

Acts 2 (Part 2) • The Life of the Church

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Open your Bible to Acts chapter 2 and we're going to get into the scripture here this morning. As we're on Sunday morning here going through the Book of Acts and making our way through the Bible that way. We're in Genesis on Wednesday nights so if you haven't had an opportunity yet to join us on a Wednesday night, we would invite you to do that.

We're going to look at the last part of Acts chapter 2. I talked to you about the fact that I was going to do a little teaching on the gift of tongues, which I'm still going to do, but not today.

We're going to just finish Acts chapter 2 today, and it's really just like 6 verses so skip all the way down to verse 42. Acts 2:42, read with me to the end of the chapter and it goes like this.

Acts 1:42-47 (ESV)

*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.*

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Stop there. Let's pray.

Father, as we get into the Word this morning, as we dig into these verses, and as we close out 2023, we just pray Lord for the presence of your Holy Spirit here as we study the scriptures. As we open our hearts to what you have to say.

And I pray my Father God that you would really speak to your people. Speak to all of us, speak right where we are and guide, and direct us through your Word, and let your Word really have an impact in our hearts today.

We thank you for this Lord. We pray these things in the name of Jesus, our Savior, amen. Amen.

Well, we don't have a whole lot of verses that we're looking at here today, but as we read through them, there are things that just immediately impact us here. One of the things that you may have noticed as I read through these verses, is that every single sentence begins with, "*And.*" Did you catch that?

It's an interesting thing. "*And they devoted...*" "*And awe....*" "*And all...*" "*And they...*" "*And day by day,...*" "*And the Lord...*" I didn't really need that slide yet, Deb. You can just put that away for just a little bit. We're going to come back to that in just a little bit.

If you guys recall your early grammar, you know that the word, and, is a conjunction. You guys remember Conjunction Junction? Come on, you guys. Some of the little kids are going, I don't know what he's talking about. It was a cartoon, forget it. Saturday morning cartoon. Anyway, that's where I learned grammar, was on Conjunction Junction.

But the word, and, is a word that connects sentences and thoughts to weave them together into a collective whole. And it is apparent as you read through these 6 verses, that Luke is doing just that. He is stitching together the imagery of life for the early believers to help us understand what it was like. What was life like when the church first started. When people just first got ahold of the gospel and started walking this thing out.

We've had 2,000 years, to do this, and in some cases even muck it up. But what was the early church like? What kinds of things were they doing? Well, that's the picture that Luke is giving us here as he paints for us a picture of the life of the church. And that's the theme for today; the life of the church. I use that phrase to refer to something that frankly, not all believers experience.

And I don't know if that takes you by surprise or not. I'm not talking about unbelievers now, I'm talking about believers. I'm talking about people who have put their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior. Not all of them experience the life of the church. There are a few that do, and if I was a guessing person, I'm not very good at guessing, but I would say about 25 percent of the body of Christ experiences the life of the church, and the remaining 75 percent don't. And the reason they don't is because they never really press in.

I would imagine that percentage is even fairly close in this room, about 25 percent of you press in on the life of the church and experience the life of the church. And about 75 percent of you, don't press in because you stay on the peripheral. And this is a very common sort of a thing.

I've been pastoring now for over 40 years and I can tell you that this is basically the way it goes. People come to church and not all the time, but they come to church. And they are genuine in their faith when it comes to trusting in Christ for salvation.

But they never experience the joy and the life of what it is to be the body of Christ. Because there is a dynamic that is available to us to experience as believers. You guys do know that we're born into a family, right? When you come to Jesus, you're not just born again. You're born again into the family of God.

That's what John 1:12 says. Says that those who believed, who received Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.

Well, children are not born into a disconnected family. They're born into a family. And as such, they get to experience the dynamic, the joy, the blessing, and yeah, the drama of what it is to be in a family.

But again, I would say about 75 percent of you are part of the family, but you don't experience it. You don't partake of it because you don't participate in it. And this is not a rebuke. I'm just telling you what's real. Just reporting to you in a sense. But it's that life that I'm talking about, that life of the church, that's what Luke is describing in these verses.

The second thing that strikes me about these verses, are the many references that Luke gives us to community. And he highlights those words in this passage because they express plurality, not individuality, but plurality.

Now I want to show you this on the screen and I've highlighted these various words and phrases that express plurality words simply like, they. It doesn't just say you, it says they.

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*“And **they** devoted themselves to the apostles teaching...” and then it talks about “**the fellowship**.” We'll get into that here as we get into these verses. Then it talks about “**every soul**.” And it talks about “**all who believed were together and they had ... things in common**.” And then again, the word, “**they**” appears, “...were selling their possessions and distributing the proceeds **to all**, as (they) had need.” And again, the word, they, is used. “...**all the people**. ... **the Lord added to their number** ... (and) **those** who were being saved.”*

Do you see how many times Luke mentions the plurality of believers? Isn't that interesting? You've got these 2 things that jump out at you in this passage. You have these connecting phrases, statements, pictures that are all interconnected with this conjunction, and, as if Luke is painting a picture and he is.

And then you have all of these references to community, connectedness, togetherness. And the point here is that these verses aren't about this Christianity that many of us experience today. This individualized privatized form of Christianity, that many people experience, and that's the way they live their life. And if you ask them about their walk with the Lord, they'll say, well, that's a private thing. Well, it never was. It was never supposed to be.

It's all about people connecting with people and all of the messy drama that can go along with that. And I know that there is messy drama because I've been here for as long as I have. And I've experienced the messy drama and there's a lot of people that stay away from church because of the messy drama.

I was hurt at church one time and I was offended and so I don't go to church anymore. Those people, I tell you, those people. Sue and I have a joke and it's

just a joke. And we say to one another once in a while, we'll say, well, the ministry would be great if it wasn't for people.

And it's our way of just letting off a little tension because, the church is made up of people who are born again, but still have to deal with a sinful nature. And because we all have a sinful nature, we step on one another's toes from time to time. And we get weird, and we say things or do things and whatever that upset others. But that's all part of being in a family.

I don't think anyone is surprised to learn that there are many believers who just simply choose to avoid that drama altogether and the internet has made that all too easy for us today, hasn't it? I can just stay home, stay in my jammies and go to church and I don't have to go anywhere. I don't have to deal with the drama. I don't have to, when the worship leader goes, all right, let's take a minute and greet one another. Oh, jeez, I got to talk to people. I don't want to, I didn't come here to talk to people. I know, I'm voicing the sentiments of every introvert in the room.

The extroverts they love it. They're like, GREETING TIME! YES! And they get to talk to as many people as they can, and it just charges them. And all the introverts are like, please don't talk to me. Please don't talk to me. Please don't talk to me. It's just the way things go.

But when you stay on the peripheral, when you don't really connect in any sort of a meaningful way, you miss out on all the incredible blessings that go along with being a part of the body of Christ and experiencing the life of the church.

And the apostle Paul challenges us, in his first letter to the Corinthians to understand that we need one another. Let me show you this from 1 Corinthians 12, it says.

1 Corinthians 12:21, 26-27 (ESV)

The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." (he says no,) If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. (and then he says this) Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

This is a passage that unfortunately there are many Christians that just simply don't, they don't understand it, either that or they choose to ignore it. One of the two, that we need one another.

I need you and you need me. We need one another. We need one another to form that collective whole that is the body of Christ.

We're going to look at these 6 verses here that Luke gives us here in the Book of Acts and what he's telling us about the life of the church. Look with me here in verse 42.

Again, he says, "*And they devoted themselves...*" And that's a very important word, you might even underline it or highlighted in your Bible. "... *they devoted themselves.*"

The New King James (NKJV) says, "...*they continued steadfastly.*" The New American Standard Bible (NASB) uses the phrase, "...*they were continually devoting.*" And I like that because the NASB gives it in a sense to show that it's an ongoing devotion. They didn't just say the Word of God is cool or prayer is cool. They continued to devote themselves to those things and that those things are the apostles teaching. In other words, the Word of God.

The apostles teaching has now been codified for you and me. In other words, put into book form and that's what you're holding on your lap. "...*they devoted themselves to the (Word of God, the) apostles' teaching and the fellowship, (we'll talk about that) to the breaking of bread and the prayers.*" Which is, the literal translation of that.

We'll put these 4 things up on the screen so you can see them together and there they are. And we're going to leave those up so you can continue to reference them.

- The Apostle's teaching (the Word)
- The fellowship
- The breaking of bread
- Prayer

But the first thing they devoted themselves was very simply to the Apostles teaching or to the Word of God. And they devoted themselves to that, meaning that they were fixated on the Word of God. They were focused on the Word of God.

And you can always see in a person's life when they become devoted to the Word of God. In other words, what you can see is, you can see the result of them being devoted to the Word of God.

Sue and I were just talking yesterday about people that we've heard from in this past year. We're getting started with our fourth year since the pandemic. And the pandemic was a watershed event for the body of Christ, I'll just tell you that. It was a watershed event in many, many ways.

It brought a lot of hardship and pain, but it also brought a lot of growth in the body of Christ. Because individuals who found themselves shuddered and unable to leave their home suddenly decided they were going to start reading through the Bible.

And we heard this over and over and over from people, literally from around the world. I decided that if I couldn't go anywhere, I was going to finally read through the Bible. I was going to read through the whole thing from Genesis to Revelation. I'd never read all the way through the Bible so I decided since I couldn't go anywhere, I was going to start reading through the Bible.

And so they started, they started in Genesis and that was a pretty fun read. And then they started going through the various Books of the Pentateuch; Genesis, Exodus and they get to, they always get to Leviticus. They always get to Leviticus and they bottom out and they're okay, I don't get it. I don't know.

And so they started going online to figure out what does this mean? And a lot of people found our YouTube channel. And it was during that one year; the first year of the pandemic, our YouTube channel jumped a 100,000 subscribers. We're now at 200,000. In fact, we're over 200, 000, but it was during that first year of the pandemic. And this was just simply the body of Christ saying, I don't get it, I need help. But I want to get through the scripture so they started doing that.

People started digging into the Word and they found something interesting. They got hooked, they got hooked on the Bible. And so I started hearing from people saying, I have gone through your teachings through the entire Bible, Genesis to Revelation. I'm like, you need an award.

But what was really amazing was what they started telling us about their lives, how their lives went from chaos to order. They went from being a mess, emotionally, many times physically, spiritually, to being people who found stability. And they started writing us about this stability they found.

And it wasn't because of me, it wasn't because of Sue. It was because of the Word, okay? Make no mistake about it. But it was absolutely crazy.

In fact, Sue used a word with me as we were talking about this just yesterday. She talked about the evolution of people's lives and I thought, well, that's a good word to use people.

We see this evolution where they go from just messed up thinking, and their lives are a mess, and they're out of order, and they're just ping-pong. They're ping-pong off the wall because of the drama the unknown things of the world. The pandemic, war that's going on around the world, things that crop up between Russia and Ukraine, and now Israel and Hamas, and they're just freaking out.

And then they start absorbing the Word of God. They start going through the Bible and really seeking God's wisdom in the midst of it. And they begin to think with a biblical mindset and their blood pressure starts to lower. Probably literally, but certainly figuratively.

And they begin to just rest in God. They begin to rest in Him and they begin to realize God's in charge of this.

He's sovereign. He's mighty. He's almighty. He's good. He's merciful. He's patient. He's tender hearted. He loves me. And it begins to change their life and it really truly is amazing.

Jesus spoke about this stability that comes into people's lives when they begin to focus on the Word of God. And He talked about it as it's recorded in Matthew 7. Let me show you this on the screen.

It says,

Matthew 7:24-25 (ESV)

“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.”

“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.”

And that's what's happening, you guys, in people's lives who get serious about the Word of God and walking it out in their lives. They don't experience less challenges than everybody else. Did you notice Jesus even went on to say, He says, just like in anybody else's life, "*the rain fell, ...the floods came, ...the winds blew and they beat on that house.*" What's that mean?

It means they went through all the same tribulations and trials as everybody else, but there was one major difference. When it was all over, they were still standing. They still stood because there was a stability in their lives that wasn't there before, you with me? And that's why Paul reminds us what he does when he wrote to Timothy.

Look at 2 Timothy chapter 3. He says,

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (ESV)

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and (it's) profitable (for what? well) for teaching, for reproof, (that means sometimes the Lord rebukes you and says, don't do that, or) for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God (or the woman of God) may be complete, equipped for every good work.

God wants to make you complete and equipped, but that happens through His Word, as you focus on His Word.

Next, on these 4 things we're looking at, it goes on to say that they devoted themselves to the fellowship. And the Greek word there, as most of is, Koinonia. And contrary to popular belief, the definition of fellowship is not just getting together, and roasting hot dogs, and singing a few songs.

It actually, the Greek word that we know of is, koinonia, or fellowship. You know what it means? It speaks of a close, mutual, relationship. It speaks of participation within the community. A close, personal relationship and participation within the community of believers.

Now do you see what I'm saying here? When I say there's about 75 percent of the body of Christ that doesn't fellowship. In fact, they fellowship more often with the world than they do the body of Christ.

I'm not saying they don't come to church, because many of them do. Some don't. They do church at home. But just because you come to church doesn't mean you are involved in the life of the church and experiencing the fellowship of what it means to have a close, personal, mutual relationship with other people. Because, relationship is key.

You can't have fellowship without relationships. And you can't have relationships without people who are willing to be vulnerable. And who are willing to press in. Even despite the drama. And I know some of you, would rather die than deal with confrontation. I get it.

But if you just avoid the things you don't like, you don't experience what God prepared for you. It's really kind of, it's very similar to marriage. Marriage can be really messy. When you get together and you give your life to someone in marriage, and you make yourself vulnerable to that person. And really that's what marriage is.

If you don't make yourself vulnerable, you really don't have a marriage. Because marriage is the act of intimacy, which is vulnerability. And when that happens, when you make yourself vulnerable to someone, you make yourself liable to be hurt. And they will hurt you.

And there are some people that say, well, I just don't want to be hurt. I've been hurt. I don't want to be hurt. I'm going to avoid the whole thing. And that's fine. That's their choice, but they're never going to experience the blessing either. They'll stay away. But you know what? You're not really living.

When you go through life constantly avoiding the negative, or the things that might possibly be hurtful, you're really not living. You're just existing. You're going through this life in self-protection mode. I don't want to be hurt. Yeah, well, you know what? You're going to be. Sorry.

I used to tell people, here from the pulpit, you're going to hurt me and I'm going to hurt you. We're just going to get over it, okay? We're going to choose to forgive one another, love one another, and move on. Because you know what? We're spending eternity together. Eternity! Think about that one for a little while. We better figure it out while we're here. You know what I mean? Yeah, you can't avoid it, man.

You can't avoid, you can't avoid the junk. Because the junk comes along with the rest of it. But it's all part of being vulnerable. It's all part of being in a relationship. It's all part of fellowshiping. That's what fellowship is. And the

early believers were devoted to it, they were devoted to it Luke says. They were even devoted to the messy parts. And that means..., what does it mean in marriage? It means I look at my wife and I say, I'm not going anywhere. You with me? I'm not going anywhere. This was hard. This hurt. That was messy, but I'm not going anywhere.

And it means the same thing in the church. It means that was hard. That was messy, but I'm not going anywhere because you see, I've been born into this family. I've been adopted into the family of God and you are my brother, and you are my sister, and I'm not going anywhere. They were devoted to the fellowship.

Next, Luke tells us they were devoted to the breaking of bread, and this is something frankly that Luke describes in verse 46. Look down with me in your Bible, verse 46. It says, *“And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts,”*

The early believers ate together. They shared their meals together regularly. They called them, agape feasts or love feasts. And you know what? First Corinthians tells us that sometimes they got messy. We won't take time to look at it, but in 1 Corinthians, Paul actually had to write the church and rebuke them because their love feasts got out of hand.

Because the whole point of the love feast was to come together and share and some of the people were coming together and they were doing the opposite. The halves were sitting apart from the have-nots, and they were sitting and gorging themselves on their food that they brought and the have-nots were sitting over there and they didn't have anything to eat.

And the sharing..., they lost sight of what the whole agape feast was all about. And Paul had to write to them and rebuke them and say, your feasts now are starting to do more harm than good.

And so you see, things do get out of hand from time to time. And as believers, there are times that we need to get adjusted back to where we ought to be, right? As the body of Christ.

We all need that from time to time because we get out of whack. Again, we've had 2,000 years to get out of whack. And I believe, personally, the best way for the church to get back into alignment is to focus on the Word of God and to pitch all of the other stuff we came up to that we call, tradition.

We've done ourselves so much disservice by adding tradition to the Word of God. And it's tradition, we do this because it's tradition. Yeah, well is it biblical? I don't care, it's traditional. Sometimes that's the attitude of some people. And I don't know why, but I've just got this, I've got this radical attitude that, like, yeah, I don't care if it's tradition. If it's not biblical, we're going to give it the boot.

They devoted themselves to the very simple act of coming together and sharing what they had. Because, you see, it was all about caring for those who didn't have. And that's what the body of Christ ought to be doing.

Guys, this is the life of the church. That's what Luke is describing, the life of the church. The life of the church is a giving church, a caring church. And it doesn't happen, it's not something that has to happen from the pulpit. People think, well, pastor, then why don't you start giving us opportunities to share and care? That's your job!

My job as a teacher is to equip you to do the work of the ministry. That's what the scripture says. You're supposed to go out and do it, right? I'm supposed to build you up and encourage you through the Word, and you go out and you start it.

Pastor, we need a ministry of such and such. Well, you better be careful saying that to me. You're going to get a job, I'm serious. You come to me and say, here's what we need in this church, I'll say, you start it. Because, really what all ministries need is somebody to carry the banner. And if you see an area of need in the body of Christ, that's wonderful. Maybe God laid that on your heart. Don't come to me. Get busy. Get busy doing the work of the ministry. That's your job. That's one of the reasons that you guys know that I will refuse to be called a minister. That's not a biblical term. It's biblical, well, you know what? That's wrong. It's a biblical term for all of us. It's not a biblical term for pastors and teachers.

We are not ministers. You, the body of Christ, we are all ministers. And I think the church did itself a real disservice at some point, beginning to call pastors ministers. Hello, minister! You know what that tells you? He does all the work of the ministry. That's wrong, no. We're supposed to care. That's the life of the church. The life that goes on within the church. Right?

The last thing that they devoted themselves to was, prayer. And one of the things that I think truly defines the life of the church is when the bride of Christ comes together to intercede in prayer. And of course, the reason that prayer is so

important is because it is an action by the body of Christ to come together and say, Lord, we need you.

As the body of Christ, it's possible for us to come together and just, and have a committee meeting. That's why we don't have committees here at Calvary Chapel. We don't like committees because committees come together and you know what they do? They go, here's what we need to do.

But I like prayer when people come together and say, Lord, what would you have us do? And we need you. It's not about us doing, it's about you working through your people. And I love when people come together to pray because they're saying, they're coming to the Lord and they're saying, Lord, we need you. You are our source and that's why we come to you in prayer.

And that's one of the reasons why Paul the apostle said to the church at Colossae from Colossians chapter 4,

Colossians 4:2 (NIV84)

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

The body of Christ needs to be a praying church, a praying body.

I look at these 4 areas that we've been looking at here in Acts and we see these things as what the early church was devoted to and I have to tell you in all honesty that this last one, this prayer is the one area where I think I'll just say I get a failing grade. I think it is partially my fault. I haven't made opportunities for gatherings.

I know that there are people who get together and pray and I always appreciate that. And some of you have a gift of prayer, which is fantastic, gift of intercession. We need you guys so much, but the body of Christ needs opportunities for prayer.

And it's something that I want to change in 2024, I'll just tell you that right now. I want to give the body of Christ more opportunities to come together and just pray together. And I'm going to be devoted to do that here in the new year so you can hold me to that, okay?

I would love it if we had this many people come out just to pray as we do come out to hear the Word. I'm thrilled that you come out to hear the Word of God and to worship together and that sort of thing. I'd love it.

I'd love it if this many people showed up for prayer. Unfortunately, when we do have a prayer meeting, we get a very small percentage of people who are really willing to come out. We say, hey, we're going to get together and pray. Crickets. It's just, it's the way it goes, unfortunately.

As we finish out these last couple of verses, verse 44 really describes for us the caring that was happening organically in the early church. It says there in verse 44, *“And all who believed were together and had all things in common.”*

And yes, they were living communally. And by the way, that wasn't even, that wasn't necessarily something that God told them to do. He didn't tell them to live communally. They just did it. It happened organically but I still like the principle of the fact that they were together, that they were one body of Christ. They recognized their connection through Jesus.

And I don't think we have to all move into the same house to be together. I think we can be together in lots of other ways. And the togetherness is described in verse 45, where Luke says, *“And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds...”* among the body of Christ.

Whoever had need, if somebody was in need, then they would do that. And this was the church's early welfare program. There wasn't any sort of a program from Rome, to take care of people that way. If you were poor, you're poor. Sorry, you may die of starvation. That's life. Well, the church decided they needed to do something about that. And so they instituted this idea where we're going to share, we're going to have things in common and that's the way we're going to live.

But you know what? It wasn't just a handout to lazy people. They didn't just hand out food to people who said, I'm a Christian and I'm here cause I'm hungry. They actually had to establish requirements and put those in place when these things happen.

Let me show you from Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, his second letter. He says,

2 Thessalonians 3:10 (NIV84)

...even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat."

...even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat."

Wowzers, huh? Yeah, you might think, well, I don't think that's compassionate. Well, the early church didn't think it was compassionate to give handouts without responsibility. Because they realized that when you do that, all you end up doing is enabling people to be lazy and so they had rules. Well, yeah, we're going to share everything, but we're also going to have requirements that go along with this.

The life of the church was a place of compassion, but it was also a place of expectation. And that's important to see, they expected people to demonstrate their faith. Don't just tell me you've got faith, they expected people to demonstrate their faith. And that's okay. That's okay within the life of the church.

The very end of verse 47, if you look at..., this is the end of that. It's really the last sentence of the chapter. And it says, *"And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved."* And I like that. I like the fact that Luke told us there was growth in the church.

And the reason I like that is because that's what we should be doing.

When we're into the Word of God, I mean, when we're focused on the Word of God. When the life of the church is happening, and there's compassion, and caring, and giving, and loving, and forgiveness, it's going to grow. It's a sad thing to see a church that has stopped growing. It's a sad thing. And I think that there is a blueprint that is contained in these 6 verses, that when followed there's going to... Well, I'll just say this, it's going to keep the church moving forward and that's what the church needs to do. It needs to keep moving forward and I think this is the blueprint to do that.

And I want to end here this morning with a quote that I'll, in just a moment, I'll put it up on the screen, but it comes from a rather unlikely source. It comes from the Encyclopedia Britannica. You guys remember encyclopedias? I'm old enough to remember, when my parents bought their first encyclopedia set. And I don't remember if it was Britannica or World Book or whatever. There were a few of them, but they were either hundreds of dollars or more.

You can get on eBay and still buy a whole complete encyclopedia set and for those of you who are young, this is what we did before there was an internet. And before all this information was at your fingertips and I like the internet for that reason, I do.

I mean, I probably do more Google searches than all of you and I'm constantly looking up information and asking Google, to answer my questions. And I love that. I love that information is at my fingertips but it wasn't that way. There used to be encyclopedias, and they were heavy, and now people buy them to, like, weight down their bookshelf. They don't ever touch them.

Anyway, I got into all that. There is a quote from the Encyclopedia Britannica on the subject of church history that I thought was just really interesting that I wanted to share. And here's the reason I want to share it with you. They caught it. They caught the life of the church. We'll put this up on the screen. All right. It says this,

The most notable thing about the life of the early Christians was their vivid sense of being a people of God, called and set apart. The Christian Church in their thought was a divine, not a human, institution. It was founded and controlled by God. They regarded themselves as separate from the rest of the world and bound together by peculiar ties. Their citizenship was in heaven, not on earth, and the principles and laws by which they strove to govern themselves were from above. — **Encyclopedia Britannica - Church History**

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It goes on to say,

The present world was but temporary, and their true life was in the future. Christ was soon to return, and the...pleasures of this age were of small concern. In the everyday life of Christians the Holy Spirit was present, and the result of this was to give their lives a particularly enthusiastic and inspirational character. Theirs were not the everyday experiences of ordinary men, but of men lifted out of themselves and transported into a higher sphere.
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Isn't that good? Somebody, I don't know who wrote that, but somebody caught the life of the church.

Let's stand together. We're going to close in prayer, and as always, we'll make available some people down front here to pray with you if you have a need, because that's what the life of the church does, we pray for one another.

Now, you don't have to come down front to get prayed for. You might know somebody, or you might even not know somebody who's sitting next to you. You know what? You can even grab them and just say, hey, would you pray for me? Doing this or going through this or whatever you can, anybody can pray.

The reason we have people down here to pray is just to make them available. It's not because they're holier or better or even pray better than anybody else. It's just to make people available for you. But the body of Christ should be available, right? We should all be available to one another.

If somebody needs to pray, if you see somebody who's hurting, ask them, hey, can I pray with you? Can I just pray for you? That's the life of the body of Christ.

Father, thank you so much for the reminders that we have here at the end of the Book of Acts. Thank you Lord for the rich blessing of what it is to be the body of Christ.

And Father God, in the name of Jesus, I pray that you would do a work in the hearts of your people. That we would walk out the reality of the life that you intended for us to live as the people of God.

That we would live that life and we would experience that life, that fellowship, that devotion to the Word. That breaking of bread in our homes. The sharing and caring and the prayer.

Lord, bring the life of the church back into your church and let it start with us today.

We ask it in the name of Jesus Christ and all God's people said together, amen.
God bless you.

Have a good rest of your year.