

Acts 2:42-47 (NIV)

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.

44 All the believers were together and had everything in common.

45 Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.

46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts.

They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts,

47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

44-02-09-Everyone Was Filled With Awe
early church, fellowship, sharing, body life, generosity

Acts 2:42-47

The church will grow in numbers as believers grow in the Spirit.

INTRODUCTION:

–*Imagine* our church in a single day growing 30 times larger? That's what happened on the Day of Pentecost when 3000 new members joined the early church. Today, *church growth seminars* are often held, but the churches don't often grow. If they do grow, it usually makes others shrink by *believers just changing locations*. But that wasn't the case at Pentecost. The church grew by people getting converted.

–*What was the secret?* The *Comforter* showed up! The arrival of the Holy Spirit drew crowds, raised questions, caused repentance, and it brought conversions. The answer today is the same. True growth in the church is *not* brought about by *entertainment* or *pomp & circumstance*, or by *lowing moral expectations*. **HOM.idea**. And this concluding part of Act 2 shows what this growth in the Holy Spirit looked like....

I. Four Basic Behaviors of a Spirit-Filled Church— v.42. *They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*

- A. What exactly was the apostles' teaching? Paul summed it up in **1 Cor 2:2**, For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. (*Jesus was the focus of Peter's sermon, and the Bridegroom must remain the focus of the waiting Bride.*)
- B. Why is the fellowship so important to the life of the church?
 1. *Personal* relationship with Christ is crucial, but it has a special corporate dimension that Jesus told us about in **Mat 18:20**, "For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."
 2. What should happen in fellowship?— **Heb 10:24-25**, And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (*Jesus isn't done teaching, and often He uses the lips of saints as they share.*)
- C. A Spirit-filled church is devoted to the Lord's Table [the breaking of bread] not just to remember Him but to broadcast what he did on the Cross, until His return. (It's a place where heaven meets earth.)

- D. The last area is corporate prayer, mentioned by Jesus in Mat 18:19, “Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.” (This *agreement* isn’t based on *good ideas* but on *minds guided into God’s will by the Spirit*— 1 John 5:14-15. This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything **according to his will**, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.)

TRANS: These 4 behaviors are *all* related to our devotion to Christ. They are *foundational* for a church whose **growth in the Holy Spirit** produces a **growth in numbers**. But part of that growth is in *attitudinal behaviors* that draw the attention of those not yet devoted to Christ...

II. Four Attractive Attitudes of a Spirit-filled Church

- A. In v.43, *Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.* (Is this “Everyone” *believers or unbelievers?*)
1. Unbelievers are often *awestruck*, even *fearful*, when confronted with the supernatural: this *can* but *doesn’t* always lead to *faith*.
 2. Believers, *filled with awe* or *godly fear*, have a promise— Pro 9:10, The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. (Recognizing that *God is God* brings an expectancy to His miraculous work— Mark 6:5-6a, He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. And he was amazed at their lack of faith. (*What is our expectancy?*)
- B. Another Spirit-filled attitude that attracts attention is the caring generosity made available by a detachment from possessions— v.44-45, *All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.*
1. This literally practiced the truth in Psa 24:1a, The earth is the LORD’s, and everything in it, (which makes us all *stewards not owners*).
 2. Why might this attract those skeptical about the Gospel? [quote: “People don’t care how much you know until they see how much you care.” They ask: “*Do they put their earthly money where their heavenly mouth is?*”]
- C. Another attractive attitude is boldness: “*These Christians are so confident about their faith that they’ve gone public!*”— v.46a, *Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts.* (Christian faith is *not a private or secret* faith— Mat 5:14-16, “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in

the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.)

- D. External courage to let your light shine before men must be matched by the Spirit-filled church’s internal family life [For the 1st 300 years, the early church met in homes, so congregations were small enough for intimacy. That also explains why it could handle absorbing 3000 new converts.]
1. The Holy Spirit, as one of the Trinitarian Family, brings a *family spirit* into the church, creating an attitude of *hospitality*— v.46b-47a, *They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.* (Truly Spirit-filled church-families manifest caring and sharing.)
 2. Why is a family atmosphere *attractive*— *enjoying the favor of all the people?* (*Human families are meant to image the Triune Family.*)
 - a. Many earthly families fail to *image this divine pattern*, but God still places an inborn longing for it in the human heart.
 - b. Most people are sensitive to that longing and *will seek it*, while others may fight against it and try fleeing from it— Psa 68:6, God sets the lonely in families, he leads forth the prisoners with singing; but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land.)

CONCLUSION:

—Jesus told us, “I will build my church.” He has no other plan. He’s in the process of preparing the Church as His corporate Bride, to reign beside Him throughout eternity. Acts 2 closes with a *description* of what that Church looked like, growing under the filling of the Holy Spirit.
 —*Spiritual gifts* come by the Holy Spirit’s choice, but *spiritual growth depends on our choice* in response to the Holy Spirit. The church’s *numerical growth* is also the domain of the Spirit— v.47b, *And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.* But the *spiritual growth* we’re called to pursue is a foundation for **growth in numbers**.
 —The *early church* exemplified that growth in the Holy Spirit, **not just** in their devotion to *Gospel teaching*, *true fellowship*, the *Lord’s Table* and *corporate prayer*, **but also** in their attitudes of *godly fear* and *expectancy*, of *charitable sharing*, of *openness in their witness*, and of *authenticity in their family spirit*.
 —God is still calling us to those areas of devotion and to those *attitudes*. *Why?* Because Jesus Christ is not yet finished building His Church.