

**ALL IN:
Fellowship
Acts 2:42-47**

Dr. Steve Horn

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Text Introduction: Last week, we began a journey together in Acts 2. It is one of the most foundational passages of the New Testament on the work of the church.

These described in Acts 2 were authentic believers in Jesus Christ. They believed, and as a result of their belief, they were baptized. After being baptized, they banded themselves together as the church.

As a church they committed themselves to these things: Discipleship (becoming fully devoted followers of Jesus), fellowship (doing life together), prayer, worship, and stewardship.

The reason that I want us to take a hard look at this passage is because these are the very things that will happen in the new building that we will build. There will be a Fellowship Hall that will seat double the capacity that our existing Fellowship Hall seats. This will be a place of teaching with up to 18 Adult Education rooms being available. This space will also have connecting corridors that are a vibrant place of fellowship. This space will also house a new prayer room for our church's prayer ministry.

As a result of doing these things together, the LORD continued to prove Himself to them so that there was a sense of awe about them, they experienced miracles together, they had favor with one another, and every day people were being saved.

We will talk about all five of these commitments over the course of the next Sundays. Last week, we focused on this first commitment—a commitment to the Apostles' teaching. Today we focus on fellowship. Let's read the text again and add a few other verses.

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

⁴³ Then fear came over everyone, and many wonders and signs were being performed through the apostles. ⁴⁴ Now all the believers were together and held all things in common. ⁴⁵ They sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as anyone had a need. ⁴⁶ Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple complex, and broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with a joyful and humble attitude, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to them those who were being saved.

And then, Acts 4:32-34.

Now the large group of those who believed were of one heart and mind, and no one said that any of his possessions was his own, but instead they held everything in common. ³³ And the apostles were giving testimony with great power to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was on all of them.

And one more, Acts 5:12.

Many signs and wonders were being done among the people through the hands of the apostles. By common consent they would all meet in Solomon's Colonnade.

Introduction: According to the one who called the gathering at a Baton Rouge Hotel a few months ago, "There was singing, clapping, preaching, and even an 'Amen' or two, but no offering, no prayers, and most importantly, no super-natural presence." The meeting was called by a former Christian pastor who now says he is an atheist. He asked, "Can we duplicate the benefits that people are used to seeing in a church service, but without the supernatural?"

Now, as sad as we might say that story is, this man and his congregation of followers have discovered that, even in denouncing faith, they were missing something and they longed to get that back. One word describes what they have missed—fellowship!

We read in our text today that the first group of people to believe in Jesus were devoted to the Apostles' teaching. We get that. We are not surprised by that. What might though surprise us is that their devotion to fellowship gets equal billing as their devotion to doctrine.

On this Biblical basis, we ought to understand the importance of fellowship and strive for greater fellowship.

Definition of Fellowship

If we are going to understand the importance of fellowship and give our attention to it, we first must make sure that we understand what Biblical fellowship is.

Literally—koinonia which comes from a word that means common

Biblically—of one heart and soul (Acts 4:32)

Practically—the totality of life together

A friend of mine, Andy Chambers, Vice-President at a Baptist College in Missouri, has written in his book, *Exemplary Life: A Theology of Church Life in Acts*, these words:

The word "fellowship" is barely adequate for all it implies. The believers in Jerusalem shared many things, including their possessions, but the meaning is much broader. The word in its context encompasses the totality of relationships..." (Andy Chambers, *Exemplary Life*, p. 68.)

Foundation for Fellowship

- Common Belief—They were believers in Jesus (Acts 2). They were giving testimony to the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 4:32).
- Common Grace (Acts 4:33)—The LORD was giving them the grace to be in relationship with one another. This is not always easy, is it? Romans 15 calls upon us do such things as: bear with one

another, agree with one another, accept one another, strive together with one another, and refresh one another.

And this is sometimes hard. So, we need God's grace upon us.

Conditions for Great Fellowship

Churches that have great fellowship ...

- Prioritize Fellowship—Twice we see the word “devoted.” You see, they understood that to be committed to Jesus was to be committed to His people. (Chambers, p. 68)
- Provide Time and Space for Fellowship—They designated a time and a place—daily and Solomon's Colonnade.
- Protect against all Threats of Fellowship—There will always be threats to fellowship.

Acts 6 tells us about one such threat to the first church's fellowship.

In those days, as the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint by the Hellenistic Jews against the Hebraic Jews that their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution.² Then the Twelve summoned the whole company of the disciples and said, “It would not be right for us to give up preaching about God to handle financial matters.³ Therefore, brothers, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and wisdom, whom we can appoint to this duty.⁴ But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the preaching ministry.”⁵ The proposal pleased the whole company. So they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte from Antioch.⁶ They had them stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

⁷So the preaching about God flourished, the number of the disciples in Jerusalem multiplied greatly, and a large group of priests became obedient to the faith.

We have most often seen this role of deacons as serving. It's larger than that—they were charged with protecting the fellowship of the church.

We have watched and been inspired over the last few days by the extraordinary accomplishment of Diana Nyad. This 64 year old swam the 110 miles from Cuba to the Florida Keys. Upon exiting the water after fifty-three hours, Diana said she had three things she wanted to say.

- Never, ever give up.
- You're never too old to chase your dreams.
- It looks like a solitary sport, but it takes a team.

I love her determination, spirit, and attitude. I especially like her third statement. It's this kind of sentiment that ought to mark us as a church. It really does take a team. This is why we are calling our church family to be ALL IN.