

Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Church's Core Activities, Pt 2

Acts 2:41-42

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PowerPoint Presentation included: none

Sermon Audio Blurb: We examine the tool given to the church to grow, learn and to worship. It is the apostolic teaching. These men, taught by the Spirit, gave the Church an abiding treasure to learn and cherish. And the model of the early church was one of devotion to the learning of it.

I. Introduction.

- A. Read Acts 2:41-42.
- B. As stated the prior sermon, in this passage we have six core activities upon which the early Church focused their time and energy.
- C. We looked at two of them last time, baptism and membership.
 1. And what we have in those two ideas, found in vs 41, is that the Church was comprised of those who were saved from eternal judgment, had placed their faith in Jesus Christ alone, were then baptized and then added to the initial 120 people.
 2. It was a gathering of those truly saved. Now they may have had unbelievers connected to them but only those who received the gospel message and were baptized in the name of Jesus were added. No more and no less.
 3. So I described this as the entry way into the visible Church. Believer's baptism brings you into the Church, but then through joining with a specific body of believers you enter fully into the life and responsibilities of the local church.
 4. These are hopefully one time events, though not always.
- D. Today we will focus on the next activity which is a devotion to apostolic teaching.
 1. Grammatically, the "they" in vs 42 is subordinate to the ones who were added to the church in vs 41.
 2. In other words, after being baptized and added to the church there then came a lifestyle change that occurred with these people. As new

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Christians they not only entered into a new relationship with one another and with God, but this then led to new activities that became their practice.

3. It is important to get this in your mind. A popular idea of the local church is that it is to be a seeker sensitive environment. The service, teaching and purpose is built around the non-Christian.
 4. However, what we see here is that the gathering and activity of the people was not centered on the non-Christian but those who were added into the church. To make this more clear, the gathering of the church is for the church, not for those outside it.
- E. We, therefore, saw two key activities that the church practices—baptism and membership. But these are single events for those who partake. The next four are different. They are activities that the church practices in an ongoing manner.
1. Note the terminology. “Devoted” “continued” “Continually devoting.”
 2. The term describes an ongoing habit that is persistent. It is used to describe a military aide who is always at attention ready to meet the needs of his superior. It is a faithfulness to something. It is to attach yourself to some person or activity to be always ready to act and receive. So in Mark 3:9 it is used to describe a boat that stands ready to receive its passengers.
 3. So we have here the natural consequences of being set apart by the Holy Spirit unto service to Jesus Christ.
 4. Unlike many you will meet in life who claim Christ, there was a clear outcome to repenting from sin and turning in faith to Jesus Christ. And the cause is through the work of the Holy Spirit.
 - a. He draws people of diverse walks and backgrounds to one another.
 - b. He brings their hearts to the Word, which He inspired.
 - c. He causes them to minister to one another through the use of the gifts He disperses.
 - d. In Colossians 3:14 we are called to put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. And this comes as a result of waking in accordance to the power and work of the Holy Spirit. For the fruit of the Spirit is love.
- F. Therefore, these next four activities bear close attention for us. These are what should mark out every church as its normal, consistent life.

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1. There are many things a church might do. Think about the activities you may have seen in a church you were part of.
2. MOPS, Teen ministry, Sewing ministry, Unwed mothers ministry, Jail ministry, Food pantry, Clothing ministry, Disaster outreach, Softball or basketball ministry and on and on.
3. But though these are activities the church may involve themselves with, they are not the core, the basics. When things go well the church can expand to other opportunities, but they can never forget the core activities.
4. And in the hard times, where the church has to retract and shrink due to persecution, world events such as war or pandemics and such, these are the activities they retreat to. These cannot be abandoned.

II. Core Activities of The Church.

- A. Devotion to apostolic teaching.
 1. A core activity of the gathered church is to learn the Word of God.
 2. We tend to gather to somehow “worship” or experience God. In fact we often call the time of singing as “worship.” But it isn’t.
 3. The idea of learning the Word of God is centered upon the gathered church rather than the individual. Though we as Americans tend to disagree. But in the gathered church of the New Testament we see the words, the teachings of the apostles taught.
- B. Let us first affirm then that all Scripture is good and necessary (2 Timothy 3:15-17).
 1. Old Testament at this time. All of it is breathed out by God. All of it has value and purpose.
 2. Remember the message Peter gave in the temple. Old Testament reference after Old Testament reference. A broad exposition and explanation of the Scripture.
 3. *“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.”* (John 5:24)
 - a. “My word.”
 - b. “Believes Him who sent Me.”
 - c. Has eternal life.

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- d. Does not come into judgment.
 - e. Where do these ideas come from? Where is Jesus pulling these out of? The Old Testament.
 - f. The Word of God is the vehicle through which revelation of God and His works and plans are understood. And this comes via the work of the Holy Spirit.
- C. Let us also affirm that all that Jesus said and taught was also the Word of God.
- 1. John 1:1 shows us that the Son of God is the Word.
 - a. He was there in the beginning when He spoke the universe into existence. He was there whenever the Word came to a prophet. He was there when the Word was given to Moses and Israel and it was written.
 - b. And then the Son of God became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14).
 - c. And when He spoke it was the Word of God speaking.
 - 2. John 14:24-26.
 - a. The intimate relationship between loving Jesus and loving His Word. His Word is the Father's Word.
 - b. And He tells the soon to be Apostles that in time they will learn from the Holy Spirit all that Jesus had taught.
 - c. And that is what our passage means by the teaching of the Apostles.
 - d. No idea of "red letter christianity."
 - e. And no idea of vague faith and experience. Jesus connects life closely with His word, His message.
 - f. John 8:30-52 (31, 37, 43, 51, 52).
 - 3. John 17:17, "Sanctify them the truth; Your Word is truth."
 - a. I always ask, when I mention this passage, if those listening actually believe it. And always I get the response of "yes" though so often actions that speak otherwise.
 - b. There is a movement that arises in cycles that is called "hyper-grace."

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- c. It is dangerous as well as very beautiful to look at. It is like the adulterous or prostitute who winks and nods at the foolish one until she lead him into destruction.
 - d. It trumpets the grace of God as over-abounding over sin but downplays the sanctifying work of the Spirit and the Word in the life of a true Christian.
 - e. Much talk about our freedom in Jesus Christ and little talk of our responsibilities and expectations in Jesus Christ. Much talk of forgiveness and acceptance and little talk of killing sin within our lives.
 - f. Here is a quote by one who exemplifies this idea, “We are nothing but a league of the guilty. You see I wish I could say that I do everything for God’s glory. You know 1 Corinthians 10:31: “Whether you eat, drink, whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God.” Who does that? For one second? . . . I wish I could say that I do everything for God’s glory. I can’t, neither can you. What I can say is that Jesus’s blood covers all of my efforts to glorify myself. That’s what I can say. I wish I could say that Jesus fully satisfies me. . . . I can’t, [n]either can you. What I can say is that Jesus fully satisfied God for me. That’s what I can say. That’s the gospel. I wish that I could say I let go of all I have for Jesus. . . . I can’t, [n]either can you. What I can say is that Jesus let go of all He had for me.” (Tullian Tchividjian)
 - g. On the surface this sounds good, but it is only half the story. We see this in pulpits throughout the land today. We see men who supposedly are expositing the Word say things like this, “God commands husbands to love their wives like Christ loves the Church. Wives are to submit to their husbands as to the Lord. Our mouths are to speak only good and not evil. But we fail and cannot do it as we ought, but Jesus did it for us so we are fine.”
 - h. But this is not how the bible teaches it. Jesus says that those who believe Him also believe His Word and follows it. They are made holy, set apart, sanctified in His Word.
 - i. Romans 5:20-6:1ff.
 - j. Titus 2:11-12.
- D. Finally, let us affirm that the primary place of instruction is the New Testament.

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1. This is not to denigrate the Old Testament.
2. But it does acknowledge that the teaching of the Apostles is the final word. Not a better word, but it is the final for it takes us to the end, the new heavens and earth. The fulfillment of every part of the gospel in which a Christian hopes.
3. The Old Testament looked forward to the coming Messiah who would redeem this world and save sinners. The Gospels describe and explain the coming of the Messiah who is Jesus Christ. We learn of His death and resurrection.
4. The New Testament after the gospels then move us outward from the Cross without ever severing us from the Cross.
 - a. In light of the death and resurrection we live in this manner.
 - b. So we marry or don't. We raise children. We labor in the marketplace. We talk, laugh and live. But always in light of our Lord and Savior.
5. Why is apostolic teaching critical?
 - a. We need it because in their teaching we receive Christ. What the Old Testament spoke of in shadows we see clearly now.
 - b. In their teaching we see the love of the Father and we see the power and hope of the Holy Spirit.
 - (1) *“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”* (Romans 5:8)
 - (2) *“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those . . . who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in fullest measure.”* (1 Peter 1:1-2)
 - c. We learn what we are apart from Jesus Christ, and we also learn what we are in Christ.
 - (1) *“What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; as it is written, “There is none righteous, not even one; There is none who understands, There is none who seeks for God”* (Romans 3:9-11)

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- (2) *“Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.” (2 Corinthians 5:17)*
- (3) *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:10)*
- (4) We learn how to view this world we live in.
 - (a) *“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Romans 12:2)*
 - (b) *“Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” (1 Jn. 2:15)*
- (5) We learn to see Our enemies in a different way.
 - (a) *But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Rom. 12:20-21)*
- (6) We learn what to pray for and why.
- (7) We begin to grasp that all that we have is by grace, even our obedience.
- (8) We learn that suffering is a normal path for the Christian. We discover that weakness and shame. One key part of what it means to take up our cross and follow our Lord.
 - (a) *“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. By no means let any of you suffer as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a*

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troublesome meddler; but if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed, but in that name let him glorify God.” (1 Peter 4:12-16)

- (9) We discover the end and purpose of the Old Testament
- (10) We learn how we view our wife or husband or our children.
- (11) We discovered that death is swallowed up in victory in Jesus. We discover that our sin is washed clean by Jesus. We see that there is no other way no other truth and now that no other life than that which is found in Jesus and Jesus alone.
 - (a) *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me. (John. 14:6)*
- (12) We discover why we gather with people from every walk of life and we find joy in it.
- (13) By the apostolic teaching we are warned, rebuked, instructed, reminded, encouraged, and a whole host of other divinely inspired results that are found only through and in the New Testament.
- (14) In the apostolic teaching we learn what it means to walk by the Spirit and His work.

III. Conclusion.

- A. It is the Word of God that is able to make a person wise unto salvation.
- B. It is the Word that makes the simple wise.
- C. It is the Word that enlightens our eyes.
- D. Why did the early church invest so much in knowing and learning of the Word?
 - 1. 1 Peter 1:23, 25; 2:2, 8.
 - 2. James 1:18, 21-23.
- E. Therefore it is necessary to always remember that God has revealed Himself in and through His Word. May we be found faithful in seeking to learn it, teach it and love it as God's very word to us.
- F. But do not stop there beloved, put it into action in every crevice of your life.

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1. You want to bathe in the Word; drink of the Word, and inscribe it upon your heart and mind with an indelible stylus.
2. You want it under your tongue and upon your lips so that you are prepared to give an answer for your hope to any who ask.
3. You want to have confidence that your words reflect God's revealed mind rather than whatever is the passing fancy of the moment.
4. Know it until you stop making it a series of inspirational quotes and you speak instead of its central message. For the bible focuses upon our rebellion and our desperate need of forgiveness and life. It speaks of God as our Sovereign Creator who judges us and finds us guilty. It speaks of our Savior Jesus Christ who is the only way we can be rescued from our sin. That Jesus Christ is the only person who can bring us into peace with God.
5. May we all seek to encourage each other in this most holy of tasks.

Benediction

May the God who gave us the Word sanctify us in it so that we might find ourselves strengthened in the truth, humble of heart, able to encourage one another toward love and good deeds, especially as we see the day of our Lord's return drawing nearer. Amen.