

“Follow the Recipe: The Ingredients” (Soul Food Pt. 1)
(Acts 2:42-47)

• **Soul Food**

- So...*food*. How many of you *check the ingredients* before you eat something? How many of you could care less, you just dig in? I get it. But here’s a thought for you this morning: if your *life* had one of those “nutrition facts” labels, what would it say? What are the ingredients that make up your life—how do you “do” life? There’s something to ponder—we’ll get back to that in a bit.
- How about some food quotes to get us started! **“Food is essential to life, therefore make it good.”** Who said that? S. Truett Cathy of Chic Fil A! If you don’t like fast food, here’s one for a more *refined* taste: **“A recipe has no soul. You, as the cook, must bring soul to the recipe.”** (Thomas Keller, American Chef) You’ve heard these food slogans: **“I’m lovin’ it.”** **“Finger-lickin’ good.”** **“Better ingredients, better...”**? **“America runs on...”**? Now we’re cookin’!
 - If you’re not hungry yet, go ahead and close your eyes and exercise your imagination: *picture your favorite food*. What is that *meal* or *dish* that you *never turn down*? Can you see it? Smell it, *taste it*? Can you hear the sounds—the *sizzle*, the *crunch*, the *clink*? Food isn’t just about a biological function, *it’s an experience*, it involves our entire lives. But to get that food, it takes *ingredients*, it takes a *process* of cooking, it takes an experience of *serving and sharing*.
- Now, in addition to your stomach grumbling, you’re probably wondering where this is going! Well, a lot of what we just said about *food*, could also be said about *our faith*. Our walk with Christ involves *ingredients*, it involves a *process*, and it involves *serving and sharing*. And, believe it or not, *food* is one of the more common topics in Scripture. Have you ever thought about *how often the Bible mentions food*? Imagine listing *every time* the Bible talks about food from start to finish—from stories, to rituals, to miracles, to metaphors—this book is full of food!
- Consider these verses about God: **“Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.”** (Ps. 34:8) **“I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands. I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods...”** (Ps. 63:4-5) How about Jesus’ words: **“I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”** (John 6:35) **“Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.”** (John 7:37-38) **“This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me... This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.”** (1 Cor. 11:24-25) **FOOD!**
- These last few weeks of summer, we’re talking about **Soul Food**. Because *food* is one of the more common metaphors in the Bible, we’re looking at our spiritual journey through the lens of *food*—Soul Food. Today it’s about, **“The Ingredients: Follow the Recipe.”** Next week it’s, **“The Process: Let it Cook.”** And for the final week, **“The Meal: Serve it Up.”** Today it’s all about *Following the Recipe*—the *ingredients*—and we’re asking the big question, *What are the ingredients to a thriving life with God?* Let’s dig in.
 - Did you know that before people started calling us “Christians,” Acts calls the first believers, **“Followers of the Way”** (Acts 9:2, 22:4, 24:14)? Isn’t that interesting? *Followers of the Way*. Salvation is not just a *once-and-done gift from God*—it’s a *way of life*. It’s not only the gift of being forgiven from sin and freed from judgement—it’s the gift of walking in an ever-growing relationship with Jesus and learning to do life as His disciple. At Connection, we like to call it, *Connecting people with Jesus and the New Life He offers*. The Bible calls it, *“the Way of Jesus.”*

• **The Ingredients**

- So, *what is the Way of Jesus?* Once you put your faith in Christ to save you, what do you do from there? If someone asked you, *“What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus—what do you do?”* how would you answer? In other words, *what are the basic ingredients to a life with God?* One of the best Scriptures for this comes, again, from the book of Acts. After Jesus ascended and returned to heaven, and the Holy Spirit filled all the believers at Pentecost, their “new way of life” as *Followers of Christ* is captured beautifully in Acts 2: **“They devoted themselves to the**

apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who 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)

- I think this is a good recipe right here; I think if we break this passage down we can find up to 7 *core ingredients* for life in Christ. You could look at other Scriptures and define these ingredients lots of different ways, but this story gives us a really good starting point. So, what are they?
- **Ingredient 1) God's Word** – **"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching..."** This is the teaching of God's Word. God's Word is central, it's as simple as that. The Bible is God's inspired, authoritative word that reveals who God is and who we are. It's God's Great Story of the redemption of all things, and all of it points to Jesus. Jesus said, *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."* So, if your soul needs the nourishment of God's Word like your body needs food, how healthy is your soul right now? There are *so many resources* today to help us with this, but the bottom line is, we need to fill our lives with God's word: it's a key, indispensable ingredient of life in Christ.
- **Ingredient 2) Fellowship** – **"They devoted themselves...to fellowship...All of the believers were together..."** What do you think of when you hear "fellowship" in the church, honestly? The word for "fellowship" is amazing in New Testament and, honestly, it's a lot more powerful than we often think: this word "koinonia" means *partnership, participation, communion*. The BibleHub topical concordance defines it like this: *"Koinonia gathers the whole spectrum of Christian experience—relationship with God, unity of believers, sacramental participation, shared mission, mutual suffering, and material generosity—into a single word. Wherever the Spirit unites believers to Christ and to one another, authentic fellowship flourishes, displaying the life of the triune God to the world."* Wow. When you search the New Testament to discover how we're meant to live, you'll come to one conclusion: *there is no discipleship without relationship*. Do you have relationships with other Christians deeper than surface level? Where you can talk about what you're *really* dealing with? Learn together, suffer together, grow together in Christ? This is the life God designed us for, but so many live in quiet isolation. It doesn't have to be this way. Take the step, be courageous, reach out, join a Connection Group! *Fellowship* is key.
- **Ingredient 3) Worship and Communion** – **"They devoted themselves...to the breaking of bread...Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts...praising God..."** When this expression "the breaking of bread" is used, they're talking about *The Lord's Supper*. In the early days, Christians met for worship, and they'd share a meal. During the meal, they celebrated Communion—they believed that the Lord Jesus was there with them at the table, that His presence, His grace was coming to them through the bread and the wine. They believed Christ Himself was coming to them in the most intimate of ways to make them one with God and one with each other. Worship was the center of their life, and Communion was the center of their worship. 2,000 years later, we're still doing it. Don't undervalue the importance of gathering to worship—week after week, over time, it'll change the course of your life.
- **Ingredient 4) Prayer** – **"They devoted themselves...to prayer..."** Jesus modeled for us a *life of prayer*, and we're called to live a *life of prayer*—not just giving God our laundry lists, but living in a conversational relationship with Him, understanding how much authority we've been given in Christ to impact the world for His Kingdom. 1 Thessalonians simply says, *"Pray without ceasing."* Watchman Nee, the great Chinese pastor and church planter, said, *"Our prayers lay the rails upon which the purposes and plans of God can and will travel."* As a church, we're called to be a house of prayer, a people of prayer—and when we live this out, we'll see God's Kingdom in ways which can only be explained by His power—which leads to the next ingredient.
- **Ingredient 5) Spirit-Filled Ministry** – **"Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles."** This one verse speaks of remarkable manifestations

of God's power—healings and miracles—through the Apostles, just like Jesus—and the Bible says this can happen by faith for any follower of Jesus as God chooses to reveal Himself. We heard miraculous stories like this from our partners in India last week. But this verse points to a bigger reality that's at play for every member of the Body of Christ, not just in miraculous ways, but in ordinary ways: when we put our trust in Jesus, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, God's personal presence and power dwelling in us. The Spirit gives each of us gifts and a ministry to do in the church and in the world. Sometimes, it's very ordinary acts of service few people see; sometimes, it's remarkable displays of God's grace that can only be explained by the power of His Spirit. But no matter what, it always points to Jesus, for the sake of building up the church and extending His Kingdom in the world. A key ingredient of following Jesus is allowing God's Spirit to work through us to do His work in the Church and the World.

- **Ingredient 6) Service and Generosity – “All the believers...had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need...”** We just mentioned the *miraculous* and *supernatural*, but one of the greatest signs of the work of God's Spirit among people was the way they *served and shared*. Here, the abundant love of Christ overflowed and expressed itself in *practical ways, radical ways*. We can see the same abundant love at work in the church today when we let Jesus lead. He came into the world not to *be served*, but *to serve*; to lay down His life; not to *take*, but to *give*. This is how we are to live together, and in this world: we not only *speak* the Gospel, we *show* the Gospel by serving and loving like Jesus. How will you serve? Who will you serve? This is a key ingredient.
- **Ingredient 7) Multiplication – “And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”** Finally, you see what happens: *the Lord added to their number daily*. It multiplies! Something amazing happens when we live out this recipe of new life in Christ, by the Grace of God: we'll see other people's lives changed just like ours! If all these other ingredients are at work in your life, *Jesus is going to show up in your life*. People will notice, opportunities will come, and you'll find people *drawn to Jesus as they're drawn to you, and to this community of new life*. We're not just called to enjoy it for ourselves, but to share it, to multiply! If you genuinely live out the Way of Jesus, *multiplication happens*.
 - Have you ever had a great meal and asked someone, *what's the recipe?* It should be the same with our faith: by power of His Spirit working in us, may we live such lives that people would ask, *What's your recipe? What are the ingredients? How can I get in on that?* And we get to reply: *let me tell you about Jesus and the New Life He offers—let me show you the Way.*
- **Are You On The Way?**
 - What's the current recipe for your life? How's that going for you, what kind of results is that leading to? When's the last time you really checked the box to read those ingredients?
 - Can we be brutally honest for a second? Because nothing but the truth will set us free. For many of us Christians, we go on for long stretches of time living *quietly miserable lives*, simply because *we're not following the recipe*. Jesus has saved us and given us *a new way of life*, but we're still trying to do our own thing. He has set the table with the *best possible ingredients* but we're settling for lesser things and wondering why our bellies are empty. Listen, with Jesus, there's a better way, there's a new way to live now!
 - The truth is, all of us are different, and this will apply to each of us in unique ways. This isn't about “trying harder,” or earning God's love; this isn't another form of “self-help.” That's not the Gospel! This is about embracing what Christ has done for you and *responding* by letting His Spirit work through you, step by step, to live His Way, His ingredients for New Life.
 - So, I want us to finish by giving just a little space to reflect on this. I want you to take a look at these ingredients for life in Christ, and then reflect on these questions, prayerfully, as we go:
 - **7 Ingredients for Life in Christ (Acts 2:42-47) - God's Word, Fellowship, Worship & Communion, Prayer, Spirit-Filled Ministry, Service & Generosity, Multiplication**
 - Now ask yourself these questions, let the Lord lead you:
 - **Do my current ingredients lead to a life that looks more like Jesus? Or something else?**

- **What ingredients in my life do I need to strengthen and increase? what ingredients do I need to add? what ingredients do I need to remove?**
- **In light of this, how can I begin to pray right now for God to grow and transform my life?**