshiping God together here as a congregation and in our individual homes with worship that is both joyful and reverent.
  - d. Working to reach everyone here at home and abroad who has not yet heard the good news of Jesus Christ.
3. Remember three things which Jesus promised:
  - a. He will “build [His] church” (Matthew 16:18).
  - b. Satan will “not overpower it” (Matthew 16:18).
  - c. He will be with us always, “even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).
5. Today, if you have not turned from your sin and confessed Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, do so now.
6. Allow Him to save you by washing away your sin and guilt.
7. Know the new life which He promises you.