

**Introduction:**

- What is life like in a community of transformation? What is life like in a community of people whose lives are being transformed by the Gospel? What does life look like where people have been impacted at the heart by the Gospel of Jesus Christ?
- “**All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord’s Supper), and to prayer. A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord’s Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity—all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.**” (Acts 2:42–47, NLT)
- I don’t believe that Luke the author of Acts wants us to adopt ‘the system’ we see in this passage as much as he wants us to see the passion and commitment of the people and what it produced.
  - Luke’s main burden, however, is not to focus on these four activities per se but to stress the profound unity and intimacy this community shared through the Spirit.
  - In short, the first mark of the first Christian community is a commitment to Jesus’ revelation uniquely entrusted to the apostles. It was the passion of the “newborns” and the hunger of the “newborns” that was to establish the ‘norm’ or the structure of the Christian faith/Christian Community.
- Passion produced the desire for God presence and spiritual growth together. Commitment produced a dedication to each other and to the mission of Christ-making disciples.
  - One of the beautiful characteristics of our culture today especially among the 30 under crowd. is the desire to ‘hang out.’ Community!
  - And since we know we have been created for relationship with God and with each other, it only makes sense that we would experience real community when it involves a spiritual purpose or spiritual journey together.
- I want to talk to you from the perspective of Acts 2:42-47. Here we have the first church and they were rapidly growing and were on fire. The Holy Spirit was moving. But we also see a group of real followers that were devoted to true community, this was a church that desired to be together with a spiritual purpose. This church was not a social club, they were not just a group of Christians that were "hanging out" they were dedicated to the things of God. So let’s see what made this church so powerful.

**I. Real Followers Desire to be in God’s Presence**

- A. There are four ‘to do’ presented right away in this passage. Devotion to the apostles teaching, fellowship, eating together and prayer. It was not the step building small group ministry that Luke was teaching, rather he was giving us a picture of what an impassioned church looks like in response to such great Gospel. The works were born out of the passion! What is the passion in your life?
- B. Often when we think of church we think of wanting to be around people, however this passage shows us that although it’s great to be in the presence of others our first priority is to be in the presence of God.
- C. The early church understood that if you are getting together for a spiritual purpose the most important thing that can happen is to grow closer to the Spirit of Christ. (verses 42 and 47). God was the center of their activity. It was the whole reason for coming together.
  1. The one thing everyone had in common was Christ. (Koinos- to have in common) The only time I can remember going to church out of duty was before I became a believer. After that, I looked forward to getting together with believers. Ie. College on Saturday night prayer group. two hours or more of worship and singing. Then get up Sunday morning to go to church.
  2. For us it wasn’t about the ‘to do’s’ it was about growing together! The journey in Christ together. Sharing life together. I love what it says in vs. 44, "all the believers were together.” That is a powerful statement! They wanted to be together with God.

## II. Real Followers Desire to Grow Their Relationship with God Together

- A. Again verse 44 says that the believers met together.
1. That is the power of small group-togetherness. Koinos - having something in common together. Koinonia - fellowship.
  2. Awe. “Fear of God takes the form of reverent and submissive recognition in trust and obedience. Hence those who fear God are reliable (Ex. 18:21). Fear of God results from hearing the law (Dt. 4:10). It is the same as serving God or treading his way (Dt. 6:13; 8:6). This fear is integral to a purposeful life that is pleasing to God, and as such it is the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 1:7; Ps. 111:10). It has a moral orientation as the avoidance of evil. The NT opposes all hampering anxiety but relates fear of God to faith as total trust.’ Kittle They were doing this together.
- B. The small group concept is nothing new to the church but now more than ever culture is driving people to once again love the small and the simple. Ie. Coffee shops, boutiques, small intimate restaurants, etc. We need to be capitalizing on this in the spreading of the Gospel. Ie. John Wesley and methodism (was small group) It was the surest way to get people growing in the things of God.
- C. When I received Christ as my Savior, I did not need anyone to tell me what to do. They gave me a Bible and told me this is what God says. I devoured it! I wanted to learn new choruses to sing to God! I did not have to be told, you need to go to church and gather with other believers. I wanted to because I wanted to grow. My life had been empty enough. I had walked alone in to many crowds. I wanted a relationship with God and with people. We live in a nation of lonely people who are simply trying to numb their loneliness or fill it with empty no return on investment things.
- D. Real followers of Christ desire to grow their relationship with God together.

## III. Real Followers Are Dedicated to Each Other.

- A. Mt. 28:18,19,20 “As you go (wherever and however you go in the course of your lives), (I am commanding you to) MAKE DISCIPLES of all peoples (of every race), baptizing them (those who believe) in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe (to be obedient to) all that I have commanded you; and, yea I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”  
If we are going to do that scripture, we have to be dedicated to each other. Because life is about the journey—not a one time event. Yes, you can get saved in a one time event but being a disciple is life time dedication to becoming Christ like.
- B. Definitions
1. Disciple - is a person who has put his faith in Jesus Christ, is committed to governing his life by Jesus teaching, and passionately pursues Jesus mandate as his own personal mission.
  2. Discipling – “Discipling is an intentional relationship in which we walk alongside other disciples in order to encourage, equip, and challenge another in love to grow toward maturity in Christ. This includes teaching the disciple to teach others as well.” Greg Ogden – *Discipleship Essentials*, p.17
- C. Necessary ingredients to make disciples, there are four:
1. The Presence of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said he would always be with us. teacher, comforter, guide, convicter. The Holy Spirit brings the supernaturalness of discipling alive and empowers both teacher and student. This accelerates growth. We find God’s word and prayer here.
  2. Truth. Disciples must encounter the unchanging reality of God’s word. Truth will bring stability to a persons life.
  3. Transparent relationship. Relationship removes the barrier that we must do it on our own. Promotes friendship and deeper relationships.
  4. Accountability. It establishes in the beginning of discipling the “we agree to do and be” process. Addresses mutual expectations.
- D. Satan wants nothing more than to suck you dry spiritually, and some of you may be there already. Do you find yourself frustrated every time you try to start a devotional with God? Do you feel dry or empty

spiritually? In the context of small groups being dedicated to each other we feed our passion and desire to grow in Christ.

#### IV. Real Followers Are Devoted to the Mission

- A. They shared life together with great joy and generosity all the while praising God and enjoying the good will of the community. This kind of church or fellowship of believers is very attractive to a lonely world.
  1. Jesus said this: *“Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”* (John 13:35, NLT)
  2. As the early church ministered to each other’s needs, the community saw this and were amazed. It opened their hearts and lives to the Gospel!
  3. Grass roots Christianity was making an impact on Jerusalem while the city had a distrust of the religious leaders. People were amazed at Jesus vs. Pharisees. People were amazed at the impact of these lovers of Jesus on their community
- B. I believe because we have seen it throughout the years at Freedom, I saw in it college, and I see when ever I travel. Where there is a passion for Christ, other people get saved. When you are ‘real’ and genuinely excited about something, other people want to know what you have found. In the context of small group gatherings, it is fun to do this. Ie. “In basketball we call that two on one, or three on one fast break.”
- C. God added each day those who were being saved. vs 47. When the church finds this, it brings so much life into the body and into the community because transformation is taking place.
- D. So much of the book of Acts is this picture of the church. Everywhere Paul went, with passion he shared Christ; he gathered the believers together and fed their ‘newborn’ hunger and passion and the result was people being added to the church.

#### Conclusion:

- Real Followers:
  - Real Followers Desire to be in God’s Presence Together
  - Real Followers Desire to Grow Their Relationship with God Together
  - Real Followers Are Dedicated to Each Other.
  - Real Followers Are Devoted to the Mission
- What Luke capture for us future reader is that the early church was very passionate and committed not because someone told them to be but because they were filled with the genuine love of Christ.
- What came out of that love was fellowship, discipleship and transformation of lives and communities.
- In January, we will be launching new small groups along with the continuation of some of the small groups that were created earlier this fall. You will be able to sign up over the next few weeks for a small group. Be watching, be a part, grow together!