



## A MATTER OF FAITH

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Acts Chapter 2:42-47 - "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 favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being

saved."

Have we lost what we once had?

### Service vs. Serve Us

It seems to me that most of today's churches are focused on their congregation. They are looking to meet the desires of those who attend. Churches are utilizing their time, resources and energy on marketing plans and outreach in order to draw new members. Huge buildings, more programs and slick advertising are common components of today's church.

Whether it is the case or not, from outside the walls, it gives the impression that churches are fixated on themselves.

Consumerism has crept into the door. I have heard the phrase "I am not being fed" from many people as a reason for leaving their church. It is all about their

needs. It is supply and demand of the faith based sort. Supply me with my preferences and meet my demands or I am out the door and onto the next church that will.

Self-absorption is not only common; it is encouraged by the individuals being catered to. The music, the teaching style of the pastor, the look and ergonomics of the building

are factors for whether to be part of a church. There is also prestige in belonging to the right church.

"They devoted themselves to the Apostles teaching and to the fellowship". This is so completely opposite of what we are experiencing today. The devotion is to the self. They were not looking for great "signs and wonders" because they were a normal part of who they were. They lost themselves in the community of their fellowship.

When did service, as in the church service, become a noun? When did it take on the identity of a bunch of people gathering to sing songs and hear someone speak? In the first church, service was a verb. It was something you did. "Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need." They were about doing service. They made sacrifices and inconvenienced themselves for

the sake of the community. They loved people with sincere hearts.

They also were not caught up in silly squabbles over what translation to read, whether a Christian should drink or not drink, which political party a real Christian supports, what kind of music is acceptable. Yes, these issues did exist for the most part in their culture but I am sure there were plenty of cultural preferences in their day to get side tracked with as well. They chose unity rather than their own personal likes and dis-

likes.

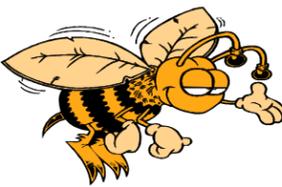
When they chose to love, God took care of the rest. Their numbers increased daily because people wanted to be part of what was going on. Many people who are not Christians have a genuine dislike of those who call themselves Christians because, let's face it, we are not enjoyable to be around.

We need to get back to putting others first, others being those outside our buildings. We need to love people and stop being so focused on ourselves.

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