



SESSION 5

WHAT SHOULD WE DO NOW?

▶ **The Point**

We do not live for ourselves; we serve God by serving others.

▶ **The Passage**

Acts 2:37-47

▶ **The Bible Meets Life**

Not long after moving into our home, a Christian neighbor appeared on our doorstep with a plate of cookies! She introduced herself and welcomed us to the neighborhood. It was an act of service that meant a lot to us at the time.

I had the opportunity to do something similar one Saturday. I joined several members of our church to cut lawns and trim bushes for a number of senior adults. It made a big difference to those we served, including one retired pastor who did not have the income to maintain his yard. It was a joy to see how we made a difference. The greatest thing we do in this life is to gain salvation through faith in Christ. As great as that is, though, God doesn't immediately take us up to heaven once we're saved. He leaves us here on earth for a purpose. We are saved to serve. As we serve others, we imitate Christ who served us and met our deepest need. Now it's our turn. We're up!

▶ **The Setting**

In the days following Jesus' ascension, 120 of His followers gathered daily in Jerusalem. They prayed and waited for the coming of the Holy Spirit whom Jesus had promised. On the day of Pentecost (fifty days after Passover) the Holy Spirit came in power and did miraculous signs through the believers. When a crowd wondered what was happening, Peter preached the good news of Christ and many people became believers. From that time the believers continued to grow in faith, develop community, and share the message of Christ with others.

What does the Bible say?

The fellowship (v. 42)—

The root of the Greek word *koinonia*, translated *fellowship*, means “common” and carries the idea of partnership, community, sharing, or connection. *Koinonia* pictures a unity among believers through Christ.

Breaking of bread (v. 42)—

This is likely the Lord’s Supper. The emphasis on breaking bread recalls Jesus’ action the night before His death when He shared bread (and wine) with His disciples.

Acts 2:37-47

³⁷ When they heard this, they were pierced to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles: “Brothers, what should we do?”

³⁸ Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

³⁹ For the promise is for you and for your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”

⁴⁰ With many other words he testified and strongly urged them, saying, “Be saved from this corrupt generation!”

⁴¹ So those who accepted his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand people were added to them.

⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer.

⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and signs were being performed through the apostles.

⁴⁴ Now all the believers were together and held all things in common.

⁴⁵ They sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as any had need.

⁴⁶ Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple, and broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with joyful and sincere hearts,

⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. Every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

GET INTO THE STUDY



5 minutes

Notes



DISCUSS: Question #1 on page 45 of the Personal Study Guide (PSG): **“What’s the most fun you’ve had serving others?”** Allow time for each person to respond.

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): In advance, enlist one person or two people (depending on the size of the group) to prepare and serve some light breakfast food at the beginning of the session. As people eat, thank the volunteer(s) for their ser-

vice and invite members to share ways they have been served by others.

GUIDE: Direct group members to **“The Bible Meets Life”** on page 46 of the PSG. Emphasize how we serve God as we serve others by reading or summarizing the text—or by encouraging group members to read it on their own.

GUIDE: Call attention to **“The Point”** on page 46 of the PSG: **“We do not live for ourselves; we serve God by serving others.”**

PRAY: Transition into the study by thanking the Lord for His example of service. Ask Him to provide insight to the group for service ideas and the courage to follow through with those ideas.

Dotted lines for taking notes.

Acts 2:37-41 Commentary

[Verse 37] Those who accept God's salvation through faith in Jesus Christ have been given the privilege of working with God to lead others to faith and growth in Christ. After the Holy Spirit was poured out on the believers on Pentecost, **Peter** and **the rest of the apostles** began testifying to the crowd about Jesus the Messiah. (See vv. 14-36.)

After hearing Peter's words, the people **were pierced to the heart**. The Jewish people had rejected the Messiah and allowed Him to be crucified. They recognized their wrong and asked, "**Brothers, what should we do?**"

[Verse 38] Peter told the crowd they must **repent**. While the literal meaning of the Greek word is changing the mind, repentance goes beyond just a change in one's thinking. The word gives the picture of changing direction—turning away from sin and turning toward God.

Next Peter called for them to **be baptized**, which means to be immersed in water. This is an outward action that symbolizes the inner change that has taken place when a person becomes a believer in Jesus. Peter said that the people in the crowd should be baptized **in the name of Jesus Christ**. The act of baptism symbolically identifies the person being baptized with the death, burial, and resurrection of the Messiah, Jesus. Furthermore, it is the public proclamation of a believer's faith in Christ and the action that identifies a believer with others who have accepted the salvation He offers.

Some people wrongly teach that baptism is essential for the salvation process because of Peter's words in this verse: **for the forgiveness of your sins**. However, neither Peter nor Paul (or any other New Testament writer) taught that baptism is essential for salvation. In fact, just a short time later (see Acts 3:19) Peter linked repentance with the forgiveness of sins without any mention of baptism.

Peter also promised that those who accepted the salvation of Jesus would receive **the gift of the Holy Spirit**. This refers to the Spirit's presence in a believer's life, which comes only through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

[Verse 39] Peter noted that God's **promise** of salvation was not only for the Jews who heard his words that day, it extended to their **children** (including future generations) and to **all who are far off**. This referred not only to Jewish people in other countries but also to the Gentiles.

[Verse 40] Peter continued to preach to the crowd that day. The apostle was persistent as he **testified and strongly urged** the people to accept God's salvation—to be different from others in their **corrupt generation**. *Corrupt* can also mean perverse or crooked. Jesus used similar words to describe those who did not believe Him or accept His message. (See Luke 9:41; 11:29.)

[Verse 41] An amazing thing happened as a result of God's call, the Spirit's conviction, and Peter's preaching. **About three thousand people** who heard the truth **accepted** Peter's message that day. They were **baptized** as a public testimony of their faith and were **added** to the small community of believers, which had previously numbered 120. (See Acts 1:15.)

Acts 2:42-45 Commentary

[Verses 42-43] Followers of Christ do not live for themselves. God designed His family, the church, so believers would support and help one another. The believers **devoted themselves** to the **apostles' teaching**, to the **fellowship** (shared beliefs and actions as members of God's family), to the **breaking of bread** (most likely the Lord's Supper), and to **prayer**. Luke noted that **everyone was filled with awe**. *Awe* refers to a deep respect (reverential fear) or sense of astonishment and amazement. It was probably most evident in the non-believing Jews in Jerusalem, especially as they witnessed the **many wonders and signs** God was doing on a regular basis. Typically the word *signs* highlights the purpose of the miracles—they are designed to call attention to God. The word *wonders* points to the impact of the things God did through His apostles—people were amazed.

[Verse 44] There was an incredible unity shared among **all the believers** in that early community of faith in Jerusalem. They **were together**. It is likely the believers regularly gathered together in groups for prayer, fellowship, and worship. Their gatherings could have been in houses, in the temple, or somewhere else, but since there were over three thousand believers at that time it seems unlikely they all gathered in the same place very often. By this time some of those who had traveled to Jerusalem for the Jewish festival (on Pentecost) may have returned to their homes outside Jerusalem. Other visitors, however, may have chosen to stay in the city for an extended period to continue learning and participating in the Jerusalem community of faith. Thus the local believers might have opened their homes and invited the visiting believers to stay with them.

The young community was typified by generosity. They **held all things in common**, meaning they shared the things they had. This may sound like a utopian concept of communal living whereby no one owns anything and everything is common property, but more likely, this reflected a sense of equality (regardless of economic status) and concern in the community that was demonstrated by meeting the needs of fellow believers.³

[Verse 45] Because the believers had experienced the radical love of Jesus to bring them into God's family, they expressed that love in radical ways within their believing community. Jesus noted that love for each other would be the way all people could identify His disciples. (See John 13:34-35.) The believers showed great love to each other in very practical ways. They **sold their possessions and property** and gave the money to those in need. There was no requirement or even expectation to do this. (See Acts 5:4.) The tense of the Greek verb translated *sold* indicates that this was not a one time action on the part of the believers. It was their continuing practice to sell their possessions and property as needs arose within the Christian community.

The early Christian community had some very poor members. At this time it could have included aged widows who could not work (such as those mentioned in Acts 6:1-6), as well as others who may have been out of work or did not have enough work (such as the believers from other areas who remained in Jerusalem after Pentecost). Regardless of their circumstances, the community took care of each other's needs.

Acts 2:46-47 Commentary

[Verse 46] Because of who God is and what He has done for humanity through Jesus Christ, believers should live to honor God and point people to Christ. This was certainly the way believers lived in the early Christian community in Jerusalem. **Every day** the disciples met **together in the temple**. The Greek word for *together* expresses a united purpose—they were single minded in living for God. Luke noted they were **devoted** to these meetings, which notes a diligent and continual action. The same term was used in verse 42 to describe the disciples' activities. Because these believers all came from a Jewish background, it was natural for them to attend one or two of the daily times of worship and prayer (every morning and afternoon) in the Jewish temple.

The believers' activities at the temple, however, included more than just praying. Because it was a place where many Jews would be gathered for worship, it was a natural location for the believers to witness about Jesus Christ. The believers wanted others to know the true identity of Jesus and to experience the salvation that only comes through faith in Him. On one particular occasion the apostles' preaching about Jesus in the temple drew the ire of the temple leaders and got them arrested. (See Acts 4:1-21.)

The believers not only prayed and witnessed together in the temple, but also ate and fellowshiped with each other in their homes. With the large number of disciples this obviously involved many houses. These small group gatherings included an ordinary meal in which **they ate their food** and probably a time of communion where they **broke bread**—shared the Lord's Supper. These gatherings were later referred to as "love feasts" (see Jude 12), and became a source of controversy in the church at Corinth, where the believers were neither unified nor concerned about each other.

Things were much different in the Jerusalem church, however. The believers had **joyful and sincere hearts**. While Luke used this phrase to describe the tone of their home fellowship gatherings, certainly it reflected their overall lives on an ongoing basis as well. The word *joyful* emphasizes gladness or delight. The sincerity Luke mentioned carries the idea of a group of people who were devoted to and focused on their Lord.

[Verse 47] The believers expressed their gratitude to God and gave thanks to Him for what He had done and what He was doing by **praising God**. This included not only glorifying Him for the salvation made possible for everyone through the death and resurrection of Jesus but also thanking Him for the joy, love, power, and witness they experienced through His Spirit working in them.

The lifestyles of the believing community gained the attention of others in Jerusalem. The believers had **the favor of all the people**. Rather than animosity, most ordinary, unbelieving Jews in the city (most likely excluding the Jewish religious leaders) held the believers in high regard.

As a result of what was happening in and through the believing community, **every day** more people were being **saved**—they accepted the forgiveness of sin and eternal life God offers through faith in Jesus. So day-by-day God added to His family.



5 minutes

LIVE IT OUT

GUIDE: Direct group members to page 52 of the PSG. Encourage them to choose one of the following ways to serve others this week.



Notes

Dotted lines for taking notes.

- ▶ **Serve others with a simple act.**
Being kind to others can be done through simple acts that don't cost a lot of money. Reach out to someone who needs a word of encouragement and perform an act of kindness.
- ▶ **Serve others by sharing the gospel.** Sharing the truth of the gospel is one way to serve others. Pray and look for an opportunity to share Christ with a friend, coworker, or family member.
- ▶ **Serve others by opening your home.** Talk to your church leaders about starting a new Bible study group in your home. A home group is a great way to include neighbors and coworkers.

Wrap It Up

TRANSITION: Read or restate the final paragraph from page 52 of the PSG:

God saves us *from* the penalty of sin, but He also saves us *for* something: to joyfully serve Him as we serve others. We're saved to serve. You're up!

PRAY: Conclude by praising Jesus for His model of service for us. Thank Him for the record He gave us of the early church's following in His footsteps. Ask Him for the wisdom and courage to continue on this path ourselves.



MINISTRY GRID
training made simple

Get expert insights on weekly studies through the Ministry Grid.

MinistryGrid.com/web/BibleStudiesForLife