



## First Baptist Church At The Villages

COMPANION TO SERMON "REDISCOVERING CHURCH" (8/2/2020) •

STUDY TITLE: THE BIRTH OF THE CHURCH • ACTS 2:36-47 •

FOR USE 8/2 THROUGH 8/8/2020

### MAIN POINT

Following Christ requires faithfully living in community with other believers and sacrificing your own preferences, opinions, and even your own needs for the good of others and the good of the church.

### INTRODUCTION

As your study time begins, use this section to focus your mind and heart on the topic of this study.

**What do you think healthy relationships look like?**

**What is the most healthy relationship you've seen or been a part of?**

**What were the elements that made that a healthy relationship?**

**Why do you think people are so confused about what healthy relationships look like?**

Relationships aren't easy—which is probably why so many of us stick to 'attending church' instead of truly belonging in community. Most of us 'good church people' exist in rows, but never move beyond that. But God wants more for us. God created and designed us to be in healthy relationships. The Greek term often used in the New Testament when talking about relationships in the church is "*oikos*", which means "family." Genuine, healthy, *oikos* relationships are required in order for you to fulfill all you're destined for.

### UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about this topic.

| READ ACTS 2:36-38, 41.

**How does Christian community begin in this passage?**

**What did the people do first?**

Christian community always begins with repentance—turning away from our sin and turning to trust in Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord. On the day of Pentecost, the day Peter preached this powerful sermon about Jesus, three thousand people came to faith.

**Consider your faith story. How did you come to know Jesus and become born again?**

**What hopes do you have for people coming to faith in The Villages and surrounding communities? How can your home and family be an 'outpost' of our church to help reach your friends, neighbors, and community?**

| READ ACTS 2:42-47.

Community begins with repentance—it begins with you joining the people of God, but that's not end of it. Community means belonging to the people of God. (*oikos* = family)

**What are some of the characteristics of the Christians in this passage?**

**Which are most surprising to you?**

**Which are most appealing?**

**Which characteristics are most discomfoting? Why?**

**How did these relationships affect and influence the community as a whole?**

## CONTEMPLATION & APPLICATION

Consider how the truths from the Scripture passage applies directly to your life.

Coming together in worship is important every Sunday, but real life—real community—real *oikos* happens when we are sharing the ups and downs of life with others. As we consider the purpose of community, let's talk about how we can grow together.

**Community is a place where people care for you. Who would you say cares about you? What do you most appreciate about those people?**

**Community is a place where you can be supportive of others and to be supported. Whom can you call when you need someone? How has having that person in your life positively affected your walk with Christ? How could you have a similar affect on others?**

**Community is a place where you belong. Do you feel like you belong, not just at our church, but in this group? What is one thing we can do as a group to help you?**

## PRAYER

Thank God for designing us to be in healthy relationships and for giving us the ability to be in relationship with Him and with other people. Pray that He would keep us focused on connecting with a community group of other Christ-followers... growing as a group, encouraging one another, caring for one another, sharing and doing life with one another. Pray that we would be a church that is known not for our events or Sunday mornings, but for our love for one another, and that because of that love, the gospel would spread throughout our community and beyond.

## COMMENTARY

| ACTS 2:36-38, 41-47

2:36. Peter addressed his words specifically to Jews (the house of Israel) and affirmed that Jesus whom they crucified was both "Lord and Messiah." By calling Jesus "Lord and Messiah," Peter was staking the biggest possible claims. "Lord" is reserved in the Greek translation of the OT (the Septuagint) for "God" (Yahweh). Thus Peter says Jesus is God. Peter further noted that Jesus was the Messiah (anointed one), Israel's hope for salvation.

2:37. Peter's audience came under deep conviction because they realized their guilt in the execution of Jesus, plus they were convinced by Peter's passionate eyewitness testimony and his description of how the events surrounding Jesus' death and resurrection fulfilled OT prophecies about the promised Messiah. This prompted them to ask the question that anyone hearing the gospel should ask, "Brothers, what must we do?"

2:38. Peter's answer indicates three major components in conversion. One must repent, which means turning from sin; be baptized in the name of Jesus to publicly declare our repentance and faith and symbolically identify us with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ; and have the Holy Spirit, given as a gift and seal of conversion, empowering the believer for the life of faith.

2:41. In response to Peter's preaching, Luke commented in an understated way that about 3,000 people were added to the community of believers. Note the close link between coming to faith and being baptized. There was apparently no delay between profession of faith and baptism. The large number of converts ("3,000") was made possible by the huge crowds who had traveled to Jerusalem from all over the Mediterranean region for the Passover celebration.

2:42. These four practices—"teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayers"—provide insight into the priorities of early Christianity. These same practices should be considered normative for the church today. The apostles' teaching was probably similar to Peter's message at Pentecost—it focused on making Christ known by appealing to eyewitness testimony and the prophecies of the OT. Early Christians gathered together regularly for edification, prayer, and exhortation. The "breaking of bread" probably included fellowship meals and participation in the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:17-34).

2:44-45. As part of their fellowship, the early church practiced a community of goods for a short time. Distribution to members of the faith community took place according to individual need. This practice did not last long, likely because it was logistically difficult and fraught with potential abuse.

2:47. The early church was an evangelizing church. Luke recounted that every day the Lord added to "those who were being saved." He did not say how this took place, but it appears that evangelism took place primarily through the gathering of Christians in the temple and in individual houses. The crucifixion and resurrection of Christ were at the heart of early Christian preaching, which called for immediate response from anyone who listened.