

The Book of Acts

Lesson 5: The Life of the First Church -- Acts 2:42-47

The crowds have gone home. The sermon is preached, the three thousand are baptized, and now comes the question every new movement eventually faces: what now? It is one thing to be born; it is another to learn how to live. In these few verses Luke pulls back the curtain and lets us watch the newborn church take its first breaths, and what we see is breathtaking in its simplicity.

There are no programs here, no buildings, no budgets. There is a people, freshly forgiven and full of wonder, who simply cannot get enough of God or of one another. They devote themselves to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. They gather in the temple and they gather in homes. They eat together with glad and generous hearts. When someone has a need, someone else quietly meets it.

Luke says awe came upon every soul. These were people who had just discovered that the tomb was empty and their sins were forgiven, and the wonder of it spilled into everything. Worship was not a duty squeezed into a busy week; it was the air they breathed. Generosity was not a campaign; it was the natural overflow of hearts that had received grace. Their life together was beautiful enough that the watching city took notice.

And quietly, in the middle of it all, Luke drops the most important line: the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. The church was not growing because of clever marketing or charismatic personalities. The Lord Himself was adding the saved to His body. This little snapshot is more than ancient history; it is a mirror held up to every congregation, asking whether we still recognize ourselves in it.

Group Discussion: Luke says the first believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer (v. 42). Which of these four do you think is most easily neglected by churches today, and why?

Personal Reflection: The early Christians were so full of joy and wonder that their faith spilled into every part of life (vv. 46-47). When was the last time your faith felt like wonder rather than routine, and what do you think makes the difference?

Read Acts 2:42-47

Study Questions

1. Luke says the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers (v. 42). What do these four devotions reveal about the foundation and priorities of the Lord's church?

2. The first believers gave themselves wholeheartedly to teaching, fellowship, worship, and prayer (v. 42). Looking honestly at your own life, which of these four are you genuinely devoted to, and which has become thin or occasional? What would deeper devotion require of you?
3. Among the church's devotions was the breaking of bread (vv. 42, 46). What is the significance of the Lord's Supper, and what does the New Testament show us about its place in the worship of the church?
4. The early Christians broke bread and worshiped with glad and sincere hearts (vv. 46-47). When you come to worship and to the Lord's table, what is the actual condition of your heart? What helps you engage with God rather than going through the motions?
5. Luke describes the believers sharing what they had, selling possessions to meet the needs among them (vv. 44-45). What does this reveal about Christian fellowship and generosity, and how is this voluntary sharing different from a forced or compelled system?
6. The first believers held their possessions loosely and shared freely so that no one among them was in need (vv. 44-45). How tightly do you hold what you have? Where is God inviting you to open your hands more generously toward others in His family?
7. Luke concludes that the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved (v. 47). What does it mean that the Lord, and not human effort, adds the saved to the church, and what does this teach us about the relationship between salvation and the church?
8. The early church was so full of joy, love, and generosity that it had favor with all the people, and the Lord kept adding to it (vv. 46-47). What part are you playing in the life and witness of your congregation? Are you adding to its joy and health, or merely consuming?
9. Taken together, these verses paint a portrait of the New Testament church: devoted to apostolic teaching, gathered for worship, bound in fellowship, generous, prayerful, and added to by the Lord (vv. 42-47). What does this passage teach us about the nature and pattern of the Lord's church, and why does it matter that we follow the New Testament pattern rather than reinventing the church to suit ourselves?
10. Look back across this portrait of the first church, its devotion, worship, fellowship, generosity, and joy. Name one specific way the Lord is calling you to help your congregation look more like the church of Acts 2, and what is one step you will take this week.

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Acts 20:7, the disciples gathering on the first day of the week to break bread; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, the institution and meaning of the Lord's Supper; Hebrews 10:24-25, not neglecting to meet together but stirring one another to love; 2 Corinthians 9:6-8, the cheerful giver whom God loves; Ephesians 4:11-16, the body built up as each part works