

Why Church Matters - Revisited

Week 1 - Discussion

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 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. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.” Acts 2:42–47 (ESV)

The early church exhibited 4 core behaviors that identified who they were and what they did. These were practices and habits that they devoted themselves to...not just accidentally, but intentionally. These core behaviors were:

1. The Apostles’ Teaching
 - The life, death and resurrection of Jesus and all of its implications
 - The OT in light of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus
2. Fellowship
 - Koinonia - literally the practice of deeply sharing life together
3. The Breaking of Bread
 - The Lord’s Supper
 - Sharing meals together in each others’ homes
 - This was a radical practice that broke down barriers - social, economic, gender
4. The Prayers
 - This was likely the practice of psalm worship they may have already been accustomed to...but done so in light of Jesus
 - Prayer was a means of sustaining power and boldness for the early believers

These 4 core behaviors shaped the identity of the early church and led to them transforming the world around them. Through their obedience and faithfulness, God *“added to their number day by day those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47).*

None of these practices, though, were done in isolation. They made a practice of gathering **together**. They saw and realized the need for community and connection, a sense of belonging.

We live in a society that has become increasingly disconnected, busy, divided and individualistic. As a result, the church has allowed itself to reflect the society around us. God has created and designed His Church to be a body, each part joined together fulfilling its purpose in support of the whole. We are called to be **together** the body of Christ. We cannot be or do what God has called us to be and do in isolation.

Quote from NT Wright:

“We have been so soaked in the individualism of modern Western culture that we feel threatened by the idea of our primary identity being that of the family we belong to—especially when the family in question is so large, stretching across space and time. The church isn’t simply a collection of isolated individuals, all following their own pathways of spiritual growth without much reference to one another.”

Questions to think about:

How am I connecting to the body of Christ on a regular basis outside of regularly scheduled church gatherings?

What might God be leading me to do, rearrange, or prioritize to be able to make the deep connections I need and others need?

What is lacking in my life as a follower of Jesus when I neglect the intentional practice of connecting with the rest of His body on a regular basis? What might others be lacking?