

# The Pentecostal Church

Acts 2:42-47

*Studies in Acts #5*

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Several years ago the local magazine, *The San Diego Reader*, sent an undercover reporter to our morning service to rate our church. The elements that were listed and ranked were sermon, liturgy, music, snacks, flowers, architecture, and friendliness. I praise the Lord that Mr. Opincar, a non-Christian rated us highly for our friendliness and snacks, as well as the sermon and liturgy, but it is a telling insight into what people out there value and look for in a church.

So what do you value? What are the crucial elements of a church that stand out above others, so that if you moved from this area and had to worship in another church, that you'd look for? Luke, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit gives us a glimpse into what the apostolic, Spirit-filled, Spirit-led church looked like. We see in Acts 2:42-47 various aspects of theology, liturgy, and community that the early church was devoted to. Let me summarize this in three points:

1. *A Church Devoted to the Lord*
2. *A Church Devoted to Each Other*
3. *A Church Devoted to the World*

## A Church Devoted to the Lord

What makes *the Pentecostal church*? First, *a devotion to the Lord*. In particular, notice the devotion to the public worship and ministry of the church.

We see it in verse 46: **and day by day, attending the temple together**. There was a time in which the Christian church continued to gather at the temple for the daily morning and evening prayers that the law prescribed. We particularly see this devotion to public worship and ministry in verse 42: **and they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and...to the breaking of *the* bread and the prayers**.

A truly Spirit-filled church is a doctrinal church. John Calvin once called doctrine the “soul of the Church.”<sup>1</sup> Our gathering to hear the Word of the Lord read and expounded and gathering for other studies needs to be the inner strength of our local church.

A truly Spirit-filled church is a church that celebrates the Lord's Supper. Where is that here? **The breaking of bread** is literally **the breaking of *the* bread**. And this is in contrast to the common meals in private homes in verse 46. Holy Communion is a time for communion with the Lord in the context of the Lord's people.

A truly Spirit-filled church is a church that gathers to pray publicly. Notice that it is ***the* prayers** that are mentioned. We do this every Lord's Day morning and evening, but let me encourage you to gather on Wednesdays for our small group, for our men's group, and for our women's group to pray together with the body of Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> Calvin, *Acts of the Apostles*, 127.

## **A Church Devoted to Each Other**

What makes *the Pentecostal church*? Second, *a devotion to each other*.

What's interesting is that **the fellowship** in verse 42 has financial overtones, as we are so devoted to each other that we have a willingness to share all that we have.

We see that in Paul's letter to the Philippians as the same terminology is used of offerings (Phil. 1:5; 4:15).

And here we see it in verses 44–46:

**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.**

Does this mean that we cannot have private property and that we should we be a Christian commune? No. We read that the wealthy gave much to support those in need as needs arose later in chapter 4:33–35 as well as in 1 Timothy 6:17–18). Also, we learn in 5:4 that the rich didn't have to sell everything they had, but when they promised the Lord they would do so, he kept them accountable. As well, how could the church all have sold their homes when they were meeting in those very homes for meals? The point is that our devotion to one another is deep and costly; it is not superficial and cheap.

To put it in the forms of applicatory questions: are you too busy for deep fellowship in the church? Are you afraid of getting too knit into the church

because it'll cause disruption in your life? Are others' needs too messy to get involved in?

What is really beautiful to see is that in 1:14 the one hundred and twenty “continued with one accord” in prayer. Now here in 2:44 we read that **all who believed were together and had all things in common** while in 2:46 they continued **day by day** in their **attending the temple together** as they prayed. Later in 4:32 we read, “Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul...but they had all things in common.” In 5:12 it is said, “And they were all with one accord.” What is so beautiful is that a close-knit community was formed by the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the gospel. The great diversity of men, women, and children, all with different ethnic backgrounds, all with different likes and dislikes, all with different talents and skills were brought together to serve the Lord as the light of this world. In Acts, in fact, the most frequent title for the church is, surprisingly, “the brothers,” which occurs twenty-five times.

## **A Church Devoted to the World**

What makes *the Pentecostal church*? Finally, *a devotion to the world*. As they were devoted to the Lord and to each other, we see that they were also devoted to the world. The result of their public and private worship, their attending God's house and being hospitable in each other's houses, was that they

were given **favor with all the people** (v. 47). And the blessing of this favor was that **the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved** (v. 47).

We need to be praying for growth as a church. But we first need to be praying that we are growing individually and collectively as a body so that we are a church worth joining.