



The Things We do as God's Family - Food and Family -

Sermon for November 7 2021

Acts 2:41-47

Sermon Introduction

This week we will begin a three-week series on Food and Family.

We will begin with a passage from Acts chapter 2.

These verses come just after Peter preached a sermon about the death and resurrection of Jesus.

The Holy Spirit gave the gift of faith to 3,000 people, and they believed in Jesus.

Today we will look at how those new Christians loved God and loved each other as a church family.

I am going to read our scripture passage now.

Please listen and open your hearts to God speaking to us in His Word.

Acts 2:41–47

41 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

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

43 And awe 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.

Together we read Isaiah 40:8:

The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.

Please pray with me.

Father in Heaven, thank you for inviting us into your church family.

We are blessed, and safe, and filled with peace because we are your children.

Holy Spirit, thank you for teaching us today about our life in Jesus.

We pray in his name.

Amen.

Here is the main point, or big idea, of today's sermon.

Big Idea: The church is one Body, devoted to four activities.

In Acts chapter 2, you can read the sermon that Peter preached 2,000 years ago to visitors from many nations.

They were in Jerusalem to celebrate the holiday called Pentecost.

If you look at Acts 2:41, you can see how people responded to Peter's sermon.

Verse 41: "So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls."

That is a lot of people!

These people from many different nations were now united by a new faith in Jesus.

How will that change their lives?

How will they interact as a new church family?

We see in verse 42 that they did four things.

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

We will look at the four activities in a minute.

But first, please notice that the early Christians "devoted themselves" to doing these things.

They were committed to these activities.

Maybe some of you have tried to start exercising, but it was hard to do?

I know that feeling.

You might exercise every day for about a week.

After that, you lose interest.

You get busy with other things.

It never becomes a regular habit.

But when someone is devoted to exercise, they put it on their calendar.

They make it a priority in their schedule.

They are committed to a habit of exercise.

The result of their devotion to exercise is a healthy body and mind.

The early Christians were committed to these four habits.
They did not lose interest in them.
They were devoted to four activities that reinforce and fuel each other.

Do you see the four activities in verse 42?

1. Learn from God.
2. Love and serve each other.
3. Eat together and fellowship as a family.
4. Worship and pray to God.

I want to help you see how these four activities are connected.

1. They learned from God.

The very first thing that Luke lists here is that the people were devoted to the apostle's teaching.
They wanted to learn more about Jesus.

Thankfully, the apostles could tell them many stories about what Jesus said and did.

Because the apostles knew Jesus personally.

The apostle John wrote this in 1 John 1:3—

"We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen and heard so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ."

The apostles could also teach from the Bible.

God's people were hungry to understand how Jesus the Messiah was the fulfillment of all of God's promises in the Old Testament.

My friends, this activity is listed first because it is the foundation of the other three activities.

You can do items 2 and 3 in any human organization.

But they won't have power because they will be built on human wisdom.

We live in a world that is always confused about the truth.

That's why we must be devoted to learning truth from God in His Word.

We do not have the apostles here physically to teach us.

We do not have the apostles to perform wonders and signs like we see in verse 43.

But we have the testimony and teaching of the apostles here in our Bibles.

When we study the Word of God, we can know Jesus the Son, and God the Father, and God the Holy Spirit.

Studying God's Word unites us in a common understanding of who God is and who we are.

That vertical unity with God helps us experience deep horizontal unity with one another.

That is the next item.

2. They loved and served each other.

The second activity we see in verse 42 is "fellowship."

The word fellowship means "to share in common with others."

These early Christians shared with each other in radical ways.

You can see it in verses 44-45.

"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."

When you understand that God is very generous toward you, it should make you more generous toward other people.

God the Father gave us His one and only Son to be our Savior.

Only the blood of the perfect and holy Lamb of God can pay the penalty for our sins.

Our salvation was very expensive.

Our sins are very great, so the cost to wash them away was very high.

These 3,000 Christians understood that.

They were grateful for the generosity of God toward them.

That's why they were radically generous with each other.

We read more about it in Acts chapter 4, verses 32–35.

"32 Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common.

33 And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

34 There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold 35 and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need."

One Voice Fellowship is a church family that wants to help each other like the early Christians did.

Acts 4:32 says that it was the believers who loved and served each other generously.

That's important to notice.

They shared their resources with their brothers and sisters in Christ.

They had a unity of heart and soul and possessions because they had unity in Jesus.

Now we should look at the third activity of the early church.

3. They ate together and had fellowship as a family.

Acts 2:46 says: "And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they

received their food with glad and generous hearts"

The early Christians gathered together frequently.

They did it "day by day."

Following Jesus is something we cannot do alone.

It is good to pray alone sometimes.

It is healthy to read our Bibles by ourselves.

But we cannot do everything alone or we will not be healthy.

Sin is a selfish motivation to get what I want even if it hurts other people.

Sin separates us and isolates us from other people.

After Jesus saves us, however, we begin to leave behind our selfish sinful behavior.

We are saved from being spiritual orphans into a new spiritual family.

As brothers and sisters we need to be encouraged and corrected and served by each other.

That's why the early Christians went to the temple together day by day.

Coming to church is something we do because we enjoy it, but also because we need it.

Listen to Hebrews 10:25—

"Don't stop meeting together with other believers, which some people have gotten into the habit of doing. Instead, encourage each other, especially as you see the day drawing near."

Verse 46 also says the early Christians met in their homes to break bread.

Breaking bread was also mentioned in verse 42.

This might refer to the sacrament of communion.

It also seems to refer to church family dinners like the ones we have here every week.

I want to show you this slide so you can see the importance of our church family dinners at One Voice Fellowship.

From 4-5pm, we gather in small groups that are separated by language.

Each group reads God's word in their language and prays for one another.

From 6-7:15pm, we all gather to worship God.

We are in the same place, but our focus is vertical.

We focus on God, not on each other.

The other hour we spend together on Sundays is 5-6pm.

This is where we build horizontal community.

We build friendships with people from different countries and cultures.

Food has a powerful ability to bring people together.

Remember that the 3,000 new Christians included people from many countries who were visiting Jerusalem.

They gathered to break bread because they were hungry for real community with God and with each other.

Food has that kind of power.

When we come to the Lord's Table for communion next week, the Holy Spirit will strengthen our bonds to Jesus through that meal.

And every week when we gather for dinner, we build and strengthen our bonds with each other as a church family.

We also gather in our homes, like the early Christians did.

Some of you ladies met yesterday in Mae's home for prayer.

I also hope that you are praying for opportunities

to invite people to your homes.

Food and hospitality are powerful tools for building friendships with people who don't know Jesus.

Would you please pray that God will connect you with people from your home country, who share your heart language?

Would you please think about inviting those people to your home, to build a friendship?

Then, when the time is right, invite them here to share a meal with all of us.

When they gather with all of us on Sunday night, they will get a taste of Christian fellowship.

And we will have the opportunity to show them how Jesus is the only one who can unite people from every nation into one church family.

Now let's look at the fourth activity described in verse 42.

4. They worshipped and prayed to God.

Prayer is communication vertically with God.

Christian worship is a dialogue.

Did you know that?

Dialogue is conversation that has two sides.

Both sides speak, and both sides listen.

Every week at One Voice Fellowship, our worship service is a conversation.

We hear God speak to us through His Word.

We speak back to God when we sing songs to praise Him.

God also speaks to us in the sacraments of baptism and communion.

We tell God that we trust him with our money when we bring our tithes and offerings.

God speaks to us through the benediction at the end of the service when the pastor announces a blessing over the children of God.

And we speak to God throughout the service with our confessions and prayers.

This is one reason it is good to attend the entire worship service.

I know that some of our cultures are more flexible with time.

And that's okay.

I just want you to see that because worship is a conversation, you miss parts of the conversation if you come late to worship.

Or if you are distracted by your phone during worship.

We want to be a family that is devoted to all the parts of the dialogue that happen in worship.

We want to be a praying church.

A praying church is united in trusting God for all our needs.

A praying church is united with each other when we pray together and for each other.

Here again is the Big Idea: The church is one Body, devoted to four activities.

1. Learn from God.
2. Love and serve each other.
3. Eat together and fellowship as a family.
4. Worship and pray to God.

If you think about these four activities, they go in every direction.

Christian community is both vertical and horizontal.

You must have both.

The power of the horizontal relationships among human beings is lost without the vertical relationship we each have with God.

God can do powerful things in a church family that is devoted to those four activities.

When we live like this, people will notice.

The world out there is very familiar with hatred and division.

But we have an opportunity in this church to show the world that people from different cultures and nations can be one family.

When we are united in Jesus and we do these four things together, people will notice.

They will understand that only God can do this among us.

And then God will bring others into the church family.

We see this in the last verse:

Verse 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."

There were 3,000 people who heard Peter's sermon and trusted in Christ.

Soon after that event the gospel began to spread all over the world.

How does the gospel spread?

When people hear the good news and see the good fruit.

Jesus has given us a message of hope and salvation to share with others.

We have the privilege of telling people in a broken world full of conflict and brokenness that Jesus is the Messiah and they can find eternal life in him.

We also show the world that the gospel has power to do everything we see in this passage.

A community of Christians who live like this is very attractive.

The early church had favor with all the people.

People were attracted to the love and fellowship they saw among the Christians.

It says in verse 47 that every day the Lord added more people to the church family.

It is important that you notice that it is the Lord who added to their number.

We do not choose our brothers and sisters in Christ.

If you are in fellowship with Christ, then you must be in fellowship with the people that the Lord adds to our number.

We will have conflict in our church.

We will sometimes see things differently.

We come from different countries and cultures.

We will misunderstand and hurt one another.

But it is the Lord who chooses our brothers and sisters.

He made us one, therefore we must live as one.

And when we live as one, it brings us great joy and it brings God great glory.

I am excited about that.

Aren't you?

Let's pray together that God our Father will make these things a reality here in our church family.

Father, thank you sending your Son Jesus, so we can be reconciled vertically with you.

Now that we are your children, we are blessed with brothers and sisters.

We have a big, diverse, global family.

Help us to love each other well.

Help us be generous like you are generous with us.

And help us trust you with our time, and money, and our entire lives.

We ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Next week we will continue to think about Food and Family as we look in God's Word to learn about communion.

We will also celebrate communion together as a church family next week.

I hope you will be here with us!