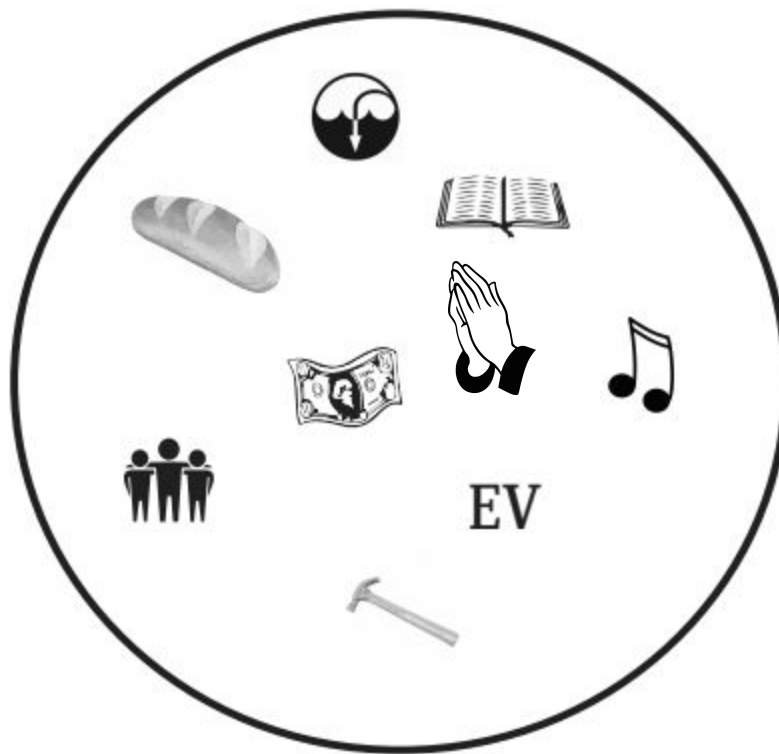


## The Church

*“So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.” -Acts 2:41-47*

This passage describes the lifestyle of the early church shortly after Christ’s ascension. This circle demonstrates some of the things that characterized the early church.



1. **Baptism** - *“those who received his word were baptized”*. Baptism is the entrance into Christian community. It is a public proclamation of your faith that symbolizes dying to your old way of life and being born again to live for Christ. If you have not been baptized, let’s talk about that at the end of the lesson.

2. **Scripture** - *“they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching”*. Christians meet together to read and study the word of God. The early believers eagerly listened to the apostles’ teaching, which is now written down for us in the Bible.
3. **Communion** - *“to the breaking of bread”*. Communion is something every believer should do regularly with their church. Jesus gave bread and wine to his disciples at the Last Supper and commanded believers to do this in remembrance of him. The bread represents his body broken for us and the blood represents his blood spilled for us. It is a constant reminder of God’s grace to us in salvation.
4. **Prayer** - *“and to prayer”*. The early church prayed together frequently. It is not only important to have time for personal prayer, but also prayer together as a Christian family.
5. **Giving** - *“they were...distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.”* Generosity is a distinguishing mark of the Christian life. Since God promises to provide for our needs and because God has been generous with us, Christians should be the most generous people on the planet.
6. **Praise** - *“praising God”*. When we praise God in community, we get to share in the joy of knowing God together.
7. **Community** - *“And day by day attending the temple together”*. The church is a community designed by God for people to come together to praise him, reach the world, and do good. Being part of a church is essential for every Christian. If you haven’t found a good local church yet, let’s talk about that at the end of the lesson.
8. **Evangelism** - *“the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”* The earliest Christians were passionate about sharing their faith because they knew it was true and that Jesus was the only hope for the world. Christian communities devote themselves to reaching the lost.
9. **Service** - *“And all who believed were together and had everything in common”*. The early church was characterized by service to one another. This is one way that Jesus said the world would know we were his disciples. Christians should be eager to serve others, especially other Christians.

What are some of the benefits of this type of community?

Which of these aspects of Christian community are you most stoked about? Why?

Have you been baptized? If not, have you thought about it?