

# Acts 2:42-47

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*The disciples of Jesus devote themselves to learning from the apostles and taking care of one another. They sell property to provide for their fellow believers. Everyone continues to feel the fear of God in them as the apostles perform wonders and signs. New believers join their community every day.*

3000 new believers are baptized and join the disciples after Peter preaches the gospel of Jesus and His resurrection to a crowd, and convicts the crowd of their guilt in crucifying the Messiah.

Following the incredible events of Pentecost, we are told how “the church” begins. The Bible calls “the church” the Body of Christ; it consists of all those on earth who have believed in Jesus. It thrives from the very start. Believers in Jesus begin to live out His teachings. Now that the Holy Spirit is guiding them, their lives are changed.

The disciples *were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching*. The *apostles* were the 11 disciples, Jesus’ core group of followers (Peter, James, John, and so on) with the addition of Matthias who replaced Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:26). With 3000 new disciples, there was plenty of *teaching* for the *apostles* to do. They had spent three years with Jesus, learning from Him, learning His teachings (largely through making mistakes), and ministering as He instructed them. They had a lot of personal experience and knowledge to pass to these new followers. Jesus Himself had opened their minds to understand the Old Testament scriptures (Luke 24:44-45). Of course, they were also teaching from the Holy Spirit’s guidance (John 14:26).

In addition to learning from the apostles, the disciples devoted themselves to *fellowship*. To simply being together, getting to know one another, building friendships, listening to and encouraging one another through trials and fears, and enjoying one another’s company. *Fellowship* means living and working in harmony with others. It is what brings meaning, bounty, beauty, and fulfillment to life. A major key to restore and maintain *fellowship* throughout scripture is forgiveness and confession of sin (1 John 1:1-9; Matthew 6:10,14).

The believers devoted themselves also to the *breaking of bread*. They shared meals together, another sign of growing *fellowship* and closeness. This may also mean that they took the Lord’s Supper together in remembrance of Jesus and what the symbols of the bread and wine represented spiritually. Jesus encourages us to respond to Him spiritually and have the intimacy of dining with Him, as a means to gain a lasting wealth without limit (Revelation 3:18-21).

Lastly, the disciples devoted themselves *to prayer*. They were *continually* talking with God. Through prayer they probably praised God, just as they sang hymns during Pentecost while waiting for the Holy Spirit. They were able to finally see Jesus’s full mission, that He came to die and resurrect for the forgiveness of their sins so that they could live rightly before God. This stirred up thanksgiving and joy in their hearts. They must have felt like captives released from

prison, unshackled from the oppressive power of a sinful nature and enabled to follow God (Romans 6:11-14).

Surely they asked Him for guidance, but also for protection. Jesus was crucified, after all, and though He resurrected and ascended in glory, He was hated by the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem. He left behind many enemies who would soon see that their goal of snuffing out His gospel did not end when they put Him to death. Indeed, more people than ever now believed in Jesus, that He was the Son of God, and that He had come back to life from the dead and now sat at the right hand of God. The disciples of Jesus grew in number. Just as they grew, so did tensions among the political leaders in Jerusalem. Jesus told His disciples very clearly while He was on earth that they would experience persecution because they followed Him.

And yet, we are told that *Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe*. The general mood among the disciples was one of *awe*. The original Greek word here is “phobos,” which means “fear.” Luke uses it elsewhere in his Gospel to show Zacharias’s reaction to being visited by an angel (Luke 1:12). Luke also uses “phobos” to describe the people’s response to Jesus raising a boy from the dead (Luke 7:16). They feared God, but they glorified Him also, and recognized that He was visiting His people. This kind of fear is not one that repels, but inspires worship. Luke uses it whenever people are encountering God’s direct, miraculous work. A human can’t but feel fear when seeing God’s divine action. The fear, translated here as *awe*, perhaps to make the concept more appealing, is driving the new church closer to God, not away from Him. They are seeing the reality of their Creator working among them, leading them on as they add numbers to the body of believers in Jesus. It’s both terrifying and wonderful at the same time. The *apostles* continued to perform *many wonders and signs*. These *wonders and signs* were *taking place through the apostles*, worked by God through the Holy Spirit within them.

Luke then provides us with a picture of what the first Christian church looked like. We are told that *all those who had believed in Jesus were together and had all things in common*. They formed a tight community where they shared everything they owned with each other. This could have been a necessity because of persecution falling upon some who had believed. As they had needs due to persecution, those needs were met by others.

The disciples were filled with such a generous and charitable spirit, they went even further than sharing what they already had. They *began selling their property and possessions* to accrue more money for the purpose of *sharing them with all* other believers, specifically *as anyone might have need*. The main reason for their fundraising and sharing was to take care of the believers who had little food, or clothing, or possessions. Much of this might have been due to persecution (Hebrews 10:34). Here the believers had taken on a mindset for the Kingdom of Heaven, seeing no value in hoarding the material things they had on earth, but making use of these *possessions* and money to lift up their brothers and sisters in Christ. To meet any *need* others had.

Their community and fellowship was daily: *Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple*.

The first church was united in harmonious ministry, prayer, and teaching: they continued *with one mind*, there was no division or conflict. They met in what was an open, public space for Jews, the *temple*. It is important to note that in this early time period, they were able to meet *in*

*the temple.* The first believers in Jesus were all Jewish, and did not abandon their culture. Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of all of God's promises in the Old Testament (Luke 24:44), so to believe in Him and follow Him was to continue to live as a devout Israelite. The Apostle Paul made clear at the end of his ministry that he had continued following Jewish customs during his entire life (Acts 28:17). Paul was doing this while also teaching consistent with the council in Acts 15, which decided the Gentiles were free from these customs.

These early Jewish believers essentially lived out their entire daily life with one another: *breaking bread from house to house*, sharing meals and sharing living spaces. None of this was done from obligation; rather, *they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart.* They were experiencing human relationship as God had intended it to be, one of harmonious living where everyone seeks the best for one another, where there is no exploitation or taking advantage. These *meals* were shared *together with gladness and sincerity of heart:* the believers shared because they wanted to share, and they were filled with *gladness* and good feeling. They lived in a state of joy and mutual benefit.

In all this, the first believers were *praising God and having favor with all the people.* They gave glory to God for their new way of life, praising Him for all He had done for them.

During this time period, it is interesting to note that they had *favor with all the people.* Very soon, harsh persecution would come from the religious leaders in Jerusalem who were bent on stamping out Christ's continued influence on the people. But at this point in time, the first church was found favorable in the sight of the other Jews. They caused no harm or division in the city. Indeed, *the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.* The church was growing every single *day.* The Jews were flocking to the Gospel of Christ and *were being saved.* The Holy Spirit was working through the apostles and disciples mightily.

### **Biblical Text**

**42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. 44 And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; 45 and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. 46 Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.**