

## Acts 2:42-47: Experiencing Community

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Tommy Meador / General Adult

Connecting Faith to Life / Acts 2:42–47

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### Introduction

- Newspaper - First thing in the morning, eating breakfast, reading the paper - wanting to know the box score. What did Dale Murphy do? In 90s, how did Greg Maddux pitch? How many points did Larry Bird score?
- Loyal fan of men I didn't know. Wanted to know their stats, did they help the team win, etc., but I would never know them.
- It's possible to know a lot about people you'll never meet and not really know the people you sit next to every Sunday.
- One of our four priorities as a local church is to help you experience community.
- Every disciple of Jesus belongs to His family. For many of us, great joy in belonging to a local church that's focused on the mission of God.
- Sadly, for others, local church has brought great pain. You didn't find community. Church feels cliquish, or you were gossiped about and treated poorly. Church is full of sinful people that sometimes act sinfully. "Sheep bite..."
- This morning I want you to know that the Gospel makes us a family that's devoted to God and devoted to each other.
- [Acts 2:42-47](#) is diagnostic. It's a summary of what was taking place in the early church and this passage shows us what a healthy church community should look like.

- Three ways that we can experience community together from [Acts 2:42-47](#).

## Determine to be devoted. (vs. 42-43)

- DEVOTED (Acts 2:42) - We're all devoted to something. What you are devoted to gets your best you. (Job, marriage, kids, etc.) Are you devoted to God and His church? In vs. 42, four things early believers devoted to:
  - Devoted to the Apostle's teaching. Why? The apostles walked with the One who died and rose again, the One three thousand people believed in at Pentecost. If early believers had to know more about Jesus, what better source of knowledge than the Apostles!
  - Devoted to fellowship - koinonia. First time this word is used in NT and only time in Luke/Acts. Koinonia = to participate or commune. Early believers devoted to each other - to participating together in growing in Christ and serving together. (Partnership)
  - Devoted to breaking of bread - reference to Lord's Supper. Lord's supper = visual reminder of their unity in Christ.
  - Devoted to prayer - Read through Acts. Church constantly prayed together, and God worked powerfully through their prayers.
- How can I be devoted to the community of believers?
- **Have the right commitment.** Saved for a relationship with God and His family. What keeps us from being devoted to the fellowship of believers? Fear of being known, of being hurt, etc. Misplaced priorities - Other things more important to you than the local church. Don't see the value of biblical community.
- **Have the right expectations.** Wrong expectation: this church is going to meet all my needs and everything is always going to be great. Reminder: church made up of sinful people. We're going to do our best

to know the Lord together and serve on His mission. We're going to do our best to be faithful to His Word - but there's no perfect church. Expect a mess. We're a work in progress. We're going to say the wrong things. Feelings are going to get hurt.

- **Have the right response.** How will you respond when the fellowship is less than ideal? In the church, we practice grace, the fruit of the Spirit, patience with each other, forgiveness, etc.

## Determine to be open-handed. (vs. 44-45)

- In the early church, fellowship was having all things in common. It was an open-handed life of giving and receiving.
- vs. 44 not describing an early form of communism where everyone sold all their possessions and put all the proceeds in a big pool and distributed evenly. Instead, vs. 45 - sold possessions and property as needs arose. Rather than communal living, it was generous living to meet the needs of people.
- In Christ, we've realized that nothing belongs to us and everything belongs to God. We're simply stewards of what He has given us.
- [Galatians 6:9-10](#): *“And let us get tired of doing good, for we will reap at the proper time if we don't give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us work for the good of all, especially for those who belong to the household of faith.”*
- Fellowship life is costly because it requires giving instead of taking. The Lord's Supper is a reminder that fellowship is costly. It cost Jesus His life to have fellowship with us, but Jesus gladly absorbed the cost because of His love for you.
- Open-handed life = “God, help me to let go of what prohibits fellowship. God, help me to give away what helps maintain fellowship. God, help me to receive what helps to maintain fellowship.”

- **What do I need to let go of?**
  - My need to be right all the time.
  - My need to be critical of everything.
  - My need to always have all my needs met. (Ph. 2)
  - My need to always have my opinion heard.
- **What do I need to give away?**
  - My time.
  - My spiritual giftedness.
  - My experience.
  - My encouragement.
  - My financial resources.
- **What do I need to receive?**
  - Instruction/biblical teaching.
  - Correction.
  - Discipline.
  - Help - Some of us are too prideful to admit when and where we need help.

## **Determine to be together. (46-47)**

- **vs. 46** - Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together... in the temple AND gathered together in homes.
- In temple, likely gathered in Solomon's Colonnade - open space where many could gather. People could hear them talking about Jesus. They shared their new faith publicly. Good news needed to be heard.

- In homes - church started in the homes of people - first couple hundred years - the local church was primarily a house church movement. Something intimate about being invited in the homes of people to share a meal and spend time together.
- While we might not be able to be physically together every day, with all of our technology, no reason why we can't daily check in and encourage people in our faith family.
- Why should you want to spend a significant amount of time in community with other believers?
- **Who you spend time with profoundly shapes you.** Once heard a pastor say, "Show me who your friends are, and I'll show you who you're becoming."
- Outside the people you live with, who gets your time? How is that shaping how you think? How you make decisions? How you think about God?
- Problem in our culture: spending time being shaped by people we don't know... Discipled by podcasters, our facebook or instagram feed, favorite political pundit.
- **How you spend time with other believers profoundly shapes you.**
- NOT simply spend time with other believers socializing (while that's important), but spending time together intentionally to know and serve God.
- At Northwood we're committed to:
  - Put ourselves under the Word of God. (Experience God in Sunday morning worship - Experience Community in LCG - specific strategy behind why we do LCGs the way we do - biblical discussion on the text I preached the previous Sunday.) Relationships grow when we're

face to face with each other talking about how the Word of God applies to our lives.

- Put action to our faith. LCGs are the frontline of care and ministry in our church. In LCGs, practice praying together, hospitality, generosity when someone in your group is in need. Relationships grow when we're shoulder to shoulder - when we have a mission to accomplish together.
- For some of us, time to step into community rather than simply attending an event.
- In the local church, fellowship grows when we maximize our time face to face and shoulder to shoulder.
- What if you've been hurt by the church? Can you experience community again?
  - Get help. Talk to a believer you can trust, a believer who will help you think well about what the Bible says about the church and how it applies to your situation.
  - Trust the Lord and take a step of faith. His plan for your life is to be in community with the local church. People will fail you. Jesus never will. Take a step of faith towards community as you trust the Lord to heal your heart and ask Him to give you wisdom to lead you to a church that is centered on Christ.
  - Beware of the temptation to grow bitter and judgmental. Bitterness can be consuming. A judgmental heart can cause you talk speak harshly about what is precious to Christ: His bride.
  - Pursue the kind of relationship with God that you hope others will have. A forgiving heart, growing in the fruit of the Spirit, pursuing righteousness, etc. Don't let church hurt keep you from God Himself.

- If this kind of community depends on us, it will always fall apart. We need a Savior who will empower us to live as one.
- We fall short of being devoted to God. We fall short of being devoted to each other.
- BUT... Jesus was completely devoted. He was devoted to His Father. He obeyed Him in every way, even to the point of death on a cross. Jesus was devoted to us. He was willing to die the death we deserve so our sins could be forgiven.
- Jesus lived an open-handed life. He didn't merely give His time and resources. He gave His life so we could be brought into the family of God. He rose from the dead to prove to us that He is God in the flesh who has the power to bring us into a relationship with God.
- God is not inviting us into a better community - something that's better than the guys hanging out watching football on Sunday afternoon, or a ladies night out.
- God is inviting us into a relationship with Jesus, and when you belong to Jesus, you belong to His people. The church is the blood-bought family of God, and there's a place for you in His family if you will trust Christ as Lord and Savior of your life.
- If you're outside the family this morning, there's an invitation to come in. God wants to do a work in your life through the blood of Jesus Christ to make you into His son or daughter.