

Slide 1

What Kind Of Church Do We Want To Be?

ACTS 2:42-47

Introduction

1. What kind of church do we want to be?
2. When you first hear this question, you may think,
 - a. We want to be a New Testament church, or
 - b. We want to be the church which Jesus promised to build (Matthew 16:18).
3. But what does such a church look like?
4. What characteristics would it possess?
5. I believe we can find our answer in the text which was read for us a moment ago.
6. In these verses, Luke shares with us four distinguishing traits which marked these early Christians.
7. This morning, I would like for us to take a closer look at these first believers and ask ourselves, "Are we like them?"
8. When we have finished our study, I would like for all of us to make it our goal to emulate those early Christians.
9. As we do this, I believe we will find ourselves not only being the hands of Jesus, but thriving in the process.

[One of the first things Luke tells us is that the church established on Pentecost was . . .]

Slide 2

I. A Learning Church

A. "THEY DEVOTED THEMSELVES TO THE APOSTLES' TEACHING" (V. 42)

1. One might say that the Holy Spirit opened a school in Jerusalem that day.
2. Its teachers were the apostles whom Jesus had appointed.

3. There were 3,000 pupils in kindergarten!
4. Those new converts sat at the apostles' feet, hungry to receive instruction.
5. They devoted themselves to this new teaching.
6. The Holy Spirit constantly authenticated their message by the miracles He caused to take place "through the apostles" (v. 43).

2a**B. YOU AND I NOW HAVE THEIR TEACHING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.**

1. Today, our devotion to the apostles' teaching requires that we submit ourselves to the authority of God's Word.
2. We become like our brothers and sisters of old as we study and obey the teachings which we find therein.

2b

3. John Stott, in his commentary on this passage wrote that, "*the Spirit of God leads the people of God to submit to the Word of God.*"

Slide 3**II. A Loving Church****A. "THEY DEVOTED THEMSELVES . . . TO FELLOWSHIP" (V. 42)**

1. The word fellowship comes from a Greek term (κοινωνία) which has to do with the sharing or partaking of something with someone.
2. It further comes from a root word (κοινων) which speaks of that which we have in common.

Slide 4**B. WHAT IS IT THAT WE HAVE IN COMMON**

1. When you look at people who are related to one another by ancestry, you notice certain similarities:
 - a. Similar height and build.
 - b. Certain similarities in facial features or hair color.
 - c. Perhaps even some of the same mannerisms.
2. As Christians we have certain things in common.
3. These commonalities include those things which we share in together and

share out together.

4. We each share together in . . .

a. God, the Father

“And our fellowship is with the Father . . .” (1 John 1:3a).

b. Jesus, the Son

. . . and with his Son, Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3b).

“God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:9).

c. The Holy Spirit

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all” (2 Corinthians 13:14).

4a

2. What we share out together.

a. This includes what we give as well as what we receive.

b. This same word (κοινωνία) is the word Paul which used for the collection he was organizing among the Greek churches.

c. He called it their “participation in the support of the saints” (2 Corinthians 8:4).

d. This word has a ‘kissing cousin’ in the Greek (*koinonikos*), which means ‘generous’.

e. These first Christians shared their possessions with one another.

f. Luke said, “They gave to anyone as he had need” (v. 45).

g. That is what we have been trying to do for those whose lives were so disrupted by the flood.

h. In his first epistle, the apostle John put it this way:

“But whoever has the world’s goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? (1 John 3:17).

4b

- i. Again, it is John Stott who best describes this attitude and action of those early Christians: "*Christian fellowship is Christian caring, and Christian caring is Christian sharing.*"

Slide 5**III. A Worshiping Church****A. "THEY DEVOTED THEMSELVES . . . TO THE BREAKING OF BREAD AND TO PRAYER (v. 42)**

1. The fellowship of those early Christians was expressed not only in caring for each other, but in their corporate worship also — “the breaking of the bread and the prayers” (v. 42).
 - a. “The breaking of the bread” — a reference to the Lord’s Supper
 - b. “The prayers” — they prayed together on a regular basis, perhaps daily.
2. They were devoted not only in learning what God would have them do, but in their worship as well.

5a**B. LIKE THEM, WE TO MUST HAVE THE SAME BALANCE TO OUR WORSHIP**

1. Their worship was both formal and informal (v. 46).
 - a. It took place both
 - 1) “in the temple” — in the temple courts
 - 2) “from house to house” — in their homes
 - a) Supplemental to the formal worship
 - b) Spontaneous
 - b. We as the Lord’s church, today, need both.

5b

2. Their worship was also both joyful and reverent (v. 46).
 - a. There is no doubt as to their joy
 - 1) They are described as having gladness and sincerity (simplicity) of heart (v. 46)
 - 2) Because God had sent His Son into the world, and had now sent

them His Spirit, they had plenty of reason to be joyful.

- 3) Besides, “the fruit of the Spirit is . . . joy” (Gal. 5:22)
- 4) Every worship service should be a joyful proclamation of the mighty acts of God through Jesus Christ.

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

- b. Their joy was never irreverent
 - 1) Just as joy in God is an authentic work of the Spirit, so is the fear of God.

“Everyone was filled with awe” (v. 43).
 - 2) God was in their midst, and they knew it.
 - 3) They bowed before Him in humility and wonder.

Slide 6

IV. An Evangelistic Church

A. “AND THE LORD ADDED TO THEIR NUMBER DAILY THOSE WHO WERE BEING SAVED” (v. 47)

1. Those first Jerusalem Christians were not so preoccupied with learning, sharing and worshipping that they forgot about sharing the good news.
2. The Holy Spirit is a missionary Spirit who created a missionary church.

Slide 7

B. THE EVANGELISM OF THOSE EARLY CHRISTIANS INVOLVED THREE DYNAMICS

1. The Lord was their principal evangelist.
 - a. Luke tells us that it was “the Lord” who “added to their number”
 - b. He did so through . . .
 - 1) The preaching of the apostles
 - 2) The witness of the church members
 - 3) The impressive love of their common life
 - 4) Their example (v. 47a).

They were “praising God and having favor with all the people” (v. 47a)

b. What are we to learn from this?

- 1) He alone is the head of the church.
- 2) Jesus alone has the prerogative of admitting people into its membership and bestowing salvation from His throne.
- 3) Our evangelization of the world will not be through the triumph of human technology.
- 4) Instead, it will be our humble dependence on our Lord as the principal evangelist.
- 5) As Paul points out in 1 Corinthians 3:6 , we can “plant” the seed of God’s Word and “water” it, but it is God who causes the growth.

7a

2. Salvation and church membership were inextricably linked together.

a. Luke tells us that Jesus did two things at the same time (v. 47b).

“And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47b).

- b. The Lord did not add them to the church without saving them (no nominal Christianity).
- c. Nor did He save them without adding them to the church (no solitary Christianity).

7b

3. Evangelism was not an occasional or sporadic activity.

- a. “The Lord was adding to their number day by day” (v. 47b).
- b. Every day, the church was growing — new Christians were being added to their number.
- c. We need to recover this expectation of steady and uninterrupted church growth.

Conclusion

1. The marks of the first Spirit-filled community are all concerned with the church's relationships.
2. The challenge for each of us this year is that we become more like these first Christians by . . .
 - a. Submitting ourselves to the teaching and authority of God's Word.
 - b. Loving one another, even as our Lord has loved us (John 13:34)

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.” (John 13:34, NASB95)
 - c. Worshiping God together here as a congregation and in our individual homes with worship that is both joyful and reverent.
 - d. Working to reach everyone here at home and abroad who has not yet heard the good news of Jesus Christ.
3. Throughout this new year, as we continue to be the hands of Jesus, let's do everything we can to be like our brothers and sisters in the first century.
4. Remember three things which Jesus promised: Our responsibility is . . .
 - a. He will “build [His] church” (Matthew 16:18).
 - b. Satan will “not overpower it” (Matthew 16:18).
 - c. He will be with us always, “even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).
5. Today, if you have not turned from your sin and confessed Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, do so now.
6. Allow Him to save you by washing away your sin and guilt.
7. Know the new life which He promises you.