

The Breaking of Bread

Based on a characteristics of a healthy church by Bob Deffinbaugh online at https://bible.org/seriespage/6-characteristics-healthy-church-acts-241-47#P44_12260

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he 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 favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Act 2:42-47 NIV)

Over the last few weeks we have seen how the early church studied the word of the apostles, how they shared their possessions for the good of all, how there is only one way to God, through Jesus, how we are called to work at harvesting souls and worshipping God. And we continue today looking at the early church as a guide to how we should live.

“**the breaking of bread,**” used here in [Acts 2](#) may refer to observing Communion or the Lords Supper (as in the Lords Supper shared with His disciples at passover described in [Matthew 26:26](#)) but the expression may simply refer to the eating of a communal meal, or it may be that whenever they met and eat together that shared communion:

Communion was part of their worship. Paul tells us For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes (1Co 11:23-26 NIV).

The Greek says the believers were “devoted to *the* breaking of bread.” Not just to breaking bread together, this may then point to the Lord’s Supper, though there is much debate among Bible scholars regarding this point.

Luke told us they broke bread in their houses, this may be because they may have not thought it was not right to celebrate the Eucharist in the temple, as communion was peculiar to the followers of Christ, and therefore they administered that remembrance in private houses.

We should remember that originally when Communion was observed, as with the Passover meal, it was celebrated as part of a full meal, not just bread and wine on its own, later it became a stand alone celebration. Communion is the way Jesus reminds us about His sacrifice, so we do not forget what He has done for us.

SONG AND COMMUNION

Luke says: Every day they continued to gather together by common consent in the temple courts, [and then] breaking bread from house to house [in dwellings], [**and]sharing [participating] their food with glad and humble hearts** ([Acts 2:46](#)), emphasis mine) - This appears to be sharing of a meal with fellow believers, it is clear however that sharing a meal was important to the early church.

The sharing of a meal was perhaps the most intimate form of fellowship one could have with fellow believers. In the ancient near eastern world (and often today in the middle east), when a guest was invited to a meal with his host, it was incumbent on the host to provide protection for this guest.

This verse gives us a clear picture of Christ-followers in their homes having a joyful meal together. So what does this mean for us as disciples and as makers of disciple makers today?

An invitation to a meal is an offer of friendship. Imagine if your employed, your boss ...no, make

that your boss's boss. If he or she invites you to lunch, what is going through your mind? In most cases you would have a nervous excitement. You would reasonably expect that someone might share something over a meal that they might not otherwise share. It is, at the very least, an opportunity to get to know someone better than you did before. A shared meal is a great way to break down barriers to discipleship and begin (or continue) to build the relationship that is critical to discipling someone.

Even more importantly, though, is that by sharing a meal with someone we not only emulate the activity of the early church, we follow the methods of the Master. As author Tim Chester points out in his book [*A Meal With Jesus*](#):

There are three ways the New Testament completes the sentence, "The Son of Man came ..."

- "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" ([Mark 10:45](#))
- "The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" ([Luke 19:10](#))
- "The Son of Man has come eating and drinking ..." ([Luke 7:34](#)).

The first two are statements of purpose. Why did Jesus come? He came to serve, to give his life as a ransom, to seek and save the lost. The third is a statement of method. How did Jesus come? He came eating and drinking.

Eating and drinking (appropriately - not glutinously) is therefore something to be encouraged, to build the fellowship of believers and to share love as Jesus shared.

It seems that at first, that the disciples came together regularly, possibly daily to share the evening meal and shared Communion as part of that supper. Afterwards the two elements that had then been united were developed separately, the social meal into the Agapœ, or Feasts of Love, the other into the Communion, or Lords Supper.

I have been asked recently why we do the things that we do, sharing and welcoming, hopefully this talk answers some of those question and is a challenge for all of us to go out and love our neighbours.

Jesus taught "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ...' "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' (Mat 25:37, 40 NIV)