

Beliefs

Fellowship of Believers

THE CHURCH

Introduction

This Bible study is designed to help you understand the fourth statement in the Apostles' Creed: "I believe in the holy catholic Church."

The word "catholic" means "universal" ... so you could say universal church if you wish. The Bible passage describes what happened after Pentecost when so many came into the church (3,000 new believers in one day) that they decided to gather in homes to care for each other.



THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE BELIEVERS

"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."

Acts 2:42-47

Listen to the story. Then, move into groups of 4 and discuss the questionnaire.

1. How would you describe the atmosphere when these first Christians got together? (Choose two or three.)

<input type="checkbox"/> chaotic	<input type="checkbox"/> life-changing	<input type="checkbox"/> boring
<input type="checkbox"/> fun	<input type="checkbox"/> predictable	<input type="checkbox"/> close
<input type="checkbox"/> exciting	<input type="checkbox"/> unpredictable	<input type="checkbox"/> too close
<input type="checkbox"/> noisy	<input type="checkbox"/> warm	<input type="checkbox"/> caring
2. What made the early church so appealing that thousands wanted to get in?

<input type="checkbox"/> the food	<input type="checkbox"/> great preaching
<input type="checkbox"/> the miracles	<input type="checkbox"/> great advertising
<input type="checkbox"/> their openness to others	<input type="checkbox"/> their spiritual vitality
<input type="checkbox"/> the amazing love they had for each other	
3. What is the closest you have come to experiencing the kind of close fellowship that is described here in Acts?

4. If you had been invited to be part of the early church, what would have been your initial reaction?

- ☐ Sounds too much like a cult to me.
☐ This is a bit too touchy-feely for me.
☐ I have some things I wouldn't sell for anyone.
☐ I might give it a try.
☐ I would jump at the chance.

5. From your school, workplace and neighborhood, what percentage of people attend church? What's the general attitude about church?

6. If you had to rank your own church or group on the six areas that are described in the early church, what would you say? In your group, read the first area below and let everyone call out a number from 1 (very weak) to 10 (very strong) in that area.

SPIRITUAL NURTURE / GROWTH: *"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."*

We have given priority to studying the Scripture, to learning more about our faith and to praying for one another.

1 2 3 4 5 6 5 7 8 9 10

HEALING: *"Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles."*

We have seen healing take place in our lives and in our relationships with one another, our families and our friends.

1 2 3 4 5 6 5 7 8 9 10

CAREGIVING: *"All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need."*

We look after each other. If someone has a need, we do what we can to care for this person and meet their need.

1 2 3 4 5 6 5 7 8 9 10

CORPORATE WORSHIP: *"Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts."*

We meet regularly for worship—to celebrate Christ's resurrection and his triumph over sin.

1 2 3 4 5 6 5 7 8 9 10

SUPPORT GROUPS: *"They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people."*

We meet regularly to support one another, praise God, study the Bible, share our needs and pray for one another.

1 2 3 4 5 6 5 7 8 9 10

REACHING OUT: *"And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."*

We keep our church or group open to new people and through our reaching out the Lord keeps bringing others to our fellowship.

1 2 3 4 5 6 5 7 8 9 10

7. What aspect of the spiritual life and energy of the early church do you most desire for yourself? For your church and/or this group?
8. How could you help your church and this group be more like the early church?
9. How would you like this group to remember you in prayer this week?