

Acts 2:40-47: Are We Doing Church Right?

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I. Introduction

What does going to church mean to you? Dressing up in your Sunday best and going to a building where you sing worship songs and then listen to a sermon from the preacher? Is that church? Maybe you attend a mid-week Bible study, or other social functions, maybe you even teach a Sunday School class, is that Church? Could you ever imagine a church culture where you shared everything with the other “church members”? You were constantly over each other’s homes. You ate together, studied the Word together, laughed together, cried together, you even sold your possessions if a poor family in the church needed help. Could you ever imagine a church like that where you treated each other as a close-knit family...as siblings instead of “church members”?

II. Acts 2:40-47: Is Church About Preaching, Singing, and Praying, Or Much, Much More?

2:40-41, Peter said a lot more than what Luke recorded here. He wanted as many as possible to be saved from the judgment that was coming upon this generation for rejecting their Messiah. Even at the end of His life Jesus gave one final warning of what was coming (Luke 23:26-31). And many were saved from the wrath to come, i.e., about 3,000 believed Peter’s words and were baptized. Thus, on the first day of the Church it gained 3,000 new family members.

2:42-43, this is the first church in human history. Now why did 3,000 people, strangers from all over the world, from different backgrounds (2:8-11) join the apostles? One reason is that the message of the apostles concerning Jesus Christ was authenticated by God’s miraculous power, first by 12 Galileans suddenly speaking foreign languages, then by other signs and wonders performed by the apostles. This proved to those who heard the message that it was true. But this was not just another religious teaching. No, what they heard cut them to the core of their being (2:37). This was not simply Peter giving a sermon. Recall that what’s taking place in Acts is Jesus is at work; He is the actor in this drama. Peter and the rest of the apostles are driven by His Spirit which dwells in them (John 14:17, 20). It is Jesus at work in them; He, not Peter, is the one speaking to the audience. And Jesus is not interested in teaching them another sermon “about” Himself. Jesus looks right at them and says, “You crucified Me!” (2:22, 23, 29, 33, 36). The reason they joined up is because Jesus has just had a personal encounter with them and they want more.

And Jesus gives them more. But notice what makes up a church. Is doctrine part of it? Absolutely. Jesus is going to continue to reveal more and more of Himself to them through the truth of His Word. But doctrine is not enough; it’s not enough to learn “about” Jesus. He wants your fellowship, your company. He wants to spend every waking and sleeping moment with you. He wants to be there when you study His Word, when you fellowship with others, when you celebrate the Lord’s Table, when you eat together and when you pray together. And that’s one of the main points of the church “together.” What Jesus is inviting them into is not an isolated relationship with Him. No, He’s inviting them into a community, a family where God is their Father and Jesus is their Big Brother. These are not church members, they are family members.

2:44-45, and what does it look like to live and function inside Jesus' family? It's awesome because you never lack brothers and sisters (Mk 10:29-30) who will help you if you're in need, even if they have to sell their possessions to help you, they will. But it wasn't just material possessions that they shared, they shared life. They devoted themselves to all those things mentioned in 2:42; they worked hard at studying God's Word, fellowshiping, eating together, and praying. They did this daily; they loved it and praised God for this newfound family He'd given them. And what was the response of outsiders watching this miracle take place between these strangers? Everyone observing this new community united by Jesus Christ loved it, so much that they too became part of it, every day the Lord Jesus Christ added more and more to the Church—Jesus at work again.

What is the community of the Church supposed to look like? The first church in history was devoted to several activities: *the apostles' doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread* (which is a reference to Communion and having meals together), and *prayers*. What did this look like in practice? It looked like a loving family which cared deeply about each other and did everything together. They shared everything: their possessions, their food, their homes, their company, their heartaches, their joys, everything. They were devoted to what God said in His word and then they lived it out in their lives...together.

Is this what churches are supposed to look like today? YES! This is what we find in the apostles' doctrine found in the New Testament. It's what the apostle Paul says (Romans 12-16; 1 Corinthians 10-16), what the apostle Peter says (1 Peter 2-5), and what the apostle John says (1 John 1-5). We're still supposed to live like a united family that does life together. Church is not about visiting a building on Sunday morning nor is it simply about studying the Word. It's about living life together in community with one another as we're guided by the Father and the Son for *truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ* (1 John 1:3).

Christianity is not about you adding Jesus into your life as if He's another item on your list, which you check off every Sunday, then Monday through Saturday you go about your life until the next Sunday. Jesus is calling you into a permanent, 24/7 relationship with Him and His Father (John 17:3, 20-26). He wants to be there to comfort you, guide you, give you advice when you need it, wipe your tears when you cry, He wants to swallow you up into Himself. He wants to be the place where you get your identity, your refuge, your peace, your advice, your salvation.

But we're not used to doing church like this. Our church culture has been centered primarily on teaching and learning. It's not that we haven't treated each other as family at all; we have. We do some family things like picnics, beach parties, supper clubs, wedding showers, etc. We're there for each other in many ways, but ask yourself this, "How much personal information do I know about the person sitting next to me?" Do you know what they're struggling with? What makes them happy or sad? How can we fulfill such commands as "rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15) if we don't know each other as a close-knit family?

III. Conclusion

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.