

The Loving Church

Acts 2:41-47

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So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.

Acts 2:41-47, cont.

And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Love in the Bible

- **“You should love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev. 19:19).**
- **“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love” (John 15:9).**
- **“God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us” (Rom. 5:5).**
- **“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal. 5:22-23).**

Love: a change of heart

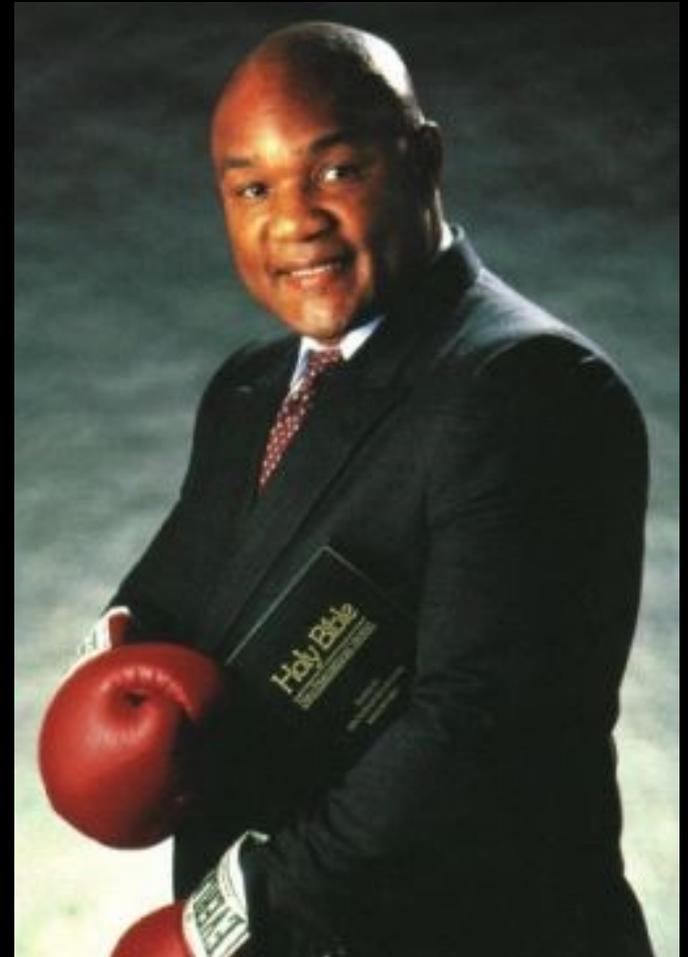
- **“They devoted themselves...” (Acts 2:42)**
- **They loved the Word of God**
- **They loved one another**
- **They loved worship**
- **They loved prayer**

1. They loved the Word of God

- **“Those who received his word” – “receive” means to “embrace” or to “receive heartily”**
- **“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching.**
- **“Then he said to them, ‘These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.’ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures” (Luke 24:44-45).**

George Foreman

“I thought I’d get power simply from owning it; I didn’t realize that I needed to read it and believe what it says. Since then, I’ve come to understand that the Bible is my road map, not my good luck charm.” (from *God in My Corner*, by George Foreman)



What the Bible does to our Hearts

- “These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31).
- “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31-32).
- “If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you” (John 15:7).

2. They loved one another

- “They devoted themselves to ... the fellowship.” *Koinonia* in Greek.
- *Koinonia* pictures a common sharing by all in the life of the church:
 - Equal status within the group – equal respect
 - Equal access to the life of the group – equal rights
 - Equal responsibility to uphold the group

Radical Love

- **This love was strong, radical love: “And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need” (Acts 2:44-45).**
- **And later among the Gentiles, it became taken advantage of by unscrupulous and dishonest people. Paul had to say, “If a man will not work, he will not eat” (2 Thess. 3:10).**

How to love like Christ

- **Make Christians your best friends.**
- **Listen to one another. Hear each other's stories. Talk less. Listen more.**
- **Slow down. Don't always be in a hurry.**
- **Include the stranger. Get to know someone who is not like all of your other friends. "The Lord added to their number daily..."**
- **Encourage one another. Help one another. Love the lost world.**

3. They loved common worship

- **“To the breaking of bread”**
- **“Love feasts” (Jude 1:12)**
- **We call it the Lord’s Supper. In 1 Cor. 11:20, Paul wrote, “Is it not the Lord’s Supper you eat?”**
- **Worship became a community experience, not a performance by a few for the enjoyment or entertainment of many. It was communal and shared with one another.**

Meaningful Worship

- **Worship centers our souls. Without a center there can be no circumference.**
- **Personal or corporate or both?**
- **“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near” (Hebrews 10:24-25).**

4. They loved prayer

- “They devoted themselves to ... prayers” – the plural meant different kinds of prayers, not just the rote repetition of the Lord’s Prayer. But regular times of prayer.
- Prayer reveals two great things about us, that are indicative of God’s work in us:
 - Our faith in God
 - Our compassion for others

Basic Rules of Community

- **His Truth, His People, His Worship, His Help**
- **People go where they are celebrated, not where they are tolerated.**
- **Christians go where Christ is celebrated, not where He is tolerated.**
- **Church should be a place and produce an atmosphere where both of these happen.**