

**Text: Acts 2:42-47**

**Title: “Our Life Together”**

Before I get started I want to thank you for your kind expressions in the death of my mother yesterday. Just two weeks ago she was admitted to the hospital after a fall and her condition quickly deteriorated. In times like these I'm truly grateful for the hope we have in Jesus Christ and the sweet support from our family of faith. But on a happier note, I want to give thanks to God for His bountiful blessings on our church last week. Last Sunday was Harvest Day, and we were blessed with a harvest in more ways than one. Financially it was a great harvest. We didn't have the complete report at the printing of the worship folder, but our total giving for last week was over \$357,000 including gifts to budget, Harvest Day and other needs as you can see. But it didn't stop there. At the end of the day the Lord had added to our church 22 new members (as you can see on the back of the worship folder). Let's express our gratitude to God with a clap offering.

Now open your Bibles to Acts 2:41. We're thinking these days about how we as individuals and as a church can yield to the unstoppable power of the Holy Spirit. And we learn to do that from our spiritual ancestors here in the book of Acts. Again, this is not just what God used to do ... it is what God still wants to do in us and through us as we are filled with the Spirit of God.

**Acts 2:41 - Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.**

What a day when 3000 people became passionate followers of Jesus Christ who were added to the church! And what we have in the next verses is a description of how, as a result of the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost, thousands of people became the Spirit-filled body of Christ. We see the evidence of the presence and the power of the Spirit of Jesus in this group of people. And this is what it looks like: **Read Acts 2:42-47.**

**PHOTO - ILLUSTRATION** – Some of you are familiar with the Duggar family and watch their television show. The Duggars consist of the parents Jim Bob and Michelle and their 19 children—nine girls and ten boys (including two sets of twins), all of whose names begin with the letter “J”: There's Joshua, Jana, John, Jill, Jessa, Jinger (with a J), Joseph, Josiah, Joy-Anna, Jedidiah, Jeremiah, Jason, James, Justin, Jackson, Johannah, Jennifer, Jordyn-Grace, and Josie. And now, three of the children have gotten married, and there are three grandchildren. Can you imagine what their household must be like every day? But actually they're a very strong Christian family, and God has used the unusual size of their family to open many doors for them to share their testimony and the love of Christ that pervades their family. You see the Duggars raise their children using a buddy system, where an older sibling is assigned to a younger sibling. They help them with their homework and practicing their music. They play games with them or help them pick out the clothes for that day. They're a big, happy family.

What we see in Acts 2 is that God is giving birth to a big family ... the church. Acts 2:41 says that three thousand new believers were added to the church in one day. Acts 2:47 says that the Lord was adding to their number daily those who were being saved. Between these verses is a description of how they lived together as a big, happy family, at least at the start. So we have a family photo of what our life together as the Spirit-filled people of God should look like. First there is...

## 1. THE WORD WE RECEIVE (Acts 2:42,43)

### **Acts 2:42a - They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching...**

After thousands were saved at Pentecost the Holy Spirit opened a school in Jerusalem, taught by the apostles and attended by these new believers. When it says they “devoted themselves” we’re talking about something that is done with intense effort. And it wasn’t just a sporadic thing. Literally they “continued to devote themselves” to what the apostles had to say about Jesus. They had a steady, daily diet of the teaching of the apostles, which is essentially what we have in our New Testament. The Word of God was at the center of the life of the people of God. They sat at the apostle’s feet, hungry to receive instruction in the truth of Jesus.

This is critical. All believers need to be established in their faith and grounded in the Word of God, but particularly new believers. In our Bible classes and our worship services and the other gatherings we have as a church, the Word of God must be at the center.

And we can be sure that what these followers of Jesus learned when they gathered, they took home with them and continued to discuss with their families and in their own private walk with God.

Now the apostle’s word carried authority because they had been commissioned by Christ Himself to convey the truth to the church. The authority of the apostles was established by the miracles they performed. We’ll see more of them later, but ...

### **Acts 2:43 - Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.**

The reason God authenticated the apostles’ message with these miracles is to cause us to listen carefully and to take it seriously. So they submitted to the teaching of the apostles, which is what we have in our New Testament, because they knew it was the very word of God to them, and they trembled at it. Literally, “awe came upon every soul.” Stop to think about this. What would our church look like if, as we open our Bibles, we all lived with this trembling sense of awe of Almighty God?

So there is the Word we receive and there is...

## 2. THE WALK WE SHARE (Acts 2:42,44-45)

### **Acts 2:42b - They devoted themselves ... to the fellowship...**

When we think about fellowship what usually comes to mind is getting together for some punch and cookies, or maybe a meal. And there was a place for that in the Acts church, as we’ll see in moment. But what is packaged in this word “fellowship” is dynamite-powerful. In fact, it’s outright radical. The word “fellowship” means to have things in common and to share with each other. And here’s the way it looked immediately after the Holy Spirit formed and filled the early church:

**Acts 2:44-45 - All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.**

The first illustration of this fellowship is that these new believers were so filled with the love of Jesus and so connected with each other that if one was in need the others did not feel they had the right to selfishly cling to their own stuff without giving up something to help the ones in need. So they would sell possessions and use the money to meet the needs of others.

**ILLUSTRATION** –A few weeks ago we talked about giving God a blank check for our life and our future. That week I got a letter from a lady in our church who had scheduled a cosmetic procedure that she had wanted for a long time. But the Spirit of God impressed upon her that that was a bit of a luxury in light of the overwhelming need that surrounds us in our world. She and her husband agreed that money would be better spent on the Kingdom of God. That’s what it this fellowship looks like.

We’ll see it later in Acts 4 where it says...

**Acts 4:34 - There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales**

**Acts 4:35 - and put it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.**

And this is hard for those of us in American churches that are so immersed in the materialistic culture of our age. We think first about our own comfort and convenience because we are more conformed to the spirit of the world than we are to the Spirit of Christ.

**1 John 3:17 - If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?**

So in this family photo of the church there is the Word we receive and the walk we share, but also there is...

### **3. THE WORSHIP WE GIVE (Acts 2:42, 46-47)**

**Acts 2:42 - They devoted themselves ... to the breaking of bread and to prayer.**

In this little phrase we get a glimpse inside the worship of the church. Luke later adds ...

**Acts 2:46 - 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,**

The “breaking of bread” that’s mentioned in v.42 and v.46 scholars believe probably refers to sharing in the highest act of worship for believers ... the Lord's Supper. But it was done in the context of sharing a meal together as believers. So their fellowship gave way to Christ-exalting worship. When it says they “ate together with glad and sincere hearts” it means that this fellowship and togetherness all revolved around Jesus. It was such a precious thing to them that their hearts overflowed with joy and love in the Lord.

Listen, this doesn't just happen automatically. We must *determine* that we are going to gather with the people of God regularly. We must *determine* that Jesus Christ is going to be at the center of our gathering. He will be the primary topic of our conversation. We must *determine* that when we come for Sunday Bible Study, worship services, class fellowships, team meetings or whatever brings us together we will do so with "glad and sincere hearts" overflowing with the love and joy of the Lord.

And prayer was an important part of this. It says...

**Acts 2:42 - They devoted themselves ... to prayer.**

When they connected with one another they connected with God. When they met together they met God. The word "prayer" is in the plural which means that it was not an isolated incident but a consistent ministry of the church. And, by the way, we're following this example as we begin to meet together for the first of our monthly prayer gatherings called An Evening of Prayer and Praise, starting on November 30.

So they met together in different places and at different times. They met in temple courts and in their homes. There were times that they were all together and times that they were in smaller groups. But whenever and wherever they met it says that they were...

**Acts 2:47 - praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.**

And as this supernatural life happened among them it was a powerful witness to the Gospel which leads to the last glimpse of the church here in these verses ...

**4. THE WITNESS WE SPREAD (Acts 2:47)**

**Acts 2:47b - And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.**

In spite of the sweet life they shared together as believers, they never forgot that the Holy Spirit is a missionary Spirit who forms a missionary church. They never lost sight of non-believers around them. The message of Acts is that God is on an unstoppable quest to take the Gospel to the nations. The Holy Spirit is given to the church to accomplish something in the church that results in a powerful witness to the world.

**ILLUSTRATION** – So much of what happens in churches today is that we are fishing out of each other's aquariums. We're going after fish that have already been caught. We need to do our fishing in the great ocean of lostness that is all around us.

Notice that no one was added to the church who wasn't first saved. Since salvation is a work of God, it is God who adds people to the church. And this was happening daily. Just as their worship was daily, so was their witness. The way the church shared life together was a powerful testimony to the Gospel, and to the truth of God. And this is exactly what Jesus prayed for in...

**John 17:23 - I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.**

**ILLUSTRATION** - So if someone had their iPhone shooting video of these gatherings they would see believers gathered and focused intently on the teaching of the apostles (which we have in the New Testament). The video would capture a look on their faces and the tone of their voices that reflected a sense of awe and wonder before God as each week they saw God at work all around them. The video would capture people emptying their pockets and their purses to give away things that could be sold to help other people in need. With the video camera running it would capture the times there was a “flash mob” at the temple where they assembled among the other Jews and lifted their praises to King Jesus. Then it would show them retreating to homes and other places where they huddled to share and pray together. Again, the video would capture the looks on their faces and the joy in their voices that showed they were happy in Jesus. And inevitably the video would capture men and women, young people and old people stepping forward to say, “Where does this love and joy come from? I want what you have.” And day by day people were saved and added to Christ and His church. That video is a video of us. This is our family video.