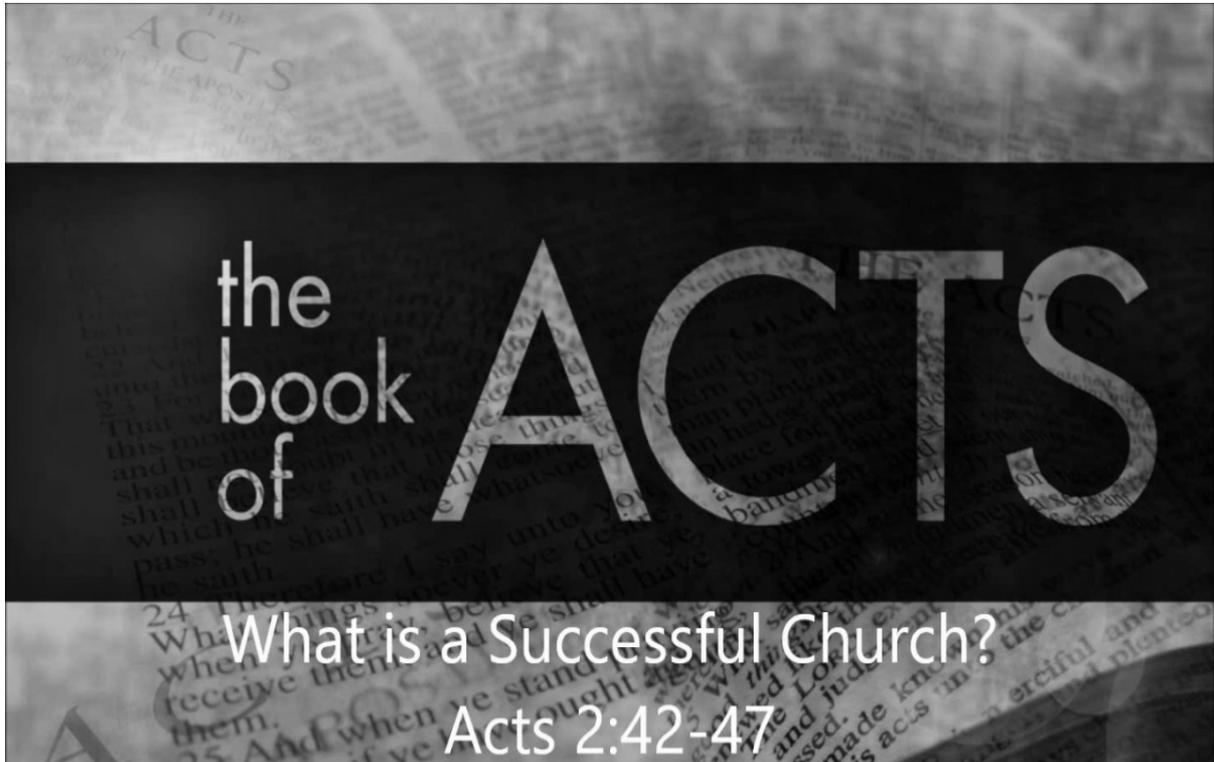


Bible Study Session 5: The Book of Acts



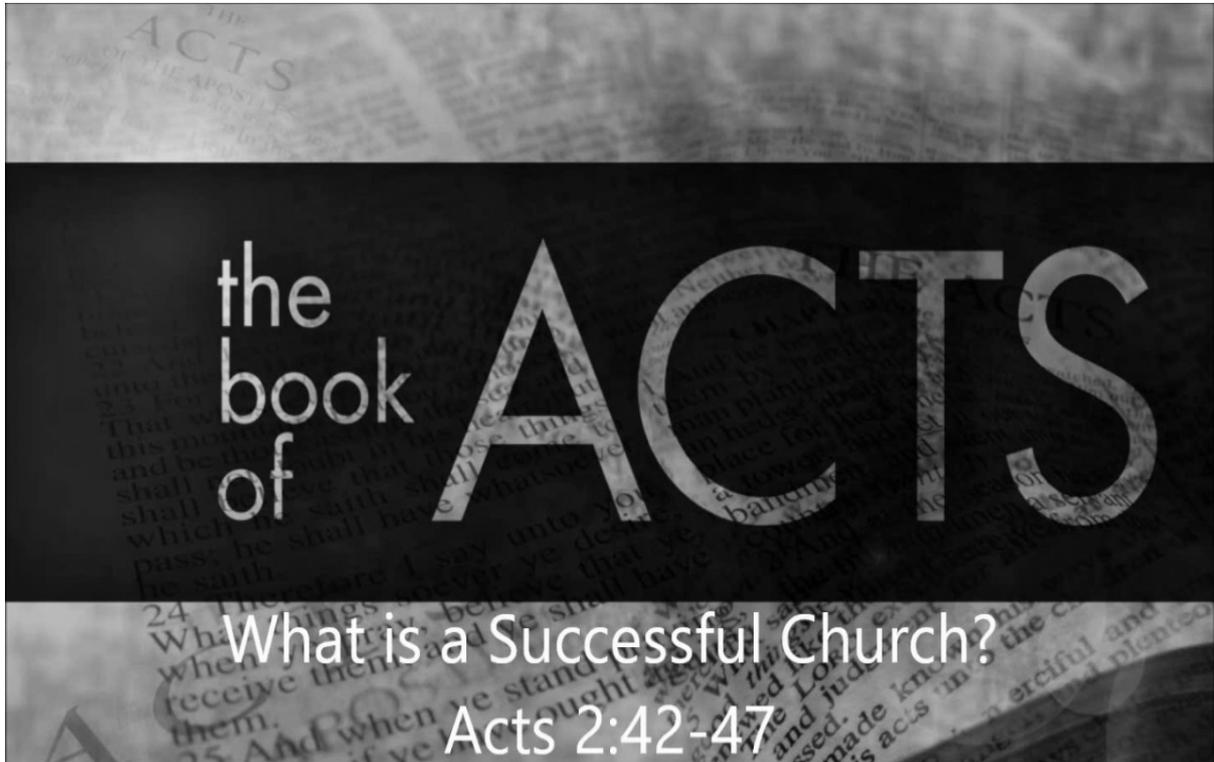
Read Acts 2:42-47 and answer the questions that follow

1. This short passage plays a vital role in the Book of Acts as well as in our faith. Why is this text so important?
2. What is the basis for the unity of the people?
3. Explain the difference (if there is, in your opinion, a difference) between the terms "breaking of bread" in v.42 and "breaking bread" in v.46. What does this signify for us?

4. Vv.44-45 is said to be an early example of communism. How do we understand these 2 verses?
5. Vv.44-45 gives us insight into the fulfilment of 2 cultural ideals. Can you identify these ideals and where they may come from?
6. V.47 says, "And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." Why is this important in terms of our faith?
7. There are 6 devotions that appear throughout chapter 2 but all 6 are also seen in 2:42-47. Can you identify them and explain each one?

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Session 5 Answers



Read Acts 2:42-47 and answer the questions that follow

1. This short passage plays a vital role in the Book of Acts as well as in our faith. Why is this text so important?

- This short passage is vital not only for the Book of Acts and the rest of the Bible, but for our own faith. This is the first glimpse we have of what the early church was like. It gives us insight into some very important characteristics of the early church like how the church functioned and aspects of true fellowship. I think that this is important because it gives us a means by which we can possibly measure the way we “do” church.

2. What is the basis for the unity of the people?

- The basis for the unity of this group of people is seen specifically in v.42. They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles, fellowship, breaking of bread and to prayer. This is important because these four aspects form the basis for life within the church and thus connects them/unifies them under one common interest. Of course we should note that they were not simply teaching their own ideas or ideals but their teachings were those that Christ had taught them, uniting them in Christ.

3. Explain the difference (if there is, in your opinion, a difference) between the terms “breaking of bread” in v.42 and “breaking bread” in v.46. What does this signify for us?

- I would suggest that there is a difference between the two. V.42 describes the aspects of the church, how the church functions and aspects of fellowship. The “breaking of bread” in v.42 then, specifically refers to the Lord’s supper/communion. I would suggest that the “breaking bread” in v.46 refers rather to the aspect of sharing in a communal meal which would be in line with the characteristics of the early church (v.44 – they had everything in common.)

4. Vv.44-45 is said to be an early example of communism. How do we understand these 2 verses?

- The definition of communism is, *“a theory or system of social organization in which all property is owned by the community and each person contributes and receives according to their ability and needs.”* What is interesting is that this is generally a forced issue; however, vv.44-45 are not an example of this. It is apparent that people sold their possessions and their goods and then gave the proceeds to the needy but this was not forced. Those who had possessions and goods to sell did so out of their own free will, out of generosity. We also know, from later chapters in Acts, that people were still entitled to own land and possessions and thus communism does not feature in this situation.

5. Vv.44-45 gives us insight into the fulfilment of 2 cultural ideals. Can you identify these ideals and where they may come from?

- The two cultural ideals are found in the Hellenistic (Greek) and Judaistic cultures. What is interesting is that the way in which the people respond to the apostles' teaching (vv.44-45) is in line with the Hellenistic ideal of a utopia and a Judaistic ideal of the Jubilee. The idea of the fulfilment of the Jubilee is seen in Deut 15:4, "*However, there should be no poor among you, for in the land the Lord your God is giving you to possess as your inheritance, He will richly bless you*". Though their response to the apostles' teachings is not based upon these two ideals, it does fall in line with these two 1st Century cultural ideals.

6. V.47 says, "And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." Why is this important in terms of our faith?

- This is important because it shows us that it is not up to us as to who is saved or "added to their number". We know from previous Bible studies that in order for us to come to the Lord, it requires a change of heart and through that, we are able to respond to Him. But we also know that it is only God who can change the heart of a non-believer and renew the heart of a believer. Thus, in us responding to God's call on our lives in spreading the gospel, we can "sow the seeds" but it is only God who can cultivate that seed allowing it to bear fruit. This is a beautiful thought because it is clear that we can fully rely on God in our faith rather than relying on ourselves.

7. There are 6 devotions that appear throughout chapter 2 but all 6 are also seen in 2:42-47. Can you identify them and explain each one?

- These 6 devotions from Acts 2 are unique in the sense that this gives us insight into, what I suggest, are the foundational aspects of what the early church was like.

- *Teaching* – We know that the apostles were with Jesus and that they spent time listening to His teachings. I think that it is safe to assume that what they were now teaching was in line with those same teachings, if not exactly, what Jesus taught.
- *Fellowship* – We see from this short passage that fellowship (true fellowship) was central to the life of the church. The members of the early church “had everything in common” meaning that those members all had a deep sense of community and a willingness to support each other, both physically and spiritually.
- *Hospitality* – This is an interesting aspect to church community in that hospitality does not refer only to bettering physical conditions of the community but it refers more too how we address the spiritual and emotional needs of the community. This devotion looks at how we understand and address the humanity of people.
- *Prayer* – Prayer is one of the most important aspects of any Christian’s faith, but in the context of the church community, I believe that communal prayer is vital in church life. Prayer of course enables us, as individuals, to bring personal petitions to God but communal prayer enables us to bring petitions for others and ourselves to the Lord. Matthew 18:20, “*For where two or three come together in my name, there I am with them.*”
- *Generosity* - This touches again on the previous devotions in that again, whatever people had to share, they did, not out of force, but out of a sense of *hospitality* and *fellowship*. Generosity generally refers to physical aspects of church community as we seek to better the physical conditions of the community.
- *Repentance* – This devotion is key to how we, as individuals and as a community, respond to God’s call on our lives. Repentance is more than simply saying sorry but it is the acknowledgement of sin and sincere response to this.

- There are of course other aspects that fit into these 6 devotions but without these, I don't believe that the church could true be a Christ centred community focused on Him and His teachings.