



The Early Church

Acts 2:42-47

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And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. ...

And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

- Acts 2:42-47

Reflecting and Learning from the Early Church:

What can we learn and be challenged by?

A couple of thoughts before the message:

1. This is not meant to be simply informational. But rather, how can this be transformational? If the same Spirit that indwelt the early Christians indwells me, what does this mean for my life? What does this mean for us as a church?

A couple of thoughts before the message:

2. Today's outline is based on my study as I meditated on what the Holy Spirit was doing in the life of the early Christians and the gap in my own heart and my need for the gospel. Will you engage the text in the same way today?

A couple of thoughts before the message:

3. Our template:

If we are honest, we struggle with _____, but from our reading we see that the gospel spurs _____.

Reflecting and Learning from the Early Church:

Reflecting and Learning from the Early Church:

1. If we are honest, we struggle with DISTRACTION, but from our reading we see that the gospel spurs DEVOTION.

Verse 42: And they *devoted* themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Devoted to...

a) Apostolic Teaching

Isaiah 40:8: "The grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever."

John Stott:

"One might perhaps say that the Holy Spirit opened a school in Jerusalem that day..."

"Anti-intellectualism and the fullness of the Spirit are mutually incompatible, because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth."

"The Spirit of God leads the people of God to submit to the word of God."

Devoted to...

b) Fellowship - "Koinonia"



Devoted to...

c) Breaking of Bread (The Lord's Supper and/or Hospitality)

Daniel Block: *"In the Lord's supper we witness a remarkable transformation. Whereas Israelites would bring their offerings to YHWH, the divine Host, and eat them in his presence, in the Lord's Supper the divine Host offers himself for our spiritual nourishment (John 6:54-58)."*

Devoted to...

d) Prayers (Corporately and Individually)

"Is prayer your steering wheel or your spare tire?"
- Corrie Ten Boom

"Prayer does change things, all kinds of things. But the most important thing it changes is us. As we engage in this communion with God more deeply and come to know the One with whom we are speaking more intimately, that growing knowledge of God reveals to us all the more brilliantly who we are and our need to change in conformity to Him." - RC Sproul

Reasons why we might struggle with devotion:

1) We are drowning in distraction.

Devotion requires sustained focus, attention, and commitment. But our lives today are filled with interruption and constant stimulation.

We become so accustomed to constant stimulation that ordinary faithfulness starts to feel boring.

Reasons why we might struggle with devotion:

- 1) We are drowning in distraction.
- 2) We are exhausted in our busyness. As a result, our spiritual practices get pushed to the margins.

If you find yourself more distracted than devoted, remember the story of Mary and Martha.

Luke 10:41: But the Lord answered and said to her, "*Martha, Martha*, you are worried and distracted by many things; but *only one thing* is necessary...

John Maxwell: "*It's hard to overestimate the unimportance of practically everything.*"

Reflecting and Learning from the Early Church:

2. If we are honest, we struggle with FAMILIARITY, but from our reading we see that the gospel spurs AWE.

Verse 43: And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.

Thoughts:

1. The word "awe" in the Greek is "phobos". This is referring to a Biblical understanding of the "fear of the Lord."

In the book *Everything Is Never Enough*, author Bobby Jamieson quotes Lydia Dugale (*The Art of Dying*): "*All of us fear what we cannot control and aim to control what we fear.*"

Bobby Jamieson: "*To this rule of fear there is one massively significant exception...to fear God is to give up the need to be in control because you trust and submit to the one who really is (in control)...This fundamental fear of God eliminates the need for control...To fear God is to give up not only the need to master all threats but the drive to know all the answers. To fear God is to trust that it is better to have him without answers than to have answers without him.*"

Thoughts:

2. To my Christian friends, when was the last time you experienced awe (fear of the Lord)?

Wow! (Luke 5:26)

Whoa! (Acts 9:5)

Woe! (Isaiah 6:5)

Thoughts:

3. Modern life has flattened transcendence. We have lost the sense of awe, where everything becomes casual.

Thoughts:

4. Familiarity desensitizes us to wonder. Exposure to the truths of God without meditation dulls amazement.

Thomas Watson (A Christian on the Mount):

"Meditation is like the shining of the sun, it operates upon the affections, it warms the heart and makes it more holy. Meditation fetches life in a truth."

One more Watson quote because it's so good!

"The promises of God are flowers growing in the paradise of Scripture; meditation, like the bee, sucks out the sweetness of them."

Without meditation, even the most comforting promises will not be sweet to the soul.

Reflecting and Learning from the Early Church:

3. If we are honest, we struggle with A SCARCITY MINDSET, but from our reading we see that the gospel spurs GENEROSITY OF CARE.

Verses 44-45: And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.

Thoughts:

1. A scarcity mindset is fueled by comparison, where we look what others have and feel like we don't have enough.

- "I'm behind."
- "I need more to feel secure."
- "I can't afford to give."

Thoughts:

2. If you're thinking, "that describes me", behind the scarcity mindset is a misplaced identity.

If our identity is built around money as our security, we will struggle to be generous and be focused on our own needs only. But if our identity is found in Christ, we will grow in generosity and care for the needs of others.

Thoughts:

3. For some, the problem may not be in having a "scarcity mindset" but in having an "ownership mindset."

"A scarcity mindset fears that the well will run dry. An ownership mindset forgets who owns the well."

Reflecting and Learning from the Early Church:

4. If we are honest, we struggle with LONELINESS, but from our reading we see that the gospel spurs COMMUNITY.

Verses 46-47a: *And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people.*

In a world where digital engagement is ubiquitous, we are more lonely than ever. Deep in our souls, we long for and need *incarnational* connection like never before.

What are the barriers to community?

- a) The barrier of vulnerability: "I have to be 'put together.'"
- b) The barrier of convenience: "It's a hassle."
- c) The barrier of passivity: "I must be the only one."

Reflecting and Learning from the Early Church:

5. If we are honest, we struggle with DISCONTENTMENT, but from our reading we see that the gospel spurs GRATITUDE.

Verses 46-47a: *And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people.*

"The same sun that melts wax hardens the clay."

- Attributed to Charles Spurgeon

The crux of the issue: "I deserve (or don't deserve) this!" versus "All is a gift."

Tim Keller: "We are never as thankful as we should be. When good things come to us, we do everything possible to tell ourselves we accomplished that or at least deserve it. We take the credit."

One more thought: Gratitude is a powerful witness:

"...praising God and having favor with all the people."

Marisa Fienup: "Have you ever made a situation worse by being grateful? Feeling gratitude and expressing thanks can manifest a warmth that can soften tense situations, draw others closer to you, and build trust that will elevate your relationships. We are designed by God to be a blessing to others in relationships and interactions..."

"Gratitude is...a form of outreach. Grateful people make God shine. Our opportunity to be grateful to others is infinite."

Reflecting and Learning from the Early Church:

6. If we are honest, we struggle with INSULARISM, but from our reading we see that the gospel spurs EVANGELISM.

Verses 47b: And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Thoughts:

1) Reading this both humbles us and gives us hope.

"And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved."

Do we pray and engage with expectation that the Lord will save?

Thoughts:

2. A heart issue: A healthy church longs for, prays for, and engages the lost because the gospel reminds us that "we were also lost, but found." Also, evangelism is never done out of a sense of superiority (ie "join the winning team", "it's better").

Close: In light of today's message on Acts 2:42-47, which of the following do you need to engage the Lord with?

- *Devotion* not distraction
- *Awe* not familiarity
- *Generosity of care* not a scarcity mindset
- *Being in community* not loneliness
- *Gratitude* not discontentment
- *Evangelism* not insularism

As you engage the Lord, remember the gospel.

Paul Tripp: "*Weakness and failure are not the opposite of the Christian life; they are the atmosphere in which grace thrives.*"

Dane Ortland: "*The heart of Christ is not exhausted by your sins and your wandering and your coldness.*"