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WHAT SHOULD WE DO NOW?



What's the most fun you've had serving others?

QUESTION #1

THE POINT

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



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!

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Acts 2:37-41

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.

If you feel ordinary, welcome to the club. But God has used ordinary people over and over again in the Bible to do great things. Take Peter as an example. Peter was just a fisherman known more for his brashness and his ability to put his foot in his mouth. Fairly ordinary. But we see a different Peter in Acts 2; he is almost unrecognizable from the man we saw in the Gospels. The man who was so intimidated he would not admit to a servant girl that he knew Jesus (see John 18:15-17), now boldly proclaimed Jesus Christ to thousands of people.

When the people asked, “What should we do?,” Peter was poised and ready with a call to action: “Repent and be baptized.” Peter was not saying we must do two things. Only one action is required: repentance.

“Repentance” in the Greek language literally means “after-mind” or “changed mind.” To repent is to change the way you think about your life and your behavior. It means to change your thinking, change your heart, and change the direction of your life. It is agreeing that God is right and we’ve been wrong. So Peter told his listeners to repent and reverse the course of their lives.

How did you initially respond when you heard the gospel?

QUESTION #2

But what about being baptized? The phrase that follows—“for the forgiveness of your sins”—sounds like we experience forgiveness as a result of baptism. But the little word that begins the phrase is the Greek word *eis*, which can be translated “for,” “because of,” or “on account of.” Peter was calling the crowd to be baptized *because* their sins had been forgiven.

That is exactly what three thousand people did that day. They responded to the message of Christ with repentance. And because they accepted Peter’s message, they were baptized.

Peter’s example should encourage us. One way we serve others is by sharing the gospel with them like Peter did. We serve them by telling them the truth—God’s truth—about His Son, Jesus. We don’t do others any lasting favors by simply befriending them or performing an act of service for them without coupling it with a verbal witness for Jesus. We want people to know the reason we serve them is because Jesus served us by dying in our place on the cross. We want to be ready to share the hope that is within us (see 1 Peter 3:15), so as we serve others we must speak up and tell them about our Savior, Jesus.

Acts 2:42-45

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.

As we serve others by sharing the gospel, we continue to serve them by helping them grow in their walk with Christ. I love the way the early church accomplished this: “They devoted themselves.” Luke, the writer of Acts, described four things in which they persevered.

- ▶ **The apostles’ teaching.** The apostles were now passing along Jesus’ teachings. The apostles followed Jesus’ command to teach “them to observe everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:20). We know they helped people see the connection between Old Testament prophecies and Jesus.

SERVING CHRIST BY SERVING OTHERS

Choose one of the following images of people serving that best represents a way you might serve Christ by serving others.



Describe other ways in which you've seen Christians serving Christ by serving others.

Ask God to show you more ways in which you might make a difference in our world through service to others. Make a conscious effort this week to embrace the new opportunity that God provides.

- ▶ **The fellowship.** The Greek word *koinonia* was used in a secular sense to describe the sharing of goods. It means to share something in common, and it likely refers here to the sharing of time and relationships between people. The key thing they shared in common was their faith in Jesus Christ.
- ▶ **The breaking of bread.** This could refer to a meal that individuals and families shared together, but it also may refer to sharing the Lord's Supper. These disciples enjoyed time together, and Jesus was the reason for their fellowship.
- ▶ **Prayer.** Spending time together also meant spending time talking to God in prayer with other believers. As these disciples used their fellowship opportunities in homes, they also spent time fellowshiping with the Lord in prayer.

Not only were the believers enjoying sweet fellowship, but the apostles were performing miracles that validated the message the apostles were proclaiming.

Then these early believers had a curious practice where they "held all things in common" (Acts 2:44). The wording of the original language suggests that the early Christians maintained ownership of their possessions, but regularly sold their possessions and distributed the proceeds to people who were in need. (See also 4:32–5:4.)

Acts 2:46-47

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.

What are the benefits of being part of a church family?

QUESTION #3

What are the responsibilities of being part of a church family?

QUESTION #4

In verse 46, we see a phrase repeated that was used in verse 42: “they devoted themselves.” Early Christians lived out their devotion to Christ and to each other in obvious ways, most notably in:

1. **The temple.** The temple was the center of activity in Jerusalem, where large crowds of people could be found. The temple was also a place where these young believers could interact with others and share their faith. Their faith in Christ was not something to hide. (See Matt. 5:15-16.)
2. **Their homes.** If the temple was the center for evangelism, homes were the center for fellowship. It was here that relationships flourished, as sounds of joy, laughter, music, and worship surely emanated from the homes of these early Christians.

People long for connections and a sense of community. They might achieve a certain level of that at work or with a few neighbors, but it lacks the love that comes when Christ binds the community together. When believers in a church freely share, fellowship, pray, and grow together, they display something no other group can: hearts changed by Jesus. When we live like that we draw others to know Christ.



What steps can we take to strengthen community in our group?

QUESTION #5

LIVE IT OUT

How is God leading you to serve others?

- ▶ **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.



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!

My thoughts