

Explore the Bible: June 16

United • Acts 2:41-47

By Roland L. McMillan



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Obviously, this passage continues the story of the Jesus movement after Pentecost. The Holy Spirit empowered the church for worldwide mission on Pentecost. Peter preached and called for repentance. Around three thousand people started following Jesus. The normal pattern in Acts is for a new follower of Jesus to be immersed in Christian baptism, and that is what happened here. The new believers did not live in isolation but became part of a thriving community. Their fellowship included common meals and prayer. They supported one another financially when there was a need. They did not understand church as something that you may attend once a week. They knew

that the church was something that you are.

Our passage continues the story of Judaism. The early church was not a brand-new movement that materialized out of thin air. Instead, the church was growing out of Judaism. At this point, all of the early believers are Jewish. Peter's sermon earlier in Acts 2 was based on Jewish Scripture: Joel 2:28-32, Psalm 16:8-11, and Psalm 110:1. Peter's focus was how those passages apply to Jesus, the Jewish Messiah. Faith in the Messiah was what distinguished the first believers from other Jews. They were based in Jerusalem and following the Messiah to whom the Old Testament Scriptures pointed. They met in the temple courts. They prayed together. Instead of seeing themselves as starting a new religion, they were growing in continuity with God's master plan, the gospel. As Acts continues, later, the Spirit will lead the church to begin including Gentiles.

Acts 2:41-47 continues the story of Jesus. Acts 1:1 implies that the Jesus story is continuing in this book. As Acts develops, we see the story of Jesus continuing in the church. The apostles guarantee the authenticity of the facts about Jesus (Acts 1:21,22). Earlier in Acts 2, we see the story of Jesus continuing as the Holy Spirit empowered the church and in Peter's sermon. Jesus was the focus of Peter's sermon. Here, we see the apostles teaching and performing "wonders and signs" like Jesus did. The Lord's supper continues what Jesus started in the last supper. The "breaking of bread" (Acts 2:42) seems to echo the way Jesus took bread and broke it at the last supper (Luke 22:19). The regular taking of meals together in their homes continues the regular meals Jesus shared with the apostles (Acts 2:46).

One part of this passage that often raises questions is the description of the way they "had everything in common" (Acts 2:44). Is this communism? No. There is no government control because the actions described here are voluntary. People still had private property, which is implied by someone selling

property in response to a need (Acts 2:45). No land was redistributed. Communism is based in atheism, but this is Christian. This passage describes the early church living what Jesus described in Luke 12:33, where he encouraged people to sell possessions to help others in need. They were continuing to do what Jesus said to do. Many believers today are generous and follow the instruction of Jesus, mirroring the practice of the early church.

Acts 2:41-47 continues the story of the Jesus movement as the early Christians had been empowered by the Holy Spirit. The result was people becoming followers of Jesus on a daily basis (Acts 2:47). There is no magic formula for church growth or evangelism here. This is simply a description of what happened, and it reminds us of what the church can be. Today we continue the story of God's people down through the ages. We live in loyalty to Jesus, continuing his movement as his people. We live as people who have been empowered by the Holy Spirit for world mission. Our local churches can be communities where we share our lives, meals, prayers, and resources as we continue the teaching of the apostles, which of course came from Jesus himself.

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