
Ministry of the Holy Spirit
Acts 2:42-47
Lesson 6 – Fellowship of the Believers

Acts 2:42-47 (NIV)

⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.

⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Discussion Questions

1. In vs 42 it speaks of devotion to the teachings of the apostles. The context of this word devotion means to receive the word gladly.
 - a. How would you characterize the word that goes forth in this church?
 - b. Has this word that goes forth strengthened you in any way, if so, how? Be specific.
 - c. What are some ways you can greater devote yourself to the teachings of this ministry?
2. Verse 42 also speaks of the devotion of the people to fellowship.
 - a. What is fellowship to you?
 - b. Why is fellowship so important to the church?
 - c. In what ways are you trying to foster a climate/culture of fellowship in this ministry?
3. Vs. 44 speaks to all the believers being together and had everything in common.
 - a. Please speak in your own words of what this verse means to you?
 - b. What do you feel some of the common characteristics are present in this ministry?
 - c. What can you do to continue to foster a culture of oneness and being on one accord as we worship, give, serve etc.
4. Vs. 45 speaks of everyone selling all they have to provide for anyone who was in need. Obviously with in influence of western civilization/culture in America we are far from that. However, the spirit of the verse speaks to how we serve/provide for one another and how we position the ministry to serve the community.
 - a. What do you see as your part to play in helping your fellow brother/sister in Christ physically/financially otherwise?
 - b. What is your part (physically/financially) in positioning the ministry to provide for the needs of congregants and community?
5. Vs. 46 speaks of meeting together every day in the temple courts. Akin to question above, we do not go to church every day in our culture, but this verse speaks to the importance of public worship in the lives of the early believers.
 - a. Why do you believe in the Christian culture of the United States that worship service still remains a take it or leave it proposition?
 - b. Why is worship service important for you specifically?

- c. What are you doing to enhance your worship experience and the worship experience for others who come to Third Church?

Workshop: The Lord added to their number daily. What this means that since they were on one accord and God added because of their faithfulness to God. Please speak to your individual responsibility/plan to grow this ministry and give your specific goals to achieve the growth goals for this ministry of 100 more members in 2026. (For example: Evangelism, your service in ministries, your commitment to consistent service attendance, being personally responsible for bringing 2 or more members to the church by the end of the year)

E. The First Church: Worthy Traits, 2:41-47

(2:41-47) Introduction: this is the first look at the early church. It shows us the traits that characterized the daily lives of believers. It should prick the conscience of the modern-day church.

1. **(2:41) Word of God:** the early believers were a people who received the Word gladly.

1. This is the basic trait, the very first trait of a true church. It actually defines a church. A church is a people, a body of people who have received *the Word of God*. They were not receiving...

- a set of ideas
- a man's thoughts
- a set of rules and principles
- a human philosophy
- a position
- a religion

They were receiving the Word of God, the very revelation of God Himself. God had revealed Himself in Jesus Christ to His disciples. And Peter, the spokesman for the disciples, was proclaiming the Word about Jesus Christ. God had spoken to the world through His Son Jesus Christ, and the early believers had received His Word. (See Deeper Study #1, The Word—John 1:1-5.)

2. Note the word "received." A true church, a true body of believers, does not just hear and listen to the Word. They are not just present to join the crowd and see what is going on. They do not sit with wandering minds and closed hearts. A true church receives the Word of God; they...

- welcome it
- believe it
- take it in
- practice it
- experience it
- hold on to it
- hunger for it
- joy and rejoice in it
- share it

3. Note the statement: "They that gladly received his word." Not everyone present received it. Some were there for the wrong reasons and others were closed-minded and disinterested. Still others simply refused to believe

and rejected the Word. But they who received God's Word became the very first body of believers, the first church.

4. Note that they were baptized: the idea is immediate baptism (see Deeper Study #1, Baptism—Acts 2:38 for discussion). Note also the large number: three thousand "were added" to the 120 disciples.

"Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand" (Acts 4:4).

"And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7).

"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11).

2. (2:42) **Stedfastness**: the early believers were a people who continued stedfastly in four things.

3. (2:43) **Fear, Godly— Church**: the early believers were a people who stirred souls with a godly fear. Fear (*phobias*) does not mean terror or fright. It means...

- a godly fear, a fear of God, of His displeasure and judgment.
- a holy sense of God's presence.
- a consciousness that God is working.
- a reverence for God and for what is happening.
- a sense of awe and wonder.

Note what it is that stirs the public to be so aware of God: the signs and wonders being done by the *apostles*. And note: there were *many*.

"His mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation" (Luke 1:50).

"But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:35).

"What man is he that feareth the LORD? him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose" (Psalms 25:12).

"Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!" (Psalm 31:19).

"Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God" (Isaiah 50:10).

4. (2:44-45) Church— Unity— Ministry: the early believers were a people who were together and who shared in ministry. It is critical for the church to pay close attention and heed what is being said in this point.

1. The *professing believers* were true believers. They were those "that [truly] believe" (see Deeper Study #2, Believe—John 2:24 for discussion that shows true belief is the commitment of all one *is and has*).

2. The believers were "together" (*ēsan epi to auto*^{PWS:4319}). This means they were together in the same place *because they were of the same call, mind, and purpose*. It does not mean just being in the same location and place. They would not have been *together* unless they had been of the same spirit and purpose. This is critical to God's call.

3. The believers sold their possessions and goods and used the money to minister to the poor and needy. Now note:

⇒ Why would they go to such a drastic extreme to minister? There is one critical reason: Christ commanded it. The church too often denies and ignores it, but denial of the truth does not do away with the truth.

Now note: Who are the rich and who are the poor?

⇒ A rich person is anyone who has more than what others have, more than what the vast majority of the world has.

⇒ A rich person is anyone who has anything to put back beyond meeting the true needs of his own family.

This is exactly what Christ and the Bible say time and again

In a summary statement, who is rich? A rich person is anyone who has anything beyond what he needs. What Christ demands is that we give all that we *are and have* to meet the needs of those in such desperate need. We are to hold back nothing. This is often the great complaint against Christians, that we just do not believe, not really. The evidence of our unbelief is seen in the insistence of Christ, the demand that we give all we have to feed the starving and meet the desperate needs of the poor and lost of the world. But we don't. Gandhi, the great leader of India's independence, is said to have never embraced Christianity for this very reason. How many others have rejected Christ because of our hypocrisy?

"Go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me" (Matthew 19:21).

"And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life" (Matthew 19:29).

"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:21).

"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matthew 22:39).

A final matter is this: Christ demands that we *give all we are and have* if we are to follow Him. Any attempt to *water down* what He often said fails miserably before an honest heart reading His Word

Thought 1. Just imagine how long ago the world would have been reached with the gospel if *professing* believers had been honestly committing their *total* lives to Christ, giving all they were and had to His cause of world evangelization!

DEEPER STUDY #6 (2:44-45) Stewardship— Commitment— Self-denial— Possessions

5. (2:46) **Unity**: a people who continued with one accord. (See Deeper Study #1, One Accord—Acts 1:14.)

6. (2:46-47) **Church— Worship**: a people who worshipped and praised God every day. Note five things.

1. The believers were worshipping in the temple, praying and attending the regular hours of worship and prayers (cp. Acts 3:1).

2. The believers were worshipping in their homes, moving from home to home. They were sharing together in fellowship meals and in observing the Lord's Supper, remembering their Lord's death. (See Deeper Study #1—Luke 9:4 for discussion stressing that the home was to be the center of ministry.)

3. The believers were worshipping with gladness and singleness of heart. The word "singleness" (*aphelotēti* ^{PWS: 3596}) means sincere, without hardness. Their hearts were soft and tender, easily touched and giving. There was no selfishness or withholding on their part. Where there was need, they gave.

Note their attitude was *gladness*, joy, and rejoicing. They were more than glad to worship and minister as the Lord had instructed.

Thought 1. Just imagine the radical, transformed behavior of these early believers. What could have caused such radical behavior? The proclamation of the *pure, unadulterated Word of Christ*. The giving of all we are and have is absolutely demanded.

"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23).

"Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord" (Acts 11:23).

4. The believers were praising God.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

"That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 15:6).

"For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:20).

5. The results were twofold: they gained favor with the people, and the Lord added souls to the church. Note the word "saved" (*sōzomenous*^{PWS:3376}). It is in the present tense, "such as were being saved." Salvation is a present experience of the believer as well as past and future (see Deeper Study #1—1 Cor. 1:18 for discussion). The idea is that those who were being saved were being added to the church day by day.

"Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand" (Acts 4:4).

"And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women" (Acts 5:14).

"And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7).

"And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord" (Acts 11:21).

DEEPER STUDY #1

(2:42) **Continued stedfastly** (*esan proskarterountes*^{PWS:764}): to continue, persevere, endure, stick, persist. A person does not quit, back off, fade away, or slip back. He continues on stedfastly.

DEEPER STUDY #2

(2:42) **In doctrine** (*didachē*^{PWS:1141}): the teaching, the instruction of the apostles. This would include both what Christ taught and His death and resurrection and ascension or exaltation. It would be the same teaching and instructions...

- that are shared in the New Testament.
- that the disciples wrote to various churches and bodies of believers.

The teaching would be no different. There is only one message, only one Word that saves and roots and grounds people in the Lord—the Word of God Himself, the message of the New Testament. On the day of Pentecost, the persons who were saved needed to be grounded in the faith. And the only message that could ground them was the message found in the New Testament. It was that message, that doctrine they were taught.

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:19-20).

"Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things" (Luke 24:45-48).

Thought 1. Note a striking fact: we can be saved and rooted and grounded in the *very same message*. God has given us the very same doctrines and instructions to root and ground us. We can have a true, dynamic apostolic experience and maturity in the Lord. We can grow and know the Lord as intimately as the early believers knew the Lord. In fact, we come short if we do not, for we have the very same doctrine, teachings, and instructions that they had.

DEEPER STUDY #3

(2:42) **Fellowship**: the fellowship wrought by the Spirit of God means more than the association existing in secular groups such as civic clubs and community bodies. There is a vast difference between *community participation* and *spiritual participation*. *Community participation* is based upon neighborly association. *Spiritual participation* is based upon a spiritual union wrought by the Spirit of God.

The distinctiveness is this: the Holy Spirit is within the Christian believer. The Holy Spirit creates a spiritual union by melting and molding the heart of the Christian believer to the hearts of other believers. He attaches the life of one believer to the lives of other believers. Through the Spirit of God, believers become one in life and

purpose. They have a joint life sharing their blessings and needs and gifts together. Note several things about fellowship that are taught by this passage.

1. Fellowship is being experienced by the new believers because they join other Christians in learning the Scriptures (apostles' teachings) and in worship (prayers and celebrating the Lord's Supper, Acts 2:41-42).
2. Fellowship forbids an unattached Christian life. Their fellowship is maintained because they "continue steadfastly" in the Scriptures and in worship. An unattached Christian life is just impossible.
 - a. Christianity is first an individual matter, but then it becomes a social matter. The Christian is attached to Christ individually, but he is also attached to other believers. He walks with other believers in the Scriptures and in worship.
 - b. Christianity is first a spiritual organism, but then it becomes a spiritual organization. The Christian has an *inward life*, but he also takes on an *outward form* of life. He becomes a living organization with other Christian believers. He sits at the feet of the apostles' teaching and joins right in with other Christians as they worship together.
 - c. Christianity makes the true believer a saint (one who is set apart unto God), but Christianity is made up of *saints*—plural. Christianity is not just one person; Christianity is many persons—*saints*. The word is often used in the New Testament, but it is never used in the singular. Christianity is Christianity because the saints *study the Scriptures together and worship together*.
 - d. Christianity demands that a believer personally live out such virtues as kindness, longsuffering, and love; but the believer can do this only in association with others.
 - e. Christianity means that the Spirit of God has entered the believer's life, but it also means that the Spirit of God has placed the believer into a corporate body (the church), into Christian society itself. The Spirit of God indwells the corporate body of believers as well as the individual (see note—' 1 Cor. 3:16).

3. Spiritual fellowship faces two dangers.

- a. Fellowship and society can be over-emphasized—to the point that individual salvation is missed. An individual must "receive His word" (Acts 2:41).
- b. Individual salvation and individual worship, whether through nature or by any other means, can be overly stressed—to the point that Christian fellowship and society can be missed (Acts 2:42; see note—' Hebrews 10:25).

"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42).

"So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another" (Romans 12:5).

"For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread" (1 Cor. 10:17).

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

DEEPER STUDY #4

(2:42) **Lord's Supper:** the phrase "breaking of bread" means the early believers observed and remembered the Lord's death. They set aside some time to observe what churches call communion, or the Lord's Supper, or the Eucharist. Note they observed the Lord's Supper daily (Acts 2:46). Why did they observe it so often?

1. The Lord's Supper was the one ordinance Christ had given to symbolize His death. And it was His death that had saved them. Because of His death, they were now...

- reconciled to God.
- in fellowship with God.
- made new creatures in God.
- infilled with the Spirit of God.
- bearing all the fruit of God (Galatians 5:22-23).

All they now were and had was due to the death of Christ. They wanted to remember and thank God for His great love demonstrated in the death of His Son, and to do it often.

2. The Lord had commanded His followers to observe the Lord's Supper often.

Thought 1. What an indictment against so many of us who observe the Lord's Supper so little! We can, of course, remember and concentrate upon the death of Christ without the symbol of the Supper. *But* Christ gave us the ordinance and commanded that we use it as the primary symbol to show His death until He comes (1 Cor. 11:26).

"This do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24-25).

"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he comes" (1 Cor. 11:26).

"And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many" (Mark 14:22-24).

DEEPER STUDY #5

(2:42) **Prayer:** the early believers were a people who persevered in prayer—the idea is church prayer, united prayer with the whole body of believers.

1. Through prayer they were brought into the most intimate fellowship and presence of God. They could get no closer to God than when they were *drawing nigh* to God through prayer.

"The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth" (Psalm 145:18).

"But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works" (Psalm 73:28).

"For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God" (Hebrews 7:19).

"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20).

2. Through prayer they received things from God. They received His provision for both their souls and lives.

"And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matthew 21:22).

"Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:24).

DEEPER STUDY #6

(2:44-45) **Stewardship— Commitment— Self-denial— Possessions**: Christ demands that we give Him all we *are and have to enter heaven*. This is the reason the early believers gave what they had to meet the needs of the world. Christ had demanded it of the rich young ruler and *of His disciples* (see outline— Matthew 19:23-26; note— Matthew 19:23-26; outline— Matthew 19:27-30; and note— Matthew 19:27-30).

In our struggle to protect the glorious truth that man is saved by grace and grace alone, we often forget and neglect another great truth: to *follow* Christ is to serve and minister to our neighbor. To follow Christ is to deny self completely, all that we are as well as all that we have (see note— Luke 9:23 and Deeper Study #1—Luke 9:23). When we love our neighbor as ourselves, then we show that we truly love God. If we do not love and minister to our neighbor (above self), then we do not love God.

When we deny self by giving all we are and have (1 John 4:20), then and only then do we receive heaven and the treasure of heaven. To deny self, to give all we are and have is a hard saying, but Christ demands it. Our attempts to soften it do not annul His demand (see Deeper Study #1—Romans 3:3).

It is love of the world that makes us unwilling to give up the possessions we have obtained (comfort, esteem, recognition, power, position). By refusing to take and give what we have, we make the fatal mistake of showing (demonstrating)...

- that we love the things of the world more than we love people; that we prefer hoarding and extravagance, living sumptuously and comfortably to helping those who are so needful, so desperately needful. (See note— Luke 16:19-21 for a discussion of what happened to the rich man who lived sumptuously.)
- that we love the world more than we love the hope of eternal life.
- that we love the position, recognition, esteem, and power of the world's possessions more than we love Christ.

Now note a critical fact that we must heed: this point is often made a point of controversy. Men use every explanation possible to ease their consciences and to keep from having to give everything. There is a reason for this, and it is this that is so critical. Possessions pull a person away from God. It is difficult for a person who has possessions to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Why? There is a lure, an attraction, a force, a power, a pull that reaches out and draws any of us who look at or possess wealth. There are pulls so forceful that they will enslave and doom any man who banks and hoards and fails to turn and embrace God.

1. Possessions create the big "I" (cp. Matthew 19:16, 20). The man who *has possessions* is usually looked up to, esteemed, honored, and envied. Possessions bring position, power, recognition. They boost ego, and make a person self-sufficient and independent in this world. As a result there is a tendency for the rich person to feel independent and self-sufficient, that he needs nothing. And in such an atmosphere and world of thought, God is forgotten. It is forgotten that there are things that money cannot buy and events from which money cannot save. Peace, love, joy—all that really matters within the spirit of man—can never be bought. Neither can money save a person from disaster, disease, accident, or death—the trials that are sure to come upon all.

2. Possessions tend to make one hoard (cp. Matthew 19:21). The Bible lays down the principle of handling money for all men, even for the poor:

"Let him labor...that he may have to give to him that needeth" (Ephes. 4:28).

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself " (Matthew 19:19; Matthew 22:39).

The world reels in desperate need. People are starving, sick, unhoused, and unclothed by the millions. Teeming millions are spiritually lost and without God in this world, and they are doomed to die without ever knowing Him. When any of us sit still and objectively look at the world in its desperate plight, we ask: "How in this world can any man hoard and not help—even to the last available penny? Why would any man keep more than what he needs for himself and his family?"

As God looks at any man who banks and hoards, He is bound to ask the same question. In fact, His questions are bound to be more pointed and forceful. This is exactly what Christ said to the rich young ruler:

"Go and sell [all] that thou hast; and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me" (Matthew 19:21).

Riches tend to make a man selfish. For some unexplainable reason, the more we get, the more we want. When we taste the things of this world and become comfortable, we tend to fear losing our possessions. We struggle to keep what we have and to get more. True, many are willing to make contributions, but only a certain amount, an amount that will not lower their overall estate or standing or level of comfort and possessions. There are few who give all to Christ, all they are and all they have to meet the needs of the world.

As Christ said, it is very difficult for the rich (meaning those who have anything in comparison with most of the world) to enter heaven. If we do not have compassion and take care of our brothers (fellow man) when they are in desperate need, how can we expect God to have compassion and take care of us when we face the desperate need for heaven? It is foolish to think that a loving and just God will meet our need for eternal life when we would not meet the need of our fellow man for physical life. The rich (all of us who have anything in comparison with the rest of the world) have the means to help and to save human life, if we only would.

3. Possessions attach a person to the world (cp. Matthew 19:22). Possessions enable a person to buy things that...

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|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| • make him comfortable | • challenge his mental pursuit |
| • please his taste | • stimulate his flesh |
| • stir his ego | |

- expand his experience
- stretch his self-image

If a man centers his life upon the things of the world, his attention is on the world and not on God. He tends to become wrapped up in securing more and in protecting what he has. Too often, he gives little if any time and thought to heavenly matters. Wealth and the things it can provide within this world can and usually do consume the rich.

"Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth" (Luke 12:33).

"I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

"Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality" (Romans 12:13).

"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10).

"That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate" (1 Tim. 6:18).

"But to do good and to communicate [give] forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Hebrews 13:16).

Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible - Commentary - The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – Acts.