

The Spirit filled community that God desires. Acts 2:42-47.

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Book of Acts | September 29, 2026 | Acts 2:42-47

Prepared from the spoken message and lightly edited for readability. Scripture quotations and spoken phrasing are preserved as delivered.

Hey guys, thanks so much for listening to today's teaching from The Grove at Champion Forest. We pray this message helps you grow in your love for God and His Word.

I want you to turn in your Bibles to Acts chapter 2. Acts is toward the very end of the Scriptures, right after the Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

We've been going through this study now for five weeks. This is week five. It's our last night looking in the book of Acts. We have a really, really, really exciting one-off next week with a guest speaker, a worship pastor from Nashville, coming in. Look at our Instagram tonight around 9:00, and you'll see some of his story - a radical salvation story and a miraculous healing story. He's going to come lead worship and share his testimony, and then one of our pastors on staff, Michael Neal, is going to come preach a word that's going to be so deeply encouraging.

So next week, as every Tuesday and Sunday when the people of God gather around His Word, you don't want to miss it. I want you to be aware of that.

As we get ready to finish our short study on the book of Acts, I hope it propels you forward to read the book more on your own and that you would have devotional time through the rest of the book of Acts, seeing what happened as the Holy Spirit continued the life of Jesus through His church.

That's kind of been our undercurrent for these five weeks: The Christian life, if you call yourself a Christian, is more than a religious association. The reality of the Christian life is that Christ Jesus, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords whom we just lifted high and sang to - the gospel picture we just sang, that He came down, and by His blood we're healed and redeemed - continues His life by the Holy Spirit in us and through us.

The purpose of the Christian life is to keep going, to keep doing what Jesus began to do. That's where Acts begins in chapter 1. Luke, the author of Acts, says, "Hey, I wrote to you, and I began to tell you what Jesus began to do and teach until the day He was taken up. Now what I'm writing to you is His life in every Christian, the Holy Spirit lived out through us."

For me, at least, and I pray for you, it has been a really enjoyable study through the book of Acts. We've looked at these first two chapters and talked through what it means for us today to pursue this kind of devotion to the Lord, but also to live in the kingdom reality that we have, if you're a Christian, in Christ Jesus.

We've covered everything up to tonight. The title of tonight is "The Fellowship of the Believers: How Christians Should Live." Another title I'd love for you to write down is simply "The Spirit-Filled Community That God Desires."

Tonight we're going to look at the Spirit-filled community that God desires. That's for every single one of us. This 2,000-year-old picture isn't what God used to like. This is what God desires now. We're going to look at how that happened in the early church and what it will take for us to get back to this power- and wisdom-living as New Testament Christians.

Before we do, let's pray and ask God to speak to us tonight. You just take five seconds. "Lord, speak to me. Prepare my heart. Open my ears. Reveal Your truth. Reveal Yourself to me."

Christian, take access through the Holy Spirit to the throne of grace. "God, I need You. Open my heart to Your Word. I have faith in Your Word."

If you're not a Christian, give Him a chance. "Here I am. If You are who You say You are, show me."

Father, tonight I exalt Your Word above my life and above what we think tonight will look like. Your Word is perfect and eternal and true. Reconcile our entire lives to Your Word, that we would only be made sense of through the understanding of Your Word and the leading of Your Spirit. Do what You desire. Change us from the inside out. In Jesus' name, amen.

Acts chapter 2, starting in verse 42. We're going to read through it, and then we'll come back. The Scripture says this:

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.

And all who believed were together and had all things in common.

And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.

And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts,

praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

— Acts 2:42-47

The Value of Christian Community

When we look at the book of Acts here, I think it's really important for you to hear my heart on this passage. I have idolized this picture of community. I've compared my life to it, and I've magnified the ways that it does not parallel this passage. I've earnestly sought to have friends like this.

This is probably one of the passages I've looked at that has caused cynicism in my heart toward the church. I

read this, but I don't see this happening. Anyone else? You look through the pages of Scripture and you're like, "This is the way God said to live, but I don't see Christians living that way." Anyone else ever feel that way? Okay, safe place here.

This is kind of the one that's just wracked my head, and it's been the gold standard for community. This is what it should look like. This is what God desires, and I have rarely found it or experienced it.

The first time I had Christian community in a biblical sense was in 2021. I was at a church inside the Loop, Houston's First Baptist. It was the first time I went to church by myself, for myself. If you've heard my story, I grew up in church. I was always there because that's where my mom and dad's car went.

Now I'm choosing, being drawn by the Lord to the church, and I get plugged into a life group on a Sunday morning. I'm going to Metro on Tuesday nights. I'm in a community group throughout the week, and I'm just walking through the Scripture with people my age. For the first time, I'm going, "This is really enjoyable. This is what it's supposed to look like."

God did some incredibly miraculous things through biblical community that are the reason I am where I am today.

I've heard a lot of stories from you, and just from being around church and growing up in church, about church hurt. We have negative experiences with people in the church, and that will happen. The church is full of sinful people redeemed by grace, but still being redeemed by grace.

Maybe you've had a negative experience with someone. Maybe you walked into church and didn't feel welcomed. You didn't feel seen. You weren't greeted or talked to. Maybe you've been here before and you weren't greeted, talked to, seen, or welcomed. From the depths of my heart, I sincerely apologize. I'm thankful that you came back. We want to love you as Christ loves you.

If that's not been your experience, it has been mine, and for a lot of us, that's been something we've encountered before.

There's also a lot of toxicity in church at times. There are tons of social cliques in the church. There are some here tonight that grieve my heart and grieve God's heart.

As I began studying and reading this passage, I was so deeply impressed. When I use that term, what I mean is shaped internally by the Spirit. I don't always hear the audible voice of God. I've never heard the outside-of-my-ear voice of God, like, "Kal." But I have these impressions that are so clearly Him speaking to me.

As I'm studying, I began knowing the Lord was shaping my heart and showing me something. It was so emotional because I know this for a fact: God is grieved by the selfish, shallow, individualistic Christian who cares more about stuff and self than loving God and His people.

If that grieves God, and it does, it must grieve us as Christians.

The answer is not, "It's their fault. They're doing it." Sorry if y'all are sitting over there. It's not pointing the finger and blaming them. We're going to look at that here in just a moment. It is a two-way street, but it should

grieve us as it grieves God.

The church, the people of God, are called to be united. We've looked at it over the study of Acts. By the Spirit, we're baptized into the body of Christ. We are brothers and sisters in the kingdom.

It's also not right to disregard it because we're kind. You cannot disregard justice and truth for the sake of, "I don't want to hurt feelings. I want to be kind to them." I think in some areas the church has been way too kind when it comes to calling people up. I think, as a Christian, there are friends in your life you're way too kind to, and you're not giving the Holy Spirit a chance to wake someone up by grace.

This is not permission for you to act out in anger, but this is a call for us as Christians to step up, be the church, and be a difference-maker in this community. Why? Because we band together and become the one that we truly are. Friendship is family in the kingdom of God.

So it's not, "No, they hurt me. They're wrong." The church has never hurt anyone. People in the church have hurt other people. We don't get to blame God for our hurt. He will hold everyone accountable who's hurt you, and vengeance is His. That is refreshing. It's far better for Him to do it than for you to try to manufacture it.

However, Christian, we have a part in community. We are called up to it. We are called to it. We're going to look at the Scriptures tonight to see how God has laid out the template of community.

My goal and my hope up here is never to preach down at you or to be against you. I hope you know that. I hope you know my heart by now. To me, this is just the impression God's given me, and I want to be obedient to the impression.

This whole week I've been looking at my life as it comes to community. I've been asking, "Am I living into this? Am I underneath what we're talking about tonight?"

There are so many lonely Christians in the world, for sure. Here, yes, there are lonely Christians in this room. I wrestle with loneliness all the time. I'm probably consistently in the mold of being in a room with a lot of people and still feeling unseen. I wrestle with it every week, every day.

I feel like I've always been a friend to people where I listen and I share, but people rarely listen and share back with me. Maybe that's some of you in this room. You face that.

I have some phenomenal people in my life who love me like I've never been loved before. My wife is the grace of God on my life. There are friends in my life and mentors in my life, and I've never been so well loved by them. But I'm just sitting up here telling you, as a pastor, I know the feeling of being lonely.

Some of y'all don't think I sin. Yes, I do. Some of y'all don't think I need Jesus. Yes, I do.

It's difficult. We face this as Christians. Tonight my hope and my prayer, what I'm so overwhelmed with, is that we wouldn't leave as lonely people anymore. I don't think you want that. We shouldn't be lonely as Christians. It's not God's desire. It's not God's intention.

The reality is that something must change. It has to change. It can't keep going the way we are. It's got to

become a different lived-out faith for us, and we're going to look at God's Word tonight to see that.

Before we go back and start in verse 42, I just want to remind us who these people were. The people we're reading about had all things together in common, sold possessions, gave to the poor, distributed according to need, fellowshiped every day, broke bread, had meals, went to church, and prayed all the time.

These are the first Christians ever to live with the Holy Spirit dwelling in them and residing in them, and this is what the Spirit produced in their lives.

They weren't seminarians. They didn't take a New Testament overview. They didn't have an Old Testament theology class. They weren't wealthy elites. These were everyday men and women full of the Spirit. They didn't have podcasts where they could listen to Peter's sermons. They couldn't go back. Most of them probably didn't have the resources to take notes. They couldn't share the notes. They were reliant on one another.

They didn't have a big church to go to. They didn't have pre-structured Bible studies to just step into. They had to initiate these things.

They were not different than we are. However, here's what I think, and I would argue this: They knew the value of community way more than we do. They knew it was a necessity to live in community as a Christian. They knew they couldn't do it without the support and help of each other.

I think that's the difference. I think when it comes to community, we're proud. We are prideful people. We don't want to say we need help. We don't want to show ourselves weak. We don't want to be the one who's always bearing burdens to other people and needing the help, therapy, and counsel.

The Christian life is a healing life. We've been healed, but we're growing in that reality, so we do need counsel and therapy with professionals and with each other. I'm not saying that the Christian life is void of burden. Keep reading Acts. A whole lot of burden comes their way.

But these men and women were filled with the Spirit. By the way, two months ago, they were sitting there arguing with Jesus in the flesh over who was the greatest. They were proud, arrogant, shortsighted, and stubborn. "Jesus, they're against us." "No, they're with us." They're wondering why He's talking to the Samaritan woman. "Why would You be with Zacchaeus? Why are You eating with sinners and tax collectors?"

These same people who couldn't understand are now modeling Christian community. They had the Holy Spirit, and they'd also lived with Jesus for three and a half years. They'd seen His example. Jesus is the model of community. Read the Gospels. Look how relational He is.

My prayer is that tonight you would leave realizing the value of community for your life and for the people around you.

Four Priorities of Ongoing Devotion

Here we are in verse 42. The Scripture says:

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

— Acts 2:42

Again, "they" is the church.

What's really important about what we're about to look at, and what we're about to go deeply underneath, is that there are four priorities right here in the everyday Christian life. I think a lot of us have way too many priorities. If everything's a priority, nothing's a priority.

They had four non-negotiable pillars of their Christian lives as they related to community, and those became the natural, everyday rhythm. These are four priorities of ongoing devotion.

The language here is in the imperfect tense, meaning they continued doing these things. It wasn't a one-time decision. It's not enough to come here one time a month and talk to friends. You need it throughout the week, day by day. You need ongoing, consistent friendship, community, teaching, Scripture, prayer, worship, and devotion.

Before we look at what they were devoted to, I want to tell you what this word "devotion" means. It means to be earnest toward, to persevere, and to have constant diligence. It's a conscious, sustained commitment.

This word means they persisted in it. They earnestly pursued it. They were diligent to continue in a constant manner. It wasn't a consumer type of idea. It wasn't, "I'll go when Peter preaches. I'll go when the senior pastor's there. I'll go when they sing the songs I like. I'll go to the trendy one. I'll go when there's a late night." No, it was, "I need these rhythms in my life to be a Christian."

Also, when you're here, you bring value to other people. This devotion isn't just, "Check it off the list. Do it." No, this is an internal wiring driving them to live this way.

Devoted to Scripture

Looking at the text one by one, they devoted themselves and continued to persist in the apostles' teaching. They had an ongoing devotion to Scripture. They kept reading. They kept listening. They kept seeking. They were focused. They persisted in the Word of God.

Look back at the context here. Peter has just stood up, filled with the Spirit, and preached Christ. He's explained the phenomenon of speaking in tongues, other languages in the world, and then he goes, "Hey, Jesus is the Christ. You crucified Him. He's raised to life. He is Lord and Christ. Repent, be baptized, and receive the gift." He preaches the gospel.

This ongoing devotion to Scripture is this new covenant that had just taken place. But it's also how Christ fulfills the Old Testament. It's all of the Scriptures. For them, they're sitting and learning this new way of Christianity. For us, it's an ongoing devotion to the 66 books of the Bible. It's the Old and it's the New.

The Old isn't done away with. We learn, glean, are encouraged, and are instructed through the Old. It points to Christ.

Have you ever played Where's Waldo while waiting at the dentist's or doctor's office? Go find Christ in the Old Testament. Make that a challenge for yourself. Watch how it grows your faith and your beauty. The Old Testament is such a love story. It's incredible to me when I read through it. Look for Christ.

They had an ongoing devotion, commitment, and persistence toward the Scriptures.

Devoted to Fellowship

Next, it says they had an ongoing, persistent devotion to the fellowship. The language here is really important. Notice that the word "the" is in front of it. It's a definite article.

What it's really saying is that this new Jesus life we live, this messianic Christianity, this reality that Christ has come, ascended, and filled us with His Spirit, is a new way of fellowship. It looks just like the life of Jesus. It's generous. It's kind. It's slow to anger. It's patient. It's humble. It's loving. It's sacrificial. It's consistent. It seeks your best interest at my expense.

Not detrimental, but it means you come first. You're more important than me. That is the way, the fellowship, that Christians ought to live in.

They had an ongoing devotion to life in community because they knew its value. They knew how important it was. They knew why it mattered. They knew why they needed it.

I was looking at some things in my study this week, and I saw this illustration. I think it was really helpful for my mind.

Sometimes, as Christians, we get really shortsighted. We get earthly-sighted, where we start looking at each other more than we look at Jesus. Maybe, in a positive sense, you're like, "Man, he or she is a really strong Christian. I want to be like them. I want to learn from them. I want to grow from them." So you start trying to tune your life to them.

They aren't the standard. King Jesus is the standard. They are an example. They show us how it can look to live faithfully, but you don't need to model your life after them. Paul says, "Imitate me as I imitate Christ." "Eyes on Jesus with me," is what he's saying. "Follow my example. Learn from me because I'm committed to Him, so you can see that through me."

Here's what would happen if we had two pianos in the room. We start playing this piano, and it sounds really nice. This other one is out of shape. It's bent. It just doesn't sound good. You say, "Tune that piano to this piano." You can't do that. It wouldn't be good.

But if you grab the tuning fork or the instrument you can use to find the right chord and key, and you tune both pianos to that instrument, then the pianos will sync up.

As Christians, if you tune your life to Christ, community will sync up. If you're trying not to be like them, that's not the end goal. The end goal is to be like Christ. If you're trying to be better than them, that isn't the end goal either. The end goal is to be like Christ.

If you want to pursue and develop rich Christian community, tune your life to Christ, not another person. Praise God for faithful examples. I wouldn't be where I am today without faithful examples in my life. But my goal isn't to be like them.

There are people I've grown up with whom I don't want to be like. My goal isn't to not be like them. My goal is to be like Jesus.

If you'll tune your life and your community to the Gospels and the life of Jesus, you will find more harmony and peace as we set our eyes on what will last.

Devoted to the Breaking of Bread

They had an ongoing devotion to Scripture and fellowship, and then it says they were devoted to the breaking of bread.

In verse 46, it talks about how they went home and had meals together. They literally broke bread and enjoyed meals. This is also a reference to the act of communion. I think the early church took communion a lot because they anticipated Christ returning really soon.

Here's a really, really sobering thought. In communion, the gospel is so tangible. We break the bread, we drink of the cup, and we're remembering Christ's body and His blood. We touch the gospel. We feel it, per se.

If the early church, 50 days after the resurrection of Christ, most of whom had seen Him, is observing communion, reminding their souls of the gospel, confessing sin, and saying, "Jesus, thank You for the bread and for the cup," then you, as a Christian, should be observing and reminding your soul of His sacrifice for you.

Get around a table. Break bread. Remember Jesus. Thank Him for what He's done for you. Gather in His name. Have meals. Absolutely laugh and enjoy that, but have a sincere commitment to Christ and what He's done for us.

There's a holy reverence that comes through that, and it changes the way we live. They had an ongoing devotion to communion. It was a way of life for them because of what it did for their minds and hearts. This was a priority.

Devoted to Prayer

Last, here in verse 42, it says they were ongoing, devoted, persistent, and earnest in prayer. They were praying with and for one another. They would come together, and part of why they were together was to pray.

Why? Because they valued it.

Prayer doesn't only enter into a meal. That is a time to pray, but that's not what prayer is for. Prayer isn't just to begin a sermon or a worship set. Prayer is communing with God and sharing life with Him.

As a Christian, the greatest thing you can do for each other is pray. Call on God. Ask for heaven's help for them. Intercede. That's why we do this throne of grace moment now. It's not a filler in the service. The whole point is to get you to the throne of grace, where you can find help in your time of need.

As a friend, how often are you praying together? How often are you following up with a prayer request? How honest are your prayer requests?

If someone asks you, "What can I be praying for?" it's so easy to say, "Man, work was hard this week." I'm not saying that's wrong, but what else? What can I spiritually pray for you? How is your devotion to Christ? How are you doing with spiritual warfare? Who are you praying for? With whom are you sharing the gospel? What's hard for you about sharing the gospel?

That happened to me this past week. I was sharing the gospel with our neighbor, and he said, "We're not church people." My wife stepped up and was so bold and pure toward him.

I left going, "God, thank You for my wife, but forgive me." I'm trying to tell him how his kids would have fun. She's telling him that the leadership of this church has purity, that they'll come hear the gospel, and that it's a healthy, great church. I'm worried about, "Oh man, if I can get your kids there, maybe..." No. She's saying, "We are Christ followers."

I struggled with the fear of man. I need a group of people praying that for me. We have to be honest in our prayer requests because when we come together and pray, powerful things happen. We get God when we pray.

It needs to be an ongoing thing for you and for your friendships.

Here's a question for you to wrestle with and ask yourself: Is my friend group consistently devoted to the Scriptures, fellowship, breaking bread, and praying together? Is this what's underneath the soil of our friendship? Is this who we are? Are we known for this?

Do I even remember the last time we opened the Scriptures together? Are we fellowshiping? Are we enjoying our time? Are we going deeper? Are we living in community? Is it clear that we prioritize these things? Is this part of how we plan our hangouts?

This is mission-critical for the church. These things brought so much power to the early church. God exploded through them. Is this part of your friend group?

When Christian Friends Lead You Away from Christ

This brings up a question: What if your Christian friends aren't influencing you in a godly way? What should you do if your Christian friends are bringing and deepening temptation in your life? What if, through your Christian friends, you've turned away from Jesus? How do you handle that?

Praise God for Scripture. Paul, writing to the church in Corinth, said:

I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people -

— 1 Corinthians 5:9

That's good. That makes sense. That's wisdom from Paul. But he keeps going:

not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.

— 1 Corinthians 5:10

Paul is saying, "No, I'm saying this":

But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler - not even to eat with such a one.

— 1 Corinthians 5:11

If you have a Christian friend whose life has no fruit, who's habitually living this way, and who hasn't repented or turned after counsel, stop. Stop giving them access to your life.

"Well, that doesn't feel loving." It's Scripture. Don't yoke yourself to them. Bad company will corrupt good character. None of you has ever compromised into holiness.

If you're thinking, "Well, I want to win them to Christ," that's not your job. Paul wrote and said, "Man, I threw these guys out into the world so God could go get them."

If your Christian friends are influencing you away from Christ, quit hanging out with them.

"Well, where am I going to find new friends?" Here. Life groups, late nights, grow groups. This is a space to meet people. You don't need to be yoked to someone who bears the name of brother or sister in Christ but doesn't live for Christ.

Pray for them. Contend for them. Invite them into repentance. Tell them why you're saying these things. Do it with love and grace. But get away. It could kill you. Your life could be void of so much joy and power.

You are one foot in and one foot out because the people in your closest circle are out, and they're pulling you that way. It's not because they're bad. It's because we're wrestling against spiritual principalities, evil, and darkness, and they are influencing all the sin that's in this world through our corrupt desires.

If your friends are more into sin and this world, and they aren't responding to you inviting them into repentance, telling them what you're feeling, and telling them what God's doing in your life, they have no business being in your inner circle.

You can wrestle with that.

What Are You Devoted To?

These were normal, daily rhythms that the early Christians lived with. It became who they were. It was their fellowship. They had meals. They had communion. They prayed. They were a praying people. That was normal. It should be normal now.

Statistically, let me show you what's normal now. I looked this up this week: screen-time projections for a lifetime.

I have an 18-year-old and a 24-year-old. Thankfully, not kids, because I'd be - I'd be - wow. Anyways, on average right now, an 18-year-old and a 24-year-old spend six hours a day on screen time. That's just the average. Some of you are way above that. I have no clue why you're doing that or what it's for. Some of you are way below it. Way to go. It doesn't make you better, just better focused.

The 18-year-old has 62 years left until they're 80. If you live until 80, you're 18, and you continue at this pace, you're going to spend 135,780 hours on your phone. You will spend 15 and a half continuous years, if you put all that time together, on your phone.

That means you could be on your phone every moment of every day until you're 33 and a half. That's alarming. Of the 62 years left, only 47 would be off your phone or a screen.

Now, the 24-year-old has only 56 more years left. I've only got 50. Yikes. You have more than 122,000 hours ahead of you in screen time. That means 14 consecutive years you'll spend on your phone.

Do you know what that's doing to you?

Young adults are the most likely to report loneliness. A quarter of young adults report serious loneliness: "I feel alone. I feel invisible. I don't feel like I have any friends. No one knows me. I'm all alone."

These are the same people who are spending an insane amount of time on their screens, and there's a direct correlation to mental health. Among those spending four or more hours a day, and again, the average is six, almost 30 percent report anxiety symptoms. Twenty-five percent report depression symptoms. These are contributions to your life.

This has become the new normal. We look at the screen before we spend time with the Lord. We value online digital community more than in-person interaction. We feel awkward even talking to each other without something in our hands to exchange. We're missing out on the depth and relationship God has designed us for.

We are image-bearers made in His likeness. We need this. If you're not having it, these things will continue in your life.

But here's the reality: This tells me that, on average, you are devoted. You are persisting. You've decided to continue on your screen. You've earnestly pursued screen time more than anything else in your life.

I'm not saying this as a blanket statement, but it's really, really hard to hear a whisper in a loud room. If your internal life is so clogged up and loud with the noise of this world and screens, it's going to be really hard to hear the impression of God's Spirit.

It's going to be really hard to remember His Word when everything you watch has a six-second attention span, and you can't sit and study God's Word because you've conditioned yourself to get out and move mentally.

You're devoted to this.

The reality is that we must change what we're devoting ourselves to as Christians. We must change the idea

that we're going to give one hour on a Sunday. We must change the idea that Tuesdays can have two hours. We must change the way we approach the church, consuming from the church and taking from the church.

There are too many Christians who are leeches. You're just sucking and draining life out of the structure of the church, hoping that it's enough for you, but you're not devoted to community. If anyone hurts you or does something wrong, you leave the church. But your life isn't devoted to the fruit you want to grow in. How will that ever work?

Scripture says this:

Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.

For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.

— Galatians 6:7-9

If you sow this, you will reap anxiety, loneliness, and depression. If you sow to your own flesh, gratifying its desires, you'll reap corruption. But the one who sows to the Spirit, capital S, will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

Then he says, "Don't grow weary in doing good."

Listen, I know some of you in this room have been persistently pursuing Christian community. Don't give up. Keep going. Keep putting yourself out there to meet friends. Keep trying. Keep calling. Keep texting. Keep praying. Don't grow weary. In due time, we will reap if we don't give up.

You must continue persisting in these disciplines. Why? Because they're so important.

We want this. I've idolized this community my whole life, but I haven't been committed and persistent in community. So how should I expect to enjoy it the way God intended it to be enjoyed?

These are the four priorities the early church pursued, and from there we see the life in fellowship that God desires us to have: devoted to Scripture, devoted to community, devoted to communion, and devoted to prayer.

These things haven't changed, and they won't change.

A Holy Awe of God's Presence

Moving on to verse 43, as a result of their focused priorities and devotion:

And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.

— Acts 2:43

This word "awe" literally translates to "fear." Fear came upon every soul.

Do you know why fear came upon every soul? Because they had a greater sense of their kingdom reality. They had a greater sense that everywhere they went, they brought the Spirit of the living God with them.

Christian, everywhere you go, you're bringing the Spirit of the living God with you. That means we should have a holy seriousness when we come here. We should have a holy seriousness when we leave here, when we go to work, when we go to the grocery store, and when we're at the gym.

Girls, what you wear: holy seriousness. Guys, what you wear: holy seriousness. What you're looking at in your free time: The Spirit of God is watching with you. Awe and fear should fill you.

This isn't the "I'm so scared of God" kind of fear. This is the "God's power is at hand" kind of fear. This is the "presence of God is with me" kind of fear. This is holy.

God wants your whole life to look that way. God wants your friend group to look that way.

What would change in your life if you were more aware of God's presence with you? I don't just mean the tingly, warm feelings we get when we sing. Praise God for His manifest presence like that, that He would be so kind as to let us know, "I'm here."

But what happens if we don't get the warm fuzzies? Will we pursue the things of Christ every day? Will we walk around and say, "I'm a temple of the Holy Spirit. My influence and example matter. I won't do this thing because I'm a temple of the Spirit. I'm not bringing God into this"?

Paul says some of you Christians are sleeping around with prostitutes. Is the Spirit of God yoked to a prostitute? No.

What you watch, God is watching with you. What you listen to, God is listening to with you. That should bring awe and fear over our lives.

How you talk about others when they aren't there - you better believe God is right there in that conversation, and it grieves Him. The way you talk about people in the church grieves Him. The way you talk about people outside the church grieves Him. The way we jump into gossip and make assumptions grieves Him.

He's in every single one of your conversations. He cares deeply about every single word you speak, and you'll give an account for it. That right there is a holy fear.

I've gotten angry at life lately. There have been moments when I've acted in anger. I didn't have a holy fear of God then. I did afterward. But what if you lived with a holy fear of God in your community?

That doesn't mean everything is so uptight and serious all the time. No, I think we'd get to enjoy things more deeply. I think we'd be better protected, and this awe would change the way we walk. We might get to see God do some remarkable things if we walked around knowing that the glory of God is with us.

Scripture says:

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge;
fools despise wisdom and instruction.*

— Proverbs 1:7

God has a specific design for your community. It's that you go out in community and fear Him. It's that the way

you speak, talk, love, give, and plan is done with a reverent awareness of the Lord.

Again, this idea of fear is reverence and trembling. It's a holy seriousness in the presence of God's manifest work.

The Christian life isn't just, "Woohoo! This is great!" We're going to have those moments. But we're not home, so we shouldn't live for only those moments.

I've heard someone say before that what's most beautiful about the mountaintop is looking down. In the spiritual mountaintop moments of my life, I've thanked God for the valleys. I have a greater beauty and appreciation for them. But I don't expect to live on the mountain all the time. I would die if I did.

We're not going to live in the valley all the time either. We're going to be somewhere in between on this level ground, but it's about living with an awareness of God's presence.

It's not just, "Buddy-buddy, we're all good friends." I'm also not saying you have to be best friends with everyone. Jesus had three people He went really deep with, but He shared His life with many people.

You need to find and cultivate relationships with people who speak into you, but you can't just take those people and look inward. You've got to keep your eyes open to other people.

I don't even want to think about how many of you walked in here so lonely tonight, asking God to see you. It's not wrong, but it's incomplete if we're just happy with the three or four people we have who walk with Jesus. That's good. Okay, multiply. Replicate. Go see people. Be a missionary here.

It could change someone's life forever. This God-centered reverence defined every aspect of their lives.

Generosity and Shared Life

Luke, the human agent through whom the Holy Spirit wrote Acts, begins telling us how their devotion took shape and the way it played out:

And all who believed were together and had all things in common.

— Acts 2:44

Look at that word, "believed." The gospel is still about believing in Jesus Christ.

They were together, and they had all things in common. These priorities and realities - Christ crucified and resurrected - reconciled all their differences.

They didn't have to agree on everything. We won't agree on everything. But if we agree on who Christ is and what He's done for us, we should have all things in common. We should live with an openness. We should live with a shared possession of our lives for other people, again, through faith.

Then it says:

And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.

— Acts 2:45

Is God calling you to sell everything you have tonight and give it away? Maybe. Chances are, no. We don't see this happen in the Scriptures after this.

If we look back at the history, it's the day of Pentecost or shortly afterward, meaning there are thousands of extra Jewish pilgrims in Jerusalem. Then the Spirit of God falls on the church. This new way of Christianity takes shape, and they're saying, "I ain't going home. I've got to learn this and stay. I only packed provisions for two months. I need help."

The Christians went, "I've got you. Come be with me. I don't have enough on my own for it, but I'm willing to let go of this possession to bless you."

You are blessed to bless. C.S. Lewis says, "Nothing's ever yours until you give it away."

These Christians began experiencing the joy of giving things away, but there was also a huge need. They were burdened by need, and they were impartial, giving to any who had need.

It wasn't, "Hey, I like you. We get along. I've got you. No, I'm going to help him." It was, "You have a need? Let me help. How can I help? I'm absolutely going to pray and have you over for a meal. If I can materially help you by selling this and giving it to you, hey, I've got some extra. I was planning to do something for myself with it, but here you go."

You have no idea what that would do for someone. That's what's happening in the early church.

Those who share in Christ's life will hold their possessions with open hands. It's not yours. You are an interim steward of what God's given you. It won't go with you. It's been entrusted to you, but we should live with an openness toward the things God's given us for His glory. If anyone has a need among us, we should give quickly and generously to them.

Again, is God commanding us tonight to sell everything and give it to the poor? If He very clearly said that to you, then be obedient. But for most of you, I think what God wants is for you to know where your treasure truly is.

Some of us have an idol of possessions or wealth, and God wants to loosen that idol in your life so you can begin enjoying things.

Jesus taught:

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

— Luke 12:34

The things you most often think about and work toward, that's your treasure. If it's not the Lord, it's an idol. He wants to redeem that because He is our portion. He is our satisfaction. He is our joy.

Christian, is there anything you have that has you more than it should? If it does, there's a throne of grace

ready for you.

Here's what God desires: devoted, reverent, generous Christians who share their lives with others.

The beautiful thing is that the Holy Spirit can transform you and me to live this way. We need Him. We're relying on Him, but He can do it.

God desires you, in your friend groups and community, to be devoted, to live reverently, to be generous, to share your life with other people, to be a good neighbor, to love, and to give without asking anything in return, as Christ has done for us. These are God's desires.

It goes on:

And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts,

praising God and having favor with all the people.

— Acts 2:46-47

Again, we see this is a daily thing. Your Christian life and your friend group should be marked by daily devotion.

They attended the temple together. They went to worship. They went to pray. They broke bread in their homes. They received their food with glad and generous hearts.

These things will happen in your friend group if you'll prioritize these tenets of our faith: prayer, communion, fellowship, the Scriptures, and letting God's Word be the guide. "God, reconcile everything in my life underneath Your Word."

It was daily. Why? Because they knew the value of living together and being in fellowship.

They praised God, and they had favor with all the people. This word "favor" doesn't just mean, "I have luck with you." It meant, "I experience the goodwill and loving-kindness of all people." It meant it didn't matter what I looked like, what I had or didn't have. I was loved by you because you love Jesus.

We praised God together. We found joy in the worship we were giving our King, and all the people from all over the world had all things in common.

God so desires that for us today.

I think a lot of it has to do with the culture we're in, but so much of our lives is compartmentalized, and that's so unhealthy. There aren't six boxes in your life for the things you have. There's one box. If you're a Christian, it's Jesus, and He is everything else. It should live and look that way.

It's not easy, but it's pursued in community.

Don't be a compartmentalized Christian. Don't be selfish with your resources. Don't seek friends who only speak like you and affirm you. Be a friend to all people.

The Lord Added to Their Number

Here's the beautiful thing: What was the result?

The early church lived this way. They pursued this way. They focused this way. They believed God for these things. What was the result of their devotion? All we could ever ask for:

And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

— Acts 2:47

Was it because they had discipline? No. Was it because they were teaching great messages? No. Was it because they were at the temple at the right time? No. Was it because they met the right people in the right place? No. Was it because they were super kind? No. Was it because they had more of the Spirit? No.

Why were people being saved? Wonderful question.

The Lord Jesus, from His throne, was drawing lost people to Himself. How? Through the community of the early church.

These ordinary, everyday, untrained men and women from all over the world were being used by God to draw the lost and hurting to Him. Through the way they loved, shared, and lived consistently, people saw that their testimony was true.

I have no quarrel with people who doubt whether God is real because of hypocritical Christians. Why? Because you're not living a true testimony. You aren't being used to draw people because you don't look like Jesus.

That's not a knock against you. That's me and you.

Does our community draw people to Christ? Are we open to that? When was the last time we thought, "Wow, maybe God wants to use my friend group to save people"?

What if the people you're praying for just need an invitation into your life? Yes, invite them to The Grove. I'm praying that you become an inviting people. Invite them on Sunday, absolutely. But what if, through day-by-day community, God began saving people in your life whom you didn't know He would?

They might see it and say, "Man, I want this. I want this Jesus you worship. I want to live the way you live. What is happening? I've never been so loved and seen. Why did you meet that need?"

The Lord is drawing people. He wants to. He is the agent of salvation. He wants to use your friend group and your life to draw people to Him, and it's a daily thing.

Here's what I believe is so true of this early church: By the Holy Spirit, the church more fully enjoyed God and each other.

I think some of you are just down in your faith because you're not enjoying it. God wants you to enjoy Him and each other.

They had their needs met, and they discovered the joy of sacrificial giving. There's someone in this room who has burned a saying into my mind: "Don't block someone's blessing." Let people give to you so they get the joy of giving and being a blessing. We have to receive for others to get that joy.

They found joy in sacrificial giving. They experienced life together. They cultivated gladness and joy. It says they grew in gladness, grew in joy, and praised God. They became more generous.

They also realized the kingdom reality on earth. What does it mean to be a Christian here, whose home is there, and whose King is coming back for us?

They overcame loneliness, anxiety, depression, poverty, pride, and aimlessness. Not everything was perfect, but God, through community, began changing the way they saw and lived life.

Questions to Consider

Where is your devotion?

I want you to think about this for yourself first, but also for your friend group. These questions work in both senses.

Where is your ongoing, earnest, persistent attention being given in your daily life, thought life, emotional life, physical life, and spiritual life? Where is your devotion? If I could pull it up and look at the way you spend your time, would I know that you're devoted to Jesus?

Second, are you captive to your possessions, or are you generous with them? Do you receive them with thanksgiving and an open hand? Are you willing to give them, or are you held by them?

Third, is your faith lived out in community? Are you a solo, rogue Christian? There are no solo Christians, at least none who last.

I heard a story this week of a young man who went away to see an older, wiser man in a cabin. They were talking, and the young man was saying, "Church is this, and church is that, and these people are this and that." He was venting about the things he didn't like in the church.

The older, wiser man reached into the fire with tongs and pulled out a glowing, red-hot coal. It was on fire. It was burning. It was hot. He pulled the coal out and set it on the ground.

He didn't say a word.

The coal kept burning. It was hot, but in a few minutes, the coal was completely out. Then he grabbed the coal, put it back in the fire, and it caught fire again.

You cannot remove yourself from community and keep burning for Christ. You've got to stay in the fire and love of Christ through His church to continue burning.

If you're not burning, find someone who is. Alec, right over there, is burning for Jesus. Go pray with him. Go get to know him. He burns for Jesus.

If you are burning, find some people whom you sense maybe are not, and go pray. Give yourself to them.

Is your faith lived out in community? Are you enjoying God and others? Are you enjoying your faith? Are you enjoying other Christians?

I discerned this would happen, but I think some of you right now, at least to me, look so defeated. You look so discouraged that this isn't happening for you. I hope you hear this as good news: God can do this in your life.

Maybe you're saying, "I don't have any of this. I'm not experiencing any of this." You can. God desires it. The Holy Spirit can change you and can change your friend group.

This isn't, "Oh man, I'll never get this." No, this is, "Am I devoted to it?" Because if I am, I'll experience this.

Fifth, are the people you surround yourself with helping you? Are they adding godliness to your life? Are they growing you and stretching you? That's something to really focus on.

Here's what I see in Acts 2:42-47. I see a focus on the priorities: Scripture, fellowship, communion, and prayer. This shaped their lives.

What you prioritize will shape your life. You go to the gym, it'll shape you. You eat healthy, it'll shape you. If you don't, it'll shape you. It'll literally shape you.

If you don't have an ongoing, persistent devotion to Scripture, community, communion, and prayer, you won't be shaped by those things.

I also see that they understood the reality of life as kingdom citizens. They knew what it meant to have dual citizenship. They chose unity. They sacrificed. They loved. They chose these things.

It's not just a warm, gooey feeling that creates this. No, it's an active choice to pursue these things.

They were impartial, and they were burdened by need. They didn't categorize people by their social status, the color of their skin, where they were from, or what they could bring in terms of value. No, they were burdened by the needs, and they met them.

They were committed to the mission of Christ daily. They enjoyed their faith and each other.

I want this for you. I want this for me. I want this for us. I want this for the church.

I want you to take just 10 seconds and think: What would an unsaved, lost person think if they saw this? What would the nonbelievers in your family and life think if they saw this? What would begin happening?

The 2:42 Challenge

I've got a challenge for all of you: the 2:42 Challenge. This is our application.

I want you to pick one day this week to fast from screens and spend the day with friends. Saturday, pick it. No screen time. Just spend the whole day with friends. Whatever day of the week you can do that, do it.

Do a Bible study. Just share what God's teaching you. Share what you're learning. Share what you're experiencing in Him. Share what you're not experiencing and ask for prayer about that.

Have a meal together. Sit around the table, laugh, and eat a ton of carbs. Just sink in and enjoy a feast. Have a meal. Love it. Enjoy it. Play a game. Just have fun.

Pray with and for one another. Be intentional with this.

Then serve and give generously to meet a specific need. Maybe you've heard about someone who has a need. Maybe you don't know, and you're just going off an impression. Ask God, "God, what is a specific need I can meet this week?"

What if it's filling up someone's gas tank? What if it's taking them out to dinner? What if it's buying them new shoes? What if it's something you can do?

"God, would You show me how to serve and give generously to meet a specific need this week?"

That's the 2:42 Challenge. I believe that if you'll do this, you'll begin desiring it. It'll become part of your normal life, and God could do far more with it than you think possible.

Here's what I want to do: I want to pray, and then we're going to go into a time of response in our throne of grace.

Lord Jesus, Lord, I so badly want this for them. God, I need this for me. We need this. You desire this.

Lord, would You please, by the power of Your Spirit through Your Word, reveal the truths of this? Please retain this in our minds and hearts, that we wouldn't move too fast from it.

God, I trust in Your Word. I believe in Your Word, that it's true, that these things can happen, that our loneliness, anxiety, depression, and devotion to worthless things can be changed by You. You can begin renewing minds and hearts to desire these things, Lord. I believe that's what You want.

I also know what could happen in the watching world when they see Christians living in ongoing, devoted community together.

God, I ask You to answer our prayers tonight. I ask You to give us courage and boldness. I pray for the lonely Christian in the room who doesn't think this can happen, that You would lift their eyes to You and show them that You see them and have plans for them.

For the Christians in this room, myself included, God, me first, help us not to be selfish with our time. Help us not to be selfish with what kinds of people we prefer to be around, whether because of status or whatever it is. God, rid us of those things so we can enjoy You and each other so much more fully.

We are the answer to each other's prayers in this room right now for community. It's us. You don't have to bring anyone else here. This right here is enough.

Lord, would You please bring forth community and lead this time of response? In the name of Jesus we pray,

amen.

Thanks again for listening to today's teaching from The Grove. Be sure to follow us on Instagram at @thegrove_cf. If you're a young adult in Northwest Houston, we'd love to connect with you on Tuesday nights and Sunday mornings. We hope to see you soon.