



### Part 3: Share Life in Christ-Centered Community

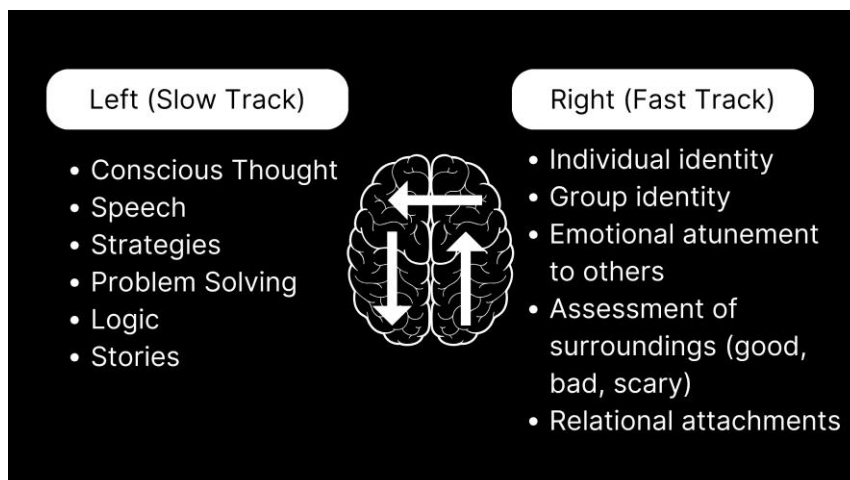
Acts 2:42-47

#### I. The foundation of being “devoted”

“All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 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.”

*Koinonia*: the unique sharing and intimate mingling that Christians have with God, and that Christians have with other Christians.

#### II. Why was this first Christian community characterized by fellowship?



Credit: *The Other Half of Church* by Jim Wilder and Michel Hendricks

We need joy-filled *koinonia* with one another, or we will not develop Christ-like character.

### III. How can we live this out?

- Choose to Invest in people: Who are your 3, 12, and 72?
- Practice joyfully connecting with them, especially in difficulty.

### Additional Exegetical Notes:

- Context: Written by Luke as a continuation of this gospel, this passage takes place immediately following Peter's preaching of the gospel at Pentecost in Jerusalem. His message led to 3,000 new converts. These converts would have been almost entirely Jewish, which explains the mention of them continuing to meet in the temple courts.
  - It was not uncommon for different social groups (for instance, trade guilds, philosophical groups, etc.) to hold regular gatherings where there would be teaching and dinner. What was extraordinary about this community was how often they gathered. Most social groups would meet once a month, while this group was holding gatherings on a daily basis.
- When starting with verse 41 included, the passage takes on a chiasmic structure.
  - People turning to Christ
    - Shared worship and meals
      - Shared possessions
    - Shared worship and meals
  - People turning to Christ
  - This structure further emphasizes the rhythms of Worship, Community and Mission, and the way these rhythms mutually reinforce one another.
- Particular Connotations in the Greek:
  - "Devoted" is actually repeated multiple times in this passage, though it does not show up in the English translation. This, in addition to the Greek phrases "each day" and "each persons home" emphasize just how continual their commitment to one other was.
  - "Sincere hearts" has both the connotation of sincerity as we think of it (without pretense, from a true place in their hearts), but also a sense of single-minded purpose and passion. They came together with a singular focus.
- The Sharing of Property:
  - The image given of this community is almost utopian and matched up with many of the ideals expounded by Greek Philosophers or even the Jewish community at Qumran. Luke is highlighting the way that this community is the fulfillment of the Jewish idea of the kingdom of God, but also the fulfillment of the best desires of the gentiles as well.
  - It is important to note that unlike the community at Qumran, the believers here still maintained personal property (even though they readily sold it for other's need), and their giving was not under obligation. Membership at Qumran required giving up personal property to be distributed by the leader; this community willingly gave up what they had to joyfully provide for others. While this community certainly challenges our western ideals of individualism, it also is not embodying communistic values either.
  - Instead, it seems that as the community listened to the "apostles teaching" (the teachings of Jesus that the apostles were passing on), they picked up on

commandments such as Luke 12:33 and saw fit to follow Jesus's way by radically giving up their own property so that no one would have need.

- The Breaking of Bread
  - Different commentators differ in their view of this phrase. Some see it as directly applying to the Lord's supper (the same phrase is used throughout the Acts and the New Testament to refer to this), yet there also seems to be a sense where these were less formal meals in homes. I take the view that it is referring to both. Unlike in our churches where the larger gather on Sunday mornings are distinct from small group gatherings or other social gatherings, in the early church these flowed in and out of each other.
- Enjoying the Favor of All People
  - This may seem like an overly optimistic interpretation of events. Certainly today we don't always experience favor with all people as we live out our Christian lives together. And Luke does not shy away from the reality of persecution for this community. In fact just a few chapters later he will describe persecution so severe that the church is scattered (Acts 8). However, in this passage he is describing the other side of the coin. While sometimes Christian distinctiveness brings persecution, it is also our distinctiveness that witnesses and makes us winsome. In this case, the community was caring for one another and their neighbors so well and so sacrificially, that they won the favor of all they were in contact with.