

**Discussion Starter:** What do you think are some characteristics God is looking for in a church?

**Key Text:** *“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. <sup>43</sup> And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. <sup>44</sup> And all who believed were together and had all things in common.” (Acts 2:42-44)*

## Acts 2: The Birth of the Church

Acts 2 describes the birth of the early church and the power by which the church carries out its mission and ministry. First, just as Jesus had promised in Acts 1:8, the Holy Spirit filled His followers in Jerusalem, enabling them to supernaturally speak in languages they had not previously learned so people could hear and understand the message in their own native tongues and dialects (Acts 2:11). Then, the Apostle Peter preached from Old Testament prophecies to prove that Jesus was the Messiah they had waited so long for (Acts 2:14-36). The power of God was felt, and about 3,000 people received the Good News about Jesus and were baptized as a public sign that they were now followers of Jesus (Acts 2:41). The church was born!

The Bible teaches that the church is people—it is not merely a building, an organization, or even a denomination. The church is *“the body of Christ”* (1 Cor.12:27) made up of all believers from every *“tribe, language, people, and nation”* (Rev.5:9) who have trusted in Jesus for salvation. In many ways, the church at its birth was the church at its best. All knew it as a God-honoring place of grace, gladness, generosity, and growth. In this 4-week series “Forward,” we’ll study characteristics of the early church in Acts 2 that every church today should desire to imitate. In today’s lesson, we’ll discover from Acts 2:42-44 three key spiritual disciplines or practices of the early Christians that strengthened them to serve the Lord faithfully and effectively. As we put these same 3 practices into action, we can experience the strength of God in our lives and church, too.

### 1. They were devoted to God’s Word. (v.42a)

*“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching...” (v.42a)*

The early church prioritized receiving teaching from the apostles Jesus trained (v.42). These Christians understood that God’s truth must always come before human tradition. Experience and emotion are to be tested by God’s Word, not vice-versa. Nothing can replace the Bible’s role in strengthening our faith (Rom.10:17).

**Discuss:** What words and concepts do you see repeated in Acts 5:14; 6:1, 7; 12:24; 13:49; 19:20?

**Discuss:** Read these verses and discuss the various ways God’s Word strengthens our faith: Psalm 19:7-9; Matthew 7:24-27; Romans 10:17; 2 Timothy 3:16-17, 1 John 4:1.

**Discuss:** When have you benefitted from God’s Word?

## 2. They were devoted to fellowship. (v.42b)

*“They devoted themselves to the...fellowship, to the breaking of bread...<sup>44</sup> all who believed were together and had all things in common.”* (v.42b, 44)

Biblical fellowship as demonstrated by the early church went far beyond coffee, donuts, church socials, or sports. For the early Christians, fellowship was serious business. For example, Christian fellowship in the New Testament included:

- *“taking part in the relief of the saints”* through sacrificial service and financial support (2 Corinthians 8:4; 1 Timothy 6:18),
- *“partnership in the Gospel”* even to the extent that fellowshipping with other Christians could lead to persecution (Php.1:7),
- *“participation in the Spirit”* (Php.2:1) through emulating Christ’s humility and self-sacrificing love (Php.2:5-8),
- *“participation in the blood...and body of Christ”* (1 Cor.10:16) through observing the Lord’s Supper in love, unity, and worship.

The quality of fellowship exemplified by the early church did not happen by accident—they were *“devoted to...fellowship”* (v.42)! We must be devoted as well!

**Discuss:** What are some key words and phrases in Hebrews 10:24-25 that reveal the importance of Christian fellowship?

**Discuss:** When have you benefitted from Christian fellowship?

## 3. They were devoted to prayer (v.42c)

*“They devoted themselves to...prayers.”* (v.42c)

Those early Christians agreed that a prayerless church is a powerless church. They knew Jesus had said, *“Apart from me, you can do nothing”* (Jn.15:5) and *“they ought always to pray and not lose heart”* (Lk.18:1). Notice the emphasis in Acts on their devotion to prayer: *“they were devoting themselves to prayer...they devoted themselves to prayers...we will devote ourselves to prayer”* (Acts 1:14; 2:42; 6:4).

**Discuss:** When have you benefitted from the prayers of fellow believers?

**Discuss:** According to Acts 2:43-44, what was the result of the early church’s devotion to God’s Word, fellowship, and prayer (v.42)?

### For Further Study:

Free online commentary on the Book of Acts at [www.enduringword.com](http://www.enduringword.com)  
Grace Fellowship Statement of Faith at <https://www.gograce.church/about>  
“Why is Going to Church Important?” article at [www.gotquestions.org](http://www.gotquestions.org)