

United
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Acts 2:41–47

Opening: Let's talk about TEAMWORK. Whether it's a sports team, an orchestra, a construction crew, a surgical team, when a group is functioning successfully as a team what kinds of things take place? What behaviors do the team members display?

This week's text builds on our studies from the last two weeks. Last week we used four words to describe being led by the Spirit of God: **Faith, Focus, Fruit, and Fellowship.**

- **Faith** – Trusting Christ as Savior and Lord and believing His Spirit lives in us.
- **Focus** – Actively seeking God's guidance, peace, and power from His Spirit.
- **Fruit** - A supernatural positive change in our behavior that comes from His Spirit.
- Today we focus on the word **Fellowship**. In six verses, we see a picture of what a Spirit-led group of believers (congregation) should look like.
- I would call it the "*Framework for a Fruitful Fellowship.*"

The Point: Following Christ is both an individual journey and a team effort. Everyone must trust Christ personally and individually, but we live out our faith in a team we call "the church" or "the body of Christ." The team only functions successfully when each player (Christ-follower) is focused on following the Holy Spirit of God.

In the first part of Acts chapter two we saw the dramatic outpouring of God's Spirit on Christ's loyal band of followers after He ascended to Heaven. Others witnessing this event asked how they too could receive salvation. Peter preached and God blessed:
41 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

This group of approximately 120 followers of Christ had suddenly become the very first Megachurch. What took place after this great harvest of souls teaches us how a Spirit-led group of Christ-followers should function. Let's look at these six verses in "expository" (verse by verse) fashion to see what it says, what it means, and how it should change us this week.

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

- Jesus said He would build His church [*ekklesia*] but that word doesn't appear until Acts 5. This text is the model for a local church congregation, but I chose the word "fellowship" because I believe this also applies to any group of Christ-followers including small groups or Sunday School classes.
- A Spirit-led "fellowship" will have a balance of these important components.
- There should be the **teaching of God's word**. First, there should always be an emphasis on the gospel to tell the unsaved how to be saved.

- Teaching is also the most obvious way saved followers of Christ receive the Spirit's leading as He interprets God's word so we can apply and obey it.
- Not positive platitudes or inspirational "talks" but the teaching of God's word.
- There should be **fellowship**. What do we think of when we hear that word?
- The Greek word for fellowship is *koinonia* which means a close mutual association to **share**, and participate and also the **willing contribution** of gifts.ⁱ
- Jesus said in John 13:34-35, *"I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. ³⁵ Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."*ⁱⁱ
- What is the perception of the church in this regard?
- Given human nature, how can we fulfill Jesus' command to love one another?
- The Life Application Study Bible asks: *"Do people see petty bickering, jealousy, and division in your church? Or do they know you are Jesus' followers by your love for one another? Love is more than simply warm feelings; it is an attitude that reveals itself in action. How can we love others as Jesus loves us? By helping when it's not convenient, by giving when it hurts, by devoting energy to others' welfare rather than our own, by absorbing hurts from others without complaining or fighting back. This kind of loving is hard to do. That is why people notice when you do it and know you are empowered by a supernatural source."*ⁱⁱⁱ
- Jesus didn't say we must be "BFFs" with everyone or agree on everything but He did command the Spirit-led fellowship of followers to love one another.
- There should be food! 😊 The Spirit-led early church **"broke bread"** together.
- Scholars believe this indicates both full meals and observing the Lord's Supper.
- There should be **prayer**, both corporate prayer and personal prayer for others.
- **Romans 12:15 (ESV) — 15** Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. [As I write this, texts of rejoicing are flying back and forth among the Holders' Care Group as they welcome their new grandson Dawson to the world!]
- **Galatians 6:2** tells us bearing each other's burdens "fulfills the law of Christ."
- Teaching, loving, breaking bread, and praying. Luke packed a lot in one verse!.

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

- The Greek word for "awe" here is *phobos*. What English word does that sound like? Here it means: "**reverence**, a worshiping respect."^{iv}
- Later Luke in Acts 9:31 Luke reports: *"So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied."*
- A Spirit-led fellowship isn't casual about God's power it lives in awe of Him.
- God displayed miraculous signs and wonders in that day to validate His gospel.
- God is still doing miracles today we just need to pay attention to His work.

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

- How is it possible for people to be that "together" on things? How can we have "all things in common" but still be unique individuals? What do you think?

- Unity doesn't require uniformity or unanimity. In other words, members of the Spirit-led fellowship don't have to look the same or think the same but if we are truly following the "playbook" (God's word) and His Spirit we will have unity.
- This takes some effort. Paul told the Ephesian church to *"Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace."*^v
- Whenever we witness Christ-followers bickering we should lovingly ask, *"Have ya'll read Ephesians 4:3? Check it out!"* We may need to say that to the mirror.

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

- Before you start squirming, this generosity was voluntary and discretionary not compulsory. This was not "communism," but Spirit-led caring and sharing for *"the least of these."*^{vi}
- Christ-followers are commanded to be generous but not required to sell everything and give it all to the church. We are to share as the Spirit leads.
- By the way, the church is not just a relief organization though it should play that role. When we share resources with those in need we must share the gospel.

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

- **They showed up!** They attended church or small groups every day with JOY!
- Meeting every day is not a command for today but clearly, they LOVED it!
- We've become more and more isolated as a society.
- Life is too short to be isolated from the family of God. We NEED each other!
- A Spirit-led fellowship of followers can't wait to get together with their brothers and sisters in Christ. I sense that every Sunday when we gather.

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

- The Spirit-led fellowship will be **attractive and "winsome"** to those who have not yet followed Christ as well as followers who are looking for a place to belong.
- What gets in the way of having a group that is that winsome? What can we do as individuals to help our "team" of followers to be more like the early church?
- Let me throw some bouquets on YOU as a group! Like verse 47, this group has been growing. It isn't the teacher, there are many great teachers. It isn't the hour because Sunday at 8 a.m. is not for the faint of heart! It's because of YOU! I stand back and watch your warmth and welcoming spirit every time we gather.
- This group doesn't fight and bicker or exclude new people. You display that "koinonia" fellowship and friendship that comes from the Holy Spirit!

So, What's the Takeaway?

- Following Christ is both an individual journey and a team effort.

- Everyone must trust Christ personally and individually, but we live out our faith in a team we call “the church” or “the body of Christ.”
- These six verses are a guideline we should follow when we are seeking a new congregation or group, and the model church leaders should strive for.
- The most important point: This kind of unified, loving, caring fellowship doesn’t happen because of human efforts. Humans can’t be “nice” that consistently.
- Human efforts and egos lead to quarrels, fighting, and selfishness (James 4:1).
- This kind of fellowship only happens consistently when each Christ-follower is focused on being led by the Holy Spirit of God living inside us.
- May God help us to be more and more like that “fruitful” first century church as we model this Framework for a Fruitful Fellowship!

ⁱ Swanson, J. (1997). In [*Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek \(New Testament\)*](#) (electronic ed.). Logos Research Systems, Inc.

ⁱⁱ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [*Holy Bible: New Living Translation*](#) (Jn 13:34–35). Tyndale House Publishers.

ⁱⁱⁱ Tyndale. NKJV Life Application Study Bible, Second Edition . Tyndale House Publishers. Kindle Edition.

^{iv} Swanson, J. (1997). In [*Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek \(New Testament\)*](#) (electronic ed.). Logos Research Systems, Inc.

^v Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [*Holy Bible: New Living Translation*](#) (Eph 4:3). Tyndale House Publishers.

^{vi} (Matt. 25:40)