

18. The Book of Acts—2:43-47

(9/2/26)

We are currently in the third major section of chapter 2 which runs from verses 42-47, a section we're calling—**“The Practice of the Early Church”**:

Acts 2:42–47 (NKJV)

⁴² And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. ⁴³ Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, ⁴⁵ and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. ⁴⁶ So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

“And they continued steadfastly...(in a few things—four pillars)” v.42

1. *The Teaching of God's Word*
2. *Fellowship*
3. *The Breaking of Bread* (Communion)
4. *Prayer*

Why go back to the first century to learn how to do church?

What better example to model the church after today than the first century church as recorded in the Book of Acts?

It was Spirit-filled, growing, dynamic, vibrant and full of life—characterized by great joy, love and good works toward one another—it was the ideal church, and I believe the model for all Christian churches.

“And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” (v.47)

Evangelism was not a ‘direct pillar’ the early church was built upon but more of a *fruit* or a direct result of them living a verse 42 church life.

Now just because it says that **“the Lord added to the Church those being saved”** doesn’t mean they sat back and did nothing.

All it means is that everything they did was done in the power of the Holy Spirit Who was working through them producing fruit—which in this case was people getting saved.

But what is interesting to me about this is that it doesn’t actually say they went out *evangelizing* where they went out knocking on doors or doing street evangelism.

I’m not suggesting they didn’t do any direct evangelism— (The Great Commission)

But the text seems to be saying that they simply lived the Christian life with all their heart, loving God and each other—**“and the Lord added to the Church daily those being saved.”**

If I read my Bible correctly it seems like the Holy Spirit is telling us that the greatest and most effective kind of evangelism takes place through the witness of transformed lives.

This is what’s called **‘lifestyle evangelism’**—which refers to opening the door to a person’s heart by being a *‘living epistle.’* (2Cor. 3:2-3)

Lifestyle evangelism must precede any kind of *verbal* evangelism otherwise people will just label us hypocrites and ignore what we say.

Lifestyle evangelism contains 3 main components—

1. *Transformational Evangelism*
2. *Relational Evangelism*
3. *Ministerial Evangelism*

Along with lifestyle evangelism there is 'verbal evangelism' which also contains 3 components.

1. *Testimonial Approach*
2. *Scriptural Approach*
3. *Invitational Approach*

It's important to understand that any evangelism if it's going to be effective has to involve compassion (people don't care what you know until they know that you care).

The thing that made Jesus so different from the other religious leaders of His day (on a human level), was His compassion—and it was His compassion for people that made Him so appealing and caused people to be so drawn to Him.

It's interesting how differently Jesus saw people in contrast to how others saw them.

The scribes and Pharisees saw defiled sinners, whom they loathed—but Jesus saw hurting, broken, lost souls whom He loved.

The difference was seeing through the eyes of *compassion* as opposed to seeing people through the eyes of *condemnation*.

I think that was the biggest reason why Jesus was able to have such compassion for people was because He was able to look beyond the outward and into their hearts.

Proverbs 14:13 (NLT)

¹³ Laughter can conceal a heavy heart, but when the laughter ends, the grief remains.

The problem is we don't often take the time to consider that; we just make quick judgments instead of taking the time to try to see them through Jesus' eyes—eyes of compassion.

One Christian writer made this astute observation—

“My single greatest concern is the growing inertia I see in the Church, born out of our luxury and materialism....Most people think what the gospel needs is more clever, skilled people, when what it needs is more people who are willing to bleed, suffer, and die in a passion (and out of a heart of compassion) to see people come to Christ.”

One of the big problems that is hindering this soul-winning for Jesus is that many Christians have isolated and insulated themselves in their beautiful, comfortable church buildings (and campuses), from the very people that need them the most.

I see many churches that have lost their way, who have lost sight of their mission where the goal is no longer to go into the world seeking and saving those who are lost.

No, the goal is to gather in church with Christians, enjoy their fellowship around a cup of coffee and a meal in the food court, and even seek to network with them to sell products and services to the Body of Christ.

And what you wind up with isn't a vibrant, dynamic soul-winning church—but a sanctified social club!

Let me read this on the subject:

“On a dangerous seacoast where shipwrecks often occur there was once a crude little lifesaving station. The building was just a hut and there was only one boat, but the few devoted members kept a constant watch over the sea.

With no thought for themselves, they went out day and night, tirelessly searching for the lost. Some of those who were saved, and various others in the surrounding area wanted to become associated with the station and give of their time and money and effort for the support of its work. New boats were bought, and new crews were trained—the little lifesaving station grew. Some of the members of the lifesaving station were unhappy that the building was so crude and poorly equipped. They felt that a more comfortable place should be provided as the first refuge of those saved from the sea. So, they replaced the emergency cots with beds and put better furniture in the enlarged building. Now, the lifesaving station became a popular gathering place for its members, and they decorated it beautifully and furnished it exquisitely because they used it now as sort of a club also. Fewer members were now interested in going to sea on life saving missions, so they hired lifeboat crews to do this work. The lifesaving motif still prevailed in the club's decoration and there was a liturgical lifeboat in the room where club initiations were held. About this time, a large ship was wrecked off the coast and the hired crews brought in boat loads of cold, wet and half drowned people. They were dirty and sick and some of them had black skin, and some had yellow skin. The beautiful new club was in chaos. So, the property committee immediately had a shower house built outside the club where victims of shipwrecks could be cleaned up before coming inside. At the next meeting, there was a split in the club's membership. Most of the members wanted to stop the club's lifesaving activities as being unpleasant and a hindrance to the normal social life of the club. Some members insisted upon lifesaving as their primary purpose and pointed out that they were still called a lifesaving station. But they were finally voted down and told that if they wanted to save the lives of all those various kinds of people who were shipwrecked in those waters, they could begin their own life saving station down the coast—so they did. As the years went by, the new station experienced the same changes that had occurred in the old. It evolved into a club and yet another lifesaving station was founded. History continued to repeat itself and if you visit that seacoast today, you will find a number of exclusive clubs along that shore. Shipwrecks are frequent in those waters, but most of the people drown."

The person who wrote that little story wrote it as an allegory of the Church and how that the Church started out poor with a very simple mission—to seek and to save those that were lost.

That was the original mission of the Church which reflected the heart of our Leader, Jesus Christ, Who stated in Luke 19:10 that that was His mission on the earth.

He then commissioned us to go into the world and do the same.

This meant that He had called His Church to be a *lifesaving station*—not a comfortable social club.

There is great joy in saving the lost—however, it’s not just joy we receive from sharing the gospel with unbelievers.

Sharing the gospel with the lost—i.e., imparting the life of God to those we evangelize has a way of returning the life of God back to us!

Jesus said, “*Give, and it will be given back to you...*” (Luke 6:38 NKJV)

As you keep sharing the gospel with the lost, you will also keep being renewed and revived in your walk as well!

As one well-known evangelist has said, “*Evangelize or fossilize!*”

Alright, we’ve looked at the “**Practice of the Early Church**”—let’s look briefly at the “**Product of the Early Church**”—or in other words, what kind of fruit did all of this produce?

What were the results they experienced?

1. They were Awesome

"Then fear came upon every soul..." v.43

The Gk. word for *fear* doesn't mean "*terror*" or "*horror*" or "*to be afraid*"—it's a word that means "*awe, wonder, amazement*."

One pastor—

"It means all the unbelievers around them had the awareness that something supernatural was taking place—that God was with these people and working on their behalf, which gave them a sense of awe and wonder."

The Greek is literally—*"Every soul kept feeling a sense of awe."*

Something incredible was taking place and it was obviously of God.

Their lives were so powerful and the transformation so radical that unbelievers stood around watching with their mouths hanging open.

Jesus said, *"...you shall be witnesses to Me..."*

Vance Havner—*"We will move this world not by criticism of it nor conformity to it, but by combustion within it of lives ignited by the Spirit of God."*

It is my prayer that we would have this kind of effect on our community.

But before unbelievers are amazed and filled with awe at what God is doing among His people, the people of God must walk in the fear of the Lord—(Malachi ch.1—Explain)

1. They were Awesome

2. They were Dynamic

"...and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles"—v.43

But not just the apostles—

Acts 6:8 (NKJV)

⁸ And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people.

Acts 1:8 (NKJV)

⁸ "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

They were moving in that power; this group of believers was dynamic!

Why don't we see more of the power and dynamic of the Spirit in churches today?

Mark 16:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ "And these signs will follow those who believe...

Matthew 13:58 (NKJV)

⁵⁸ Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

3. They were Joyful—v.46

Acts 2:46 (NKJV)

⁴⁶ So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart...

The word '**gladness**' comes from a Greek word which means—"to rejoice."

Why were they so joyful? → It was due to the simplicity of their hearts and lives.

When you have simple desires, you will be glad with simple provisions.

They were able to appreciate simple things because their lives were not cluttered and complicated with a lot of material things.

So many Americans (even Christians) have so much but are still miserable.

Much of the lack of joy in people's hearts is directly related to the lack of contentment in their lives.

Ecclesiastes 4:6 (NKJV)

⁶ Better a handful *with* quietness Than both hands full, *together with* toil and grasping for the wind.

And Christians are not exempt from this trap.

Paul said, "...I have learned in whatever circumstance I find myself in to be content." (Phil. 4:11)

1 Timothy 6:5–10 (NKJV)

⁵ useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a *means of* gain. From such withdraw yourself. ⁶ Now godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. ⁸ And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. ⁹ But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all *kinds of* evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

"...they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart...praising God..." (v.46-47)

Their joy was expressed to God in praise (v.47)

The Psalmist said, "*My heart is overflowing with praise.*" (Ps. 45:1)

1. They were Awesome

2. They were Dynamic

3. They were Joyful—v.46

4. They were Magnetic

"...and having favor with all the people"—v.47

People couldn't resist the dynamic of this group.

They loved God, they loved each other, they loved the lost, and it made them attractive or 'magnetic' to the world around them.

One Church historian said this on the subject—

"Some of the reasons the early church found favor with the common people can be discerned from the apology written by the philosopher Aristides early in the second century:

'Now the Christians, O King, by going about and seeking, have found the truth. For they know and trust in God, the Maker of heaven and earth...From him they received those commandments which they have engraved on their minds, and which they observe in the hope and expectation of the world to come.

For this reason, they do not commit adultery or immorality; they do not bear false witness, or embezzle, nor do they covet what is not theirs. They honor father and mother and do good to those who are their neighbors. Whenever they are judges, they judge uprightly. They do not worship idols made in the image of man. Whatever they do not wish that others should do to them, they in turn do not do; and they do not eat the food sacrificed to idols. Those who oppress them they exhort and make them their friends. They do good to their enemies.

Their wives, O King, are pure as virgins, and their daughters are modest. Their men abstain from all unlawful sexual contact and from impurity, in the hope of recompense that is to come in another world.

As for their bondmen and bondwomen, and their children, if there are any, they persuade them to become Christians; and when they have done so, they call them brethren without distinction. They refuse to worship strange gods; and they go their way in all humility and cheerfulness. Falsehood is not found among them. They love one another; the widow's needs are not ignored, and they rescue the orphan from the person who does him violence. He who has gives to him who has not, ungrudgingly and without boasting.

When the Christians find a stranger, they bring him to their homes and rejoice over him as a true brother. They do not call brothers those who are bound by blood ties alone, but those who are brethren after the Spirit and in God.

When one of their poor passes away from the world, each provides for his burial according to his ability. If they hear of any of their number who are imprisoned or oppressed for the name of the Messiah, they all provide for his needs, and if it is possible to redeem him, they set him free.

If they find poverty in their midst, and they do not have spare food, they fast two or three days in order that the needy might be supplied with the necessities. They observe scrupulously the commandments of their Messiah, living honestly and soberly as the Lord their God ordered them.

Every morning and every hour they praise and thank God for his goodness to them; and for their food and drink they offer thanksgiving.

If any righteous person of their number passes away from the world, they rejoice and thank God and escort his body as if he were setting out from one place to another nearby. When a child is born to one of them, they praise God. If it dies in infancy, they thank God the more, as for one who has passed through the world without sins. But if one of them dies in his iniquity or in his sins, they grieve bitterly and sorrow as over one who is about to meet his doom.

Such, O King, is the commandment given to the Christians, and such is their conduct. ’’

This kind of church is hard to resist—and because they were a *magnetic* church—

5. They were a Growing Church—v.47b

"And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." (v.47)

They were living their Christianity to the fullest and doing their part (v.42-47a) and because they were doing what God called them to do, God did for them what only He can do (v.47)—saving the lost and building the church.

Pastor Chuck Smith—*"When the Church is what God has called it to be, then God will do for the Church what He has promised to do."*

Conclusion

This church was on fire for God.

I think most Christians want their lives and their churches to be on fire for God—so what's the problem?

The thing about a fire is once it's been lit—it has to be fed if it's going to continue to burn!

God lights the fire in every believer's heart once they get saved—it's our responsibility to continue to feed it if it's going to keep burning.

How? → "**They continued steadfastly...**" (v.42)

Then → v.43-47

Several years ago, our family vacationed in Colonial Williamsburg in Williamsburg, Virginia.

While we were there, we got a chance to tour an old colonial church built in the 1600's. (Finish)

The only fire we bring into this place for God is that which comes from the hearth of our own hearts.

And the only fire that will be there is the fire we kindle daily through our communion with Him.