

4. Generosity

Acts 2:44-45 NLT - 44 And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. 45 They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need.

The early church displayed a radical generosity, caring for those in need. They were not being required to do this. Such selflessness comes when we are secure that God will meet our needs, and that the needs of others are as important, or more important than our own.

Malachi 3:10 NLT - 10 Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do," says the LORD of Heaven's Armies, "I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won't have enough room to take it in! Try it! Put me to the test!

God has chosen to use us to supply adequate "food in the Temple" and meet the needs of the people. Have you ever tested God's promise to provide for you in Malachi 3:10? What are we in danger of missing if we live with our hands closed? Share with your group any stories of God's abundant provision for you.

WRAP-UP

Our culture reinforces impatience, detachment, and individualism. But the life of the early church demonstrated just the opposite: patience, devotion, and community. If we want to keep our faith burning brightly, we won't settle for snippets of scripture, shallow engagement, operating in our own capabilities or living with our hands closed.

MEMORY VERSE

All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer
- Acts 2:42-47 NLT

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life.

Challenge- Dare to dive deeper into your relationship with other believers.

"Dangers that Dim"

Spark #3

INTRODUCTION

In this sermon series we've found that the Holy Spirit brings the spark that ignites our faith, and that by remaining in God's presence and walking in obedience we can fan that flame in our lives. But what are some of the dangers we face in working to keep that flame glowing brightly? What can cause our flame to dim or go out? The early church serves as our model of what keeps that flame alive, and we will consider what we need to do to guard against the dangers that dim.

Ice Breaker

Describe a group you've been part of that became like family to you. (a team, class, bunco group, playgroup, neighborhood, garage band...)

Key Passage

Acts 2:42-47 NLT - 42 All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer. 43 A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. 44 And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. 45 They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. 46 They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity - 47 all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Teaching

John 8:31 NLT - 31 Jesus said to the people who believed in him, "You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings.

The very first thing mentioned in Acts 2:42 that distinguished the believers was their devotion to the Apostles' teaching. What was meant by the Apostles' teaching? It was the Apostles who communicated to the believers who Jesus was and what He had done. They were a trustworthy source of what Jesus taught.

According to the John 8:31, why would it be important to have a thorough understanding of Jesus' teaching? What would be the danger in knowing only small bits and pieces of scripture (coffee cup verses) without any context or background? Is there a verse you've heard people quote, but you suspect is being taken out of context? (e.g., You may know Phil 4:13, but do you know Phil 4:12?)

Galatians 1:6 NLT - 6 I am shocked that you are turning away so soon from God, who called you to himself through the loving mercy of Christ. You are following a different way that pretends to be the Good News

If we don't know the true teaching of Jesus, we won't recognize counterfeits. And that can be disastrous. Paul addressed this problem when he wrote to the Galatian church. They quickly followed something that pretended to be Good News but wasn't.

Devoting ourselves to studying scripture requires more than a "quick read". God's Word directs us to Jesus and brings us life, but it takes time to understand and "soak into our bones".

What are some steps you can take to help you better understand God's Word and make it the foundation of your life? Who should you include in the process?

2. Community, Eating, Prayer

Acts 2:46 NLT - 46 They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity--

In this verse we see the kind of relationship that existed amongst the early church members.

How often were these believers together? Where did they gather together? What were they doing together?

Our key passage, especially verse 46, gives us a glimpse of the bond that existed between the members of the body of Christ. In verse 42 we saw that the believers were devoted to fellowship. That word in the Greek is Koinonia. It means a strong bond of intimate community. This bond was based in the good news and mission of Jesus.

Developing a deep bond requires effort. What were the circumstances surrounding your deepest relationships with other believers? What is the danger in keeping relational bonds shallow or superficial? What are some of the things we can do to foster a deeper bond with other believers?

3. Signs and Wonders

Acts 2:43 NLT - 43 A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders.

The Holy Spirit not only arrived on Pentecost, He remained and empowered believers to do signs and wonders which demonstrated God's presence among His people. These included speaking in tongues, miraculous healings, casting out demons and raising the dead. They produced awe in everyone who witnessed them and focused attention on the Holy Spirit, causing many to believe.

In Acts chapter 3, we read about Peter and John healing the lame beggar.

Acts 3:12-13, 16 NLT - 12 Peter saw his opportunity and addressed the crowd. "People of Israel," he said, "what is so surprising about this? And why stare at us as though we had made this man walk by our own power or godliness? 13 For it is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob--the God of all our ancestors--who has brought glory to his servant Jesus by doing this. This is the same Jesus whom you handed over and rejected before Pilate, despite Pilate's decision to release him. ... 16 "Through faith in the name of Jesus, this man was healed--and you know how crippled he was before. Faith in Jesus' name has healed him before your very eyes.

Peter took the focus off he and John and used the miracle to point people to Jesus. Too often we can fall on either of two extremes – either we allow God's work to make us prideful and seek the spotlight, or we discount God's ability to move miraculously and rely only on our own capabilities. What are the dangers in each extreme?