



WARM-UP

We recommend you choose 1 or 2 of the following questions.

What habits or rituals do you practice on a daily or regular basis? What might these habits say about what you are devoted to?

What did you enjoy most about your family growing up? Why?

- *Eating together*
- *Playing together*
- *Conversations together*
- *Traveling together*
- *Other*

Have you ever belonged to a close-knit group of people outside of your family? What made it close-knit?

WORD

"Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 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, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."

- Acts 2:41-47 (NIV)



INTRODUCTION

This week's passage gives us a fascinating snapshot of what the very first church looked like. Over the last few weeks we've studied the events leading up to the birthing of the church as a handful of faithful followers of Jesus strove to come to grips with the horrendous crucifixion of their leader, followed by His reported resurrection from the dead and miraculous appearances.

After His gruesome death and burial, eyewitnesses reported that He'd appeared to over 500 of them over a span of 40 days. Of those 500+, only 120 were convinced enough to obey His command to gather together and wait for the gift of the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit arrived on the Day of Pentecost, those 120 were radically transformed, and in one day 3,000 more became believers. The first church was born, with new believers joining their numbers every day. The characteristics and practices of this first church give us insights into what creates a healthy church.

DISCUSSION

1. Discuss what it means to be devoted in these 4 areas like the first church was:

- a. *"The Apostles' teaching"*
- b. *"Fellowship"*
- c. *"The breaking of bread"*
- d. *"Prayer"*

How might we become more devoted in the areas in which we are lacking?

2. Verses 44-45 tell us, "All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need." That sounds pretty radical. Is this relevant for the church today? If so, what might it look like?

3. How do you see God involved in the church in this passage?



DISCUSSION CONTINUED...

4. Why do you think the church enjoyed “the favor of all the people”? How might our church or connect group grow in favor?
5. Verse 47 tells us that “the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved”. Considering Jesus’ earlier commands to “go into all the world and preach the gospel” and to “be witnesses”, how do you see God and the believers working together to accomplish this growth?

APPLICATION

1. From discussion question #1 above, what is one thing you or your group can commit to doing to help our church be more like the first church?
2. What is one thing from discussion question #4 that our group can start doing to grow in favor?
3. What can we do individually and as a group to work with God to add more people to the church?

PRAYER

1. Ask God to show you what you can do individually, and as a group to help our church be more like the first church.
2. Ask God for the power to do more signs and wonders (v. 43).
3. Ask God to add to the church (vs. 47).