

The First Church

Acts 2:41-47

I wonder what it would be like...

I wonder what it would be like to belong to a church of 120 saved souls, but before the day was done, 3,000 souls were added and baptized, all in one day... I wonder what it would be like to belong to a church family where all 3,120 people were filled by the Holy Spirit—not even one was full of himself... It sounds like a dream. But on the day of Pentecost the filling of Holy Spirit was, in fact, their reality.

I wonder what it would be like, if the 240 or so people of FBC would all be filled, not with ourselves, but with the Holy Spirit... What would that be like? What would that _____ like? It would look very much like the first church—we would give ourselves to what they gave themselves to. But it would begin where they began: by becoming a Spirit-filled, Spirit-empowered, Spirit-focused church family.

If we all came under the conviction of the Holy Spirit as the first church did, and surrender ourselves fully to His control, then this is what we would look like: Instead of adding all kinds of unbiblical and unnecessary elements to church-life, **as Spirit-controlled Jesus-followers we would be wholly devoted to the following eight devotions.**

Spirit-filled Christ-followers devote themselves:

1. To _____ (41).

These Jewish converts are the first to be baptized as Christ-followers “in the name of Jesus Christ” (38). But they are not aware that they belong to a brand-new entity. The universal understanding of the church, made up of both Jews and Gentiles, isn’t understood until later. For now, they only know that they’re faithful Messiah-followers, who are filled with the Holy Spirit, who are already fully obedient to the apostles. Note with me that not one of them is _____-baptized by water. Spirit-filled Jesus-followers, once they become aware of what the apostles teach about baptism, they’re _____ unbaptized for long.

Why did Peter command that the convicted in the crowd repent and then quickly be baptized? Being Spirit-filled, he was keenly aware of His Lord's teaching just before His departure: "Go, and make disciples, *baptizing them* in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20). Personally, I think this is who we should baptize: Those who are Spirit-convicted, Spirit-convinced, because they're Spirit-filled—those who *can't continue* as disciples of Jesus until they're baptized.

2. To God's _____ (42).

"Devoted" speaks of exerting great effort and persisting in doing something because it's a matter of highest priority. It indicates action that is continuous and habitual because we want to, we have to, we can't _____ without it. What were these first Christ-followers devoted to? What was their highest priorities? "The apostles' teaching." The apostles were men moved and inspired by the Holy Spirit of God. So when they taught about the life, ministry, death, resurrection, ascension, and the teachings of Jesus Christ, they were speaking the Words of Christ. So when the apostles spoke God's Word, God spoke. And it's a high and holy devotion that Spirit-filled Christ-followers are wholly devoted to.

In 1953, Scottish preacher and theologian, William Barclay, wrote what's still relevant to this day: "We should count it a _____ day when we do not learn something new and when we have not penetrated more deeply into the wisdom and the grace of God."

3. To _____ (42-46).

It means "being together," but much more than that. It means *sharing in _____ together*. Spirit-filled Christ-followers have *spiritual devotions in common*, like Jesus Christ and one another. We *share in common together* the same Lord, the same Father, the same Spirit, the same Book, the same passion for God and His Book, and the same love for God and for each other. Some key words that are descriptive of Spirit-filled fellowship:

Verse 44: *Together.*

Verse 44: *Common.*

Verse 45: *Sharing.*

Verse 46 NASB: *Continuing.* “And day by day *continuing* with one mind in the temple and breaking bread from house to house.”

4. To _____ (42).

“The breaking of bread.” This expression refers both to sharing a meal together *and* to observing what came to be known as the Communion, or the Lord’s Supper, which furthered their intimate fellowship with each other and with the Lord. At the common meal, they enjoyed their intimate communion with one another. At the communion meal, they delighted in their intimate communion with their risen Lord.

5. To the _____ (42).

It’s plural, which probably means they maintained the Jewish habit of praying three times a day. It goes without saying that they prayed privately, but they prayed corporately as well, praying together. And their prayers centered on Jesus Christ, on blessing and praising their Father, on guidance from the Holy Spirit, and on boldness to proclaim the Gospel. The Christian life is a dependent life, for we desperately _____ God in this sad, bad, and troubling world. Spirit-filled Christ-followers are keenly aware of their need *and desire* for Jesus Christ. So they seek Him, delight in Him, and glory in Him *together* in prayer!

6. To _____ (45).

This first church was a serving church family, with the emphasis on *family*. Spirit-filled Christ-followers have this intense sense of **responsibility** *not for themselves*, but for _____ another. Their unifying love for each other was beautifully manifested in serving through sharing. It wasn’t socialism—the purpose wasn’t to redistribute wealth but to meet _____ in the family. Consider the possibilities...

7. To _____ (46-47).

These first Jesus-followers saw themselves as the faithful remnant of Israel. It would take the progressive revelation of the Holy Spirit through the apostles to reveal that this was the beginning of the universal church, composed of Jews *and* Gentiles. All they knew was that their

Messiah had come after all, that He poured out His Spirit on them, and that they were saved, glad, generous, happy, and full of praise to God.

They weren't satisfied to worship the Lord at the temple once a week on Sundays. Their worship was "day by day," in their homes, out in the streets, down at the market, and up in the temple, and always together. Do you, do we look like this? If we are Spirit-filled Christ-following Christians, this certainly is what we look like.

8. To _____ (47).

When the people of the church are Spirit-filled Christ-followers, Christianity is a most loving and lovely thing. The church is beautiful. They are unified, centered on Christ, and most loving. Isn't that what Jesus told His original disciples in John 13: A new commandment I give to you, that you _____ one another: *just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another*" (34-35).

This is probably the most effective evangelism strategy on the planet. They didn't have a strategy. Here's how their evangelism worked: 1. They were in _____ with Jesus and with each other and everyone knew it: "They were glad and generous hearted, and praising God." 2. The unsaved were attracted to their winsome witness: "They were having favor with all the people." 3. _____ did the saving: "The Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved." It's the church's responsibility to be a winsome witness before the world. It's God alone who saves. And every Spirit-filled, Spirit-empowered church in every time and in every place is a winsome witness.

There it is...

Their Christianity was _____. Why? Because Jesus Christ was their daily reality. Why? Because the Holy Spirit controlled them daily. How does that happen? Actually, it's not that hard. It happens through *surrender*. **The Spirit-Filled Life**, by Bill Bright: