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What Should We Do Now?



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

QUESTION 1

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 (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.

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. Peter was just a fisherman known more for his brashness and his ability to put his foot in his mouth. Pretty 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 (John 18:15-17), now boldly proclaimed Jesus Christ to thousands of people.

When the people asked, “What should we do?” (v. 37), Peter was poised and ready with a call to action: “Repent and be baptized” (v. 38). 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.

But what about being baptized? The phrase that follows—“for the forgiveness of your sins” (v. 38)—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.

How did you initially respond when you heard the gospel?

QUESTION 2

That is exactly what three thousand of the 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 people 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 (1 Peter 3:15), so as we serve others we must speak up and tell them about our Savior, Jesus.

Acts 2:42-45 (CSB)

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 people by sharing the gospel with them, 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" (v. 42). Luke, the writer of Acts, described four things in which they persevered.

- » **The apostles' teaching.** The apostles had learned from Jesus Himself; now they were passing along His teachings. No doubt they shared first-hand accounts of His acts and miracles during His three-year ministry. The apostles followed Jesus' command to teach "them to observe everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:20). We know they helped people see the connection between Old Testament prophecies and Jesus. The apostles guided people to see how Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament.
- » **The fellowship.** The word "fellowship" may sound churchy, but 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.

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

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

QUESTION 4

- » **The breaking of bread.** This could refer to a meal that individuals and families shared together, but it also may refer to their sharing the Lord's Supper. At any rate, these new 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 first-century 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' ministries were characterized by "many wonders and signs" so that "everyone was filled with awe" (v. 43). The performing of miracles echoed Jesus' ministry and validated the message the apostles were proclaiming.

Then these early believers had a curious practice where they "held all things in common" (v. 44). The Greek philosopher and mathematician Pythagoras had promoted a utopian view of community in the Greek culture six hundred years before Christ. This ideal view was for citizens to own possessions collectively and to share their resources so that no one was in need. But what the church did was different. 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 (CSB)

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.

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

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 (Matthew 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.

We also know that the early Christians continued these practices. Later in Acts 5:42, we learn: “Every day in the temple, and in various homes, they continued teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.”

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

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

QUESTION 5

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer."

ACTS 2:42

START WHERE YOU ARE



How is God calling you to serve Him by serving people in the following places?

Home

Church

Community

Work

LIVE IT OUT

How is God leading you to serve others?

- » **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.

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