

ACTS Launch – “The Church” (Acts 2:42-47)

For the week of October 11, 2015

Testimony

Have a volunteer share their testimony. Take 5-10 minutes.

Tell the Story

Summarize or tell the story of Acts 2: 42-47. Then read the passage. Discuss any details missing from the telling of the story. Finally, rebuild the story as a group.

1. This passage clearly tells us that the early church members made the church a priority in their lives. Would people in today's time-challenged society want to be a part of a church like this, especially considering the commitment and priority? Explain.

2. Would you feel comfortable in this early church? Why or why not?

2. The church is a generous community (vv. 44-45).
The early Christians continued to own private property and work at their jobs, but as Christians, they also practiced a new and deeper level of generosity than the world had ever seen before. They sold a portion of their possessions to help the needy among them. This deep level of concern for others still defines the Christian community today.

Being generous with time, talents and possessions is a hallmark of all Christians. Describe a time in your life when you were the recipient of someone's generosity. What impact did this have on you?

Digging Deeper

1. The church is a learning community (vv. 42-43).
Think about it: These 3,000 baby Christians were continually devoting themselves to God's Word as it came from the apostles. These new Christians, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, were hungry for God's Word. They couldn't get enough of it. Being filled with the Spirit and being filled with God's Word go together (read Ephesians 5:18-20; Colossians 3:16-17). In other words, when the Spirit reigns, God's people continually devote themselves to the study of His Word.

What about you? Are you hungry for God's Word? Can you not get enough of it? Is it a priority and a daily habit in your life? Why or why not?

Every time the word fellowship (*koinonia*) is mentioned it denotes some type of sharing – either sharing something, or someone. The foundation of the early Christian's fellowship was giving. Fellowship cost something in the early church. So many people today never know the joys of Christian fellowship because they have never learned to give themselves away. And fellowship is a work of the Holy Spirit (read 2 Corinthians 13:14).

Discuss in your group the following statement: When the Holy Spirit reigns in your life, God's people not only relate to the Word, they relate to one another in *koinonia* and sharing. If the Holy Spirit is not reigning in your life, the opposite is true.

3. The church is a worshipping community (v. 46). Worship is the primary characteristic of the church that refuses to become a monument. The tragedy of the contemporary church is that most people worship their work, work at their play, and play at their worship. If we are to be an extension of the book of Acts, we must first give attention to worship, including our own private adoration and thanksgiving. Read what author and Pastor A.W. Tozer said and then discuss:

"We have lost our spirit of worship and our ability to withdraw inwardly to meet God in adoring silence. Modern Christianity is simply not producing the kind of Christian who can appreciate or experience the life in the Spirit. The words, 'Be still, and know that I am God,' mean next to nothing to the self-confident, bustling worshiper."

How do you currently worship our almighty God daily? Is it a priority in your life?

4. The church is a missional community (v. 47). The early church was marked by eagerness for Christ's teaching, supportive relationships, wonder at God's working, sharing, prayer, genuineness and joy. As a result, God adds to the number. Where Christian fellowship demonstrates the gospel, believers come alive and nonbelievers get curious and want to know what the secret is.

Are nonbelievers "curious" today about God and are they attracted to a vibrant church that exhibits the characteristics of the early church? Discuss. How does being a church that makes disciples who make disciples reach out to nonbelievers?

Keys to the Text

- Churches were built from the beginning to foster fellowship. However, many Christians today think fellowship is gathering together in passing and talking about such mundane things like the weather or the latest sports scores. This has led to a generation that skips church altogether, choosing instead to stay home and catch the Sunday service online and keeping up with friends via social media. True fellowship is so much more. Having people in your life to share your joy and sorrows, to encourage and pray for you, hold you accountable and give you a place to do the same for others is the true purpose of the church and the design God intended.
- What is it that you "devote yourself" to doing? Luke kept the list short; studying the Word, fellowship with other believers, sharing meals and praying. All things we as believers should be committed to incorporating into our own lives for our own spiritual maturity. Today, we have so many more distractions competing for our time. Commit this week to finding the time to add one or more of these practices in your own life and see what God will do with it.

Prayer

- Pray for each member of your small group. What issues are they struggling with? Where are they trying to grow?
- Pray for RiverLakes to be a church that actively makes disciples who make disciples. Pray for our church family to be bold for Him in our home, at work and elsewhere.
- **Bottom Line:** The church is supposed to be an attractive community.