

December 2/3, 2023  
"Life in the Early Church"  
Pastor Aaron Buer



## SPEND DAILY TIME WITH GOD AS YOU READ, THINK, PRAY + ACT.

### 2023 SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

Intentional activities to deepen our relationship with God and mold us to be more like Jesus.

#### DECEMBER PRACTICE Celebration

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## Day 1 Acts 2:42-47 | Life in the Early Church

**And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.** Acts 2:47b

Following his resurrection, Jesus commissions his followers to make more followers (see [Matthew 28:16-20](#)). With the help of the Holy Spirit, this small band of Jesus's disciples grew—within a few months—from a fledgling few to a prospering community of several thousand. How did this happen? What was behind such staggering growth? The book of Acts records how the early church's growth was connected to their devotion to at least four things as a community: testifying, teaching, fellowship and meeting needs.

These ways of life were central to the early church and should also be for us. This week, we will consider each of these four commitments in turn. As these commitments were a significant part of the early church's health and growth—through the Holy Spirit's empowering work—they will also be a part of any vibrant local church's health and growth. As we begin this week, take some time to carefully consider each of these commitments and how God might desire to help you grow in one of these areas.

**IN YOUR CHAIR TIME TODAY** Begin this week with a prayer of openness, asking God to help you see and understand how he wants to work in your life through the truths and commitments we will be considering— testifying, teaching, fellowship and meeting needs. Aim to identify one this week that you will intentionally focus on and seek to grow in.

## Day 2 Acts 4:33 | Testifying

**With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.** Acts 4:33a

The early church showcases their faith in both word and deed. They love and care for one another through sacrificial service and generosity. And they also testify about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The life, teaching, and work of Jesus gripped the hearts of the apostles and early church, and now their words and deeds reflect what Jesus has done for them. The apostles' words reflect what Jesus has accomplished for them: "With great power, the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus" ([Acts 4:33](#)).

The apostles share the message of the resurrection because they believe what they spoke. They witness the resurrected Jesus and want others to know of the life found in his name. The question for us today is—are we as confident and ready to share this same message? Are we willing to testify of what Jesus has done? We will likely all have opportunities—possibly even this coming day or week—to share about Jesus and his resurrection with others. Are we ready to do so?

**IN YOUR CHAIR TIME TODAY** Consider if you are ready to share the Gospel with others. Join us for **SHARING YOUR FAITH** at the Kentwood Campus this Thursday night from 7-8:30 PM to learn tools to share. [Register here](#). If you can't attend the training, check out our similar study called "The Gospel and Your Story" on Right Now Media with your small group or a few friends. You can join our Ada Bible's Right Now Media at [app.rightnowmedia.org/join/adabiblechurch](http://app.rightnowmedia.org/join/adabiblechurch).

## Day 3 Acts 2:42 | Teaching

**They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.** Acts 2:42

The early church is devoted to the apostles' teaching. They listen intently and study the written Word. This teaching grounds the early church in what to think and how to live. Such teaching likely includes three primary components: what Jesus taught (like the

Sermon on the Mount), the Gospel (the good news of what Jesus has accomplished for us), and the message of Jesus in the Old Testament. This core content of the apostles' teaching shapes the early church and its commitments as a community.

In the same way, our lives should be grounded in the apostles' teaching. The apostles aren't living among us today, but their teachings are preserved in the Scriptures. The Bible has been handed down to us as the Word of God spoken through the apostles (and prophets). As the early church was devoted to the apostles' teaching, we should be as well—by reading, listening to, studying, memorizing, and obeying God's Word. Bible intake may look different for each of us, but such a commitment should play a central role in every believer's life. The Bible is God-breathed ([2 Timothy 3:16](#)) and profitable for all life and godliness ([2 Peter 1:3](#)).

**IN YOUR CHAIR TIME TODAY** Many Christians have a plan for Bible engagement each year. The New Year is quickly approaching! Consider a Bible reading plan for the year ahead. A great place to find reading plans is in the YouVersion Bible app. You can even invite friends to join you to read and discuss. Find a Bible-engagement plan appropriate for you and your season to help you more fully mine the riches of God's Word.

## Day 4 Acts 2:46-47 | Fellowship

**Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts.** Acts 2:46

The early church is devoted to *koinonia*—a Greek term referring to shared life. The early church recognizes that following Jesus is not a solo sport or an isolated mission. When people follow Jesus, they join a team—a growing band of brothers and sisters devoted to Jesus, his teaching, and his community. Admittedly, the early church was not always harmonious and faced conflicts. (Read the book of [1 Corinthians](#), for instance). The early church struggled with issues just like we do today. But the early church demonstrates health through their devotion to teaching, learning, and sharing life in community.

It is challenging to do life with many people at once. We can only know a handful of people at a deep level in any given season of life. This is one reason why committing to a small group is so critical. We can be known in small groups and pursue God with others who want to do this too. We can find the fellowship described in the early church—a rhythm of sharing life with glad and sincere hearts.

**IN YOUR CHAIR TIME TODAY** If you are not in a small group, now would be a great time to consider joining one. New small groups start in the new year. We have groups for couples, singles 35+, men, women and young adults. We also have groups to work on your finances or discuss our sermon series in January. Find a group for you at [adabible.org/joinagroup](http://adabible.org/joinagroup). If you are in a small group, how can you more fully share life with those God has entrusted to your circle? Prayerfully consider this and seek to take at least one action step in the coming weeks.

## Day 5 Acts 4:32-35 | Meeting Needs

**With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.** Acts 4:33-35

The early church share their lives—and, in many cases, this means that they also share their stuff. Those who were financially able to do so sold their belongings to meet the needs of the early church. And because of the radical generosity of the early church, there are no needy people among them. The sacrificial love of Jesus so transforms their lives that they, in turn, sacrificially give of themselves and their stuff for the benefit and blessing of those in their community.

The attractiveness of the early church is closely connected to this sharing of life and possessions. Those on the outside witness the extravagant love that marked the lifestyles of these early saints. It should be for us as well. We should be known and recognized for our good deeds. When we take care of each other—and even those outside the church—it becomes a powerful testimony of the transforming power of Christ. Maybe it's making meals for a small group member undergoing medical treatment. Perhaps it's shoveling snow for an elderly neighbor. Or possibly it's providing transportation for a fellow church member facing unemployment or financial strain. There are tangible ways to share time, skills, and possessions for God's honor and the benefit of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

**IN YOUR CHAIR TIME TODAY** Spend some time considering what you have that could benefit others. Maybe it's time. Or maybe it's wisdom or expertise. Or maybe it's even money. Whatever it is, consider what you are blessed with and how you have been blessed to be a blessing.