



## Message #6

# “THE FIRST CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP”

Acts 2:42-47

On the Day of Pentecost, through the conviction of the Holy Spirit and as a response to Peter’s message (the first Christian sermon), 3,000 people were added to the 120 disciples, or followers of Jesus, gathered in Jerusalem. This was an incredible and powerful moving of God’s spirit. In this very way, the first Christian church was borne and the Christian movement (not known by that name at this stage) had its origins.

How did the leaders (apostles) of the church handle this explosive growth? What were the main priorities moving forwards? Here in Acts 2:42-47, Luke sets out a number of aspects of community life in the early church that were essential then...and now. **Acts 2:42** is the key verse and is like a summary statement. The principles presented here are expanded in later verses and chapters.

“**They were devoted to.....**” “They” refers to the new believers, the 3,000 people who responded following Peter’s message. Some versions render this phrase as: “They were continually devoting themselves to.....” This highlights that their “devotion” was not just a singular action...but a lifestyle, an on-going process. What was it that they were devoted and committed to?

Luke mentions 4 principles that should still be the priority of every Christian church.

### (1) They were devoted to THE APOSTLE’S TEACHING

Teaching was one of the functions of the apostles.

#### Functions of the Apostles:

- They were witnesses to the Resurrection (Acts 1:21-22)
- They were servants of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:1)
- They were servants of the church (2 Cor.13:4)
- They preached the Gospel (Romans 1:1-5)
- They were the guardians and teachers of the truth (Acts 2:42)
- They founded churches (1 Cor.9:1)
- They were the authority figures within the church (Acts 6:2-6)
- They were called to suffer (2 Tim.1:11-12)
- They were empowered by the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:8)

**Given that the early church did not have the New Testament yet, or any of the Gospels or Epistles (Letters) why was it so important to learn from the Apostles?**

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### (2) They were devoted to THE FELLOWSHIP

Christianity is a COMMUNITY religion (Romans 12:5). Here in verse 42, the word KOINONIA is used. It means “fellowship, communion, sharing in common”.

**Vincent’s Word Studies** puts it well.....

*“A relation between individuals which involves a common interest and a mutual, active participation in that interest, and in each other.” (p.456)*

**Fellowship among believers takes many forms:**

- Sharing in the fellowship of God’s love (1 John 4:10-12)
- Sharing in the fellowship of a common devotional life (Acts 2:42)
- Worshipping together (Psalm 55:14)
- Praying together (Acts 1:14)
- Breaking bread together (1 Cor.10:16-17)
- Sharing with those in need (Heb.13:16)
- Showing hospitality (Rom.12:13)
- Sharing money and possessions (Acts 2:44-45; Deut.15:10-11)
- Sharing with the needy (Job 31:16-20; Acts 6:1)
- Bearing with the weak (Gal. 6:1-2)
- Strengthening the weak (Isaiah 35:3-4)
- Encouraging one another (Heb.10:24-25)
- Putting the needs of others first (Rom.15:2)
- Living in harmony (1 Peter 3:8)
- Showing equal concern for all (Acts 10:34; James 2:1-4)

The church needs to model caring, loving, community to a hurting, broken and fractured world.

**How do you think the Church@TheGabba family can be more committed to building the fellowship of believers? What can you do to encourage this?**

**(3) They were devoted to THE BREAKING OF BREAD**

Does this refer to Communion/Lord’s Supper....or to sharing a meal together>

It may not be either/or...it might be both!

When we celebrate communion together, we proclaim the Lord’s death until He returns. But we also affirm our covenant with each other by celebrating communion together. We are saying that our lives are linked together by our affirmation of the work of Jesus, through our sharing of the cup and the bread.

Similarly, we are linking our lives together as we share meals with each other in our homes. We are commanded in Scripture to show hospitality to one another. Sharing a meal is a very powerful affirmation of our friendship and our fellowship. Life Groups are an ideal way to grow deeper in our fellowship.

**Does hospitality come easy to you? Do you enjoy having people around to your home and sharing in their story and growing closer in fellowship? Why, or why not?**

**(4) They were devoted to PRAYER**

The prayer referred to here is corporate prayer, not individual prayer (though that, also, is important).

It is interesting that there is very little emphasis on individual prayer in Acts. Not that it is unimportant...but prayer is usually mentioned in the context of the church gathered (in large or small groupings) and together. This underscores an important principle for us today. How devoted are we to joining together in prayer, of uniting in prayer? The lack of prayer in the contemporary church is undoubtedly one of the contributing factors to the weakness of it. Praying with other Christians is highlighted as the mechanism God uses to:

- Reveal His will
- Release His blessings
- Accomplish his purposes.

**What opportunities do you take to pray with others? Is it something that you think is important and should be encouraged more?**

**Do you think these four principles/activities are a priority for you?...for the church? What do you think might happen if you/we were as devoted to these things as the early church was?**