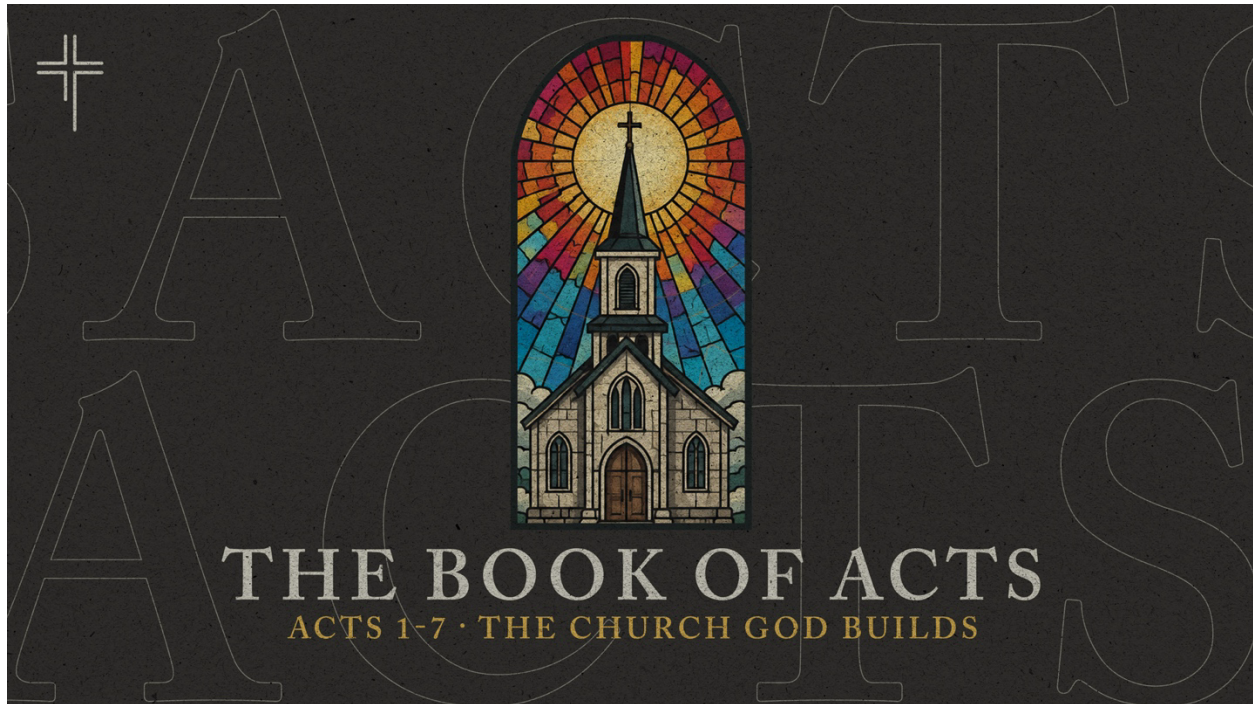




IMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH
SERIES: THE CHURCH GOD BUILDS
SCRIPTURE: ACTS 2:42-47
DATE: OCTOBER 11, 2026

INTRODUCTION

Three thousand souls were just added at the conclusion of Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost.

Admittedly, after such an incredible response to the gospel, the apostles had a leadership challenge. What do you do with three thousand new converts? How can you help them grow in their new relationship with God? How might you prevent them from making a quick, momentary decision, only then forget it several weeks later?

What happens next? Who do these people become after they were saved?

Text

Acts 2:42–47

⁴² And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³ And awe^[d] came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵ And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶ And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Explanation

Acts 2:42–47 is the first of several passages in Acts commonly referred to as a “summary passage.” These passages describe the general activity of the early Christians and the progress of the gospel. They often serve as transitions from one story to the next.

In our text today, we see the early Christians engaging in several activities that contributed to both their individual spiritual growth and the numerical growth of the church.

It is striking that these initial converts were “devoted.” This implies that they made a conscious decision to continue in their faith beyond their initial conversion. Their relationship with God through Christ now took priority over everything else. The change they were seeking did not come fully or automatically at the moment of conversion. Rather, their conversion placed them on a trajectory toward lasting change. Out of their conversion came a new journey marked by devotion and growth, distinct from the way they had previously sought to relate to God through the law.

APOSTLES' TEACHING

The first Christians immediately devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching. In a later summary passage in Acts 4:32–35, Luke references the apostles' teaching in connection with their testimony about the resurrection. Much of the apostles' teaching would naturally have centered on Jesus' resurrection.

Throughout the opening chapters of Acts, Luke repeatedly emphasizes that the apostles were bearing witness to the resurrection.

The apostles also understood teaching to be one of their primary responsibilities. In Matthew 28:19–20, commonly referred to as the Great Commission, Jesus commanded the apostles to “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” Later, when a group of widows came to them because they were not receiving their daily portion of food, the apostles established the office of deacon so that others could serve while they remained devoted to prayer and the ministry of the word (Acts 6:1–6).

Jesus Himself identified the apostles’ teaching ministry as authoritative and set apart. In John 14:25–26, Jesus said: “These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.” John 16:12–15 adds: “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth...” These passages reveal that the apostolic teaching was a reflection of truth given through the Holy Spirit.

It is worth highlighting that the early church was a learning community. They were intellectual, not merely experiential. They were seeking to increase their understanding of God and His ways. Their faith was not simply about having an experience with God; they were devoted to learning the truth about God.

FELLOWSHIP

While each Christian is responsible for his or her spiritual condition and growth, each believer also belongs to a community. A common word the New Testament uses for this community is “fellowship.” This means that the early church gathered regularly for worship, accountability, and mutual edification. They did not simply come together for socializing; they came together for fellowship. They came to love one another. Christianity has a place to belong—to know others and to be known.

THE BREAKING OF BREAD

The phrase “breaking bread” could simply mean that the church ate meals together. And while it is certainly true that they shared meals, the phrase in Acts 2:42 may also have a connection to celebrating the Lord’s Supper. Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper in the context of Passover. The bread represents His body given for us, and the cup represents His blood poured out for us.

From the very beginning, the early church practiced baptism and the Lord’s Supper. It is significant that the early Christians worshiped differently from what had been prescribed under the Old Testament covenant. No sacrifices or offerings are mentioned here. Instead, Christ had given His people new covenant signs in baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

The Old Testament rituals pointed forward to what Christ would accomplish. The ordinances of the church point believers back to what Christ has already accomplished in His death and resurrection.

PRAYER

This next item probably comes as no surprise: they devoted themselves to prayer. This was also one of the things the original 120 believers did after Jesus instructed them to wait in Jerusalem.

It is encouraging to think that, even in the midst of an extraordinary outpouring of God’s Spirit, the early Christians did not neglect prayer. If anything, their experience of God’s work appears to have deepened their dependence upon Him in prayer.

Prayer reminds us that ministry is ultimately dependent upon God rather than human ability. We should not think of prayer merely as something we do when we need God to intervene. The early church was characterized by people who regularly depended upon God in prayer.

AWE

Luke speaks about the people being filled with “awe.” In this instance, people were overwhelmed with reverence and amazement at what was taking place. God was clearly at work. What was happening was not the result of human

planning, eloquence, or gifting. The Holy Spirit was at work, and people were amazed.

This awe was worshipful and expectant. What God was doing was unmistakable, and the people were taking notice.

SIGNS AND WONDERS

Luke tells us that signs and wonders were being performed *through* the apostles. This wording is significant. The apostles were not acting independently; God was working through them.

Jesus told His disciples that such works would follow His departure. In John 14:12, He said: “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in Me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.” The apostles were now carrying out the ministry Jesus had entrusted to them.

Recognizing the purpose of the signs and wonders is helpful. The miracles demonstrated God’s mercy toward people, while also supporting the apostles’ ministry of the word. These signs bore witness that God was at work through their ministry and confirmed the message they proclaimed. Acts 4:29–30 shows this connection when the believers prayed: “And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to Your servants to continue to speak Your word with all boldness, while You stretch out Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of Your holy servant Jesus.” Likewise, Hebrews 2:3–4 explains: “It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to His will.”

The signs and wonders were therefore not the central message. They served the message by demonstrating God's work and authenticating the testimony of those proclaiming Christ.

ALL THINGS IN COMMON

This speaks to the unity of the early church. These early Christians were living out what Paul would later command the Philippian church: “Being of the same

mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves” (Philippians 2:2–3).

For the early church, this unity was tangibly demonstrated through their generosity toward one another. Verse 45 explains the meaning of “all things in common” when it says that they “were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as they had need.”

A few clarifications and observations about the generosity of the early church are helpful. First, their giving appears to have been prompted by the Spirit’s work among them. Our entire passage is meant to convey that the Spirit was at work in these believers. Second, their giving was sacrificial. Amazingly, they sold possessions in order to help those who were in need. Third, their giving was conducted with discretion. The resources were distributed according to actual needs. Fourth, their giving was nondiscriminatory. It was available to *all* who had needs. Fifth, their giving was voluntary. Nothing in the text suggests that people were forced to give. Rather, they gave willingly and, as the broader passage suggests, with joy. Sixth, the people continued to own possessions. What Luke describes did not result in communal living in which individuals no longer possessed anything privately. A few verses later, we see the church meeting in “their” homes, indicating that people still owned their own houses.

The emphasis, then, is not on eliminating private ownership but on refusing to allow possessions to prevent believers from caring for one another.

DAY BY DAY: IN THE TEMPLE AND IN HOMES

A worthwhile question for these new Christians is: How often did they meet, and where did they meet?

Evidently, the movement of the Spirit led them to gather day by day. Of course, this does not necessarily mean that every Christian gathered every single day. Rather, Luke seems to be emphasizing how regularly and passionately these believers gathered together.

Gathering in the temple made sense for these Christians because, in their minds, their belief in Jesus flowed out of God’s design for the temple in the Old Testament. They were not attempting to start an entirely new religion; they were embracing the fulfillment of God’s promises in the Old Testament.

They presumably did not participate in the temple sacrifices and offerings as though Christ's sacrifice had not occurred. Instead, they gathered for worship, prayer, and fellowship. It is also probable that they were spreading the word about Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension.

But the church also met in homes. They demonstrated joyful hospitality. They were eager not merely to share the same beliefs but to share their lives with one another.

Our text again references "breaking bread." Earlier, we considered that "breaking bread" could have a reference to the Lord's Supper. Here, however, the idea is probably that they were eating meals together. The following phrase—that they "received their food with glad and generous hearts"—strongly suggests that Luke is describing ordinary meals. It is possible that the Lord's Supper was celebrated in connection with these meals, but the emphasis here appears to be on the joy and generosity with which they shared their food.

PRAISING GOD

This Christian community was something special. Perhaps you have experienced a sweet friendship or community that led you to praise God for what you were experiencing.

Much of what has been described in this summary passage concerns how the believers related to one another. They learned from the apostles, fellowshiped together, witnessed signs and wonders through the apostles, practiced incredible generosity, and demonstrated hospitality. As we will note in a moment, they even experienced favor with all the people.

Yet the passage also makes clear that these believers were filled with awe and were praising God. They rightly understood that what they experienced horizontally was connected to their vertical relationship with God. The Holy Spirit was at work in and among them. This all resulted with praise towards God.

FAVOR WITH ALL THE PEOPLE

In addition to the fellowship experienced within the Christian community, there was favor with those outside the church. This phrase in our summary is significant because very soon the Christian community will begin to experience obstacles and persecution.

When we look to other New Testament letters, we see encouragement for Christians to conduct their lives among outsiders in ways that earn their respect. First Thessalonians 4:11–12 instructs: “But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more, and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.” Similarly, 1 Peter 2:12 advises: “Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.”

The early Christians were not seeking popularity, but their lives and relationships gave credibility to the gospel they proclaimed.

THE LORD ADDED

As Luke concludes his first summary passage, he identifies the activity of the Lord. He is the one who was adding to their number those who were being saved. The Christians were certainly active, but ultimately, the Lord was the one working. The increase was happening rapidly, day by day.

It is also noteworthy that those being added were *those who were being saved*. This was a *Christian* community, and entrance into the church came through salvation. Genuine salvation resulted in belonging to a new community.

The church was active in teaching, fellowship, prayer, generosity, hospitality, worship, and witness. But Luke ends by reminding us who was ultimately responsible for the growth:

The Lord added to their number those who were being saved. God is building His church.

Discussion Questions

- What stands out to you about this new community of believers?
- In what ways should churches today model themselves after this community?
- Where do you see the activity of God in this passage?
- What words might you use to describe the role of the apostles? How do you perceive the early church viewing them?
- Luke describes the early church as “devoted.” On a scale from 1–10, how devoted do you think the church is today? What about you specifically within the past month?
- Of the different items listed in our passage, do you think churches today appear to be devoted to some items more than others?
- What does this passage teach us about Christian fellowship?
- The early Christians gathered in the temple and also in homes and day by day. What do you perceive to be normal for Christians today in terms of gathering at the church and also in homes? How often?
- This early Christian community experienced favor with all people? To what extent do you think Christians experience favor with those outside the church? Why do you think that is?

Conclusions or Applications

WHAT IS A CHURCH?

It is very common for churches today to look at Acts 2:42–47 and conclude that churches should practice several core activities.

First, churches should embrace God’s Word. At the time of Acts 2:42–47, God’s truth was being revealed through the apostles’ teaching. The church sought to grow in its understanding of God’s plan of salvation and His truth. Today, churches are no different—we are to be people who follow God’s truth revealed through the Scriptures. We must continue to preach and teach God’s Word.

Second, churches should worship God. This was clearly an important part of this early Christian community. They were filled with awe at what God was doing. They gathered together regularly for breaking bread. They apparently continue to gather in the temple for worship and prayer. Today, a key part of our gathering together as a church is worship.

Third, churches should fellowship with one another. Genuine fellowship among believers can be expressed in a variety of ways. This includes carrying one another's burdens, encouraging one another, keeping each other accountable, building friendships, sharing a meal, serving together, and more. Our church today certainly prioritizes providing opportunities for fellowship and service.

Fourth, churches should be about evangelism and bearing witness. We see the early church engaging in evangelism as they gathered at the temple daily and found favor with all the people. The way they treated one another helped bear witness to the outside world. The church was growing, and the Lord was adding to their number those who were being saved. Churches today must engage in evangelism and mission efforts.

Fifth, churches today should be people of prayer. Prayer can be an act of worship as we offer prayers of praise and adoration. Prayer can also be a mark of fellowship as we intercede for one another. Prayer is certainly part of our evangelistic efforts as we pray for the lost to be saved. Churches must rely on prayer to be the church God designed us to be.

After listing these five things, it is worth pointing out how these activities are all interconnected. Healthy churches engage in all of these things, not just a selected one or two of them.

True fellowship cannot be isolated from being devoted to God's Word. Indeed, the fellowship Christians enjoy is doctrinally dependent on God's truth. Similarly, worship cannot be separated from sound doctrine, nor can worship be separated from genuine fellowship. We are told in Scripture to sing hymns and spiritual songs *to one another* (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). Our worship can even be hindered when we lack love toward our brothers and sisters (1 Corinthians 13:1–7; Matthew 5:23–25). Likewise, our evangelistic efforts will fall short without prioritizing prayer.

It is interesting to note that the early Christians, from the very beginning, began functioning in these core ways. These are timeless, God-given means by which churches can continue to honor God and bear witness today. The best thing we can do is to keep pressing on in these five areas and avoid drifting from them. We must keep the main things the main things!