

BELIEVERS PRAISE GOD

Lesson Scripture: Acts 2:32-33, 37-47

Focus Scripture: Acts 2:32-33, 37-47

Key Verse: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." Acts 2:42 (NRSV)

ACTS 2:32-33, 37-47 (NRSV)

Acts 2:32-33

32 This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses.

33 Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear.

37-47

37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?"

38 Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

39 For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him."

40 And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation."

41 So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

43 Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles.

44 All who believed were together and had all things in common;

45 they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any

ACTS 2:32-33, 37-47 (KJV)

Acts 2:32-33

32 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.

33 Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.

37-47

37 Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

had need.

46 Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts,

47 praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

KEY TERMS

- **Acts** – Written by the Apostle and Gospel writer, Luke; a sequel to Luke’s Gospel, this is the fifth book of the New Testament.

Also known as the Acts of Apostles, this book is a record of immediate actions taken by the Apostles to continue Jesus’ ministry after his resurrection and ascension.

- **Breaking bread** – Refers to traditional celebrations of the Lord’s Supper as well as the act of sharing common meals. Today’s scriptures refer to both.
- **Praise** – Acknowledging and appreciating God for his worthiness. “Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised” (Psalm 145:3, KJV).

INTRODUCTION

2021 unfolded with the world facing unprecedented chaos and threats to routine daily life experiences. The world-wide COVID-19 Pandemic, police brutality, violence, social inequalities, political, social, and economic upheavals and unrest, and corrupt leadership were pervasive. Although most people express desires for unity, strong differences of opinions on what unity should look like exist. Who should benefit from a unified society? Even determining how unity should be achieved seems to present immutable barriers to humankind being “on one accord.”

Today’s scriptures give vivid pictorial accounts of what a unified community looks like as well as the values

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to be derived from living in harmony with others. This is Holy Spirit inspired unity! The benefactors are believers who have been baptized in the Holy Spirit, and commit to living their lives in accordance with the life and precepts of Jesus, the Christ. Bonded together through steadfast love for Jesus Christ and commitments to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, these early Christians enjoy unity despite the chaos and disunity that exists in the broader society around them.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

The disciples have watched Jesus ascend into heaven, and they have obeyed his command to wait in Jerusalem for the arrival of the Holy Spirit. While waiting, they select a replacement for Judas, who betrayed Jesus Christ. By praying and casting lots (Acts 1:23-26), they choose Matthias. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit makes a grand entrance while the disciples, including Matthias, are all

together in one place. "Filled with the Holy Ghost, the disciples begin speaking in other tongues" (Acts 2:1-4). As others, including pilgrims from many nations (Acts 2:5), observe the disciples' reactions to the Holy Spirit, they are amazed and

bewildered by the fact that they are hearing the disciples speak in their native languages. Some accused the disciples of being drunk. Peter challenges that suggestion and launches into a powerful sermon.

The Disciples as Eyewitnesses (Acts 2:32-33)

For his sermon, Peter uses the scriptures to confirm Jesus' Messiahship, resurrection, and ascension into

heaven, with a seat at God's right hand. Peter also notes that Jesus' promise to send the Holy Spirit is being witnessed by everyone as they observe the events on this Day of Pentecost. In a powerfully persuasive way Peter brings credibility to himself

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and his colleagues by pointing out the fact that, as eyewitnesses to Jesus' ministry, the disciples (now Apostles) have personally watched Jesus perform miracles and fulfill prophecies throughout his earthly ministry. This includes Matthias, whose eligibility for consideration has been based upon the fact he had been with Jesus from the time of his baptism by John the Baptist until his resurrection (Acts 1:22-26). For scriptural validations, Peter uses several Old Testament scriptures, including the Psalms, as well as the books of Jeremiah and Joel.

**Convicted Hearts
Lead to New Lifestyles
(Acts 2:37-47)**

Peter's sermon continues from Acts 2:14 through Acts 2:36. As a result, the community of believers increases exponentially, beginning with about 120 disciples (Acts 1:15), and adding over 3000 more that day (Acts 2:41). The new converts included many devout pilgrims who have traveled to

Jerusalem for the Passover and are staying over for Pentecost. When the crowd asks Peter what they should do after hearing his message, Peter commands them to repent, be baptized in the name of Jesus for forgiveness of their sins, and to "receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." In essence, Peter tells them to change their lives immediately and receive the Holy Spirit.

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Consequently, we see the whole community engaging in new lifestyles as described in our **Key Verse** (Acts 2: 42). Since "everything was held in common and everyone's needs were met," (Acts 2:43-45), praising God, breaking bread together, and

fellowshipping with each other are now daily routines. As others observe this community of believers, the numbers of believers continued to grow.

SANKOFA

Family reunions, for people of the African diaspora, are occasions when most families congregate, fellowship, and

break bread together while remaining “on one accord.” The reunions are usually carefully planned, with focus on strengthening and unifying family relationships. Relatives who travel great distances look forward to seeing those who live closer to the reunion site as well as those who may not have attended the last reunion. It is a time for reuniting with familiar family members, meeting new family members, celebrating kinship, and recalling family histories. Family values and legacies are passed on from one generation to the next.

Power of a special kind is derived from these reunions. The family has been the quintessential structure for the transmission of culture and values that sustain Africans of all nations. Wisdom from the elderly is easily accessed and passed on to younger generations. In many cases, oral histories, including periods of pain and suffering as well as triumphs, are recalled and freely shared. Through them, family members gain greater senses of personal worth and positive identities. Celebrations that the world, in general, might totally ignore

are typically reunion highlights. Neither slavery nor Jim Crow Laws, apartheid, or other structural impediments that affect us individually and/or collectively have been able to obliterate the power, resilience, and optimism that strong family ties and relationships produce.

CASE STUDY

Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu’s leadership, as head of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, has garnered world-wide acclaim. The Commission’s goal was to help South Africans heal and unify after apartheid ended. Unification in South Africa involved bringing together a nation, including oppressors and victims, that had been legally separated by race-based policies or systems of segregation and discrimination. Apartheid had been in existence more than 40 years.

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Tutu's report, undergirded his work. In addition to his own frequent prayers, he called on others to pray. One example is cited in the following personal account: "when we started (the commission), I wrote to the secretary-general of the Anglican consultative council and asked him if he would please put this request to the religious communities of our church around the world, to say, 'please pray for this enterprise.'"

LIFE APPLICATION

An obvious message from this study is the fact that praise is not to be limited to Sunday morning worship, or other corporate settings. For believers, it is to be incorporated into daily life experiences. How can we persevere, or expect to flourish, unless God is with and within us? Proverbs 3:6 promises that if we acknowledge God in all our ways, he will direct our paths. As we look at the community of believers in today's lesson, we can find a model for patterning our lives.

In these challenging times, our need for God is magnified every day. He has promised never to leave us nor to forsake us. Therefore, we can depend on him.

In these challenging times, our need for God is magnified every day.

Yet, we should never take him for granted. Remember, he deserves our praise. As we praise him, we are strengthened as we are reminded of his presence, his goodness, and his faithfulness.

QUESTIONS:

1. How comfortable are you with your praise habits?
2. How often do you stop all distractions and just focus on God's presence?
3. Are you filling your prayers with praise as well as petitions?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Closing Song: "Jesus, You Are the Center of My Life"

Closing Prayer: Dear

Lord, we thank you that each of us can experience your presence wherever we are. Thank you for being our Father, our Lord, our Savior, and everything we need. It is in you that we live and move and have our being, and for that we say "thank you." In the name of Jesus, please bless us to stay close to you and to remember how you cover us "under your wings," and protect us from the storms of life. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

September 27–October 3

Monday	Psalm 95 (Praise the Rock of Our Salvation)
Tuesday	Luke 19:28, 36-40 (Stones Shout Out!)
Wednesday	1 Peter 1:3-9 (Indescribable and Glorious Joy)
Thursday	Psalm 98 (Sing to God a New Song)
Friday	Hebrews 13:12-16 (A Continuous Sacrifice of Praise)
Saturday	Psalm 66:1-7 (Rejoice in God's Mighty Rule)
Sunday	Psalm 100 (Enter God's Courts with Praise)