



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

The greatest thing in life is to gain salvation through faith in Christ. But if that's the greatest thing we can experience, why doesn't God simply take us to heaven as soon as we've received Christ? Jesus does more than just save us from sin; He saves us for something: the joy of serving Him. He calls us to serve Him by serving others. He saves us for His glory, and we glorify God when our service leads others to a deeper relationship with Him.

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 likely refers to 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 (CSB)

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



10 minutes

Notes



ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): Display the following items: tennis shoes, Bible, set of keys, paint brush, and a Vacation Bible School t-shirt. Invite your group members to identify what these items are used for. Allow time for discussion. Share that these everyday items become tools used for God’s glory when we serve others through VBS, missions, and more.

TIP: As the leader, position yourself opposite of the entrance to make it easier for latecomers to slip in with less distraction.

DISCUSS: Invite your group members to discuss **Question #1** on page 45 of the

PSG (Personal Study Guide): **“What’s the most fun you’ve had serving others?”**

SUMMARIZE THE PSG (PAGE 46): 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. Some time later, 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.

The greatest thing we do in this life is to gain salvation through faith in Christ. However, God doesn’t immediately take us up to heaven once we’re saved. He leaves us here on earth for a purpose.

SAY: “We are saved to serve. As we serve others, we imitate Christ who served us and met our deepest need.”

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 discussion with prayer.

PACK ITEM:
Pack Item #4
“Four Priorities” poster
PLAYLIST PICK:
“Make Us One”
By Jesus Culture

Acts 2:37-41 Commentary

Verse 37: After the Holy Spirit was poured out on the believers at Pentecost, Peter and the rest of the apostles began testifying to the crowd about Jesus the Messiah (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 or submerged in water. This is an outward action that symbolizes the inner change that has taken place when a person becomes a believer in Jesus Christ. Peter said that the people in the crowd should be baptized "in the name of Jesus Christ." The act of baptism symbolically identifies the individual being baptized with the death, burial, and resurrection of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. 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 (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.

Verses 39-40: 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 (Acts 2:21; Ephesians 2:13-17). In his preaching, Peter was persistent as he "testified and strongly urged" the people to accept God's salvation—to be different from others in their "corrupt generation."

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 (Acts 1:15).

Acts 2:42-45 Commentary

Verses 42-43: 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 source and purpose of the miracles—they are designed to call attention to God. The word "wonders" points to the impact of the miraculous 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.¹

Verse 45: The believers expressed love for each other in radical ways within their believing community. Jesus noted that love for each other would be the way all people could identify His disciples (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.

1. John B. Polhill, *Acts*, vol. 26 in *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 120–121.

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 the 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 (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 together and probably a time of communion where they broke bread—shared in the Lord’s Supper.

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 Christ but also thanking Him for the joy, love, power, witness, and so much more 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

Notes

Dotted lines for taking notes.

SAY: “How is God leading you to serve others?”

GUIDE: Lead group members to consider the responses to the Bible study listed on page 52 of the PSG.



- » **Dig deeper.** Read through Acts chapters 1–12 this week to gain an overview of the birth and growth of the early church. Note how God chose to work in and through these believers at Jerusalem.
- » **Step out of your current “friend zone.”** We can’t serve people we don’t know. This week, pay attention to those you regularly encounter in your daily routine of work, class, church, and free time. Make an effort to get to know them better.
- » **Serve together.** Identify a need in your church or community for which your Bible study group can collectively respond. Ask leaders in your church to help you identify a need and a way to respond.

Wrap It Up

SAY: “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!**”



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