



Homecoming

WEEK 1

STUDY GUIDE



CENTRAL
CHRISTIAN CHURCH

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2021

Read: Acts 2:42-47

Scripture Verse: *"The believers studied what the apostles taught."* – Acts 2:42a

Today's Thought:

When I was in high school, each fall brought the sights, sounds, and smells of a new school year and the change of seasons. About half-way through the fall semester, our focus would soon be on fall's main event, 'homecoming.' Fall homecoming meant selecting the homecoming queen and her court and the big football game against the cross-county rival. It also included the excitement of seeing old friends home from college and, of course, the annual homecoming dance! It was always a busy but exciting time for creating high school memories.

We can all think back to times like that when we experienced the strange mixture of moments of excitement and seasons of change. With each homecoming we remember, a whole phase of life is revisited, left behind, and refilled with new happiness that is yet to come. In Acts 2, we read of another homecoming, this one in Jerusalem. Dr. Luke describes for us the Feast of Pentecost, one of three annual celebrations that brought men and their families back to Jerusalem to worship at the temple. It was the time of the grain harvest 50 days after Passover when families would gather to celebrate with joy and thanksgiving. It was a homecoming of celebration and reuniting with old friends in worship to the faithfulness of their God.

On that Pentecost homecoming, something unique happened, which led to the beginning of the church. With people visiting from all around the land, many speaking different languages, God poured out his Holy Spirit on the disciples as they were meeting, empowering each to speak the Word of God in every language represented in Jerusalem that day! God was now moving His message outside the boundaries of Israel to offer all people the choice to have a relationship with him. The good news had now become both vital and contemporary. God has invited you and me to enter a living relationship with the historical Jesus. The Son of God lived, died, and rose again, precisely like the Scripture predicted. He did all that so that today it would bring forgiveness and power for a new life to all who respond to Him as Lord and Christ. He will be with us, as He was with the first disciples, charging us with the power we need to witness about Him. And we learn to do it by studying all that the first apostles taught.

- Why were there so many people in Jerusalem and what were they there to do?
- What was so unique about this harvest celebration?
- Why did God pour out the gift of the Holy Spirit on the disciples and followers of Jesus?
- How are we empowered to share the gospel with our friends today?
- How do we gain knowledge to share?

Further Reading: Matthew 28:20

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2021

Read: Acts 2:42-47

Scripture Verse: *"...They shared life together. They broke bread and ate together. And they prayed."* - Acts 2:42b

Today's Thought:

A big part of any homecoming is celebrating life with others, especially those new to the family or who have been away for a long time. God had just given himself to the His people with the giving of the gift of the Holy Spirit. It would be a gift that would enable them to receive all other gifts and fulfill all of God's commands.

Upon our receiving of salvation today, we are also given the gift of the Holy Spirit. This gift has the same power it did back then, giving us the ability to receive the spiritual gifts of service and fulfill all God commands of us to do. Once we have received the power of the Holy Spirit, we hunger to learn from the teaching of the apostles. Before Jesus left his disciples, He had instructed them to teach the new believers everything He had commanded. It now becomes our job as we learn and grow in the Word to teach the new believers in our realm of influence.

Another gift God has given us is new believers. We are to do life together with each other. The true fellowship that Luke is writing about is more than just having coffee together. It requires a degree of personal sacrifice on our parts, such as our time, possessions, money, and ourselves. He even mentions breaking bread together in each other's homes. The breaking of bread here may suggest not only practicing the sacrament of the Lord's Supper but also sharing an everyday meal. Doing life together displayed true fellowship, but it also included one more element, prayer. Included with the command to do life together was the call to pray for one another. Just as those first Christians prayed, we are called to pray for others both inside the church and out. Sharing life together within the body of Christ takes more than a casual effort. It must become a choice, a conscious lifestyle.

- What do you devote yourself to daily? Any kind of spiritual devotion?
- Why do you think these people got together?
- How often do you get together with other Christ followers?

Further Reading: Isaiah 58:7; Luke 1:65; 2:52; 7:16

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2021

Read: Acts 2:42–47

Scripture Verse: *“Everyone felt that God was near. The apostles did many wonders and miraculous signs.”*

– Acts 2:43

Today’s Thought:

After Jesus’ resurrection and just before His ascension back to heaven, He gave the disciples and his followers one last instruction. He told them all, “You will be My witnesses.” The disciples of Christ had been eyewitnesses to His many miracles, the Gospel message, His other teachings, and His death, burial, and resurrection. The message the disciples were to share was to focus on Christ and what He did. And Acts 2 and 3 portray this fact along with the very heart of the Gospel.

Earlier in Acts 2, you will remember that while the disciples were in their upper room fellowshiping and praying together, the Spirit of God descended upon them with tongues of fire, empowering them for the mission ahead. They could all feel the powerful presence of God upon them. The Holy Spirit would impart the gift to perform “wonders and miraculous signs” to authenticate their calling and confirm the gospel message’s truth. Christ, too, had performed many “signs and wonders,” along with other miracles to verify and authenticate that He was the Messiah and the Son of God. And upon further research and study, we find the Gospel firmly rooted in historical reality.

A friend of mine was locked out of his home at 16 because of his new-found faith in Christ. He had to leave because his faith in Jesus was in direct opposition to the family faith. And the exciting early days of the church saw many experiences similar to my friend’s. There were transformed lives, and spiritual growth was evident, but there was still opposition. The contagious enthusiasm of those who believed in Jesus threatened the traditional foundations of many people’s religious convictions, and uneasy tolerance gave way to hostility. And what had started as a small company of believers soon transformed into a new community called the church. It was a community of men and women who could be closer than any family and who could provide the kind of loving support that believers then—and believers now, like my friend—would always need. Find a group of like-minded people today and join together in fellowship and prayer. We are instructed to do life together.

- What does Jesus call all his followers to be?
- How can we best communicate that witness today?
- What are you doing to create an atmosphere of fellowship and prayer in your life?
- What steps do you need to take to make this fellowship a reality in your life?

Further Reading: Luke 24:44-49

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2021

Read: Acts 2:42-47

Scripture Verse: *“All the believers were together. They shared everything they had. They sold what they owned. They gave each other everything they needed. Every day they met together in the temple courtyard. In their homes they broke bread and ate together. Their hearts were glad and honest and true.”* – Acts 2:44-46

Today’s Thought:

Upon reading today’s text, one may gather that the early church believed in and or practiced what we would call socialism or communism. There are even those who point to these verses to support the concept of socialism today. Pure communism is an economic, political, and social system in which most property and resources are collectively owned by a class-free society rather than by individual citizens. Under pure communism, the central government provides the people with all necessities, such as food, housing, education, and medical care, thus allowing the people to share equally from the benefits of collective labor. On the other hand, Socialism is a financial system where everyone in the society equally owns the factors of production. Pure socialism is an economic system under which everyone—through a democratically elected government—is given an equal share of the four economic production factors: labor, entrepreneurship, capital goods, and natural resources. Economic output is distributed according to everyone’s ability and level of contribution.

As the early church began, it was common for members to sell their property and share the proceeds within their community as someone demonstrated need. This practice was partly due to their expectation of Christ’s soon return to establish His kingdom. It may also explain why the practice was discontinued. Although this may sound like a form of socialism or communism, it was not, mainly because it was done voluntarily. Furthermore, neither were their goods evenly distributed. The shared resources of the early church were only allocated to meet needs as they arose.

In addition to sharing all they had, they met together daily in the temple courtyard to worship. Many times, they would gather at each other’s homes to share a meal and celebrate the joy and gratitude they had in the Lord. They were a unified and joyful church due to their newfound

victory in Christ. They loved spending time together in fellowship because of the shared joy that they had in Jesus. This description of the early church reminds me of the words written in Hebrews 10:24-25, "*And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. ²⁵ Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*" Today, let us be encouraged by the joyous and wonderful unity displayed by our early church brothers and sisters as they learned together from the apostles' teaching while sharing meals and times of prayer.

- What is the difference between communism and socialism?
- Why was what the early church practiced not a form of communism or socialism?
- How do we emulate today what the early church practiced?
- In what ways have we gotten away from these practices and what can we change to fix it?
- What is a next step for you to begin practicing the habits of the early church?

Further Reading: Acts 9:31-42

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2021

Read: Acts 2:42-47

Scripture Verse: *“They praised God. They were respected by all the people. Every day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved.”* – Acts 2:47

Today’s Thought:

The message of the last several days is that as believers in Jesus Christ, we are instructed to share in this life together. Here's what we know. We look to the example put forth by the early church right after the out-pouring of the Spirit of God. They became students of God's Word as taught by the apostles. They spent time doing life together with shared meals, fellowship, worship, and prayer. And the results were that everyone felt the presence of God.

What a beautiful picture of what the church is to be today. The early church worshiped together daily, and we find it hard to gather once a week. They spent time together studying God's Word daily, but we don't have time to be in a small group study once a week. In some cases, they sold everything they had to help those with needs in the church family. Today, we say we cannot afford to bring His whole tithe and our offering into the storehouse. Because of the obedience of the early church, God added to their numbers daily those who were becoming saved. How can we enjoy the presence of God like the early church when we can't follow the instructions laid out for us? How can God bless us with new people if we aren't doing life together with those already here?

The message we have received this week from those who started the early church is still vital today if we listen and take heed. Each of us is invited by God to enter a living relationship with the historical Jesus. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, lived and died and was raised again, fulfilling all Scripture. He did it to bring forgiveness and power for a new life to all who respond to Him as Lord and Christ. He promises to be with us today, just as He was with the first disciples, and He has charged us with the same power to be His witnesses in our world. The result will be the same; He will add to our numbers daily those becoming saved! The church will grow because this way of life is attractive and genuine. May we praise our Lord and Savior and begin today to put the practices of the early church back into action with expectant hearts.

- What are the main ingredients for the success of the early church?
- How is your church fellowship like and unlike the fellowship of the early church?
- How could you help your church be more like the early church?
- How might this example affect how you get involved in your church?
- What might keep today's church from experiencing this kind of fellowship?

Further Reading: Romans 14:18; I Corinthians 1:18;
Ephesians 6:18

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