

“Exemplified!”

Acts 2:42-47

February 8, 2015

Intro: Have you ever researched your family tree?

...ever researched your DNA?

Today... we will do a little bit of a hybrid of the two...

Review:

A. **Ch.1 = Equipped!**

1. Vision, Fusion, Mission (and Ascension)
2. Unified – “of one accord”
 - a. Joyful, faithful obedience/worship
 - b. Prayer
 - c. Waiting

B. **Ch. 2 =** (amongst most important chapters...)

1. Empowered! (v.1-13)
2. Explained, Exalted, Exhorted (v.14-41)

T/S: TODAY = Exemplified! (v.42-47)

Big Idea:

Our past (Acts 2) should INFORM, INSPECT, & INSPIRE our present and future...

Preview:

- A. v.42a = *Divine DNA*
- B. v.42b-47a = *Divine Discipleship*
- C. v.47b = *Divine Development*

Context: Acts 2:40-41

40And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.” **41**So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

REMEMBER:

God has a power-filled people...
and a purposed-plan... the Church!

&

The Church is here...
to finish what Christ started.

T/S: The KEY to realize & remember is we will be focusing on the original 120 + the new 3,000 in vv.42-47

T/S: Ok... let's unpack the passage!

v.42

I. (3) DNA Strands...

Inform *(they/Church defined)*

Inspect (*devoted?*)

Inspired (*internally motivated*)

T/S:

POWERFUL “DNA” QUOTE:

To fail to exclude unbelievers from the fellowship of the church is a grave error. Only disunity and dissension can result when those who serve Christ try to work in harmony with those who serve Satan.

Additionally, to design the activities of the church to appeal to unbelievers, or to allow them to play a major role in the life of the church, is to give them a false sense of security. The result for them may be eternal tragedy. The church must reach out in love to those who do not know Christ. It must never, however, let them feel that they are a part of the fellowship until they come to faith in Christ.

...And no evangelistic purpose should ever be undertaken that alters what the church is by divine design—**an assembly of saved worshipers pursuing holiness and spiritual service.**

*** See Mark Dever’s message:

42 *And they devoted themselves...*

A. **“they”** =

- New Christians
- Spirit-filled
- “Church”
 - Body “parts” of whole...
 - Swatches of the Quilt

*** Define & Defend Church...

“synagogue of Satan” ([Rev. 2:9; 3:9](#))

BEWARE...

I appeal to/urge you, brethren, to take note of those who create dissensions and difficulties, in opposition to the doctrine which you have been taught; avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. ([Rom. 16:17-18](#))

ALL Christians are to “strive to excel in building up the church” ([1 Cor. 14:12](#))

“I will build my church” ([Matt. 16:18](#)).

B. **“devoted”** = (SPIRIT empowered devotion)

No superficial, wishy-washy walks or worship!

"Devoting" = “of one accord” [1:14](#)

C. **“themselves”** = (voluntary commitment)

*** came WANTING to learn!

*** **NOTE: Ugandan Discipleship process...**

- * **First: Gospel (Stickman)**
- * **Second: Biblical Worldview (JDP)**
- * **Third: How to Study the Bible**

to the apostles' teaching

(3) Keys... (apostle's – truth – taught)

1. **“apostle's” =**
 - a. Set apart...
 - b. Sent out...
 - c. Trustworthy...

2. TRUTH (implied)
3. “teaching” =
 - a. DOCTRINE (matters!)
 - b. “Equipping” (vs. informing)

QUOTE:

The first sign of a Spirit-filled church is one in which the Spirit-filled people do not flee from Scripture and seek a substitute for it but are driven to it to have their spiritual lives rooted and grounded in the Word of God.

- R.C. Sproul

CAUTION!!!

We are told by the polls that the primary reason people come to church on Sunday morning is to enjoy fellowship with their Christian friends. What motivates people to come to church is not worship but fellowship.

NOTE: I have seen this in our ministry...

(2 Tim. 2:2)

***"My people are destroyed for
lack of knowledge"
([Hos. 4:6](#)).***

**The church cannot operate on truth
it is not taught...**

and the fellowship, ("koinonia")

**Fellowship is the spiritual duty of believers to
stimulate each other to holiness and faithfulness.**

More than blessing... RESPONSIBILITY!!!

**Hebrews 10:24-25 charges believers to "*consider how to
stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our
own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but
encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day
drawing near.*"**

1. Supernatural UNITY

- “one another” verses...
- Ephesians = commanded!
- **John 17 = priestly prayer**
 - a. See prayer answered...
 - b. See prayer empowered! (v.47)

2. One-ness of purpose & priority

2. **MP - “Package Platoon”**

3. SEMINARY living at Southern (should BE Church)

Koinonia = "*the fellowship of the Holy Spirit*" (**2 Cor. 13:14**)

to the breaking of (the) bread

A. “THE bread” = Lord’s Supper...

1. REMEMBERING (per Jesus)
 - Sovereign KING (Acts 2:23)
 - Sacrificed CHRIST
2. REPENTING
 - Purifies the “Church”
 - Unifies the Church

KOINONIA = our participation in the blood and body of Christ when we partake of the cup and the bread at the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 10:16).

- B. Also lays groundwork for “Agape Meals”

and the prayers.

- A. Early Church = church of prayer!
- B. Today... very few are committed to prayer
- C. Prayer = part of P. S.W.O.R.D.

Jesus brought “ABBA” & Intimacy...
Now empowered by the Spirit!

***43* And awe came upon every soul,**

- A. Reverent fear...

- B. Holy terror...
- C. Knowing in the presence of GOD
- D. "every soul" = ALL impacted!
- E. God's power & presence cannot go un-noticed!

T/S: NOTICE... sequence of events...

...and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.

- A. "AWE" comes before miracles...
- B. God's people changed = AWE...
- C. Miracles in ministry = point to MESSIAH!

44And all who believed were together

TRUE "family" & friends!

Doing life together... BE-ing together!

and had all things in common.

Oneness of purpose & priority (i.e. Charlie)

45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.

NOT communism or socialism....

Rather... true CHRISTIANITY!

46 And day by day,

NOT Sunday but EVERY-day!

attending the temple together

Place of evangelism & persecution...

Going on... BE-ing MISSIONAL together!

See Acts 26:18... = **LIFEwithoutChrist.com**

(I am sending you [Paul])... and HE is sending us....

“to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.”

and breaking bread in their homes,

- a. Hospitality & Koinonia go hand in hand like time & truth. – JDP

- b. Hospitality is both the seed AND fruit of koinonia. – JDP

If the temple was the place of witness,
homes were the place for fellowship.

they received their food with glad and generous hearts,

Truly grateful people... = meal prayers

47praising God

When God's people come together and enjoy fellowship, "praising God" is the natural result ([v. 47a](#)). True fellowship focuses on God and helps people to remember the good things he has done, which, in turn, causes praise.

and having favor with all the people.

People tend to like humble love...

Stephen shows... NOT always or forever...

***And the Lord added to their number
day by day***

Ultimately, God is the evangelist.

Paul wrote, "*I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow*" ([1 Cor. 3:6-7](#)).

those who were being saved.

QUOTE:

This church, though not having any cultural elements of success, no worldly strategies, was still endowed with every necessary component for accomplishing the purposes of its Lord.

The church will still be effective in bringing sinners to Christ when it manifests the same key elements of spiritual duty that marked this first fellowship.

- Warren Wiersbe

CLOSE:

So unified, joyful, and Spirit-filled were they that their very existence was a powerful testimony to the truth of the gospel.

True evangelism flows from the life of a healthy church.

"BE-ing brings on BE-lieving." - JDP

NOTES:

“Exemplified!”

Acts 2:42-47

February 8, 2015

See Wayne Grudem’s “Doctrine of the Church”

Ch. 44: The Church: Its Nature, Its Marks, and Its Purposes

What is necessary to make a church? How can we recognize a true church? The purposes of the church

Explanation and Scriptural Basis

A. The Nature of the Church

1. Definition: The Church Is the Community of All True Believers for All Time

This definition understands the church to be made of all those who are truly saved. Paul says, “Christ loved *the church* and gave himself up for her” ([Eph. 5:25](#)). Here the term “the church” is used to apply to all those whom Christ died to redeem, all those who are saved by the death of Christ. But that must include all true believers for all time, both believers in the New Testament age and believers in the Old Testament age as well. [

Jesus Christ himself builds the church by calling his people to himself. He promised, “I will build my church” ([Matt. 16:18](#)). And Luke is careful to tell us that the growth of the church came not by human effort alone, but that “*the Lord* added to their number day by day those who were being saved” ([Acts 2:47](#)).

But this process whereby Christ builds the church is just a continuation of the pattern established by God in the Old Testament whereby he called people to himself to be a worshiping assembly before him. There are several indications *in the Old Testament* that God thought of his people as a “church,” a people assembled for the purpose of worshiping God. When Moses tells the people that the Lord said to him, “*Gather the people to me* that I may let them hear my words, so that they may learn to fear me all the days that they live upon the earth...” ([Deut. 4:10](#)), the Septuagint translates the word for “gather” (Heb. [לָקַח](#), [H7735](#)) with the Greek term ἐκκλησιάζω “to summon an assembly,” the verb that is cognate to the New Testament noun ἐκκλησία ([G1711](#)) “church.”

And the author of Hebrews quotes Christ as saying that he would sing praise to God in the midst of the great assembly of God’s people in heaven: “In the midst of the church (ἐκκλησία) I will sing praise to you” (Heb. 2:12, author’s translation, quoting Ps. 22:22).

Therefore the author of Hebrews understands the present-day Christians who constitute the church on earth to be surrounded by a great “cloud of witnesses” (Heb. 12:1) that reaches back into the earliest eras of the Old Testament and includes Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets (Heb. 11:4-32). All these “witnesses” surround the present-day people of God, and it seems only appropriate that they, together with the New Testament people of God, should be thought of as God’s great spiritual “assembly” or “church.” Moreover, later in chapter 12 the author of Hebrews says that when New Testament Christians worship we come into the presence of “the assembly (lit. “church,” Gk. ἐκκλησία, [G1711](#)) of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven.”

2. The Church Is Invisible, yet Visible

In its true spiritual reality as the fellowship of all genuine believers, the church is invisible. This is because we cannot see the spiritual condition of people's hearts. We can see those who outwardly attend the church, and we can see outward evidences of inward spiritual change, but we cannot actually see into people's hearts and view their spiritual state—only God can do that. This is why Paul says, “*The Lord knows those who are his*” ([2 Tim. 2:19](#)).

When Paul writes his epistles he writes to the visible church in each community: “To the *church* of God which is at Corinth” ([1 Cor. 1:2](#)); “To the *church* of the Thessalonians” ([1 Thess. 1:1](#)); “To Philemon... and Apphia... and Archippus... and the *church* in your house” ([Philem. 1-2](#)). Paul certainly realized that there were unbelievers in some of those churches, some who had made a profession of faith that was not genuine, who appeared to be Christians but would eventually fall away. Yet neither Paul nor anyone else could tell with certainty who those people were. Paul simply wrote to the entire church that met together in any one place. In this sense, we could say today that the visible church is the group of people who come together each week to worship as a church and profess faith in Christ.

The visible church throughout the world will always include some unbelievers, and individual congregations will usually include some unbelievers, because we cannot see hearts as God sees them. Paul speaks of “Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have swerved from the truth” and who “are upsetting the faith of some” ([2 Tim. 2:17-18](#)). But he is confident that “The Lord knows those who are his” ([2 Tim. 2:19](#)). Paul says with sorrow, “Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica” ([2 Tim. 4:10](#)).

Similarly, Paul warns the Ephesian elders that after his departure “fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and *from among*

your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them” ([Acts 20:29-30](#)). Jesus himself warned, “Beware of false prophets, *who come to you in sheep’s clothing* but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits” ([Matt. 7:15-16](#)). Realizing this distinction between the church invisible and the church visible, Augustine said of the visible church, “Many sheep are without and many wolves are within.”

3. The Church Is Local and Universal

In the New Testament the word “church” may be applied to a group of believers at any level, ranging from a very small group meeting in a private home all the way to the group of all true believers in the universal church. A “house church” is called a “church” in [Romans 16:5](#) (“greet also *the church in their house*”), [1 Corinthians 16:19](#) (“Aquila and Prisca, together with *the church in their house* send you hearty greetings in the Lord”). The church in an entire city is also called “a church” ([1 Cor. 1:2](#); [2 Cor. 1:1](#); and [1 Thess. 1:1](#)). The church in a region is referred to as a “church” in [Acts 9:31](#): “So *the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria* had peace and was built up.” Finally, the church throughout the entire world can be referred to as “the church.” Paul says, “Christ loved *the church* and gave himself up for her” ([Eph. 5:25](#))

4. Metaphors for the Church.

To help us understand the nature of the church, Scripture uses a wide range of metaphors and images to describe to us what the church is like.

Body of Christ, Family, Bride, Branches, Olive Tree, Harvest, Building, Temple, God's Priests, God's House, "the pillar & bulwark of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15)

Each of the metaphors used for the church can help us to appreciate more of the richness of privilege that God has given us by incorporating us into the church. The fact that the church is like a family should increase our love and fellowship with one another. The thought that the church is like the bride of Christ should stimulate us to strive for greater purity and holiness, and also greater love for Christ and submission to him. The image of the church as branches in a vine should cause us to rest in him more fully. The idea of an agricultural crop should encourage us to continue growing in the Christian life and obtaining for ourselves and others the proper spiritual nutrients to grow. The picture of the church as God's new temple should increase our awareness of God's very presence dwelling in our midst as we meet. The concept of the church as a priesthood should help us to see more clearly the delight God has in the sacrifices of praise and good deeds that we offer to him (see [Heb. 13:15-16](#)). The metaphor of the church as the body of Christ should increase our interdependence on one another and our appreciation of the diversity of gifts within the body.

5. The Church and Israel

James can write a general letter to many early Christian churches and say that he is writing "To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion" ([James](#)

[1:1](#)). This indicates that he is evidently viewing New Testament Christians as the successors to and fulfillment of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Peter also speaks in the same way. From the first verse in which he calls his readers “exiles of the Dispersion” ([1 Peter 1:1](#)) to the next-to-last verse in which he calls the city of Rome “Babylon” ([1 Peter 5:13](#)), Peter frequently speaks of New Testament Christians in terms of Old Testament imagery and promises given to the Jews. This theme comes to prominence in [1 Peter 2:4-10](#), where Peter says that God has bestowed on the church almost all the blessings promised to Israel in the Old Testament. The dwelling-place of God is no longer the Jerusalem temple, for Christians are the new “temple” of God ([v. 5](#)). The priesthood able to offer acceptable sacrifices to God is no longer descended from Aaron, for Christians are now the true “royal priesthood” with access before God’s throne ([vv. 4-5, 9](#)). God’s chosen people are no longer said to be those physically descended from Abraham, for Christians are now the true “chosen race” ([v. 9](#)). The nation blessed by God is no longer said to be the nation of Israel, for Christians are now God’s true “holy nation” ([v. 9](#)). The people of Israel are no longer said to be the people of God, for Christians—both Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians—are now “God’s people” and those who have “received mercy” ([v. 10](#)). Moreover, Peter takes these quotations from contexts in the Old Testament that repeatedly warn that God will reject his people who persist in rebellion against him and who reject the precious “cornerstone” ([v. 6](#)) that he has established. What further statement could be needed in order for us to say with assurance that the church has now become the true Israel of God and will receive all the blessings promised to Israel in the Old Testament?

6. The Church and the Kingdom of God

What is the relationship between the church and the kingdom of God?
The differences have been summarized well by George Ladd:

The Kingdom is primarily the dynamic reign or kingly rule of God, and, derivatively, the sphere in which the rule is experienced. In biblical idiom, the Kingdom is not identified with its subjects. They are the people of God's rule who enter it, live under it, and are governed by it. The church is the community of the Kingdom but never the Kingdom itself. Jesus' disciples belong to the Kingdom as the Kingdom belongs to them; but they are not the Kingdom. The Kingdom is the rule of God; the church is a society of men. [

B. The "Marks" of the Church (Distinguishing Characteristics)

1. There Are True Churches and False Churches

What makes a church a church? What is necessary to have a church? Might a group of people who claim to be Christians become so unlike what a church should be that they should no longer be called a church?

At the Reformation a crucial question came up: how can we recognize a true church? Is the Roman Catholic Church a true church or not? In order to answer that question people had to decide what were the "marks" of a true church, the distinguishing characteristics that lead us to recognize it as a true church. Scripture certainly speaks of false churches. Paul says of the pagan temples in Corinth, "What pagans sacrifice

they offer to demons and not to God” (1 Cor. 10:20). He tells the Corinthians that “when you were heathen, you were led astray to dumb idols” (1 Cor. 12:2). These pagan temples were certainly false churches or false religious assemblies. Moreover, Scripture speaks of a religious assembly that is really a “synagogue of Satan” (Rev. 2:9; 3:9). Here the risen Lord Jesus seems to be referring to Jewish assemblies that claim to be Jews but were not true Jews who had saving faith. Their religious assembly was not an assembly of Christ’s people but of those who still belonged to the kingdom of darkness, the kingdom of Satan. This also would certainly be a false church.

In large measure there was agreement between Luther and Calvin on the question of what constituted a true church. The Lutheran statement of faith, which is called the Augsburg Confession (1530), defined the church as “the congregation of saints in which the gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments rightly administered” (Article 7). Similarly, John Calvin said, “Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to Christ’s institution, there, it is not to be doubted, a church of God exists.”

In contrast to the view of Luther and Calvin regarding the marks of a church, the Roman Catholic position has been that *the visible church* that descended from Peter and the apostles *is the true church*.

In some cases we might have difficulty determining just how much wrong doctrine can be tolerated before a church can no longer be considered a true church, but there are many clear cases where we can say that a true church does not exist. For example, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (the Mormon Church) does not hold to any major Christian doctrines concerning salvation or the

person of God or the person and work of Christ. It is clearly a false church. Similarly, the Jehovah's Witnesses teach salvation by works, not by trusting in Jesus Christ alone. This is a fundamental doctrinal deviation because if people believe the teachings of the Jehovah's Witnesses, they simply will not be saved. So the Jehovah's Witnesses also must be considered a false church. When the preaching of a church conceals the gospel message of salvation by faith alone from its members, so that the gospel message is not clearly proclaimed, and has not been proclaimed for some time, the group meeting there is not a church.

The second mark of the church, the right administration of the sacraments (baptism and the Lord's Supper) was probably stated in opposition to the Roman Catholic view that saving grace came through the sacraments and thereby the sacraments were made "works" by which we earned merit for salvation. In this way, the Roman Catholic Church was insisting on payment rather than teaching faith as the means of obtaining salvation.

But another reason exists for including the sacraments as a mark of the church. Once an organization begins to practice baptism and the Lord's Supper, it is a continuing organization and is *attempting to function as a church*.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper also serve as "membership controls" for the church. Baptism is the means for admitting people into the church, and the Lord's Supper is the means for allowing people to give a sign of continuing in the membership of the church—the church signifies that it considers those who receive baptism and the Lord's Supper to be saved. Therefore these activities indicate what a church thinks about salvation, and they are appropriately listed as a mark of the church today as well. By contrast, groups who do not administer baptism and the Lord's Supper signify that they are not intending to function as a church.

Someone may stand on a street corner with a small crowd and have true preaching and hearing of the Word, but the people there would not be a church. Even a neighborhood Bible study meeting in a home can have the true teaching and hearing of the Word without becoming a church. But if a local Bible study began baptizing its own new converts and regularly participating in the Lord's Supper, these things would signify *an intention to function as a church* and it would be difficult to say why it should not be considered a church in itself.

C. The Purposes of the Church

We can understand the purposes of the church in terms of ministry to God, ministry to believers, and ministry to the world.

1. Ministry to God: Worship

Worship in the church is not merely a preparation for something else: it is in itself fulfilling the major purpose of the church with reference to its Lord.

2. Ministry to Believers: Nurture

According to Scripture, the church has an obligation to nurture those who are already believers and build them up to maturity in the faith. Paul said that his own goal was not simply to bring people to initial saving faith but to “present every man *mature in Christ*” ([Col. 1:28](#)). And he told the church at Ephesus that God gave the church gifted persons “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, *for building up the*

body of Christ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” ([Eph. 4:12-13](#)).

3. Ministry to the World: Evangelism and Mercy

Jesus told his disciples that they should “make disciples of all nations” ([Matt. 28:19](#)). This evangelistic work of declaring the gospel is the primary ministry that the church has toward the world. Yet accompanying the work of evangelism is also a ministry of mercy, a ministry that includes caring for the poor and needy in the name of the Lord. Although the emphasis of the New Testament is on giving material help to those who are part of the church ([Acts 11:29](#); [2 Cor. 8:4](#); [1 John 3:17](#)), there is still an affirmation that it is right to help unbelievers even if they do not respond with gratitude or acceptance of the gospel message. Jesus tells us,

Love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for *he is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish*. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. ([Luke 6:35-36](#))

4. Keeping These Purposes in Balance

All three purposes of the church are commanded by the Lord in Scripture; therefore all three are important and none can be neglected. In fact, a strong church will have effective ministries in all three of these areas. We should beware of any attempts to reduce the purpose of the church to only one of these three and to say that it should be our primary focus. In fact, such attempts to make one of these purposes primary will always result in some neglect of the other two.... **All three purposes must be emphasized continually in a healthy church.**

However, *individuals* are different from churches in placing a relative priority on one or another of these purposes of the church. Because we are like a body with diverse spiritual gifts and abilities, it is right for us to place most of our emphasis on the fulfillment of that purpose of the church that is most closely related to the gifts and interests God has given to us.

Ch. 45: The Purity and Unity of the Church

What makes a church more or less pleasing to God? What kinds of churches should we cooperate with or join?

Explanation and Scriptural Basis

A. More Pure and Less Pure Churches

In the previous chapter we saw that there are “true churches” and “false churches.” In this chapter a further distinction must be made: there are *more pure* and *less pure* churches.

This fact is evident from a brief comparison of Paul’s epistles. When we look at Philipians or 1 Thessalonians we find evidence of Paul’s great joy in these churches and the relative absence of major doctrinal or moral problems (see [Phil. 1:3-11](#); [4:10-16](#); [1 Thess. 1:2-10](#); [3:6-10](#); [2 Thess. 1:3-4](#); [2:13](#); cf. [2 Cor. 8:1-5](#)). On the other hand, there were all sorts of serious doctrinal and moral problems in the churches of Galatia ([Gal. 1:6-9](#); [3:1-5](#)) and Corinth ([1 Cor. 3:1-4](#); [4:18-21](#); [5:1-2](#), [6](#); [6:1-8](#); [11:17-22](#); [14:20-23](#); [15:12](#); [2 Cor. 1:23-2:11](#); [11:3-5](#), [12-15](#); [12:20-13:10](#)).

B. Definitions of Purity and Unity

We may define the purity & unity of the church as follows:

The purity of the church is its degree of freedom from wrong doctrine and conduct, and its degree of conformity to God's revealed will for the church.

The unity of the church is its degree of freedom from divisions among true Christians.

C. Signs of a More Pure Church

Factors that make a church “more pure” include:

1. Biblical doctrine (or right preaching of the Word)
2. Proper use of the sacraments (or ordinances)
3. Right use of church discipline
4. Genuine worship
5. Effective prayer
6. Effective witness
7. Effective fellowship
8. Biblical church government
9. Spiritual power in ministry
10. Personal holiness of life among members
11. Care for the poor
12. Love for Christ

Most churches will tend to think that the areas in which they are strong are the most important areas, and the areas where they are weak are less important. But the New Testament encourages us to work for the purity of the church in all of these areas.

ALL Christians are to “strive to excel in *building up the church*” (1 Cor. 14:12), an exhortation that applies not only to an increase in the number of church members, but also (and in fact primarily) to the “edification” or growth of the church toward Christian maturity.

When a church begins to stray from faithfulness to Christ, this will be evident not only in the shift to impure doctrine (which can sometimes be concealed from church members by the use of evasive language) but also in the daily life of the church: its activities, its preaching, its counseling, and even the casual conversations among members will tend to become more and more man-centered and less and less God-centered. There will tend to be a repeated emphasis on the typical kinds of self-help advice given in popular journals and by secular psychologists. There will be a horizontal orientation as opposed to a vertical or God-centered orientation, there will be fewer and fewer extended times of prayer and less and less emphasis on the direct application of Scripture to daily situations, but more emphasis on simply being a caring and sensitive person, and on affirming others and acting in love toward them. The conversation and activities of the church will have very little genuine spiritual content—little emphasis on the need for daily prayer for individual concerns and for forgiveness of sins, little emphasis on daily personal reading of Scripture, and little emphasis on moment-by-moment trust in Christ and knowing the reality of his presence in our lives.

D. New Testament Teaching On the Unity of the Church

There is a strong emphasis in the New Testament on the unity of the church. Jesus' goal is that "there shall be *one flock, one shepherd*" (John 10:16), and he prays for all future believers "that they may all be one" (John 17:21). This unity will be a witness to unbelievers, for Jesus prays "that they may become *perfectly one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me*" (John 17:23).

Paul can *command* the church to live in unity because there already is an *actual* spiritual unity in Christ which exists among genuine believers. He says, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all" (Eph. 4:4-6). And though the body of Christ consists of many members, those members are all "*one body*" (1 Cor. 10:17; 12:12-26).

Because they are jealous to protect this unity of the church, the New Testament writers give strong warnings against those who cause divisions:

I appeal to you, brethren, to take note of those who create dissensions and difficulties, in opposition to the doctrine which you have been taught; avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. (Rom. 16:17-18)

Those who promote "strife... dissension, party spirit... shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:20-21). And Jude warns that those who "set up divisions" are "worldly people, devoid of the Spirit" (Jude 19).

Consistent with this New Testament emphasis on the unity of believers is the fact that the direct commands to *separate* from other people are always commands to separate *from unbelievers* not from Christians with whom one disagrees.

F. Reasons for Separation

As we examine the motives people have had for church separation throughout history, and as we compare those motives with the New Testament requirements that we seek both the unity and the purity of the visible church, we can find *both right and wrong reasons for separation*. Wrong reasons would include such things as personal ambition and pride, or differences on minor doctrines or practices (doctrinal or behavioral patterns that would not affect any other doctrine and that would not have a significant effect on the way one lives the Christian life).

On the other hand, there are some reasons for separation that we may consider to be right (or possibly right, depending on the specific circumstances). In most cases these reasons will flow from the need to work for the purity of the church as well as its unity. These reasons for separation can be considered in three categories: (1) doctrinal reasons; (2) reasons of conscience; (3) practical considerations.

1. Doctrinal Reasons

A need for separation may arise when the doctrinal position of a church deviates from biblical standards in a serious way. This deviation may be in official statements or in actual belief and practice, insofar as that can be determined. But when does doctrinal deviation become so serious that it requires withdrawing from a church or forming a separate church? As we noted above, there are no commands in the New Testament to separate from any true church, so long as it is still a part of the body of Christ. Paul's response even to people in erring churches (even in churches like the one at Corinth, which tolerated serious doctrinal and moral error, and for a time tolerated some who rejected Paul's apostolic

authority) is not to tell faithful Christians to separate from those churches, but to admonish the churches, work for their repentance, and pray for them. Of course there are commands to discipline those who cause trouble within the church, sometimes by excluding them from church fellowship ([1 Cor. 5:11-13](#); [2 Thess. 3:14-15](#); [Titus 3:10-11](#)), but there are no instructions to leave the church and cause division if this cannot be done immediately (see [Rev. 2:14-16, 20-25](#); cf. [Luke 9:50](#); [11:23](#)).

Christians would seem to be *required* on doctrinal grounds to withdraw from a church and join or form a new organization only when the doctrinal error is so serious and so pervasive that the parent church *has become a false church* no longer part of the body of Christ.

2. Matters of Conscience

In the area of conscience, if a Christian had no freedom to preach or teach as his or her conscience, informed by Scripture, would dictate, it might be thought that separation was necessary or at least wise. But caution and great humility are in order here...

Some people might also find it necessary or at least wise to leave a church on the basis of conscience if staying implied approval of some unbiblical doctrine or practice within the church, and thereby encouraged others to follow that wrong doctrine or practice. But others may think it right to stay in the church and voice clear disapproval of the faulty doctrine.

3. Practical Considerations

Christians may decide to separate from a parent church if, after prayerful consideration, it seems that staying in the parent church will very likely result in more harm than good... In these situations much prayer and mature judgment will be required, because withdrawing from a church, especially by people who have been there a long time or have established leadership functions in the church, is a serious action.

4. Are There Times When Cooperation and Personal Fellowship Are Prohibited?

The biblical passages we have looked at seem to require that Christians practice “no cooperation” in certain activities with another group only when the other group is an unbelieving one, and then, it seems, only when the unbelieving group shares control of the activity (this is implied in the metaphor of being “yoked together” in [2 Cor. 6:14](#)). Of course, it may be found wise or expedient on other grounds to decide not to cooperate in a particular function, but non-cooperation would not seem to be required except when the other group is an unbelieving one.

The third and most extreme kind of separation, the avoidance of all personal fellowship with members of another entire church group, is never commanded in the New Testament. Such an extreme measure of “no fellowship” is only implied in serious cases of church discipline of individuals, not in cases of differences with entire churches.

- Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine

Introduction

COMPLETENESS IN COMMUNITY life. This passage gives us a picture of early Christian community life. The first thing that we see is the completeness of their community life. There was care of the new believers (v. 42), the various elements of worship (vv. 42, 47), evangelistic outreach (vv. 43, 47), caring for the material needs of each other (v. 45), oneness in spirit (v. 44), and joyful informal fellowship in homes (v. 46). Would that we too might have such comprehensiveness in our community life!

Follow -Through Care of the Converts (2:42)

THERE WAS IMMEDIATE, regular follow-through care of the first converts in the early church. The verbal expression "they were devoting themselves to" (lit. trans.) covers four activities.

"Devoting" (*proskartereo*) is the same word as is used in connection with the persistent devotion of the disciples to prayer in [1:14](#)

- A. Apostle's Teaching:
- B. Fellowship / "Koinonia"

The word *koinonia*, which Luke uses for "fellowship," is a favorite word of Paul's, though this is the only time it appears in Luke's writings.

It is used for "the fellowship of the Holy Spirit" (2 Cor. 13:14) and also for our participation in the blood and body of Christ when we partake of the cup and the bread at the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 10:16). Paul speaks of the pillars of the Jerusalem church giving him and Barnabas "the right hand of fellowship" (Gal. 2:9) as a sign of their accepting them as legitimate servants of Christ.

C. Breaking of "the bread"

The breaking of bread" has a definite article before bread, causing some to render it "the breaking of the loaf" (see also [Luke 24:35](#))

Note also that the other three features mentioned in [2:42](#)—teaching, fellowship, and prayer—are spiritual activities, which suggests that this fourth one—the breaking of bread—is also a spiritual activity (i.e., the Lord's Supper).

D. "and to the prayers"

The great contribution of Jesus to the Christian understanding of prayer was his

intimacy with God, whom he called "Father" (Mark 14:36). He taught his disciples also to share this intimacy, and even the Gentile Christians used the characteristic Aramaic word that he used, "Abba," when addressing God (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6). This new understanding of intimacy with God would have been actualized in their experience through the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

E. Implications:

1. Discipleship = short term AND long term "follow up"
2. See "BRIDGE Life Cycle"
3. Discipleship is done best in koinonia...

According to the Bible the entire Christian life, including spiritual growth, battling sin and Satan, and serving God, are intended to be done in community. The passages in Ephesians, for example, that describe these things are all in the plural, suggesting that we do them along with others.

.

the Holy Spirit "will guide [them] into all truth ... and ... will tell [them] what is yet to come" (John

16:13). With time the church developed a **comprehensive body of teaching, so that Paul told the Ephesian elders that he had given them "the whole will and purpose of God" (20:27)**. At the end of his life he urged Timothy, **"What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you" (2 Tim. 1:13-14)**. A key, then, for follow-through care today is to teach people the Bible.

***** NOTE: Ugandan Discipleship process...**

- * First: Gospel (Stickman)**
- * Second: Biblical Worldview (JDP)**
- * Third: How to Study the Bible**

- 4. Hospitality is shared/experienced from the onset...**
 - c. Hospitality & Koinonia go hand in hand like time & truth. – JDP**
 - d. Hospitality is both the seed AND fruit of koinonia. – JDP**

We know that later the church had fellowship meals that they called "love feasts" (Jude 12; cf. 2 Peter 2:13).

It is probable that the house was an evangelistic center too.

evangelization by hospitality." These were key centers of Christian fellowship, and they can be so today as well.

8. **Sincerity, joy, and praise in fellowship.** As mentioned above, the early Christians developed an attitude toward each other that enabled them to truly enjoy each other, especially when they met for meals (v. 46).

Jesus broke the stereotype of a religious person in whose presence others were not supposed to have fun. One of the keys to enabling this was sincerity, which gave rise to an openhearted fellowship. Today, too, we should encourage enjoyment in our fellowship groups.

9. **QUOTE:** The early Christians also enjoyed the favor of the people outside the church (v. 47), which is often the case with a new work of God. Unfortunately, such favor does not always last for long, for those who admire the life of Christians soon come to realize the implications of their message. They realize they are being challenged to make a decision about adopting Christianity and rejecting their own cherished religion. Vested interests of some powerful groups become jeopardized. Thus, admiration is replaced by fear and opposition. This happened in Jerusalem especially as a result of the ministry of

Stephen. Note 8:1: "On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria."

Consider...

For this reason it is important that plans for "neonatal care" be made before the birth of the babies and that this process of follow-through care occurs immediately after the evangelistic program.

Community living in an individualistic age. People today are so individualistic that the biblical idea of community seems strange to them. We live private lives

...the culture of individualism reigns. People change churches and groups with the same frequency evident in the rest of society. The rate of divorce in the Western church is not much different from the rest of society,

we urgently need to reexamine the principles governing our community life in light of what the Scriptures say about it. We must explore more fully the implications of the devotion to the fellowship that Christians practiced in the first century.

Key QUOTE & CONCEPT:

Desire for teaching as an evidence of conversion. Let me say here that openness to being fed by the Word is key evidence that one is truly regenerated.

Many people come to Christ to have a felt need met because they hear that the God of the Christians is a prayer-answering God. In their eagerness to be blessed by this God, they go through the motions of "making a decision." Since the possibilities of prayer attracted them to Christ, they may give a high place to prayer. But how do we know that the seed of eternal life is germinating in them? If there is such a seed, it will hunger for the nourishment of the Word. Peter states this principle by using a metaphor from human life: "Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation" (1 Peter 2:2).

The Lord's Supper and follow-through care today.

Ministering in the miraculous.

Unfortunately, today we have the situation of a sign-mania on the part of some Christians and a sign-phobia on the part of others.

QUOTE: We should never fear to be biblical.

House fellowships today.

NOTE: Beware... the “Life Groups” in Acts were not accommodating people’s hectic, self-serving, superficially absorbed schedules. No! Rather, the truly biblical “Life Group” (both back then and now) is Christ-centered, “prioritized” above worldly activities, and is seen through eternal vs. temporal eyes. The difference is seen in one’s lived out paradigm(s). Religious groups see “go-ing” and “do-ing” as both a means and an end. By contrast, biblical koinonia is all about Christ... in the context of simply “BE-ing” together. - JDP

The importance of gladness and sincerity in Christian fellowship cannot be overestimated.... "life ... to the full" (John 10:10)

QUOTE:

Today's church is challenged to demonstrate a holy, happy fellowship.

The Community Life of the Church ([2:43-47](#))

- A. “Awe” (v.43)
- B. “Sharing Possessions” (vv.44-45)
 - 1. Reveals voluntary hearts
 - 2. NOT communism or socialism
 - a. God’s people = sacrificial hearts
 - b. Bible never diminishes private ownership
 - c. Forced taking leads to corruption
 - d. Goal = become a Christ-like people (love)
 - 3. See that faith affects finances! - JDP

- C. “Praising God” together (v.47a)

When God's people come together and enjoy fellowship, "praising God" is the natural result ([v. 47a](#)). True fellowship focuses on God and helps people to remember the good things he has done, which, in turn, causes praise. Such fresh and powerful community life would win the admiration of people outside the church.

- D. Growing Numerically (v.47b)

In the meantime the church grew numerically ([v. 47b](#)).

Luke never writes that these new conversions took place primarily through the preaching of the apostles.... Personal witness through word and life added to the impact of the miraculous signs and the public preaching and resulted in a comprehensive evangelistic outreach.

E. Sovereign Grace! ([v.47c](#))

Ultimately, God is the evangelist.

Paul wrote, "*I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow*" ([1 Cor. 3:6-7](#)).

- NIV Application Commentary

The Common Life of the Community

[2:42–47](#)

v. 42 should be viewed separately, as a conclusion to the Pentecost narrative. Thus viewed, it provides a glimpse into the manner in which the new converts were incorporated into the church.

v.42

(koinōnia) The key may be to see the terms “breaking of bread” and “prayer” in apposition to “fellowship.” The meaning would then be that they devoted themselves to a fellowship that was expressed in their mutual meals and in their prayer life together. If this is so, then the meaning of the third element, “the breaking of bread,” would be further clarified. Joined with fellowship, it would likely carry the cultic sense of sharing a meal with the Lord, participating in the Lord’s Supper. It probably also involved as well their participation in a main *agapē* meal together.

v.43:

“reverent fear” = (*phobos*, “awe,” NIV).

v.44-45:

Verse [45](#), speaks against the early Christian community adopting a practice of community ownership (which helps to better define the intent of v.44). The imperfect tense is used, indicating that this was a recurrent, continuing practice: their practice was to sell their property and goods and apportion the

proceeds whenever a need arose. This is much more in keeping with the Old Testament ideal of community equality, of sharing with the needy so that “there will be no poor among you” ([Deut 15:4f.](#)).

v.46:

The word translated “with one accord” (*homothymadon*) is commonly used in Acts to express unity of purpose and particularly applies to the “one heart and mind” ([4:32](#)) of the Christian fellowship (cf. [1:14](#); [2:1](#); [4:24](#); [5:12](#); [15:25](#)).

F. Stagg, however, points out that single-mindedness is not always a good thing. The same word is used of the angry mobs that rushed upon Stephen ([7:57](#)) and Paul ([19:29](#)).

For the Christian community, fellowship and unity of purpose are salutary only when rooted in fellowship with Christ and in the unity of his Spirit. The structure of Acts should remind us of this—the unity of the Christian community derives from and is guided by the gift of the Spirit that lies at the heart of its life together.

The Christian presence in the temple testifies to evidences for their zeal for witness.

QUOTE:

If the temple was the place of witness, homes were the place for fellowship.

v.47:

Consider:

Verses 43-46 give an ideal portrait of the young Christian community... Their common life was marked by praise of God, joy in the faith, and sincerity of heart.... It was an ideal, almost blissful time marked by the joy of their life together and the warmth of the Spirit's presence among them.

(EXAMPLE: life at Southern Seminary!)

- New American Commentary – Volume 26: Acts.

NOTE:

See Mark Dever's message:

"False Conversions: the Suicide of the Church"

v.42:

The first thing said of them is this: “**They continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers**” (v. 42). They did not stop studying the Word of God, but they continuously and in a diligent manner applied themselves to doctrine, which is one of the most politically incorrect words in the church today. “Don’t talk to me about doctrine,” people say. “I don’t need any doctrine. All I need to know is Jesus.” That is how far we have come from the first-century church, which focused its attention steadfastly and continuously on coming together to study the doctrine of the Apostles. Today that apostolic doctrine is in the Scriptures. The early church was a Bible-studying church, steadfastly, continually devoted to devouring the Word of God that came from the Apostles.

QUOTE:

*The first sign of a Spirit-filled church
is one in which the Spirit-filled people
do not flee from Scripture and seek a substitute for it
but are driven to it
to have their spiritual lives rooted and grounded
in the Word of God.*

- R.C. Sproul

Koinonia:

CAUTION!!!

A word of caution: **the primary reason we are to come to church on Sunday morning is to worship God. However, we are told by the polls that the primary reason people come to church on Sunday morning is to enjoy fellowship with their Christian friends. What motivates people to come to church is not worship but fellowship.**

We see in the early church the model of how church should function. They came to hear and study the Word of God, but they also came to enjoy the friendship and camaraderie in the fellowship of believers in the church.

NOTE: I have seen this in our ministry...

- People loved church but “liked” Christ
- “Don’t you know... as soon as Jeff leaves (the biblical teacher), everyone will come back...”
- “This guy (Pastor Jeff) is going to preach himself out of a job... If he keeps up this teaching people are going to leave.”
(spoken by one who left soon after)

Breaking bread together:

There really is no warmer experience of friendship than sharing meals.

Prayer:

The early Church was a church of prayer!

vv.43-45 (Common God vs. Common Goods) – JDP

Christian-ism vs. Communism (JDP)

The Lord loves a cheerful giver. He doesn't just love givers—anybody can be a giver. He loves *cheerful* givers. He loves people who love to express their gratitude to Him by building the kingdom of God.

See 2 Cor. 8... the Macadonians!!!

v.46-47:

In Church

The first Christians had *ekklesiola*, that is, house churches.

v.47:

God built His church initially with people that He converted, that were the fruit of His action in their lives, not as a result of the things that people do to try to prime the pump.

NOTE: **See Mark Dever's message:**
"False Conversions: the Suicide of the Church"

- St. Andrew's Expository Commentary – Acts.

The Church Walking in the Spirit (Acts 2:42-47)

The church was unified ([Acts 2:44](#)), magnified ([Acts 2:47a](#)), and multiplied ([Acts 2:47b](#)).

- Bible Exposition Commentary – Be Dynamic (Acts 1-12).

The First Christian Fellowship ([Acts 2:42-47](#))

v.42:

Spiritual Duties

And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ([2:42](#))

v.42a

It Was a Saved Church

they were continually devoting themselves ([2:42a](#))

Incredibly Important... Often Overlooked...

QUOTE:

That the church should be composed of saved individuals seems axiomatic. Sadly, however, many churches today are made up largely of unsaved individuals. Amazingly, some even try to design a church where non-Christians can feel comfortable. This can't be the goal in a church that is devoted to holiness and righteousness in all areas of life.

That is not to say that unbelievers are not welcome to attend the preaching of the truth and the worship. They are welcome to hear the gospel preached and the Word of God expounded. They are welcome to

hear the prayers of confession, the anthems of praise, and the calls to holiness. They are welcome to witness the corporate love and devotion of the church to Jesus Christ. All of that should make them uncomfortable with their spiritual condition. Membership and service in the church, however, are restricted to believers. God's people and Satan's people cannot work together to achieve God's goals. "Do not be bound together with unbelievers," Paul warned the Corinthians, "for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?" (2 Cor. 6:14-15).

REVELATION 2...

Conversely, the Lord Jesus Christ rebuked the church at Pergamum for allowing itself to be infiltrated by unbelievers, thus being influenced by Satan:

But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit acts of immorality. Thus you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Repent therefore; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth. (Rev. 2:14-16)

POWERFUL QUOTE:

To fail to exclude unbelievers from the fellowship of the church is a grave error. Only disunity and dissension can result when those who serve Christ try to work in harmony with those who serve Satan. Additionally, to design the activities of the church to appeal to unbelievers, or to allow them to play a major role in the life of the church, is to give them a false sense of security. The result for them may be eternal tragedy. The church must reach out in love to those who do not know Christ. It must never, however, let them feel that they are a part of the fellowship until they come to faith in Christ. And no evangelistic purpose should ever be undertaken that alters what the church is by divine design—an assembly of saved worshipers pursuing holiness and spiritual service.

*** See Mark Dever's message: "False Converts: the Suicide of the Church"

v.42b:

It Was a Scriptural Church

to the apostles' teaching ([2:42b](#))

God designed the church to be a place where His Word is proclaimed and explained.

"The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also" ([2 Tim. 2:2](#)).

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect" ([Rom. 12:2](#)).

"Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching" ([1 Tim. 4:13](#)).

"Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things; for as you do this you will insure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you" ([1 Tim. 4:16](#)).

"I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus...: preach the word; be ready in season and

out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction " ([2 Tim. 4:1-2](#)).

An elder must be one who holds "fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict" ([Titus 1:9](#)).

QUOTE:

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" ([Hos. 4:6](#)).

The church cannot operate on truth it is not taught...

v.42c:

It Was a Fellowshiping Church

and to fellowship ([2:42c](#))

Fellowship is the spiritual duty of believers to stimulate each other to holiness and faithfulness.

KOINONIA is most specifically expressed through the "one anothers" of the New Testament (cf. [Rom. 12:10, 16; 13:8; 14:19; 15:5, 7, 14; 16:16;](#)

[Gal. 5:13](#); [Eph. 4:2, 25, 32](#); [5:21](#); [Phil. 2:3](#); [Col. 3:9, 13, 16](#); [1 Thess. 4:9, 18](#), [5:11, 13](#); [Heb. 3:13](#); [1 Peter 1:22](#); [4:9, 10](#); [5:5](#), etc.).

Those who receive Jesus Christ become partners with Him and with all other believers ([1 John 1:3](#)). That fellowship is permanent, because our shared eternal life is forever.

For a Christian to fail to participate in the life of a local church is inexcusable. In fact, those who choose to isolate themselves are disobedient to the direct command of Scripture.

[Hebrews 10:24-25](#) charges believers to "*consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.*"

v.42d:

It Was a Christ-Centered Church

to the breaking of bread ([2:42d](#))

Lord's Supper, or Communion. **This duty is not optional, since our Lord commanded it** of every believer (cf. [1 Cor. 11:24-29](#)).

In Communion, all believers meet on common ground, unified at the foot of the cross ([Eph. 2:16](#); [Col. 1:20](#))

Paul wrote in [1 Corinthians 10:16-17](#), "*Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread.*"

CRITICAL but OFTEN OVERLOOKED...

Communion calls for self-examination and purging of sin, thus purifying the church. Nothing is more vital to the church's ongoing, regular confrontation of sins in the lives of its people than the thoughtful expression of devotion to the remembrance of the cross.

It Was a Praying Church

to prayer ([2:42e](#))

Jesus Christ had promised in [John 14:13-14](#) that "whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it."

The prayer in view here is not only that of individual believers but of the church corporately (cf. [1:14, 24](#); [4:24-31](#)).

DEFINING TRUTH!

Sadly, prayer is much neglected in the church today. Programs, concerts, entertainment, or the testimonies of the rich and famous draw large crowds. Prayer meetings, on the other hand, attract only the faithful few. That is undoubtedly the reason for much of the weakness in the contemporary church. Unlike the early church, we have forgotten the Bible's commands to pray at all times ([Luke 18:1](#); [Eph. 6:11](#)), and to be devoted to prayer ([Rom. 12:12](#); [Col. 4:2](#)).

Spiritual Character

A church that fulfills the spiritual duties will find that those duties produce spiritual character. Four aspects of the first fellowship's character may be discerned in this passage.

It Was an Awe-Inspiring Church

And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe ([2:43a](#))

Phobos (awe) refers to fear or holy terror related to the sense of divine presence, to the attitude of reverence. It describes the feeling produced when one realizes God is at hand.

The life of this first fellowship was so genuine and spiritually powerful that everyone, whether inside or outside the church, kept feeling a sense of awe. They weren't awed by the church because of its buildings, programs, or anything reflecting human ability, but by the supernatural character of its life. Such an effect should be produced when the spiritual gifts are properly operative ([1 Cor. 14:24, 25](#)).

It Was a Miraculous Church

and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. ([2:43b](#))

wonders and signs
were designed to attract attention
and point to spiritual truth.

It Was a Sharing Church

The first Christian fellowship was not a commune, nor does the passage offer support for such a notion. The family, not the commune, is the basic social unit in God's design.

QUOTE:

That this was not a primitive form of communism is evident... Such a principle for Christian living would have obviated the responsibility of each believer to give in response to the Spirit's prompting (cf. [1 Cor. 16:1-2](#)). [Second Corinthians 8:13-14](#) describes a similar kind of generosity to the Jerusalem poor.

The apostle John extends this command to all believers:

We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. ([1 John 3:16-18](#))

It Was a Joyful Church

*with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God
([2:46b-47a](#))*

QUOTE:

One of the key reasons for that joy was the sincerity of heart they manifested. *Aphelotēs* (sincerity) literally means "simplicity" and derives from a root word meaning "free from rocks," or "smooth"

There were no stones of selfishness in their hearts.

Praising God also produced joy.

The goal of the first fellowship was to exalt the Lord, and that produced true happiness.

Those who glorify themselves and seek the preeminence will never know lasting joy.

Joy comes to those who give God glory.

"If therefore there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love,

united in spirit, intent on one purpose" ([Phil. 2:1-2](#)).

Spiritual Impact

**The dynamic corporate life
and spiritual character of the church
had great impact.**

They Were an Attractive Church

and having favor with all the people ([2:47b](#))

***** They proved true the words of Jesus in [John 13:35](#), "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."**

***** Their unity was an answer to our Lord's high priestly prayer "that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me" ([John 17:21](#)).**

They Were a Growing Church

*And the Lord was adding to their number day by day
those who were being saved. ([2:47c](#))*

**So unified, joyful, and Spirit-filled were they that
their very existence was a powerful testimony to
the truth of the gospel.**

True evangelism flows from the life of a healthy church.

“BE-ing brings on BE-lieving.” - JDP

- MacArthur New Testament Commentary