



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V28 N6 February 8, 2026

POWER AND PURPOSE

“A Spirit-Formed Community”

Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-37

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Biblical Community

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, in others' lives, and in the world.

“All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 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, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

Acts 2:42-47



Q?

What did biblical community look like at first?

Some animals are social; some are solitary. Among the most solitary are bears, rhinos, leopards, koalas, and wolverines. Wolverines are very strange and solitary mammals. They not only prefer to live alone, they always try to rid their surroundings of every other animal. They are known to seize large areas of land for themselves. No wonder they choose to live in the vast forests of Alaska and Canada. Among the most social, with what might even be called strong family ties, are elephants, wolves, prairie dogs (America's meerkats), chimpanzees, and orcas. Orcas form extremely strong bonds and rarely separate for longer than a few hours. Offspring may even live with their parents for their entire lives. It is said that orcas are very smart, with great ability to work together and an amazing instinct to protect the members of their community.

People are more like orcas than wolverines, albeit a few have the disposition of the latter. People are undoubtedly divinely wired for community — lone rangers and hermits notwithstanding. When we think of famous recluses, the story of Howard Hughes is often the first that comes to mind. In 1947, the eccentric aviation genius and movie producer locked himself in a screening room for four months eating chocolate bars and drinking milk while living in his own filth. His lifestyle wouldn't get any less strange over the next several decades. That lifestyle may have worked for Howard, but it doesn't even occur to the vast majority of others because one aspect of the image of God in mankind is community. One theologian writes: “It is not surprising that ultimately the image of God should focus on community. As the doctrine of the Trinity asserts, throughout all eternity God is community, namely, the fellowship of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who comprise the triune God. The of creation of humankind

in the divine image, therefore, can mean nothing less than that humans express the relational dynamic of the God whose representation we are called to be. Consequently, each person can be related to the image of God only within the context of life in community with others. Only in fellowship with others can we show forth what God is like, for God is the community of love — the eternal relationship enjoyed by the Father and the Son, which is the Holy Spirit” (Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 179).

Given our nature as human beings, it's not surprising that spiritual transformation should take place in the context of community. One author writes: “The fire of God kindles higher as the brands are heaped together and each is warmed by the other's flame. The members of the body must be in *contact* if they are to sustain and be sustained by each other. Christian redemption is not devised to be a solitary thing, though each individual of course has a unique and direct relationship with God, and God alone is his or her Lord and Judge. But The Life is one that requires some regular and profound conjunction with others who share it. It is greatly diminished when that is lacking” (Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 187-88). In other words, God transforms us through our relationships with other Christians. Think spiritual gifts — which are abilities that are given “for building up the body of Christ” (Eph 4:12). Therefore, every one of us needs frequent, meaningful contact with other members of the body of Christ in order to mature — put differently, in order to *form* (Gal 4:19), *conform* (Ro 8:29), and *transform* (Ro 12:2) us into the likeness of Christ. Otherwise we run the risk of growing spiritually cold, apathetic, and stagnant.

Read Acts 2:42-47

42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. 44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. (ESV)

Read Acts 4:32-37 also

32 Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. 33 And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. 34 There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold 35 and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. 36 Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, 37 sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet. (ESV)

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

In Acts 2:42-47

- Circle "they" in v. 42.
- Underline "devoted themselves" in v. 42.
- Circle "every soul," "all who believed," "they," and "their" in vv. 42-47.
- Box "to" in v. 42.
- Underline "the apostles' teaching" in v. 42.
- Underline "the fellowship" in v. 42.
- Underline "the breaking of bread" in v. 42.
- Underline "the prayers" in v. 42.
- Circle "wonders and signs" in v. 43.
- Circle "were together, in v. 44.
- Circle "in common" in v. 44.

In Acts 4:32-37

- Bracket "of one heart and soul" in v. 32.
- Underline "his own" in v. 32.
- Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 32.
- Underline "had everything in common" in v. 32.
- Circle "great grace" in v. 33.
- Box "for" indicating *reason* in v. 34.
- Circle "owners" and "belonged to him" in v. 34 and v. 37 respectively.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

ACTS 2:42-47

1. To whom does “they” (v. 42) refer?
2. Explain how devotion to the apostles’ teaching is possible today since the apostles are no longer with us.
3. The practice of “the fellowship” (*koinōnia*) in verse 42, explain it and its importance (cf. v. 44).
4. Describe the practice to which “the breaking of bread” refers.
5. From the context surrounding verse 44, explain the meaning of “had all things in common.” (You might want to consider 4:32-5:4 as well.)

Acts 4:32-37

6. Describe being “one in heart and mind” and what you think caused it.
 7. The apostles were testifying “to the resurrection.” Why “the resurrection” in particular? (See Ac 2:29-36.)
 8. What makes you think the generosity of the early church was voluntary . . . or not?
 9. People who sold property didn’t *literally* put the proceeds at the apostles’ feet, did they? Explain.
 10. Joseph, whom the apostles called “Barnabas,” lived up to his name. How so?
 11. **Discussion:** The generosity of the early church was remarkable. Talk about its significance for today.
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Commentary On The Text

In his synopsis of Acts 2:42-47, one commentator writes: “This passage summarizes the life of the community both internally (v. 42) and with those outside (vv. 43-47). The early believers hold their possessions in common and also go to the temple, reflecting their embrace of the Messiah. This messianic faith has not caused them to separate from Jewish practice and worship. Their interaction and engagement with those outside has sparked even more growth. In Acts we never see a community turned so inward that taking the message to those outside and engaging with those outside is forgotten or ignored” (Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 149).

Acts 2:42-47 (cf., 4:32-35) describes a kind of involvement and sharing with others that caught the eye and enjoyed the esteem of unbelievers then as well as now. Perhaps it was sparked by the unusual number of Jews in Jerusalem to celebrate Passover, who remained in the city after coming to faith in response to the preaching of Peter (Ac 3:14-41) and leaned on the fellowship of the locals for their needs but continued long after they departed for home. Unfortunately, it’s too rarely seen today. It was a way of life devoted to the teaching of the apostles and lively participation in Christian community, which included but went far beyond observing communion and praying together. All the believers agreed that they were stewards rather than owners of their belongings, and they also agreed as stewards to use what was entrusted to them for the common good. As a result “there were no needy persons among them” (4:34). Moreover, they did more than see each other once a week at church; they walked around in each other’s lives on a daily basis, as evidenced by the fact that they frequently ate together in each other’s homes. The fact that their devotion was spontaneous, prompted only by the Spirit (4:31b) rather than in response to an apostolic campaign to “get them connected to community,” makes it even more remarkable and suggests that this type of behavior should be considered normative for today. As another commentator writes: “It was an ideal, almost blissful time marked by the joy of their life together and the warmth of the Spirit’s presence among them” (John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 122).

The general description of early Christians’ sharing and the specific description of Barnabas’ exemplary generosity found in Acts 4:32-37 is closely tied to the previous description of Christian *koinonia*, i.e., fellowship, in 2:42-47. Here Luke provides his readers with another glimpse into the life of the Jerusalem church. What he had described in general terms in 2:42-47, he describes again in more specific terms in 4:32-37 by

providing an outstanding example of someone who actually sold a piece of property and brought the proceeds to the apostles to be distributed to the poor. Verses 32-33 describe the unique unity “in heart and mind” that marked the congregation. Verses 34-35 describe the unique generosity that accompanied that unity. And verses 36-37 describe a concrete example of that unique generosity.

On the opening verses, one commentator writes: “The opening two verses are almost identical with 2:43-44, only in reverse order. Together they characterize the community life as marked by four things: their unity in mind and heart (v. 32a), their sharing of their possessions (v. 32b), the power and witness of the apostles (v. 33a), and the grace of God, which rested upon them (v. 33b). The overarching concept was their unity, their being ‘one in heart and mind,’ their fellowship in the Spirit (cf. *koinōnia* in 2:42). This served as the basis of their sharing of their possessions” (Polhill, 151).

In verses 34-35, Luke reports that “there was not a needy person among them” (v. 34a) and then explains why (vv. 34b-35). One commentator observes: “All of these descriptions of the mutual care within the community are presented positively by Luke. These acts evidence the community’s piety and mutual commitment to God and one another. It is a sign that they see each other as family or friends, worthy of compassionate care” (Bock, 215). This idyllic situation existed because people with investments liquidated them and brought the proceeds to the apostles to distribute to those in need. The tenses of the verbs in Greek indicate they did not do this all at one time; it was a continuing practice. So “from time to time” (NIV) as the need arises, individuals step up to meet the needs by liquidating some of their assets. How long did this specific practice continue—for it could not continue indefinitely? Perhaps until the persecution and scattering of the church in Jerusalem (8:1-3).

In verses 36-37 Luke introduces his readers to Barnabas, who will be mentioned twenty-two more times in the book of Acts, and tells them about his unique example of generosity. He lives up to his nickname, which means “son of encouragement,” by selling a piece of property and giving the money to the apostles to distribute to those in need. This encourager, whom Luke later calls “a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith” (11:24), is “surely a man of rare quality, a community builder, able to promote and sustain warm and constructive personal relations” (James D. G. Dunn, *Acts*, 60) whose generosity is worth imitating.

Word Studies/Notes

Acts 2:42-47

v. 42 *they* The pronouns throughout refer to the apostles, the 120 believers mentioned in Acts 1:15, and the 3,000 or so that were added to their number on the day of Pentecost (2:41).

v. 42 *devoted themselves* Cf., “continued steadfastly” (NKJV). “The expression ‘devoting themselves’ has the idea of *persistence* or *persevering* in something (BDAG 881 §2; EDNT 3:172; Barrett 119:162). The imperfect periphrastic construction speaks of the *ongoing devotion* that they have” (Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 149, italics added). Some take it that there were four expressions of the believers’ communal way of life; others take it there were only two. On the one hand, the latter argue “the breaking of bread” and “prayer” should be taken in apposition to “fellowship,” i.e., as aspects of fellowship (see discussion in John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 119). On the other, each of the four acts are preceded by articles: “the” teaching, “the” fellowship, “the” breaking of bread, and “the” prayers. Practically speaking it makes little difference.

v. 42 *apostles’ teaching* Cf. Mt 28:19-20. “Just as the apostles had been instructed by Jesus, so they passed along that instruction to the new Christians. In keeping with Jesus’ teaching to them (chap. 1), this would have included such subjects as his resurrection, the Old Testament Scriptures, the Christian witness, and surely their own reminiscences of Jesus’ earthly ministry and teachings” (Polhill, 119).

v. 42 *the fellowship* The Greek term has a more profound sense than is generally conveyed by the English word “fellowship,” which to many denotes occasional get-togethers with friends. In the immediate context it refers to a kind of life together that entails sharing to meet the needs of others and might be translated “community.”

v. 42 *the breaking of bread* “The ‘breaking of bread’ is a term that here probably included the Lord’s Supper as well as eating a meal together (cf. v. 46; 20:7; 1 Cor. 10:16; 11:23-25; Jude 12). Elsewhere the phrase describes both an ordinary meal (Luke 24:30, 35; Acts 20:11; 27:35) and the Lord’s Supper (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 10:16; 11:24). Probably these early Christians ate together and as part of the meal, or after it, used their common food, bread and wine, to commemorate Christ’s death” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Acts,” 2019 ed., 65, planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/acts.pdf).

v. 42 *the prayers* “The presence of the article in the Greek text before prayers has led some

interpreters to see this as a reference to their keeping the formal prayer hours of Judaism in the temple . . . The reference, however, is probably much broader and involves primarily their sharing in prayer together in their private worship” (Polhill, 119-20); cf., 3:24.

v. 43 *wonders and signs* “The apostles’ message—regarding the resurrection—was ‘accredited’ by signs and wonders as Jesus’ message had been (see 2:22). Wonders are ‘miracles evoking awe’ and signs are ‘miracles pointing to a divine truth’” (Stanley Toussaint, “Acts,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 360).

v. 44 *were together* Not so much a reference to them being together in one place as to them being “one in mind and heart” (see 4:32).

v. 44 *in common* A form of the same word translated “fellowship” in verse 42 reflecting their communal way of life, which was not a form of Christian communism in that they voluntarily shared what belonged to them (see 5:4).

Acts 4:32-37

v. 32 *one heart and soul* “Luke liked to emphasize the unanimity of mind and purpose of the first believers (see 1.14 and similar emphasis of the earlier summary account in 2:46). Looking back, he saw the sort of spirit which Paul encouraged among his churches (1 Cor. 10:24, 33; 13:5; Phil 2.4) to have been literally lived out in the first church” (James D. G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 59).

v. 32 *his own* “‘No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own.’ The picture is one of unqualified sharing, of not claiming owner’s rights, of saying ‘what’s mine is yours’” (Polhill, 151).

v. 32 *in common* “This sharing of possessions shows how ‘connected’ their mutual participation is. It extends even down to possessions, as verse 34 explains in more detail . . . The point is that many are voluntarily giving over a great deal of their possessions for the use of all. The result is that community members’ needs are met” (Bock, 214).

v. 33 *great grace* “The ‘abundant grace’ that rested upon these Christians was the divine enablement that God granted them to speak and to live as they did” (Constable, 125).

vv. 34, 37 *owners, belonged to* “Repeated attempts have been made to see this as an early Christian experiment in community ownership . . . [Barnabas’] sale of property would hardly be a sterling example if surrender of property were obligatory.” (Polhill, 153).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THIS PASSAGE

The Christian life involves a commitment to biblical community
marked by Spirit-inspired generosity.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



PARENT CONNECTION

When my son was in elementary school he loved every part of church on Wednesday night – the greatest snacks, adult leaders that made being a Christian cool, solid teaching right on his level, all kinds of games and just hanging out with his people. He couldn't wait to get to church and loved to invite everyone he knew. Arriving at church on Wednesday, we would look like a clown car with kid after kid tumbling out of the backseat, only a few of them mine. In junior high he quit the basketball team because games were on Wednesday nights. In high school and college, he cleared his calendar and began to get involved by serving on the media team or playing an instrument for midweek worship. Wednesday nights set the bar for biblical community for him, and some of his best friends are people he grew up with on Wednesdays. There is something special and unique that happens when believers gather together to learn more about Jesus and worship Him. Being part of midweek programming is just different. You'll grow your network of Christian friends by participating in a Bible study or prayer group that will only strengthen your faith. Your kids will meet friends and spiritually grow with them for years to come. Their knowledge of Christ will expand and they'll experience heart change through the work of the Holy Spirit in their community. I know you're tired. I know your schedule is full. I know you want the kids in bed early. But would you be willing to give midweek programming a try? It's worth the sacrifice. We're praying for you!

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Acts 2:42-47.

1. What 4 practices did the new believers devote themselves to?
2. What came upon every soul?
3. What were believers selling and why?

What Do You Think?

Why was it important for believers to attend the temple together?

What Do You Do?

With your family or home group, host a worship night. Spend time praising God in worship for all He has done for you

CORE COMPETENCY: Biblical Community
I spend time with other Christians to help with His work.

MEMORY VERSE: 1 John 4:7

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God."

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRAL Kids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- ☐ I completed my Bible Study
- ☐ I memorized this week's verse
- ☐ I brought my Bible to church
- ☐ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)
I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)
I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)
I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)
I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)
I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)
I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)
I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)
I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)
I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)
I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)
I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)
I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)
I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)
I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)
I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)
I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)
I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)
I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)
I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)
I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)
I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)
I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)
I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)
I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)
I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)
I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)
I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)
I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)
I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have five children: Elijah, Levi, Bo, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

The Scrolls Bible Study is a spiritual growth resource of Central Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

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**CENTRAL
BIBLE CHURCH**

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OUR MISSION
Making God known by making disciples who are changed by God to change their world.