

## ACTS 2:42-47

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### [INTRODUCTION]

- How many of you track your steps?
- It's meant to be a simple hack for better health.
  - Set a step goal, then let your Apple Watch, Garmin, or other wearable tell you how far you've gone.
  - The experts say we should all aim for 10k steps a day—though this is one of those times when I'm not exactly sure who “the experts” are.
- It's all healthy and good—until you hand it to someone with the wrong personality mix.
  - Overly competitive, slightly obsessive, potentially neurotic...
  - Or, in other words—someone like me.
- I don't mind if I'm miles from my step goal, but if I'm close? I *have* to get there.
  - I've been known to do laps around the kitchen island...
  - I've taken the recycling out one item at a time.
  - Once, I even got out of bed to get 200 more steps in.
    - The dog thought I'd lost my mind.
    - Rosie, my wife, was sure of it.

### [CONTEXT]

- So far in Acts, things have been dramatic.
  - Jesus ascended to heaven and the Spirit descended from heaven...
  - The disciples spoke in miraculous languages and over 3k people were saved!
- Now, for the first time, things quieten down—and we get a picture of “normal life.”
  - Which raises an interesting question, doesn't it?
  - What does every day, routine, normal life look like in the church at its best?
    - Bc most of our days aren't headline material: 3k saved before lunch!
    - No—most of my days are like: 3 cups of coffee before lunch!
  - So, how do we follow Jesus in the ordinary, daily, routine?
- This passage gives us a **picture** and a **process**:
  - A **picture** of what it looks like.
  - And a **process** so we can live that way.
    - We don't have to lose our minds chasing 10k steps.
    - But this morning, I believe God will invite each of us to take one...

### [Transition]

- Let's start with the **picture**.
- The first thing we see is this: We are the church at its best when we...

## [CONTENT: THE PICTURE]

### 1. Love God in Worship

#### [State]

- Do you see this happy image in our text?
  - **V42:** They devote themselves to teaching and prayer; **V46:** They attend the temple together; **V47:** They praise God together; and as a result, **V43:** awe comes upon every soul.
  - This is a worshipping community—they respond to God’s love by loving him in return!
- I’m struck by how balanced their worship is—see how it engages mind and heart?
  - **The Mind:** They devoted themselves to the apostles teaching (**V42**). Truth mattered. They were hungry to learn more.
  - **And Heart:** They didn’t just study—they were stirred. They felt the wonder of who God is and what he has done in Christ—so that **V43: awe came upon every soul.**
- Awe has been the subject of increasing scientific research over the last decade.<sup>1</sup>
  - Psychologist **David Elkins** calls it “*a lightning bolt that marks in memory those moments when... we see with startling clarity what is truly important in life.*”
  - Essayist **Peter Wehner** says awe is “*often evoked by being in the presence of great beauty, something powerful and sublime, mysterious and even overwhelming.*”
  - Research shows awe has a surprising **range of benefits:** it can calm our nervous system, quiet anxiety, increase joy, and even make us more generous.
  - But more than that, it provides a sense of deep meaning. **Albert Einstein** once wrote: “*He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead: his eyes are closed.*”
- But look at the early church:
  - They are not as good as dead—and their eyes are not closed.
  - Instead, they are alive with the truth of God.
    - Not just inspired by symphonies or sunsets...
    - But moved by the truth of the gospel:
      - Jesus was wounded that we might be healed.
      - He died that we might be forgiven and live.
      - He endured the terrors of the cross that we might stand in awe.
- That’s what we want for our church:
  - Not **intellectualism**—where we just know a bunch of stuff.
  - And not **emotionalism**—where we just seek a moving experience.
  - But **awe**—reason and emotion: worship of the mind and heart.

### [Illustrate]

- I experienced this in one of our services last week.
  - In my sermon I told you about my grandmother's death.
  - Then we got to the Table and sang:
    - *The dead will rise and give You praise // Wood and nails will not hold them down // The curse is done, the battle won.*
    - The truth of the gospel moved my mind and heart—and with tears, I worshipped.
- Thousands of students also experienced it this week as they packed Thompson-Boling for a special night of praise.
  - The gospel was clearly preached...
  - There was a strong call to repentance and faith...
  - And hundreds responded by giving their lives to Christ.
  - The truth of the gospel moved their minds and hearts—and they worshipped.
- Many of us experience it week by week in these pews.
  - The reality of God breaks into our lives.
  - The veil between heaven and earth becomes thin.
  - The things we hold to be true lay hold of us—and together we worship.

### [Transition]

- That's the first part of our **picture**—we love God in worship.
- But it doesn't stop there—we are the church at its best when we...

## 2. Love One Another in Fellowship

### [State]

- Isn't it clear from our passage that the love the early church had for God spilled out—overflowed—in love for each other?
  - The church at this time was made up of around 3k souls—roughly the same size as our church today!
  - And yet, they're not just a large gathering—they weave their lives together in smaller, intimate groups:
    - **V42:** They devote themselves to fellowship; **V44:** They spend time together and share their belongings; **V46:** They share meals in each other's homes.
    - Since the very beginning—they made their big church feel small!
- This is part of God's design for us:
  - Remember that God himself exists in relationship—Father, Son, and HS.
  - And this relational God made us in his image:
    - We are designed to be in relationship with him and with each other.
    - Life was never meant to be lived alone—we are hardwired for connection.

### [Illustrate]

- In our culture today, we see this longing for connection everywhere—but we also see that people don't know where to find it.
- A recent study from Harvard Business Review examined how people today are using generative AI.<sup>2</sup>
  - Among the top three uses? Therapy/Companionship and Finding Purpose.
  - I'm fascinated by the rise of AI—it has the potential to help us with all kinds of things.
  - But it can never replace human connection.
    - Therapy? Companionship? Finding Purpose?
    - These are things we should be doing together!
- In a world that is increasingly disconnected, the church invites us to be a counter-witness: come and be part of broken, beautiful, human community.
  - Where we share meals, joys, and burdens.
  - Where life is richer and faith becomes stronger.
  - Where the body of Christ comes alive in ways no algorithm can replace.
- We were designed for connection—and we have it in this place.

### [Transition]

- That's the second part of our **picture**—we love one another in fellowship
- And the last thing we see is this: We are the church at its best when we...

## 3. Serve the World on Mission

### [State]

- Don't we also see that in our text?
  - The gospel changed the way the early church loved God and each other, but it also gave them a heart for everyone else!
  - They were all about service.
    - **V45:** They sold possessions and belongings to give those in need.
      - This wasn't a communist thing...
      - It was voluntary—they didn't do it bc they had to but bc God's generosity toward them made them generous to others.
    - **V47:** Through their life together, the Lord added new believers to their number every day.
- In other words:
  - They **cared** for the practical welfare of those in need and they **shared** the gospel that the lost might come to Christ.
  - It was a ministry of word and deed.

**[Illustrate]:** We want to be like that.

- Locally:
  - **Why** we give over \$1M to around 50 local partners every year.
  - **Why** many of you give your time to come alongside these partners—to serve the poor/homeless, abused/addicted, marginalized/hopeless.
  - **Why** one of our Sunday School classes is faithfully caring for a **refugee** family from Syria. They've driven them to dentist and doctor appointments, become savvy with google translate, had their kids play together at the park, and helped their kids get backpacks and clothes for the school year that actually fit. They are serving the world on mission.
- Globally:
  - **Why** we give over \$2M to partners in 50 different countries across the world.
  - **Why** so many of you pray for and go to the far-flung corners of the earth—to serve the nations, see God's people gathered, and help hurting souls find hope.
  - When war broke out in **Ukraine**, one of our partners, Pavlo, described a stark scene: every lane of traffic—even the shoulders—was jammed with people fleeing the country as fast as they could. So, he and his church leaders made a remarkable choice: they turned around and went back—determined to offer Jesus to a nation in desperate need. He shared the unnerving image of being the only car driving into the country while everyone else fled the other way. Today, we partner with his church—bc we want to serve the world on mission.
- We are absolutely convinced that our lives are richer when we give ourselves away.

**[Transition]**

- Put these three things together, and we see a beautiful **picture**.
  - The church at its best.
  - Love God. Love one another. Serve the world.
- Which takes us to our **process**—or dare I say, our next step...

**[CONSEQUENCE: THE PROCESS]**

- This **picture** of what our lives can look like, also gives us a **process** to get there.
  - In normal, everyday life—carpool, emails, grocery runs, and family schedules—spiritual growth can sometimes feel mysterious: What are we actually supposed to do to grow in our faith?
  - This passage reminds us that we don't have to chase the extraordinary—instead it can be beautifully simple: **imitate the early church**.
- So, let me invite you to do these three things:

### **Step 1: Love God in Worship.**

- Start each day with your Bible open, a word of prayer, or a worship song as you make breakfast.
- And prioritize being in church every week. Like the early church, devote yourself to teaching, prayer, attending the temple, and praise—pick a service, and let awe come upon your soul.

### **Step 2: Love One Another in Fellowship.**

- Invite a friend to lunch, grab coffee, or linger after church.
- And get involved in a ministry here. Like the early church, devote yourself to fellowship. We have ministries for kids, students, young adults, men, women, seniors, Sunday Schools, Community Groups—pick one and find real connection that is infinitely better than AI!

### **Step 3: Serve the World in Mission.**

- Look for ways to serve in your normal routine—family, friends, coworkers, strangers.
- And plug into a mission opportunity here at church. Like the early church, devote yourself to service. Teach kids here on a Sunday morning, serve a local partner or refugee family, or engage globally with our partners in places like Ukraine—pick one, knowing our lives are richer when we give ourselves away.

### **[THE CLOSE]**

- If you're doing those things—celebrate!
  - Please don't feel guilty for not doing more.
  - Just enjoy it, love it, and carry on!
- If you're not involved in these things:
  - Also don't feel guilty—that's not how the gospel works!
  - But maybe God is inviting you to take your next step?
    - We want every member—kids, students, young adults, mid-lifers, seniors—to find their place in all three.
    - Is there one you could step into today?
- If you're not sure where to start, we'd love to help!
  - Stop by the Welcome Center after the service.
  - Our staff and volunteers would love to help you find enjoyable, life-giving ways to get connected.

## [CONCLUSION]

- The good news is this: You don't need 10k steps.
  - You don't need to pace your kitchen island...
  - You don't need to take the recycling out one item at a time...
  - And you definitely don't need to get out of bed to hit some arbitrary count.
- But you do need 3:
  - Our church will be what we make it—so let's make it the church at its best...
  - Love God. Love One Another. Serve the World.
- If we do this:
  - Awe will come upon our souls...
  - Friendship will run deep...
  - And, who knows, maybe the Lord will continue to add to our number day by day those who are being saved.

**Let's take these steps together.**

## RESOURCES AND ENDNOTES

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### Resources

This list contains some of the resources that were used to prepare this sermon series. Check them out if you want to dig a little deeper.

- John Calvin, *Commentary Upon the Acts of the Apostles*.
- Ray Cortese, *The Mission: Clarified, Mobilized, Empowered*.
- Dennis E. Johnson, *The Message of Acts in the History of Redemption*.
- Alan Thompson, *Acts: A Commentary*.

### Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> I owe all the quotes in this section to Peter Wehner, *Awe Is Essential*. Accessed [here](#) 10/2/25.

<sup>2</sup> See *How People Are Using Gen AI*. Accessed [here](#) 10/2/25.