

The Fellowship of Believers

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Preacher: Jared Blankenship

[0 : 00] Well, as I said last week, we took our time studying the theological realities of the church as Paul expressed them to the church of Ephesus.

We were reminded that everything the church is and does is focused on the work of Jesus Christ and that in the gospel, we are redeemed by the blood of Jesus, reconciled to God by his grace, and we are made members, eternal members of Christ's new kingdom people.

And Paul used three illustrations at the end of that passage, if you remember, to describe this new kingdom people, these gospel people, what we call the church. He said that we are citizens of God's kingdom, that we now all have the same passport.

We are members of God's family, that we all have the same father. And that we are living stones of God's temple.

In other words, those who repent of their sin and follow Jesus are saved by God's grace and then united together with God's people.

[1 : 15] And those are the theological realities of who we are and what God has created us to be as his church. And today, we begin looking at how these theological realities shape the identity and practice of the local church.

And of course, particularly how these realities should shape the identity and practice of Lakeside Bible Church. And I think Acts chapter 2 is the perfect place for us to do just that.

The chapter begins, maybe if it's been a while since you've read it, the chapter begins with the unique pouring out of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. This is about 50 days after Jesus' crucifixion. It's only a few days following his ascension to heaven. And as you recall, perhaps in your readings of the Gospel of John, Jesus had promised his disciples that once he returned to his exalted place in heaven, he would send the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the Helper, who would come and would indwell them and would empower them and would teach them and help them to recall all that Christ had taught them.

And this day of Pentecost, as it's recorded in Acts 2, is that promised moment that Jesus had foretold. And as a part of this, the apostles who were in Jerusalem at the time were uniquely empowered by the Spirit to speak in languages that were unknown to them, but known to the various ethnic communities represented in Jerusalem at the time.

[3 : 05] And as you might expect, this caused quite a stir among the people, which led Peter to preach perhaps the clearest gospel message that you'll find anywhere in the New Testament.

Peter's inspired sermon, spirit-empowered sermon, resulted in 3,000 people being saved. Or as Paul would have said to the Ephesians, 3,000 people who were then redeemed by the blood of Jesus.

Now our purpose this morning is to examine what took place after the conversion of these new Christians. So the Spirit comes, Peter preaches, the Lord pricks their hearts, He regenerates 3,000 souls, they trust Jesus by faith.

Now what? That's what we want to focus on now. And it's interesting. They didn't simply continue their everyday lives with only a shift in their religious affiliation.

That's not at all what took place in the lives of these people. Their lives were transformed.

Immediately, they were united in fellowship with all the other new Christians that had come to faith in that moment.

[4 : 32] Now think about this. In that moment, ethnic people from outside of Israel have gathered in Jerusalem. They have heard the apostles preaching the gospel, speaking of Jesus in their own native tongue.

Now they have been pricked in their hearts by the preaching of the gospel through Peter. And now all of a sudden, all of these people from different backgrounds and different cultures, Jews and Gentile alike, are now united in fellowship together in Jerusalem.

It's amazing. Just like that, everything changes. Their lives are transformed. Totally. Fellowship's actually an important word in this text.

We see it in verse 42. They were devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship. The Bible doesn't describe God's people in this way anywhere in the scriptures prior to Acts chapter 2.

Not even the gospels use this word for fellowship. It appears for the first time at this moment. And then the apostles regularly used it in reference to the church.

[5 : 54] And I want to tell you what the word is. You probably already know it. It is koinonia. Koinonia. And I want to give you a definition for it. It means fellowship, partnership, the close association between persons, emphasizing what is common between them.

That's a definition that a Greek scholar, Bill Mounts, has given to us. Fellowship, partnership, the close association of persons, emphasizing what is common between them.

These people that have come to know Christ are now this koinonia in Jerusalem. Something that the apostles would continue to describe them as over and over in the New Testament.

Let me give you just a couple of instances where the apostles use this in other places. 1

Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 9. Paul tells the Corinthians, God is faithful by whom you were called into the koinonia, fellowship, partnership of his son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Here he is writing to a local church and he says, God has been faithful through the gospel. He has called you into koinonia. Koinonia. Not just any koinonia, but the koinonia of Jesus, the son of God.

[7 : 28] Paul continues many times to use this word. Notably, he uses it when he refers to the Lord's Supper in the same letter to the church at Corinth. But the apostle John also speaks of it.

1 John chapter 1 verse 3. That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you. so that you too may have koinonia with us.

And indeed, our koinonia is with the Father and with his son, Jesus Christ. Do you see?

What brings people together emphasizing what is common between them. And whenever the apostles used this term koinonia, what they were referring to is the church.

that as we have koinonia with Jesus Christ in the gospel, now all of a sudden we have koinonia with others who have also become one with Christ in the gospel.

[8 : 31] And we think back to Ephesians 2. What is it that the church is made by or made to be? We are redeemed by the blood of Christ, then we are reconciled by the peace of Christ.

We are reconciled first to God and in the process of being reconciled to God through Christ, we are reconciled to one another so that Christ is making his kingdom people a koinonia.

You see, this fellowship word, this koinonia, was not what the apostles used to describe a church potluck after the morning worship service. It wasn't merely men as a term for gathering as if we're going to go and have fellowship together after the service today.

That's not how they used this. They employed the word to indicate a believer's reconciled state to God and to other Christians.

And this is what we are. We are a partnership together that goes far deeper than a simple choice to worship with a particular group of people at a particular place on Sunday mornings.

[9 : 47] We, Lakeside Bible Church, have koinonia together in the same way that each of us who are believers have koinonia with God through Jesus Christ.

Now, does that seem like a relationship that is to be treated casually and with a commitment that is based primarily on convenience?

Of course not. Unfortunately, that's actually how many Christians think about their relationship with the local church. And what I want to get across today is this dynamic of the fellowship of believers. believers, the koinonia of believers, that because of who we are in Christ, we have an identity and a relationship with one another that is meaningful and is deep and is unlike any other relationship that we will have in this life.

And I want to point out the importance of it. But of course, before we can really talk about that fellowship, it would be necessary for us to talk about what it means or how one might become a part of this koinonia.

[11:05] We find that answer in verse 41. Let's read it together. So those who received his word were baptized and there were added that day about 3,000 souls.

So notice that this fellowship of believers, the entrance into it is expressed in verse 41 by believers, baptism. Now, it's not that the apostles were teaching that baptism was necessary for salvation or in some way contributes to our salvation.

They repeatedly affirmed in the scriptures that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, according to the scriptures alone and to the glory of God alone.

That's unmistakable in the scriptures and it's undeniable in the scriptures. At no place do the apostles ever teach us, do the Bible ever teach us that our baptism is actually what makes us a believer.

But it's also true that baptism was so closely related to a person's conversion in the early church that the apostles did sometimes use the terms interchangeably to refer to a person's conversion.

[12:19] And here we see that this represented in this baptism as these people received the word of the gospel that Peter had preached actually became the entrance into the kingdom.

Not the baptism itself, but the faith that undergirded it, the conversion that was represented by it. So as Peter preached the gospel on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit regenerated these people, they believed the gospel, and then they were baptized to publicly declare their repentance from sin and conversion to Jesus.

And notice that only these regenerate baptized believers were formally added to the fellowship. And there's an important truth in this for us.

You can't be a part of a local church without first being a part of the church. Now you can play the part of a church member.

You can sign the membership forms and you can affiliate with a particular congregation. You can do all of those things, but you can't truly be a part of the church without being a part of the church, without being a believer, without being a Christian.

[13:38] Someone who, as Paul said, has been redeemed by the blood of Christ and reconciled to God through the peace that Christ brings.

You cannot be a part of the fellowship of believers until you first know Christ. What do we see is true about the church, even the local church, in the way it was formally recognized in the scriptures?

It was only made up of those who were regenerate, those who were truly in Christ. It wasn't only marked by regenerate partnership, it was marked by meaningful partnership.

Belonging to the people of God, as we'll see in the remaining verses, is something that these Christians took very seriously. There's nothing casual about their life in the church.

It truly meant something to them. Even the fact that someone was keeping track of these things leads us to believe that there was even a formal recognition in some way, even early on, of who belonged to the church and who didn't.

[14:47] The truth is, the Bible knows nothing of an individual that belongs to Christ but doesn't belong to his people. Yet there are so many Christians who treat their relationship with the church as if it doesn't really matter.

I don't want to say it's a mistake. I would say it's a sin. Let's think about it this way. Chris and Ashley, Lord willing, this weekend are going to stand and covenant together in holy matrimony. And it's an exciting day and everybody's excited about it and perhaps, can you imagine what Ashley would think if Chris came to her this afternoon after lunch and he said, you know what, sweetheart, I've been thinking and I just want you to know I love you so much and I'm so thankful for you.

All I want to do is spend the rest of my life with you and I want to grow with you and I want to serve you and I want to be a part of what you're doing and I want you to be a part of what I'm doing and I want us to go at this thing together.

But I've been thinking, I'm not really into this whole marriage covenant thing. I mean, is it really necessary? I mean, what difference does a piece of paper from the state of North Carolina really make with our relationship?

[16:05] I mean, we're in love. We're committed to one another. We don't need the formalities. In fact, it might even actually cause some kind of hindrance in our relationship and I don't want to ruin a good thing that we got going.

So, sweetheart, I know you've been planning the wedding and you're excited about this. I just don't think we need it. I think we just need to forget about that and move forward lest we mess things up. It's not really that big a deal.

Of course, Ashley's going to say, what does it matter with you? Of course, it's a big deal. Right? We would all say, yeah, no, Chris, you're out of your mind.

Of course, this is a big deal. This covenant means something. It means something as you make a covenant with God and you make a covenant with Ashley in the process of this.

It's important. There's a lot of people who actually view marriage that way. There's a lot of Christians who view the church that way. I don't mean to say that the covenant that you make with a local church is the same as a covenant that you make in marriage.

[17:07] It's not the same, but that doesn't mean that the formal partnership with a local church is insignificant. And there's so many people who they go through this life and they think, you know what, I love my church and as far as I can tell at this point in my life, this is who I want to identify with and this is who I want to serve the Lord with and I want to grow with, but I don't think I want to make any kind of formal commitments to them.

I don't want to make any kind of public membership statements or anything like that. Maybe that would mess up a good thing going. Maybe that would tie me in too close. I don't know.

But what we see taking place here in the fellowship of believers in Jerusalem was that it was made up of regenerate people, but it was also meaningful to them. They took it seriously. And we see that continuing through the New Testament.

Now that we're on the same page about meaningful, regenerate koinonia, let's see what marked the Christian church at its purest moment in history. What's abundantly clear in this passage is that God's people are a gathering people.

Hence the reason I'm connecting this particular text to the value that we would call gathered worship. When God's people gather, what is it that they do?

[18:31] They worship, they encourage, they express affection as they build one another up in Christ. And when fulfilling God's desires, the local church displays the glory of God in such a way that its kingdom identity is unmistakable to the world around it.

God's people are faithful to the Ephesians 2. So the theological affirmations of Ephesians 2 are then intended by God to have practical applications in the ongoing life of the church.

Now we're going to spend the next four weeks after today diving into the details of these things that we're going to just mention briefly. So if I hit on one of these things this morning and you think I'd really like, I think we should probably spend some more time on that.

Chances are we're going to spend more time on that. But there's no reason for us to do it today, okay? So just come back the next four Sundays and you'll get your feel, okay? But let's just briefly mention these five spirit-filled marks of the fellowship of believers, okay?

Number one, gathered worship. Gathered worship. Look at verse 42. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

[19:49] So verse 42 opens with a statement regarding the fledgling church's passion and commitment. If you have a New American Standard Bible with you today, you'll see a more literal translation represented where it could literally be translated, they continually devoted themselves.

It's a present active participle. It's the idea that this wasn't just something that they did on this day of Pentecost, but this was something that was true of these Christians moving forward in an ongoing way in their Christian lives.

The devotion of these new Christians was not a fire that quickly burned out. It was a continual devotion that marked the ongoing state of this fellowship in Jerusalem.

And such is the mark of a truly regenerate congregation. The Holy Spirit indwells his people. He empowers Christians so that the fire of devotion for God and his people is enduring.

And the things to which the Christians were continually devoted continues all the way through the end of verse 47. But here in verse 42, the section opens with their devotion to the formal worship of the congregation.

[21:10] What was it that these people did? What was their main concern when it came to their formal worship of God in Christ?

Four things are listed here. Number one, Bible teaching. Bible teaching. And they continually devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching.

Now it's important to note that the apostles' teaching here doesn't refer to teaching that originated in the minds of men. These were not contrived doctrines of men.

That's not what this was. What they taught the people was the gospel of Jesus through the written word of God. Jesus had instructed these apostles to take his message to the world, not their own. And his message was rooted in the Old Testament scriptures and expressed in his own teaching to the disciples, apostles, and then especially through his crucifixion and resurrection.

[22 : 17] These early Christians were devoted continually to the faithful exposition of the Bible and what Jesus had taught his disciples. Now think of Peter's sermon here.

You can go back and read it later in Acts chapter 2. He begins with an exposition of the prophet Joel. And he says this that you are witnessing today, this pouring out of the Holy Spirit, this is exactly what Joel prophesied and he goes through and he deals with it.

And then he takes that Old Testament scripture and he connects it directly to the person and work of Jesus Christ, the gospel. And then as he connects it to the person and work of Jesus, he pulls in parallel passages in the Psalms that help undergird the truth that this really is who Jesus is. He really is the Son of God. He really is the Messiah. And only if you trust in him can you know God and be saved and be forgiven. What was Peter doing in Acts 2?

He's preaching the Bible. He's not preaching Peter's thoughts. This wasn't Peter's commentary on the Christian life. This was the Bible Peter was preaching. And when they gathered together Sunday by Sunday or even in some cases, day by day, what were these people, these early Christians committed to?

[23 : 30] They were committed to Bible teaching. And what does that mean for us? Well, over time, these apostles were inspired by God to take this teaching and to write it down.

And it's what we have in the pages of the New Testament. And when we gather as a church, especially in the context of formal worship, we must be committed to, continually devoted to the faithful preaching of the Bible.

people, you don't need my thoughts. My word will be meaningless at the end of the day. What you need is God's words.

What we need to hunger for is not the best wisdom that Jared can impart to you. What we need to hunger for is the very words of God that point us to the person of Christ, that tell us who we are in him and instruct us on what we're to do in relation to that.

Bible teaching. Secondly, we'll talk a lot more about that next week. Secondly, gathered worship. The actual gathering.

[24 : 44] This is the koinonia word. Look again at verse 42. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship. Notice the definite article there before koinonia.

It's actually in the Greek. The koinonia, making this an explicit statement to the gathered church in this moment. So what were they committed to?

Bible teaching in person with other Christians. That's what they reflected on, committed themselves to in regards to their formal worship. And this is such an important word for our times.

because we have such incredible wealth of access to teaching through modern forms of media.

That's a blessing that we are to rejoice in God with, but it can also be a curse on the other end. I've seen a, I think, a disturbing trend actually in recent years where Christians are passionate about Bible teaching, they're passionate about Bible doctrine, but not in the biblical practice regarding the church.

[25 : 57] Many are content to be fed by their favorite celebrity preachers online, or they relish the ability to kind of roll out of bed at 9.55, grab their coffee and sit on the couch in their PJ so that they can bring up the live stream and at least kind of halfway hear what's going on at the church down the road for the day.

And I'm not trying to be mean about this. I'm trying to be really serious about this actually. The COVID lockdowns exacerbated this extremely, in our area especially.

I want to say that though the Bible teaching is the backbone of Christian living, it's wrong to think of preaching as the sum of gathered worship.

It is a vital part of our gathered worship. But what many Christians have done is they've taken their passion for teaching and they've made that the whole of their Christian life and their Christian worship.

So that the actual gathering of God's people doesn't really matter to them as long as they can hear the message and they can hear it from a faithful preacher that is going to that maybe have a style that they prefer and hit the things that they like.

[27 : 22] I think it was Dylan and I a few weeks ago we're having coffee and we were talking about this dynamic and in relation to and I hear all the kids in there. I love hearing the kids in our church services. I really do.

And I hear them in there enjoying their time together. And Dylan and I were talking about that dynamic of you know sometimes it feels like you know if I got to go in this side room what's the whole point in coming and what we came to the conclusion of in the point of that conversation is well if the only reason you gathered with God's people was just to hear me preach then you'd be just as well to sit at home.

But that's not the only reason we gather today. You're not here just to hear me. You're here to hear from the Lord. Of course that's vital to what we're doing. But there's a magnificent part of being here knowing that Dylan has made the effort to be here.

Knowing that he's going to end up having to go to that side room at some point. That does something for me. Something for me that I would not experience and be encouraged by if he didn't come. There is a significance to the gathered people to the koinonia.

There's a significance to being here with Noel and Raina where we get to hear about God's gospel work around the world. That's something that you cannot experience online in the same way. There is a uniqueness to the passionate praise and singing of God's people.

[28 : 43] There was a commitment from these new Christians to the gathered church. The corporate worship of the church. And I think it would be a sin for us to count our online preaching diets as a suitable replacement for gathered worship services with the church.

We need to take that seriously. I think the early Christians did. Number three is the Lord's Supper. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, the fellowship, and to the breaking of bread. Sandwiched between these two terms of formal worship, the breaking of bread here is certainly a reference to the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthians, was the first time that we see the apostolic teaching of this.

But we see here that Christians practiced it from the very beginning. Remember, Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper with his disciples and he commanded them to regularly partake in it in remembrance of the gospel.

And here, we find that those disciples obeyed the Lord's command. In just a matter of days, after Jesus has ascended back to heaven, here is the church faithfully, continually devoting themselves to the observance of the Lord's table.

[30 : 09] I think that's important. I love that we do it every month. Sometimes I wonder if we should actually be doing it more often than that. They were continually devoted to it.

Number four, the prayers. The prayers. Here again, the definite article is helpful to us. It indicates that there was a body of composed prayers utilized in the regular worship of the early church. These probably included the Psalms. No doubt it included the Psalms. We have other examples in the New Testament of doxologies and benedictions that were commonly used in the early church. Bottom line, in a corporate sense, God's people are a praying people. And corporate prayer was a vital part of the gathered worship of the early church.

Now here's the question. How devoted are we to gathered worship? I know it's a foolish question this morning. On a day with low attendance in our church, you are here and you're always here.

[31 : 15] Even Shannon is here with a brand new baby boy. She's committed to the gathered worship of the church. So don't take this as a question that that's saying, I don't think you are. I know you are.

But it is helpful to be reminded of how important it is. Maybe another way to ask the question is, what does it take for us to miss the gathered worship?

I'm not saying that there's never a reason to miss. I'm saying, what does it take though? Our priorities in worship as a church match the priorities of the church in Acts chapter 2.

That's an important question for us. Gathered worship. Number two, Holy Spirit power. We're going to zoom through these last few, okay? Holy Spirit power.

Verse 43, and awe came upon every soul. Many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles, through the apostles. Let me carefully point out the conjunction in the middle of this verse.

[32 : 16] Notice it. Awe came upon every soul and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. A casual reading, we would assume that the awe that came upon every soul was only concerned with the many wonders and signs done through the apostles.

But that's not what Luke is saying here. They certainly contributed to the awe that was experienced by the church. There's no doubt about that. But Luke is describing two different demonstrative works of the Holy Spirit.

There's the awe that came upon every soul. And then there's the demonstration of the Holy Spirit's power through the apostles as God affirmed the gospel through signs and wonders.

Two different things are happening here. And while the spirit-empowered signs of the apostle certainly contributed to this awe, the fear of the Lord that overwhelmed them was rooted in the transformative power of the spirit at conversion.

Now, this is an often forgotten mark of the fellowship of believers. That is the power of the Holy Spirit at work by producing people who fear God and love Jesus and obey the word.

[33 : 37] So remember, we're thinking about the koinonia of believers. If it starts with regenerate people, and we're not just calling everybody and anybody a Christian that just mentions the name of Jesus.

We're talking about legitimately regenerate people as far as we can see. And that is who has gathered as the church. What will be evident is the Holy Spirit's power at work in leading us to fear God and to love Jesus and to love one another and to serve him.

It is a transformative power that takes the life of a person who was an enemy of God and not only reconciles them to God, but radically changes who they are and how they think and their desires and the way that they live.

And we could go church by church, perhaps in our area even, and we could see lots of people naming Jesus's name, but very little Holy Spirit power evidenced through the transformative work of conversion.

And we step back and we wonder, where is the power in all of this? And I think this is just another reason to emphasize the importance of regenerate partnership in the local church.

[34 : 46] If a church is not careful to practice biblical membership and discipline, it will inevitably be filled with unbelievers who are utterly powerless regarding the Spirit of God.

will develop nothing more than a cultural Christianity that isn't very Christian. You know, one of the marks of a true church is people who have the Holy Spirit of God resting on their lives.

Not in an ecstatic way, but by the ordinary means of grace, God is transforming them and he is sanctifying them. And there's no doubt that something is going on in them that is unique.

And it may not be flashy and it may not be extreme, but something's working. And we know what that thing is. It's the Spirit of God through the gospel of God.

Holy Spirit of God. That's not to diminish the awesomeness that would have come through these signs and wonders. It's just to say that we don't need the signs and wonders to see the Holy Spirit at work in our church.

[35 : 55] Number three, loving care. Loving care. Verse 44, and all who believed were together and had all things in common. They were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all as they had need.

It's amazing how the transformative power of the Spirit will so radically destroy our sense of greed and selfishness and in its place put loving kindness.

That's exactly what was happening in Jerusalem. These new Christians who've, some of them at one point were enemies even of one another, are now sharing and having all things in common.

All things in common here carries the sense of being willing to share the blessings and possessions that God has given you with those around you. It would be akin to having, you know, Alice and Tom over to your house this week.

And in the process of that, they walk in and you say, I want you to make yourself at home.

Whatever you need, help yourself to it. What's mine is yours. Whatever you need while you're here.

[37 : 05] It's that kind of idea. They were together and they had all things in common. Not that they put this big pot in the middle of the church. They said, all right, everybody bring all your stuff. We're going to distribute it evenly.

That's not what they were doing. They were saying, what's mine is yours and what's yours is mine. And whenever you have a need, you can help yourself to it. Because this isn't for me. This is a

blessing of God and it's useful to us all.

But then they took it even further. Serious financial crisis overwhelmed some of the people who belong to this fellowship of believers. And instead of just saying, you know what, to the homeless man, I'm going to pray that God will provide you shelter.

And instead of just saying to the hungry man, I'm going to pray that God will send you food. The spirit-filled Christians sacrifice their own goods to help meet the needs of others.

And you are so faithful at doing this. I love this about our church. That though we're just such a small church, you're always so willing to go above and beyond in your giving.

[38 : 08] And I know that's exactly how it's going to work out with this Christmas project. I know all of those things. But it's good to be reminded in this text. They routinely shed their excesses to meet the needs of those who were struggling.

It wasn't government ordered. It wasn't church ordered. It was the free generosity of God's people caring for one another. A wonderful example of what we are to be for one another.

And it was all based in love. They had experienced the loving kindness of Jesus. And they were showing that loving kindness then in whatever way they could to one another.

Number four, routine togetherness. Routine togetherness. Verse 46. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes.

They received their food with glad and generous hearts. Praising God and having favor with all the people. Most Christians these days only view their koinonia through the lens of formal worship.

[39 : 13] That is the gatherings of the church on Sunday or perhaps in other events throughout the week. Not the early Christians. Their devotion to one another produced a togetherness that extended to every facet of their lives.

They genuinely lived as new kingdom people. And we're going to deal with this in a lot more detail in a couple of weeks. But we can't miss the fact that these Christians routinely built one another up in Christ as often as they could.

Day by day, we're told. They were together. They were together. And their interactions included worship, hospitality, praising God, spurring one another along in holiness.

And I'll say, if our engagement with the local church is limited to Sunday worship and occasional events, we are surely going to be deficient regarding what God has called us to be as his people.

It should be normal for us to host one another in our homes. It should be routine for us to go have coffee or lunch or breakfast together just for the purpose of being together and talking about what the Lord's doing in our lives and praying together and encouraging one another.

[40 : 31] That should be routine. That should be something that happens all the time in our lives, not just in what we do on Sundays. It's true discipleship.

True discipleship is accomplished when Christians get serious about their responsibility to help one another faithfully follow Jesus.

And of course, that happens on a Sunday. Of course, that happens at Lakeside Connect. But I'll tell you, the places that it's going to be most impactful is sitting at the coffee shop or sitting in one another's living rooms or going out to the golf course like I'm going to do on Wednesday with Terry.

And I'm going to get embarrassed and he's going to encourage me through the process. That's a part of what we do. We're together, building one another up in Christ.

Finally, instinctive evangelism. Instinctive evangelism. Again, we'll talk about this in a lot of detail later on. But look at verse 47. The Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

[41 : 36] I don't think that it is a coincidence that Luke tacked this on at the very end of this series. And I'm being very deliberate by referring to this evangelism as instinctive.

Because faithful evangelism will be the natural overflow of a life that is wholly devoted to Christ. If we think of our evangelism mainly in terms of church programs, we will be involved as long as there's a church program.

But whenever there's not a church program, we probably won't do a lot of evangelism anymore. The point here is that there was an instinctive, natural overflow because of all of these other things.

To which these faithful people were clearly demonstrating the transformative power of the Holy Spirit in their lives. They were routinely talking to others about the gospel.

They might not have been on a street corner with a microphone and a speaker. But something about their lives and the overflow of that came natural evangelism.

[42 : 47] And I think that's really what we're called to do. To love Jesus so much. And to be so committed as his new kingdom people. That the way we talk about the Lord is really just an overflow of our faithfulness as Christians.

So then the fellowship of believers is that koinonia that grows organically. Not because we've manipulated something in a service or created a particular mood that will encourage people to flood an altar or whatever it may be.

Programs and marketing are tools that we can use, but they will never be the reason for church growth. Not when we think about regenerate church growth. That only comes as God adds people through the faithful witness of his church.

The Lord added, such as should be saved. And we need to trust that. And then let the overflow of our lives be one that glorifies God. Let's wrap it up.

Too many local churches, I think, appear in contrast to what we studied in Ephesians 2. They appear more like divided kingdoms, dysfunctional families, desolate temples.

[44 : 06] Characterized by infighting. Without a focus on the gospel. Not living in unity with one another, but maybe in struggles of power and style.

Part of this, I think, is because so many churches are largely composed of unbelievers who have affiliated with a cultural form of Christianity that's not actually truly Christian.

Part of it, I think, is because Christians have failed to take their place in the fellowship of believers very seriously. And I realize that Acts chapter 2 is what we would call a descriptive passage.

There's no formal commands here. It's describing what this church was. That's not irrelevant. But someone may would confront us and say, well, that's just describing.

There's not really saying we have to do all these things. So maybe it would be helpful for us to wrap up with Hebrews chapter 10, where these things are expressed as a command. Hebrews chapter 10 and verse 19.

[45 : 17] I can't remember if I put it on the screen. You can turn there if you want. I'm going to read it. Hebrews 10, beginning at verse 19. Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, that's the redemption through the gospel, through the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way that he has opened for us through the curtain, that is through his flesh.

And since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water, all of that's gospel focused.

And then he says, let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering. For he who promised is faithful. In other words, be continually devoted to something.

And that something being the gospel and the implications of it. And let us consider how to stir one another up to love and to good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

Do you see the explicitness in this? He says, here's what Jesus has done for us. He has united us with God. And undergirding this is the assumption that he's also united us together.

[46 : 55] And then he also assumes that there is a temptation that we will have to think a lot of Christ and actually very little of his people. And he says, so let's not do that. Let's seek to find ways to stir one another up.

And how are we doing that? To love good works. Not neglecting the gathering, the formal gathering, but looking for more and more ways to do that as we see the day, the day of judgment, the return of Christ coming near.

In other words, what is described for us in Acts chapter 2 is clearly demonstrated as command throughout the rest of the New Testament. This is who we are in Christ.

This is what he's called us to be. So let's be that.