

**Discussion Starter:** How would you help a new Christian understand the importance of the church?

In our “Forward” series, we’re learning qualities of the early Christian church at its birth in Acts 2. These qualities are important to know because the church at its birth was, in many ways, the church at its best. The early church in Acts 2 is a model for all churches, no matter the time or place in history.

Today’s lesson focuses on the attitude of mutual care exhibited in the early church. By helping each other out, these early Christians were building each other up.

**Key Text:** *“And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. <sup>46</sup> And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts.”* (Acts 2:45-46)

The New Testament has much to say about the importance of Christians edifying – or building up – one another. It is our privilege and responsibility to seek to build one another up in the faith.

## 1. We build up one another with our generosity.

In Acts 2, people had come to Jerusalem from all over the Roman Empire and the Middle East to celebrate Pentecost. Scholars estimate that as many as 900,000 travelers from “*every nation under heaven*” (Acts 2:5) had crowded into the city. After Peter preached and 3,000 received Christ and were baptized (Acts 2:41), these 3,000 new Christians desired to stay in Jerusalem for as long as possible to learn to grow in their new relationship with Jesus. These new believers needed places to stay and food to eat, so the early church generously gave to meet one another’s needs (Acts 2:45-46). Their generosity was not any sort of pre-socialism or pre-communism – they were not forced to share. Rather, these Christ-followers viewed their “*possessions and belongings*” (v.45) as a trust from God. They knew what generosity looked like because they had experienced generosity from God, so they voluntarily committed to being generous with each other as needs arose.

As the early church grew and spread, its generous spirit grew and spread with it. For example, when the church in Jerusalem was affected by a famine, the church in Antioch supported them (Acts 11:27-30), and churches in Macedonia and Achaia later assisted, too (Rom.15:25-26; 1 Cor.16:1-4).

**Discuss:** Why is it important for a church to be known for its generosity?

**Discuss:** In what ways have you benefitted from a church’s generosity?

**Discuss:** According to 2 Corinthians 9:11-13, how can our generosity toward one another in the body of Christ point nonbelievers to God? How do we see this evidenced in Acts 2:47?

## 2. We build up one another with the Bible.

Acts 20:32 says, “I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”

When a Christian comes to us with a need, a question, or even a complaint, let's be sure to use God's Word to respond because God's Word builds people up.

**Discuss:** When have you benefitted from a fellow Christian's Bible-based counsel?

## 3. We build up one another with our words.

Ephesians 4:29 says, “Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up... that it may give grace to those who hear.”

Our words and how we speak them can tear people down or build them up. Corrupting talk drains others of courage, but gracious talk puts courage in.

**Discuss:** What key words and phrases do you notice in Ephesians 4:29?

## 4. We build up one another with our love.

1 Corinthians 8:1 says, “Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.” It is impossible to build others up when we are angry, arrogant, or authoritarian. But when we minister in love, others will be built up.

**Discuss:** According to John 13:35, what did Jesus say is the primary identifying mark of His followers? Why do you think this would be the primary identifying mark?

**Discuss:** When have you been built up by another Christian's love?

## 5. We build up one another with our spiritual gifts.

“So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church.” (1 Corinthians 14:12)

God gives each Christian at least one spiritual gift – an ability to edify the church. The wrong use of spiritual gifts easily leads to comparison and jealousy, but the right use of spiritual gifts leads to great glory for God and great good for the church body. If you don't know what your spiritual gift is, you may find a “Spiritual Assessment Tool” helpful (see under “For Further Study” below.)

**Discuss:** When have you benefitted from the use of spiritual gifts in church?

### For Further Study:

“Why is Edification Important in the Life of a Christian?” at [www.gotquestions.org](http://www.gotquestions.org)

“Spiritual Assessment Tool” (Discover your spiritual gift) at <https://s3.amazonaws.com/bhpub/edoc/DOC-Spiritual-Gifts-Survey.pdf>