

The Church: DEFINED

Study Questions

Week 5

"...and there were added that day about three thousand souls." Wow! God's Spirit fueled Peter's words and the result was supernatural. Some of those who had called for Jesus' crucifixion now were calling Him "Christ." The community of God's people—the church—was expanding. We might wonder what it looked like to be among them or even to be one of them. These last verses of chapter 2 profile the church's early days, but also (should) inspire us to assess our own experience here in 2020.

MAIN TEXT: Acts 2:42-47

CONNECT & OBSERVE

1. What did you find most significant from Sunday's sermon?
2. Read the passage in Acts. What questions come to mind as you consider these verses?

LEARN

3. The word translated as *devoted* in verse 42 means "hold fast to, continue in, persevere in."¹ Think about the four practices Luke includes. Why do you think these were so important for the early church?
4. "Every soul" in verse 43 refers to the widespread awareness in Jerusalem of what was happening among the believers. Imagine being there. Why would awe (or fear) be so prevalent in those who witnessed what was happening?²
5. Verses 44-45 describe a voluntary, open-handed concern for each other's material needs. What does this imply about the kind of transformation taking place within the community?
6. Verses 46 refers to community activities at both the temple and in homes. How could both be vital to the formation of the early church?

¹ According to *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, Third Edition.

² NT scholar, Darrell Bock, proposes that, "The fear described here is likely to be similar to that seen in Acts 2:37, where divine activity is associated with the group...Such activity causes all to take careful, respectful, even nervous notice of what is happening inside the community."

APPLY

7. Think about the four practices of *the apostles' teaching* (preserved for us in the New Testament), *fellowship*, *breaking of bread* (i.e., sharing a meal), and *prayer*. Which of these do you think we do well in our community? Which need more attention?

8. Talk about the kind of radical sharing of material possessions that's described in this passage. What's your gut response to it? Have you witnessed something like this taking place in the church today? If you can, describe what happened!

9. Consider this extended quote from NT scholar Dr. Darrell Bock:

"Everything about the Gospels and Acts tells us that God's people are to take the initiative to show community and serve those around them. Much in Western culture drives us to an individualism that undercuts this development of community. We are taught to have things our way and that being able to have our individual needs catered to is how to measure the success of an organization. In our culture, our individual needs and rights come before any needs of the group. The biblical picture is not of what someone receives from the church, although one does receive a great deal, but of what one gives and how one contributes to it. The portrait of the early church in Acts shows that community and the welfare of the group were a priority. This attitude reflected spiritual maturity that allowed the church to grow. In the case of this earliest community, the believers' preaching was matched by their community, making a powerful testimony for their mission. When the early church said that God cared, the care they gave their own demonstrated this." (*Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Acts*)

Discuss whether you agree with this assessment of our culture and its impact on the church (including Calvary), or do you see it differently?

10. It's possible to have a variety of reactions to this short passage—everything from inspired to discouraged. How does it hit you?

Take time to pray together—that we would be the kind of Spirit-infused community that testifies to Jesus' presence among us.