

**Study Notes: Acts 2:42**  
**July 24, 2022: “A Picture of Who We Are (And Who We Want to Be)”**  
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**Background/Context:** Acts 2:42 begins a brief summary of life in the early church that is found in Acts 2:42-47. This “snapshot” of what the church was like was taken soon after the day of Pentecost; it highlights some of the key activities that helped form the early church and still remain important for the church today. By engaging in these activities, the church allowed for the Holy Spirit to work and continue to grow and thrive. The rest of the book of Acts includes other events and snapshots that show the growth of the church and the work of the Holy Spirit.

***They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.***

- “They” refers to the believers. Earlier in Acts 2, we read that 3,000 people came to faith in Jesus Christ on the day of Pentecost. As this picture of the early church is painted, it is a picture of the church made up of those who believe.
- The believers were continually devoting themselves to four activities: listening to the apostles’ teaching, fellowship, breaking bread, and prayer.
- The Greek word, *proskartereō*, translated as “devoted,” has the connotation of constant attention, single-mindedness, and perseverance to accomplish certain tasks. In this verse of Scripture, Luke highlights four primary activities that the believers were devoted to:
  - **The apostles’ teaching** refers primarily to the Gospel message about the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ which brings salvation. It also included the fulfillment of the Great Commission, with the apostles teaching others “all that Jesus taught and commanded.” Along with these basics, the apostles would have also taught about the responsibilities of believers in light of this salvation. For examples of this teaching, look to any of the Epistles in the New Testament.
    - About the apostles’ teaching, the Expositor's Bible Commentary notes, “The apostles’ teaching’ refers to material considered authoritative because it was the message about Jesus of Nazareth that was proclaimed by accredited apostles. It seems to have included an account of Jesus’ earthly ministry, passion, and resurrection (cf. 2:22–24), a compilation of his teachings (cf. 20:35), and a declaration of what all this meant for human redemption (cf. 1 Co 15:3–5)—all of which was viewed as a Christian ‘tradition’ (*paradosis*, GK 4142) that could be passed on to others (cf. 1 Co 11:2; 1 Th 2:13; 2 Th 2:15; 3:6).”
  - **Fellowship** is the Greek Word *koinania*. The concept of *koinania* is difficult to explain because it is more than how fellowship would be defined today. It involves sharing life together in all aspects, and a deep building of a relationship that goes beyond casual friendship or association.
  - **Breaking the bread** may or may not refer to communion alone. Early believers surely celebrated communion, following the command that Jesus gave at the last supper. However, communion was different for the early church, and celebrated in conjunction with a common meal (called a love feast). Therefore, this statement may also refer to sharing meals together.
  - **Prayer** for the early church was a constant activity. It happened for several hours at a time, and was a community activity (not led just by one person). Prayer was the basis for the community.
    - About prayer, the New American Commentary states, “The fourth and final element of their life together, another expression of their fellowship, was ‘the prayers’ (RSV). 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. They may well have done so to some extent, for their faithfulness in attending temple worship is noted in 2:46 and 3:1. The reference, however, is probably much broader and involves primarily their sharing in prayer together in their private house worship.”