

Have you ever tried to do something meaningful entirely on your own? It could be starting a business, training for a marathon, or even assembling IKEA furniture. For the life of me, I cannot assemble IKEA furniture by myself! Going solo may be easier at first. No one is there to slow you down—no one to disagree with your plan. But eventually, the cracks show. We hit a wall, and we realize we weren't meant to do this alone. It's the same with our faith.

Somewhere along the way, modern Christianity has become increasingly individualized. We focus on our relationship with Jesus, our quiet time, and our growth. But the early church saw things differently. Their faith was deeply communal. It was a shared life, not just a personal belief. They didn't just sit in rows; they lived in circles. They didn't just gather for worship; they served one another with open hands and open hearts.

As we see in Acts 2:42-47, serving one another in love wasn't just something they did; it was how they reflected Christ and grew in unity. They were building something that didn't rely on programs or positions, but on people showing up for each other in sacrificial, everyday ways. That's what made the early church healthy, vibrant, and attractive to the watching world. Serving one another in love is how the church reflects Christ and grows in unity.

We're going to examine three powerful ways this played out in the early church and what it might look like for us to live it out today. *"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:42).*

Devoted to the Community

Luke, the author of Acts, is giving us more than just a snapshot of church life; he's describing the rhythm and rule of life that shaped the first community of Jesus-followers. And it wasn't random. This was intentional. Just as we at CPC have been intentional in creating and practicing a Rule of Life—a set of spiritual rhythms that shape our formation—the early church had its own, rooted in devotion.

That word "devoted" doesn't mean a casual or half-hearted commitment. In the original Greek, it means to hold fast, to persevere in, to continue steadfastly. In other words, this was more than something they did; it was who they were. Their devotion had four key expressions:

The Apostles' Teaching

They weren't just interested in spiritual inspiration; they were hungry for truth. They devoted themselves to learning everything they could about Jesus: his words, his ways, his heart. In a world full of shallow takes and curated opinions, they were grounded in the deep things of God. Serving others begins with a clear understanding of who Jesus is. We can't reflect him if we don't know him. This week, in Summer XP, we were also devoted to the teachings of Jesus! We learned to love one another, forgive one another, pray for one another, and serve one another.

Fellowship (koinonia)

This wasn't just hanging out after church or swapping surface-level updates. This was a deep, intentional, and relational connection. Koinonia means shared life. It's the kind of community where people know your story, carry your burdens, and stick with you when things get messy. You can't serve people well if you don't know them deeply, and you can't know them deeply if you're only loosely connected.

The Breaking of Bread

This was both an ordinary and sacred rhythm. They shared meals, which built trust and closeness, and they shared communion, which reminded them they were one body, bound together by the love and sacrifice of Jesus. In this kind of setting, serving isn't a task; it's a natural outflow of family life.

Prayer

They prayed with each other and for each other. This kept them aligned with the Spirit, tuned into each other's needs, and reliant on God for power and direction. Prayer wasn't just vertical; it was deeply communal.

So, what does all of this have to do with serving? EVERYTHING! Serving begins with a commitment: a commitment to God, to his Word, and to one another. You can't serve well from the margins. You can't make a meaningful impact in someone's life if you only show up occasionally. The people in Acts 2 weren't loosely connected spectators; they were devoted participants. They weren't asking, "What do I get out of this?" They were asking, "What can I bring to the table?"

And that's our key point: we can't serve each other well if we're only loosely connected. True service flows out of deep relationships. That's why the most powerful moments don't usually happen on a stage; they occur in a living room, a hospital room, over a shared meal, or in a late-night phone call. It happens when you know someone well enough to recognize their need without

them even asking. Are you devoted to the community, or just attending it? Do you know the people around you well enough to serve them meaningfully?

The early church changed the world not because it was flashy or famous, but because it was faithful to Jesus and one another. And it all began with devotion.

Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Acts 2:43-45

Meeting Needs Through Sacrificial Service

The early church was devoted to truth, to one another, to prayer, and to shared meals. They weren't half in. Their relationships weren't casual. They built a foundation of trust, honesty, and spiritual hunger. And that kind of deep connection opened the door to something powerful.

Because of their devotion, God's presence became unmistakably real among them. People weren't just learning about God; they were experiencing him. There was a tangible sense of awe, of God moving in ways they couldn't manufacture. They were a transformed people transforming Jerusalem.

But here's what's remarkable: the wonders and signs didn't stop with what the apostles did publicly. The awe deepened when the people themselves began to live in a radically countercultural way, by serving one another sacrificially. The devotion of the early church didn't just stay within the walls of a prayer meeting or a worship service. It spilled over into everyday life in one of the most tangible ways possible: sacrificial generosity.

Luke tells us they held "everything in common." That doesn't mean they lost their individuality or became a uniform community; their unity didn't diminish particularity; they were devoted to the same mission, but each person still had their own story, background, personality, and way of contributing. It means they refused to cling tightly to what they owned. They saw their possessions not as trophies to be protected, but as tools to be shared and utilized, not just shared when convenient. These believers were selling their property and possessions to help those in need. That's costly. That's uncomfortable. That's love in action.

Serving one another isn't always convenient—it's sacrificial. And yet, this is precisely how we reflect the heart of Christ. *"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many"* (Mark 10:45). When we serve, especially when it costs us something, we reflect the likeness of Jesus, who gave up comfort, privilege, and even his life for us.

Let me illustrate this with a simple example. This is a standard spoon, which you can use to easily feed yourself. This other one is taped to a long stick. Try feeding yourself with this one; it doesn't work. You can't reach your own mouth. But if you use it

to feed someone else and they do the same for you, suddenly it works. Everyone gets fed. Everyone's needs get met. We weren't made to serve ourselves. We were made to serve one another.

That's what the early church understood. That's why Acts 2:45 says, "They gave to anyone who had need." They lived with an open hand, not a closed fist. And when each person served someone else, no one was left out.

Our church community embodies this well. Throughout my years at CPC, I've witnessed this body stand up to give sacrificially, whether it's physically, emotionally, or spiritually. This year alone, outside of your regular giving, you gave to:

- **Camp Scholarships: You generously gave \$15,000 to help our kids go to summer camp.**
- **Disaster Relief: LA Fires, we raised over \$35,000.**
- **Refurbished the Library for LEAD Elementary: Kids have an exciting environment to improve their reading skills.**
- **Biblical Counseling Ministry: It has served 88 people from 2024 to 2025!**
- **Summer XP: We had 126 adults and students as leaders serving kids this week!**

Every time we put a need forward, you step up! People feel the presence of God through the love of his people. My prayer is that we continue to be willing to live with the long spoon in our hands: to serve instead of self-serve. I pray we continue to ask, "Who needs help?" Instead of, "What's in it for me?" Someone once said to me, "When everyone is set on serving and blessing others, they don't have to worry about whether or not their needs will be met because there's an assurance and joy in knowing that they mutually share with and encourage one another."

This kind of sacrificial service isn't always flashy. But it's powerful, it's Christlike, and it's how the church grows stronger together. When we serve, we reflect the heart of Christ, who gave everything for us.

Serving in Everyday Life

The early church's commitment to one another didn't stop at generosity in moments of crisis; it flowed into the rhythms of their everyday lives. Their serving wasn't just sacrificial; it was consistent. It became part of their daily routine, their shared tables, and their joyful worship. Let's look at how serving became a way of life for them.

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 2:46-47.

The picture Luke gives us here is powerful, not just because of what the early church did, but also because of how often they did it. This wasn't once-a-week religion. This wasn't a twice-a-year

drop-in. This was a daily devotion, woven into the fabric of ordinary life. They gathered in large spaces, such as the temple courts, as well as in small, familiar places like homes. They ate together. They shared their lives, and through all of that, they served one another. As Kevin likes to say, "The ordinary is where our communal faith is lived."

Notice that there's no indication that these people were trying to create a program or pull off a service project. Their serving wasn't structured around events. It flowed out of proximity and presence. They saw each other. They knew each other, and that allowed them to meet needs in real-time, not because they had a sign-up sheet, but because they had deep, genuine relationships. Service wasn't an event; it was a way of life.

When we make serving part of our daily rhythm—checking in on a friend, dropping off a meal, picking someone up, praying together after a hard day—it becomes natural. It's not forced or performative. It is just a byproduct of doing life with Jesus and his people. If you are looking for a deeper connection, we have so many groups that you could be a part of: Community groups, Student Life Groups, WBS, Men's Fraternity, and MomCo. These groups do life together!

And here's what's amazing: that kind of service builds joy. Luke tells us they shared meals "with glad and sincere hearts." That word "glad" can also be translated as exuberant. Serving didn't drain their joy; it deepened it. It also created gratitude, because when you're on the receiving end of that kind of everyday love, you can't help but be thankful.

And finally, it created something magnetic. "They enjoyed the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." People noticed. Their community wasn't just attractive—it was irresistible. When people see others living with generosity, joy, and purpose, they want to be a part of it. When serving becomes a rhythm, rather than a random act, the church flourishes, and people are drawn to God. Wayne Cordeiro, in his book *The Irresistible Church*, wrote, "An irresistible church is one that lives to serve. Not out of duty or obligation, but because it's the natural outflow of a heart captured by God."

Let's ask ourselves if service is something we schedule occasionally or something we live out daily? The truth is that one meal, one text, one visit, one ride, or one prayer may feel small to you, but to someone else, it might be the reminder they need that God sees them and loves them. And in that moment, you're not just being a nice person, you're being the church.

The beauty of the early church wasn't just in its theology, but in how it was lived out, day after day, in ordinary places with extraordinary love. While Acts 2 paints a powerful picture of that kind of community, it's not just a history lesson; it's an invitation. Because the same Spirit that filled them, fills us. The same Jesus

they followed is the one we follow. And the same kind of servant-hearted, joy-filled, others-focused community they built, we can build, too. So, the question today isn't whether we can serve one another, but how will we serve each other.

Let's get practical. What does this look like in our everyday lives?

Be Present: Real service starts by showing up.

So much of serving starts with simply being there. You can't meet a need you're not close enough to see. Presence communicates care, and in a culture constantly pulling us toward distraction, showing up with full attention is more powerful than ever.

It's hard to be present when your phone is always buzzing. Maybe you've sat across from a friend who's pouring out their heart, and you catch yourself checking a notification or scrolling without thinking. Or maybe you've left your Life Group feeling like you were physically there, but mentally you were thinking about what you missed on TikTok. Digital distraction is one of the biggest barriers to real presence. It tricks us into thinking we're connected when we're actually absent. Sometimes the most Christlike thing we can do is put the phone down, look someone in the eye, and say, "I'm here."

It breaks my heart when I'm out to dinner with friends, and I see a young family out to dinner all on their devices. No one is talking, no one is present. Although I do love my iPhone, the only reason I have it is for the picture capabilities. I'm the last generation that did not have a cell phone growing up. It's important to me to try to model that presence with the next generation. When I meet with younger staff, I try very hard to keep that phone in my pocket because I want to be present. I want them to know that this hour for coffee is more important to me than what is on my phone.

Whether it's showing up to church, joining a group, or checking in with a friend—don't underestimate the power of your undivided attention. Sometimes the greatest gift you can give is your time and your presence.

Be Observant: Who around you has a need you can meet?

Jesus often noticed what others overlooked, and he calls us to do the same. Start looking around: Who's discouraged? Who's overwhelmed? Who hasn't been showing up? Ask God to open your eyes to the needs in your circle. It could be as simple as offering to babysit, sending a Venmo to cover someone's lunch, or writing a note of encouragement. The needs are there; you just have to look.

Be Sacrificial: Are you willing to give time, energy, or resources for others?

Serving often costs us something: convenience, comfort, and sometimes even money. But that's the serving that reflects Christ. When you give up something valuable to bless someone else, you're stepping directly into the story of the gospel. Please

don't wait until it's easy or perfectly planned—lean into the discomfort. That's where authentic love shows up. When we say "yes" to serving, at times we are taking a leap of faith.

Maybe it's feeling awkward, not knowing where to start, or worrying about not doing things well. Let me say this: if you say 'yes,' God is with you along the way. He will give you the strength you need to accomplish his tasks. I'll never forget my first youth ministry job where the buck stopped with me. I was no longer an intern; I was the director. I was supposed to know what I was doing, but nothing prepared me for the church I was working at.

I came to find out that the Sr. Pastor and I were the only believers on staff when I was first hired. I would prepare my midweek talks for high school, and as soon as I opened the Bible, all the kids would walk out. But week after week, I would sacrifice the time, show up, and feel inadequate. I would ask God, "Are you sure you want me here?"

Then, a year after being there, Ryan died in a skateboarding accident. Ryan came to our youth ministry. He was the kid that everyone knew and liked. He had a way about him as a 16-year-old that made people want to follow him. When I got the call, I didn't know what to do. So I called my old boss at PBC, and he said, "Sandy, you know what to do, show up! Don't worry about what to say; God has you there for a reason. Go show up for this family and the kids in the community. Lean into the discomfort and let God take it from there." That was a radical time of ministry in that town. God did some amazing things because I leaned into the discomfort. It was there that I learned what real sacrifice for others was about. It changed me forever.

Be Consistent: Make serving part of your life, not just a one-time project.

We tend to think of service as an occasional event, something we sign up for on a weekend. But in Acts 2, service was woven into the daily life of the church. What if serving became part of your regular rhythm? Weekly check-ins. Monthly generosity. Daily awareness. The goal isn't perfection, it's faithful presence. Keep showing up. Keep noticing. Keep offering what you have. You don't need a title, a platform, or a program to serve someone. You need a willing heart, a little margin, and the humility to see others as more important than yourself. When we start living like that, not as isolated believers, but as a Spirit-filled family, the church flourishes, and people are drawn to God.

What made the early church so powerful wasn't their programs—it was their people. Ordinary believers, devoted to God and to one another, serving with open hands and sincere hearts.

They showed up. They gave sacrificially. They lived their faith daily, and because of that, people were drawn to Jesus.

That same invitation is ours today. We don't need titles or platforms—just willing hearts. Because serving one another in love is how the church reflects Christ and grows in unity. So let's be present. Let's be observant. Let's be sacrificial. Let's be consistent. And let's trust that when we serve in love, God will do more than we could ever imagine—through us and through this church.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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