

The Biblical Model of the Body of Believers



Saturday, 5/2 at 4:00 | Sunday, 5/3 at 9:00

Fourth Sunday of Easter – 2020

Introduction: **Dear friends in Christ:** A model is like a pattern, *something we look at and try to follow*. Therefore, *having the right model is important!* This is an example of a bad model: About 500 years ago, *at the time of the Renaissance*, Michelangelo and Raphael were doing many amazing paintings and sculptures. However, with some of them, *the women have the legs of NFL linemen!* Why?



Some of the female figures were painted from male models!

Our focus today is on a Biblical model: Since, *over a period of time*, models can change from good to bad, *it can be helpful to return to the original – which is our goal today!*

Let me set things up by sharing the big picture: In the OT God promised the Savior; then, in the NT, *the Son of God came and completed His saving work!* Then, *50 days after*

Jesus was raised, He poured out the Holy Spirit. On that very day, about 3,000 people were saved!

Now, in this sermon, we focus on how those believers functioned as the NT Church: †They were not separate, *but together as one body of Christ*; †their gatherings were not weekly, *but daily*; and †their loving actions toward each other were truly extraordinary! Today, *as we view the NT model*, let's recognize what is wrong with today's NT body of believers. And then, *let us begin today to return to the Biblical model for NT believers!*

1. **Their Main Activities:** ⁴² **And they were devoting themselves to...** // That means they were "holding fast to," "clinging to," "persevering in" four key things. As I share them with you, *understand that Luke was identifying the most important activities of the NT believers!*
 - a. **...the apostles' teaching [instruction] and the fellowship [close relationship],** // The teaching refers to what we do here in every service – *reading and explaining God's Word!* The fellowship – *the close relationship* – included all believers with each other. Furthermore, *they treated each other as belonging to the same body!* As my head and my arm care about each other and work together for what is best, *so they did the same among all of the believers!*
 - b. **...the breaking of bread and the prayers.** // There are a number of different words and phrases used to describe the Lord's Supper, including "**the breaking of bread.**" That phrase includes the Supper as we know it today, *so, along with bread and wine, they received the Body and Blood of Christ for the assurance of their forgiveness!* Regarding "**the prayers,**" that phrase

points to another key element of the Divine Service!

To summarize: Those NT believers **held fast** to

✦gathering together, ✦learning God’s Word, ✦receiving the Supper, and ✦talking to God through prayer!

2. **How the Unbelievers Felt:** ⁴³ **And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.** // Lenski described the **unbelievers** with these words, “**These outsiders kept experiencing ‘fear’ in the sense of awe. They felt that higher powers were at work among the disciples**” (117). That was a time when **God** was at work in many powerful and visible ways through the apostles among the unbelievers. Why? To ✦show them that what the apostles were teaching was true and ✦call them to believe in Jesus as their Savior!
3. **How the Believers Viewed Their Possessions:** ⁴⁴ **And all who believed were together and had all things in common.** ⁴⁵ **And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.** // The believers were together – *not living together, like the hippie communes of the 60’s and 70’s*, but faithfully meeting together to ✦grow up in God’s Word, ✦receive the Supper, ✦pray, and ✦share their possessions *according to the needs of the others*.
4. **What the Believers Did Day By Day:** ⁴⁶ **And day by day [devoting themselves (same Greek word as in v. 42) with one mind in the temple,] and breaking bread in their homes, they [shared] their food with glad and generous hearts,** ⁴⁷ **praising God and having favor with all the people.**
 - a. For those believing Jews – *prior to them being persecuted*, the temple was the key place to gather.

“Its spacious [porches] and halls afforded them room for their own assemblies” (Lenski, 120).

- b. Since the temple was not a convenient place for sharing a meal and receiving the Lord’s Supper, it was received – *along with God’s Word* – in house churches. Not just one family alone, *but many believers met together in various homes*.
 - c. Regarding those believers and the response of the unbelievers, Lenski wrote: “Their fervor in the Temple worship commended them, and their happy conduct with praise to God on their lips made the [unbelieving] Jews like them” (121).
5. **What the Lord Did Day By Day:** **And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.** // During those early years of the NT Church, the Lord granted much ✓ peace, ✓ joy, and ✓ growth, but persecution was coming and will even be included in next week’s sermon!

Conclusion: So what was the model of the early NT believers? They **faithfully** met together to ✨grow up in God’s Word, ✨receive the Supper, ✨pray, and ✨share their possessions *according to the needs of the others!*

This Week’s Challenge: Compare your life with Acts 2:42-47; then take at least ONE STEP to be more in agreement with the Biblical model.

Let Us Pray: Dear Holy Spirit, *TY for making us holy in God’s sight through Jesus!* Now, *as the body of Christ*, let nothing keep us from ✨growing in the Bible, ✨receiving the Supper, ✨talking to God thru prayer, and ✨sharing our possessions!

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