

Breaking the Routine: How the Early Church Turned Everyday into Extraordinary

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- [0 : 0 0] As the routines of life continue in their predictable cycles, waking, working, eating, sleeping, and the cycle continues on and on.
- Do you ever think that maybe something significant might be missing? Do you ever wonder if there's just more to life than the daily grind?
- What if I told you that a vibrant, meaningful life is closer than you think that we could enjoy every day?
- Well, today, this morning, we're going to uncover a blueprint of life filled with unity, filled with purpose, and growth from a surprising source.
- It's from the early Christian church. The early believers in Jerusalem didn't view their faith merely as part of their life.
- [1 : 0 1] They viewed their faith as their life. And everything they did grew out of their faith in Jesus Christ. And it wasn't just something they did on Sunday.
- It was something that motivated. It was something that filled. It was something that was their life. It affected their daily routines. It affected their relationships.
- And it even affected their possessions that we're going to find out a little bit this morning. And then we find out more about those possessions in chapter 4 that we'll get to in a few weeks.
- But as we explore the book of Acts, we discover that the early church was characterized by three attributes.
- They were unified. They were magnified. And they were multiplied. It wasn't a community that was simply built on superficial commonalities.
- [2 : 0 4] You know, sometimes people are confused when they talk about unity. They think, well, in order to be unified, we have to believe the same thing. That's not true. In order to be unified, unity in the Christian life primarily is we share the same faith in Jesus Christ.
- Amen. I ought to hear an amen. Because the point is, you who are a couple, how many of you have been married more than 30 years? Do you agree on everything? Probably not.
- Some of you have been married longer than that. And I guarantee you, you don't agree on everything. Now, you probably come to an agreement. Now, the early church, we're going to find out as we go, came from different walks of life.
- There were different nationalities. There were different races. There were different socioeconomic strata. So there were people who literally went hungry during the week.
- We see that in the book of Corinthians. Some, because of their pride, they ate their fellowship meals quickly. So those who came in poor, so they could eat before those lower class people came in.

[3 : 26] And I do say that in air quotes. But yet, what we're going to see through Acts chapter 2, Acts chapter 3, Acts chapter 4, and the rest of the book of Acts, was that they were unified and they were held together by their faith in Jesus Christ.

That's what unified them. That's what held them together. Their faith was, their unity was built on the transformative power of the gospel.

It's Jesus Christ that made the difference in their life. It's the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ that brought them together. Have you ever been traveling somewhere? I know, Catherine, just on our recent trip, on our cruise, we were seated at the same table with another couple who were believers.

And we just hit it off. We had another couple at the table. And they were friendly. We were friendly. But we just, we tended to gravitate toward this other couple.

And we were sharing our faith. Not to say we distanced from the other. But, matter of fact, we have stayed in touch with the other couple. As a matter of fact, he messages me from time to time.

[4 : 42] He sent me a picture. And he said, guess where we are? Well, it was a picture of the ark, the ark encounter. And then he said, guess where we're going next?

They're going to, where did we say, Kat? I shared with you. They're going to the other, there's the ark encounter. And then there's, was that?

Yes, the creation museum. So things like that. Now, I doubt that we agree on everything. But we agree on our faith in Jesus Christ. And they're excited about their faith in Christ.

So much so that they take their vacations to go to places like that and learn more about that. So let's dive in this morning very, very quickly into the story to see how maybe we can live such an engaging, such an impactful and such an abundant life, even in the midst of persecution, even in the midst of being so different from the rest of the world around them.

Let's read this morning's text. We begin in Acts chapter 2, beginning with verse number 42. We're going to read through verse 47. We're going to finish up our time in Acts chapter 2 this morning.

[6 : 00] Verse 42 says, And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

Now all who believed were to gather, and had all things in common, and sold the possessions and goods, and divided them among all. We're going to talk a little bit about that. We're going to get more into that when we get into chapter 4, in terms of did they sell everything?

Did they give everything away? The answer is no. But divided them among all, as anyone had need. Verse 46, So continuing we with one accord in the temple, and breaking of bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people.

And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. So what do we see first in this early church who came together on the day of Pentecost?

3,000 people came to know the Lord Jesus Christ, subsequent to Peter's message. Sir, what must we do? What do we do? Since we know that we're guilty now.

[7 : 19] We realize our guilt. And what hope is there for us? What do we do now? He said, Repent. Be baptized. Trust Jesus Christ as your Savior.

The gospel. So what do we see first? We see a unified community. And we see the power of a shared belief.

The commonality of their faith in Jesus Christ. And the power, the transformative power of the gospel. Verse 42, And they continued steadfastly.

Or they devoted themselves. The meaning of that word there was there was a consistent devotion to. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching.

So they wanted to hear what God said. They wanted to hear the word of God. So they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship and the breaking of bread.

[8 : 21] And in prayers, then fear came upon every soul. So we start looking at the early church's devotion to the apostles' teaching in verse number 42. Now this commitment was a commitment to learning and growing in their understanding of Jesus' teaching.

Remember, who were these apostles? They had been with Jesus. They had listened to Jesus' teaching. So what were they teaching? They were teaching what they heard from Jesus.

And so they were merely relaying what Jesus taught them and what they saw modeled in Jesus Christ. And so these disciples are merely teaching what Jesus taught.

And so the early church, some 3,000 plus people, we're going to see how they gathered together as the body of Christ.

But they devoted themselves to hearing what the apostles had to say. Ultimately what Jesus had to say. So the word, as we said here, signify or says that they were devoting themselves to.

[9 : 33] It was a concerted effort that they made to the teaching. They didn't just come and tick off a box on their weekly to-do list and say, You know what?

We gathered together with the body of Christ so we can go and have fun. We can go to work this week and go to the daily grind. And then next week we come back. No, it was something they devoted themselves to.

It wasn't a casual interest or an occasional study. But for them, it was a daily pursuit. They hungered for the truth.

It always warrants my heart when people first come to know Jesus as their Savior. They're hungry to know more. Everything's new. Everything is exciting.

Some of the things are hard to understand. Some of the things are hard to take in. But if I can understand it, I want to understand it. And they hungered for the truth and they found that truth in the teaching of the disciples, the ones who walked with Jesus, the ones who witnessed his death on the cross and his resurrection.

[10 : 45] So their common faith in the apostles' teaching unified them and it became a solid foundation for their community.

So first of all, they were devoted to the teaching of the word. Secondly, we see in verse 42 that they devoted themselves to fellowship.

They devoted themselves to fellowship and the breaking of bread or eating together. So verse 42 also mentions fellowship and breaking bread, indicating it was a spiritual and a physical thing.

So they devoted themselves to getting to know one another, spending time with one another, but also eating together. Now, I don't think this was merely a social gathering.

Hey, come on, let's have a party and let's just have a cookout. You know, invite you to our backyard hamburger cookout. No, it was let's get together.

[11 : 48] And while they were together, since they were together, we might as well eat. It's like we have a meeting and let's make it a lunch meeting. We're here. We got to meet. So might as well eat while we're meeting. And I think that was the case there.

They were together and everyone brought their dishes, brought whatever. And they probably pooled their resources and they they ate together. It was an expression of their shared faith.

It was an expression of their caring for one another as well. And I don't think their communal meals were just physical food. I think this breaking of bread also signifies to us that they probably shared the Lord's Supper as part of that meal.

And every time they gathered together, they remembered what the Lord Jesus Christ had done for them. And I think that should give us a little bit of a pause when we come together.

On the 25th, when we come together to share our meal together, it should be more than just eating. We should also be concerned about who's sitting by themselves. Who are we going to spend time with?

[12 : 53] Who are we going to get to know? You know, there's probably some in here that you may not even know their name. And you look across the aisle and you go, well, I see their face on Sundays, but I don't even know their name.

Well, how about let's make this an opportunity, a time where you can get to know someone. That's how the early church and we're going to see in a moment.

That's how they made a difference. So much so that people were getting saved every day. And it wasn't just because they were here in the gospel. They were primed because they saw the fellowship and the care that people had within the body of Christ for one another.

So they were bound together by his love, by fellowship, the breaking of bread, and also in what? Prayers. And so they prayed together. They got together.

They prayed together. And so corporate prayer is not something that we do just because it's something to do. Corporate prayer is something the early church did together. Why?

[13 : 55] Because that's where our power comes, from God, from his Holy Spirit. So they spent time praying together as a body of Christian, body of believers.

So it began, praying together began in the early church. And I believe wholeheartedly that we should keep up that practice as well. Now, praying together, there's a lot of ways to pray together.

I have been in churches where praying together meant literally praying together. I've been in churches.

We had, I've preached in churches where they, when they pray together, one particular church, that was about 250. And during the worship time, when they prayed, 250 people prayed aloud together.

But you know what? I couldn't understand what they were saying, but you know who did? God did. God heard every single one of those prayers. Now, I don't know if praying together means everyone praying at the same time.

[15 : 03] It may sound like bedlam to us, but it probably sounds like sweet music to God's ears. There's also praying, you know, one at a time, short, short prayers.

Whatever that, whatever it looks like, prayer was an important aspect. Next, what do we see? They also shared their possessions as well.

Verse 44. Now, all who believed were together, and they had all things in common. Now, verse 44 takes us a little bit deeper into their unity.

All who believed were together had all things in common. I don't believe this was an enforced uniformity, but I think it was a voluntary willingness to share with those in need.

Someone has a need. Someone lost their job because they were baptized, and their employer, maybe their master craftsman, dismissed them maybe as a journeyman, or they dismissed them as a student because of their faith in Jesus Christ.

[16 : 26] And so they had no job. They had no way of taking care of themselves. And they said, you know what? Don't worry about it. We'll take care of you. And so they took care of one another. They recognized that they all were gods, and they were willing to share with those within their body in need.

So I believe this attitude of selfishness and communal care stood in stark contrast to the rest of the people in Jerusalem. And I think it stands in stark contrast to America today.

What is America? Individualism. Take care of number one, right? And you know what? It's bad to be you if you have a need.

But the early church said, you have a need. You're part of our family. And so we will take care of you. So I don't think it was, and we're going to see in, again, in chapter number four, that they had all things in common, meaning it was, if it's mine, it can be yours too.

You know, they didn't hold too tightly on their possessions. And I think they realized that they couldn't take it to heaven with them. And I think they realized the brevity of life and also that if they were to survive, they had to survive together as a community.

[17 : 51] So I don't think it was forced, as is in communism. But I've heard it said that we could probably more call it communism.

They had it. Everything was common. And it wasn't like a commune where people just came and took what was yours. It was a willing to share, say, oh, I hear you have a need.

And we saw this last week. Where someone said, we want to take care of a need. And we're not, made no bones about it. They were willing to do it. They were more than happy to do it.

And I think that's the way the early church was. You have a need, we'll take care of you. Something happened in your life and there's an emergency, don't worry about it. We will take care of it.

And there's something similar for those who can't afford health insurance. I think some of you still are part of the shared health where those who have a need put into kind of like a cooperative.

[19 : 00] And if you have a medical need and medical expense, you pull out. And the others who put in, if they have a medical need, they take out. So it was kind of a similar thing going on.

What their unity was, their unity was tangible. It was something that you could say, we're unified, but you can see it. It's not something we just pay lip service to.

It's something that was real. So the early church was a unified community, but they also had a magnified mission. The mission was paramount in the early church.

What was the mission? Same mission that Jesus had. He came to die on the cross so that we could be saved. And what did he tell his disciples over and over? The last thing he told them, we see that in Matthew, end of Matthew.

We see that in Acts chapter 1, verse number 8. He said, when the Holy Spirit comes, you're going to be my witnesses. That's our mission. Those are our marching orders as the body of Christ.

[20 : 08] And that mission, that mission alone should unify us. And everything else that we do should be subservient to that mission.

So every dollar that we spend as a church should be, how does it help us carry out the mission? Everything that we do, every meeting that we have, how does it help us carry out the mission?

You who signed up to clean the church building. Well, it's not just a physical task that we do. You can say to yourself, by providing a clean facility, and one that doesn't stink when we come, and one that, you know, the garbage cans aren't overflowing, and when we come together and someone comes into our midst, they're not distracted by anything.

And so they can hear the Word of God without any distraction. So when you're cleaning the church, you can say to yourself, I am carrying out the mission.

If you're cutting the grass, if you're trimming a tree, if you're doing whatever, if you're in the nursery, and those who, I don't know who's in the nursery today, but you're probably watching this on the TV screen in there, you're carrying out the mission today.

[21 : 34] Let that sink in. Everything that we do, no matter how great or how small, it's all meant to carry out the mission, and it's all built to support the mission.

Just like across the street, I noticed it is Sunday, Lord's Day, but they're working on someone's foundation across the street. This morning I had to follow some dump trucks.

One apparently took the wrong turn. I had to wait for him to back up and go the right way, and the other guy behind him in the dump truck followed him. But what are they doing? You could ask them, well, we're just making a foundation.

Well, maybe they are, but what are they doing? They're helping build probably a beautiful house. And so everything that everyone does, whether it's a carpenter, whether it's a concrete finisher, or whether it's a roofer, whatever they're doing, they're not just roofing.

They're not just working on concrete. What are they doing? They're building a house. So what are we doing? I'm not just working in the nursery. I'm not just cutting the grass. I'm not just vacuuming the floor, mopping the floor.

[22 : 43] I'm on the mission of helping people to know Jesus Christ as their Savior. So that was a magnified mission. There was a power of collective worship. In a collective worship, verse 46, So continuing daily, devoting themselves, they continued daily with one accord in the temple, breaking bread from house to house.

They ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart. So the early church enjoyed daily communion and worship. Now, when you're in communion, I don't mean the Lord's Supper necessarily.

It was a daily, they communed with one another. They spent time with one another. In verse 46, we see the believer's dedication to spending time together in corporate worship.

Now, these early Christians met every day. A little bit different atmosphere than we have today. Many of us are separated by many miles. We work.

Some of you work shift work. But in Jerusalem, in this first century, you pretty much walked everywhere you went.

[23 : 57] And you didn't have to walk very far. These buildings, these homes, these shops were all within close confines with one another. And so it was easier for them to get together every day.

So how did they do it? How did 3,000 people come together? Where did they meet? In the temple. So the early believers continued to gather in the temple, and most likely in the outer court.

So, and this is how we're going to see that people saw how they related to one another. So probably most likely the outer court.

And the outer court was a place, was kind of a meeting place before they went into the inner court. There was a court of the Gentiles. There was a court where the women were in.

There was another court. And then the male Jews were able to go in a little bit further. But in that outer court, there was a place where the money was changed.

[24 : 58] People came in from out of town to worship. They would change their money so they could buy their doves, buy their sacrifice so they could give. This is most likely where they gathered together, a large group.

And so they gathered together there. But also what it says is, and they broke up into smaller groups from house to house and ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart.

So these early Christians met every day, not out of obligation. Not to say, well, I'm going to feel guilty. I'll make you feel guilty if you're not there. But because they found something incredible in that unity together.

They found something special. They found that it gave their life purpose. We come together for one unified purpose, and that's to glorify Jesus Christ and to enjoy our time together as the family of God.

So they gathered in the temple for corporate worship, in homes in smaller group for discipleship. I think it was also reflecting the fact that their faith wasn't confined to a single place. You know, this is where we meet.

[26 : 07] But this is not the church. This is the church building where the church meets. But everywhere we are, we are the church. So they worshiped together, acknowledging God's goodness, also His work among them.

Their unity in worship not only deepened their relationship with God, but it also strengthened their bond as a community, as the body of Christ.

And what did this unity lead to? So they ate their food, gladness and simplicity of heart. And what did this unity, what did this camaraderie, what did this time together do?

They were praising God, and people began to notice. The other Jews who had passed them by on their way into the inner courts, into the temple, saw these people praising Jesus.

And they're going, that's different. We just come, we offer our sacrifices, and we go home. You know, we just come and do our duty, and then we leave.

[27 : 10] Man, they are spending some time together. They must, they've got something special. You know, for the rest of the Jews, it was a mechanical thing that they did on the Sabbath.

It was a mechanical thing that they did when they went to the temple. I've heard people say this. Well, you know what, I've got to go do my duty. I've got to go to church. Literally, I've heard people say that.

I've got to go do my duty. Well, to them, it wasn't a duty. To them, I think it was a special time that they looked forward to spending some time together. And what effect did this have on the world?

It said, And they began having favor with all the people. And as a result, the Lord added daily those who were trusting Jesus as their Savior.

So their joyful worship, their loving community, was not a private affair. It was a powerful witness to the transformative power of the gospel.

[28 : 15] If all we ever do is gather together in this building, the world never witnesses. But what if we get out?

We were talking this morning about getting out into the park and have worship in the park. Guess what? What do people do in the park? They walk. They spend time.

They relax. And guess what? It might attract a crowd. And so the people were able to, the world was able to witness what was going on when they worshiped. They didn't worship in private.

They worshiped in public. And so people said, man, that's different. I want to go hear what they have to say. And I'm sure people that were within earshot of the preaching of the teaching of the disciples and the preaching of the disciples, people came to know Jesus Christ.

And also during the week, they were sharing their faith with all around them. They weren't isolating themselves. But instead, they were spending so much time together worshipping and fellowshiping.

[29 : 18] They also experienced the presence of what? Joy. Verse 46. Gladness or joy and simplicity of heart.

So I think this indicates a community that was marked by authenticity. Their faith was real. By joy.

And also gratitude. They were thankful for their relationship. And I think this, we see simplicity. It wasn't just simple. The word there used for simplicity is a word that means sincerity.

It wasn't put on. It wasn't show. They were sincere in their faith. How do we know it was sincere? Because they helped each other in need. It was a tangible way that they said, I love you.

And they showed it by sharing. And so this was a, it was filled with joy. It was filled with sincerity as they worship.

[30 : 23] And it was a magnetic testament to the life-changing power of the gospel. People were saying, they're different. They were different. You know, the thing is, we should not be the same as the world.

There are too many people today. There are too many churches today that want to compete with the world to attract the world.

Guess what? We can never compete. We can never compete. The only way is God through how different we are.

And I don't mean different in the way that some sects are different in that they wear different clothes. And they don't drive vehicles.

And they just look so different that they look weird. No. We want to be different in our joy. We want to be different in our demeanor.

[31 : 22] We want to be different in our patience. We want to be different in our forgiveness. We want to be different in the way we worship together. We want to be different in our unity.

That's what attracted the world. Their worship attracted the world. Their sincerity in their worship attracted the world.

Their sharing with one another was attractive to the world. And he said by their life, by their worship, daily people were trusting Christ as their Savior.

It wasn't just an act they put on for worship. Now, I don't mind getting dressed up. But in some churches, and some churches locally, say, you know what?

Men, you have to have a coat and tie in order to be here. Women, you have to wear dresses in order to be here. You know what that is? I want to show somebody else how good I look.

[32 : 32] Now, yes, they may have other reasons. But there are some who put on their Sunday best and think God wants to see their Sunday best. God couldn't care less.

Let me say that again. God couldn't care less what you wear to church, as long as you cover up. Right? As long as you cover up, God doesn't care.

What he cares about is the heart. A lot of people give God their Sunday best, but their heart's far from it. And so God wants us to be together, serving him, loving him, loving one another, and caring.

Now, that doesn't mean I'm not going to get dressed up, but that's not the reason I do. So some of you guys, ladies, when you wear your nice dresses, you look nice.

Guys, when you wear your suits, that looks nice, too. So I'm not putting that down by any means. But they were sincere in their heart when they got together.

[33 : 42] So the early church was a unified community. They had a magnified mission, and they had a multiplied impact. So there's a power of continual growth.

So let's go through this last section, verse number 47. Praising God, having favor with all the people, and the Lord added to their church daily those who were being saved.

So because of their commitment to gather, people noticed. Because of their sharing with one another, people noticed. They were sharing their faith. The closing of verse 47 reveals a vital truth.

The Lord added daily to their number those who would be saved, those who were being saved. The growth wasn't simply due to human effort.

God was a part of it. I think this serves as a powerful reminder that while we are called to share the gospel, God is the one who brings the increase.

[34 : 44] God's Holy Spirit is the one who draws men and women and boys and girls to him. We are to be faithful in our witness, but it's the Lord who accomplishes the growth.

So when we talk about church growth, it's not all about numbers. When we talk about church growth, it's not all statistics and tactics that we use just to get more people.

We just need to share the gospel and live a life that is attractive to the world because we are different, but we're a good different. We're a different different.

And unity is different. And so the world is attracted to what we have in Jesus Christ, the joy, the love for one another, and the early church saw people coming to know Jesus, not monthly, not weekly, but daily.

Salvation was a daily reality in the early church. And I believe this speaks also to an urgency that the early church had. So what we need to be doing is we need to provide the structure for people to do the work of the ministry.

[36 : 09] We need to provide the training for people to do the work of the ministry, and we can see God begin to work. So in conclusion, as we've gone through Acts chapter 2, verses 42 to 47, we've seen the vibrant potential that we can have simply by enjoying our time together, worshiping together, praying together, eating together, remembering the Lord together, and what He means to us.

So this was a thriving, growing family bonded by their shared belief in Jesus Christ and their commitment to live out His teachings. They didn't just get together to learn more.

They got together, learned more, and they went out and did more. And that's what we see in the early church. So the power of the gospel led to them breaking down barriers, racial barriers, language barriers, socioeconomic barriers, and they enjoyed what they had in common together.

So that's the potential of the church when it's walking in the Spirit. This is our call to followers of Jesus Christ to be such a community.

So how do we respond? How do we embrace that same power that marked the early church? Well, here are some next steps. I'll give you three next steps, and they're also in your connection cards.

[37 : 36] First thing is embrace community. Embrace community. Find ways to experience genuine fellowship with others within our faith family.

It could be starting a Bible study group together. It could be saying, Hey, look, let's three or four of us get together and let's pray on a regular basis. It could be inviting a fellow church member to a meal.

It could be just spending time with them. So embrace community. It's what made the early church attractive to the world.

And then worship wholeheartedly. I think God loves when we worship Him with our entire being. Not just sing a song, but sing it from the heart.

How often have you found yourself, and I have, singing, worshiping, but I was probably merely saying words or singing words rather than singing to my Heavenly Father.

[38 : 46] So worship wholeheartedly. And then, number three, share the gospel. Share your faith with others. We are going to be beginning what's called the Hope Initiative.

It's going to begin. It's 30 days, hopefully with just a few, and we'll work out from there. 30 days where we spend time spending time in God's Word, learning how to be conscious of others in our community, ultimately praying for the lost, being more aware of those who are around us, and hopefully that we can become an evangelizing church, an outreach church where people are coming to know the Lord on a regular basis.

I want you to know this. The early church wasn't a perfect church. You know, sometimes the early church, you know, this Pentecost, 3,000 people, daily people were getting saved, and we kind of, we immortalize them.

We idolize the early church. Well, the early church, just read 1 Corinthians, just read some of the letters that the apostles wrote. They had their problems.

No perfect church. Doesn't exist because you don't have perfect people in any church, but they were committed. They were committed, at least in the beginning, they were committed to Jesus Christ.

[40 : 23] They were unified, they were passionate, and they made an impact that we're still talking about today. So, let's strive to do the same. Let's pray. Father, this morning, we've come together.

We've spent time in your word. We pray that we may be able to experience that same unity in our faith in Jesus Christ, that we would be able to magnify the mission, and also, Lord God, that we would be able to see the constant multiplication, people coming to know Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Lord, I pray that our worship would be infectious, and that our lives as well would be so different in a positive way that the world would realize what's missing in their life.

Lives maybe that are broken or hurting and want what we've experienced. So, Father, we thank you for what you're going to do in our midst.

I thank you for each one here this morning. I thank you for each one watching or listening to this message whenever or wherever they are.

[41 : 37] And I pray, Father, that your Holy Spirit would make a difference in their lives. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.