

D-Up: A Series on Discipleship
The Importance of the Church in Your Discipleship
Acts 2:41-47

Dr. Steve Horn

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Text Introduction: This morning I am continuing a new preaching series on discipleship. We are calling this series of messages “D-Up!” For those of you who might be basketball fans, you might be familiar with that phrase. This might be a phrase that the coach yells out to the team when it is time to get more intense in their defense.

We began our journey two weeks ago by asking the question, “Am I Even on the Right Road?”

Then last time, we focused on baptism. We simply said that if you are a believer in Jesus, you should be baptized as a way to identify with Jesus. Baptism is a beginning step of our discipleship. If we resist here, we will resist in other areas.

Today, we continue that passage in Acts that is so foundational to discipleship—Acts 2:41-47. We started in this text last week as we talked about baptism, but let’s go a little farther today as we think about the church.

Text: ⁴¹So those who accepted his message were baptized, and that day about 3,000 people were added to them. ⁴²And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to the prayers.

⁴³Then fear came over everyone, and many wonders and signs were being performed through the apostles. ⁴⁴Now all the believers were together and held all things in common. ⁴⁵They sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as anyone had a need. ⁴⁶Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple complex, and broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with a joyful and humble attitude, ⁴⁷praising God and having favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to them those who were being saved.

Introduction: This has always been a favorite text of mine. I consider it to be among that is most important to me. I literally think about it every day. The text guides us into a discussion on the church.

The Principle of the Church

Acts 2:41 sets forth a principle for the church. The principle is based on being “together” in some things. Some churches require different things to be considered a “member” of the church, but basically there are three New Testament requirements to be a part of a church.

- **Belief**—You must be a believer in Christ. You must believe the right things about Christ. The church literally is the “called out ones.” You cannot be part of the church without being a believer.
- **Baptism**—Baptism is, as we said last week, the mark, or the identification, that you maintain and agree with the beliefs.

- Belonging—As we read in Act 2, there is such a feeling of wanting to belong. Those early believers could not have thought in terms of just occupying a seat. They wanted to belong to the community of believers. They needed to belong to the community of believers.

Chuck Colson writes in his book, *The Faith: What Christians Believe, Why They Believe It, and Why it Matters*:

We cannot treat the local church like a restaurant, picking and choosing from the menu, visiting another whenever we feel like it. Church membership involves making a covenant with fellow believers. It takes time to develop unity with others at any depth, and this never takes place, ever—not at any time or anywhere—without conflict.¹

The Practices of the Church

First, we see who a church is—those who believe together, are baptized together, and belong together. Next, we see what the church should do. Here are the practices but also the priorities of the local church. We are going to be pressed all the time to do so many different things, but here is what we must be committed to doing.

They were continually devoting themselves to...

- Teaching—They wanted to learn all they could.
- Fellowship—They recognized that authentic fellowship would sustain them, but also be contagious as they shared their message with others.
- Worship—We see this in our text by their breaking bread together. In this context, “breaking bread” most likely refers to sharing the LORD’s Supper together as a way of remembering. Worship is remembering what Christ has done for us. We will worship together in Heaven.
- Prayer—They were devoted to prayer because they believed that something unique happened when people prayed. When the early church had a problem, they didn’t panic, picket, or pout. They prayed. Just one or two pages over in Acts 4, we see a remarkable example of this kind of praying.
- Giving—They were involved in giving together. We see an example of this in Acts 11 with the church at Antioch.
- Evangelism—Not necessarily expressed in Acts 2, but the rest of Acts indicates that the Church was devoted to sharing the message of Jesus with others.

¹ Chuck Colson, *The Faith: What Christians Believe, Why They Believe It, and Why it Matters*, Zondervan, 2008, 155.

The Privilege of the Church

- They experienced excitement together.

In our text, verse 43 gives us the indication that fear came upon every soul. A better translation is awe. It was excitement.

Excitement happens when we stand in awe of God. We cannot manufacture excitement. Excitement is contagious. Pray for God to do marvelous works in our midst that we stand in awe.

- The experienced everything together.

Some might consider this portion (vv. 44-46) of the text difficult to apply in a contemporary setting, but notice the timeless application. At the very least, our fellowship has these obligations:

- Relational
- Financial

In the 1988 Winter Olympics American speed skater Dan Jansen was favored to win a gold medal. The day before his first race, Dan's sister died from leukemia. Bearing the sorrow, Jansen fell in the first turn. Four days later, in the 1,000 meter race, he fell again. Jansen received a lot of mail, but one letter was more than remarkable. The letter came from a 30 year old Special Olympics athlete named Mark from Pennsylvania. Mark wrote:

Dear Dan,

I watched you on TV. I am very sorry you fell two times. I am in the Special Olympics. Seven years ago, right after my Dad died, I won a gold medal in the PA State Special Olympics. Before we start each race, our teachers tell us to say, "Let me win, but if I can't, let be brave in the attempt." I want to share my gold medal with you because I don't like to see you not get one. Try again next time.

Inside the envelope, Dan found the gold medal. That's it. That Attachment! When somebody needs something, we give them, even if it is ours.²

The Potential of the Church

How do we know if we are doing any good? The assessment is found in verse 47. There is really no other gauge for a church.

So what?

1. Every Christian ought to be an active part of a local church. It is not optional.
2. Every church ought to be growing. It cannot be growing if Christians are not being committed to the church.

² From Sermon by David Dykes, January 7, 2001, "Back to the B.A.S.I.C.S."