

# Early Church Life

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Acts 2:42-48, I Corinthians 12:12-31 – PAGE 779 IN ESV BIBLES

## Introduction

The Holy Spirit comes on the scene and ignites this band of disciples with empowerment to complete the mission that Jesus gave them to accomplish.

**The result was nothing short of incredible. Peter was transformed into a mighty, courageous leader. The gospel was preached with power and 3,000 souls were added to their number in one day – many of which were from distant places.**

The section of scripture we are looking at today is the first of one of Luke's summaries. Here Luke will show us some of what it was like to live in this exciting period of church history.

**We can learn a lot from these few short verses!**

## What Were They Devoted To?

In verse 42 we get a list of priorities for the early church. These are the things that they had committed to making a part of their lifestyle.

**NOTE: The word “devoted” is a strong and important word.**

- We want to see and (really) experience the benefits of something before we commit. **We are a “try before you buy” culture in all respects.**
- But this is not how the Kingdom of God works! The benefits flow from our devotion. Marriage blessing flows from the marriage covenant, not compatibility and good communication skills. Intimacy with Jesus flows from His covenant with you the resulting faithfulness to Him. Fulfilling relationships are fulfilling because of the intentional commitments you have with each other.
- **This is the frustrating nature of faith. Faith requires action before knowing the outcome. In fact, it is faith that moves God to act on our behalf.**

*The thing that is most frustrating for all pastors in this culture is that we often find ourselves trying to move people to make commitments to a mission, idea, or project before they have experienced the rewards of it. This goes right against the grain of the way we are taught to think and feel by our culture.*

**But think about this... More than likely the most fulfilling blessings you have experienced in your life probably came as the result of making a commitment and a risk BEFORE you could see how it would result in benefit to you.**

**Now that we have some understanding of what “devoted” means, let's look at verse 42...**

## Apostles teaching...

- This would include both Jesus' earthly teaching during his time with them, as well as the 40 days of post-resurrection appearances where he taught through the OT showing them how it all points to Him.
- This is BEFORE the New Testament, but certainly they were teaching much of what we read in it today.

### Two Contexts for This Teaching:

1. Larger, public gatherings like they did under Solomon's Portico
2. In homes, often around or after a meal together.

In order to be called a church, the Bible must be preached. You don't have to do it like I do it, but you have to do it or you can't call it a church. You don't have to do it every time you gather, you don't have to do it as a monologue, you don't have to use a podium or a stage, **but it needs to be done.**

## The Fellowship...

This is the word *koinonia* which means "intimate participation, sharing, oneness, communion".

This is that almost intangible, sometime elusive, thing that exists between the people in a local church. It is that thing that you feel when you walk in the door to any KCC gathering and you feel that connection, the feeling of belonging to something greater than yourself, that feeling of warmth.

**But, it's more than simple community and connection. It's not a club or fraternity. It's community with Christ as the centerpiece. It is community with purpose, movement –a mission. It is the gospel in context, rooted in place and time. It's the gospel with a street address and a first name. It is the gospel demonstrated and applied to real people, by real people.**

*Until real people with real circumstances and real sin are involved, it's all just ideas and theories.*

## Breaking of Bread...

This would be eating meals together as well as The Lord's Supper.

- We are talking about hanging out together here. Simple, but pretty uncommon these days.
- Some levels of relationship are not possible without logging lots of hours just spending time together. Even if you have a lot in common, including commitment, there is no substitute for time spent in the same space at the same time doing anything, or nothing, at all.
- **Our "get stuff done" culture is flat out at war with this necessary part of church life!**
- **WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU INVITED SOMEONE OVER FOR A MEAL IN YOUR HOME?**

*This is why we take Communion together and emphasize the "together" part so much. It's not that you can't take it alone and have it be meaningful. However, it is MEANT to be a community exercise. A gathering together around what holds us together, the death & resurrection of Jesus.*

**If a local church doesn't ever take the Lord's Supper together then it isn't meeting the minimum standard of "church". There are lots of ways to do it, with different regularity, but it must be done nonetheless.**

## The Prayers...

This is not just prayer as in a prayer meeting. This would include worship, praying in homes and other gatherings.

- Worship is central to church life. It is not the warm up to preaching, but rather it is the goal of true preaching.
- Worship is what we are made to do, it is what God most wants from us, and it is the only thing we have to offer Him of any value.
- What/Who we worship is what ultimately defines us as human beings. It defines our purpose and it defines the direction of our lives.
- **Worship keeps our eyes on the King, keeping us from drowning in the storm.**

*So worship is another necessary element of church life. A non-negotiable, that must be protected and nurtured in your own life as well as in the life of the local church.*

## Then What Was GOD Doing?

**READ verse 43-47**

We have seen now what the people were devoting themselves to. Now we are told what the Holy Spirit was doing **(perhaps in response????)**

### Awe came upon every soul...

This is more than a jaw drop. This could be translated as “reverent fear”. Some translate it simply as “fear”.

This is reverence and trembling awareness of the weight of God’s glory and His infinite mercy to us. Like Romans 11 says “Note the kindness and severity of God.”

This is something that “came upon” them by the Holy Spirit. Certainly, their devoted lifestyle was a factor, but still this is clearly a doing of the Holy Spirit.

### Many wonders and signs through the apostles...

The miracles didn’t stop with Jesus’ ascension, nor did they stop with Pentacost.

**Again, like the awe that came upon them, these miracles are being done *through* them not, *by* them.**

- Much of the teaching I hear about miracles, healing, and the Holy Spirit is infused with a kind of anxiety about doing it right.
- If not anxiety, it’s infused with mysticism under a Christian veneer.
- With Jesus, and the apostles, you don’t see either. They would simply pray in faith, and God would heal.

### Why don’t we see this now?

This is a question that haunts me quite a bit, as it does most pastors and scholars that I know.

As I study and pray over this issue, I keep coming back to **Acts 1:8**. The primary purpose of signs and wonders is to validate the gospel message being preached to those far from Christ. You will have a hard time finding much evidence of miracles being done for believers ANYWHERE in scripture.

That’s not to say that He doesn’t do that. It would be crazy to say that God doesn’t do miracles for Christians! **It’s just that I think as we have pulled the supernatural elements of Christianity under a bushel, behind closed doors, out of the sight of the lost - we have lost the plot.**

That being said, praying for healing and miracles out there among our pragmatic culture is what I struggle having faith to do the most.

## Everything in Common...

This was not a coerced generosity. We clearly see in this time that some sold all they had, some did not. Most people seem to have kept their homes.

This was HIGHLY counter-cultural. Jews did not typically take on any burden for the poor or sick in their communities, despite the Biblical commands to do so. For these early Christians to live this way would have had a tremendous impact on their culture.

In our culture, altruism is not very countercultural. However, generosity on the level of what some of these people were doing would be. However, their sense of deeply connected community and unity WOULD be very countercultural.

**One of our greatest strengths is our willingness to love anybody that comes through the door. The question for us is going to be how far does that love extend? Does it go so far as to open the door of your home and your life?**

## And the Lord Added to their number...

This is Lord as in Jesus, not Yahweh.

Jesus is adding to their number. As they lived this countercultural lifestyle of devotion, unity, generosity, and fellowship new disciples were made daily.

*Certainly, this was the work of the Holy Spirit... but who wouldn't want to be a part of this kind of community? This must have been incredibly attractive to the people of that time, especially those that were poor, needy, or otherwise on the outside of the Jewish society.*

*The same is true of us. The richer, more unified, more loving our Body becomes the attractive it will be to the world. This is what we do best. It is the most effective way that KCC will have to share the gospel with those that are far from Christ.*

**There are other ways, but this will always be the most effective.**

*Studies have shown that non-Christians say that they would go to church if someone would ask them but they will never go if no one asks them. They are waiting on an invitation.*

By Acts 4 they number around 10,000 people in all. (says that there were 5,000 men).

## Closing Thoughts

Luke does not give us all the particulars of how 10,000 people got disciplined. The logistics of that are mind boggling. What he does is tell us what the central elements were. He gives us their priorities as a Body, and attributes the rest to Jesus.

**The question for you is: "Do you share the same priorities?"**

