

## Acts 2:41

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### Introduction: Consumer vs. Partner

- This morning we pause our series on Luke’s Gospel for a 4 week mini-series, entitled, “**Gospel Partners.**” *As you are turning to Acts 2, let me ask you to imagine...*



**Illustration:** Imagine with me that it’s Friday night and that you’re looking for a nicer restaurant to enjoy a Wisconsin tradition — the fish fry. You call ahead to get a reservation, and then you and your spouse embark for a night out on the town. Let me ask you — “WHAT ARE YOUR EXPECTATIONS FOR THE RESTAURANT EXPERIENCE?” If you’re like me, when you walk in the door, you expect to be warmly greeted and well-treated; after all, you’re a paying customer. If you have a reservation, you also expect to be seated without delay. Once you’re seated in a prime booth location (*because after all, you’re important!*), you expect the wait-staff to make contact with you almost immediately, asking what you’d like to drink, and then clearly communicating the day’s specials to you. You expect your waiter to check in on you multiple times before the food comes — and when it does come, it must be delivered promptly and taste amazing. And throughout the night, you really don’t want to be thirsty — so you expect the waiter to keep your glass full. If you slip away for the restroom, you should be able to find it, and it should be spotless. If the restaurant comes through on all these things, maybe you will review them on trip advisor and you’ll probably leave a nice tip.

! Now, keep those expectations for a good restaurant in mind and let me ask you: “HOW MANY OF YOU HAVE THE SAME SORT OF EXPECTATIONS FOR CHURCH?” You expect to arrive at a perfectly cleaned building every Sunday — no smudges on the front windows and no lint on the carpet. The lawn should be manicured to perfection. You should find a parking spot near the entrance. The greeters should smile in a way that’s big enough to look genuine, but not too big so as to look fake or cheesy. You should be given a bulletin and asked how you’re doing, because people should care about you — but they shouldn’t care too much, because you really don’t want people asking you about your spiritual life, because that’s too personal. Oh, and you should be able to take your kids to a nursery without giving too much thought that it takes other volunteers / servants for Jesus to staff and clean it. Even if you’re super late, you expect to find a good seat in the auditorium; yeah, the guys with the name-tags should save you one of those premium seats — you know, the ones on the back row. When it comes to the music, you expect it to be loud and joyful enough so that it’s clear we aren’t at a funeral, but quiet enough to be reverent. And then when it comes to the sermon, you expect that the preacher spent time in the original languages earlier in the week, consulting contemporaneous ancient literature to assess the appropriate range of meaning for each word. His sermon be true to the text, theologically sensitive, rich in application, and absolutely life-changing, BUT YET delivered in no more than 32 minutes. If you stick around after the service, you expect people to minister to you — they should ask you how they can pray for you, or ask

if you want to be discipled, or ask if you want to be best friends — even though you’ve never been to prayer meeting or a community group (*because, those seem a bit intrusive on your schedule*). **Oh..and I almost forgot about announcements... can they spare you some of this stuff?** I mean, you have the rest of your day to get to...so at the end of the service, you sure hope they don’t ramble on about sick people, meals, extra classes, evangelism, or missionaries. After all, you have brunch reservations at your favorite restaurant! Oh, and I almost forgot...if the church does all this well...maybe you’ll leave a tip.

 **Please forgive my obvious exaggeration, my hyperbole!** My point is that too often people approach the church as CUSTOMERS, who expect to be served by a business, when Jesus has called us to be PARTNERS, who are in this work of service together. *A customer says, “Serve me,” while a partner says, “Hey, we’re in this together!”* While Lakewood is blessed by a growing number of souls in attendance each Sunday, OUR GREATEST NEED AT THIS TIME IS FOR ADDITIONAL PARTNERS!

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**TEXT: ACTS 2:14-47 (FOCUS ON VS. 41)**

 **Context:** We begin our brief series on gospel partners, it’s important that we start all the way at the beginning of the church! Remember, while the gospel is almost as old as the dirt (**Gen. 3:15**), the Church is only 2,000 years old. It began on the Day of Pentecost in the early AD 30s. If you will remember, by this point, Jesus had already been crucified for our sins, had risen again, and had ascended into heaven. Before His ascension,

the risen Christ had instructed the Apostles to wait in Jerusalem for the outpouring of the all-powerful Holy Spirit, after which He promised that they would be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and even to the ends of the earth (1:8)! On the Day of Pentecost, then, roughly 50 days after the crucifixion of Jesus, the Holy Spirit came with great power, so that Peter preached an incredible gospel sermon, calling people to repent and believe in Jesus. On this day, 3,000 people received the gospel, were baptized, and were added to the church.

We are going to focus on vs. 41, this morning, but let's begin reading in Acts 2:22...

 **Acts 2:22-47** *“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know— 23 Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; 24 whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it. 25 For David says concerning Him: ‘I foresaw the Lord always before my face, For He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken. 26 Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; Moreover my flesh also will rest in hope. 27 For You will not leave my soul in Hades, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. 28 You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence.’ 29 “Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30 Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his*

body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, 31 he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. 32 This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. 33 Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. 34 “For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, 35 Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.”’ 36 “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” 37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” 38 Then Peter said to them, **“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”** 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.” 40 And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, **“Be saved from this perverse generation.”** 41 **Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.** 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.*

*Remember, we are going to focus on vs. 41, this morning...*

 SLIDE — **Acts 2:41** Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.

*I want to invite you to notice with me, this morning...an outline that it is not original to me.*

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### **3 BASIC STEPS TO BECOMING A GOSPEL PARTNER — (1) BELIEVE, (2) BE BAPTIZED, AND (3) BELONG.**

- ➔ My aim, this morning, is not so much to give each of us a theology lesson as it is to stir up our obedience!
- ➔ **Nevertheless**, it’s important that I point out that the Book of Acts is a historical account of a transition period in the work of God. What this means is that we’re reading a theologically-informed record of what **did happen**, not necessarily a command for what **should happen**. Acts simply describes what *did* happen. However, many times what did happen in Acts is also what should happen in the church today...**we just need to make sure that we account for the transitional nature of the book** (*for example, we have no Apostles today and the miraculous gifts of the Spirit are not presently functioning since the church has been established and since we have the completed Word of God*).
- ➔ But with all of that in mind, I believe that **Acts 2:41** gives us three (3) steps that should be in full effect today, representing

basic New Testament Christianity. Each one of these steps can be found and supported in the rest of Scripture: **Believe the Gospel, Be Baptized, and Belong to a Church**. You must take these steps in order to be a partner in the gospel work of Christ.

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## SLIDE — BELIEVE

### 1. Believe the Gospel

 **ACTS 2:41** THEN THOSE WHO GLADLY RECEIVED HIS WORD WERE BAPTIZED; AND THAT DAY ABOUT THREE THOUSAND SOULS WERE ADDED TO THEM.

 Peter had just preached a fiery bold sermon — yes confronting sin and unbelief — but ultimately pointing to the crucifixion of Jesus, His resurrection, and His enthronement in heaven as the Lord. He spoke of fulfillment of the OT Scriptures, the promise of the Holy Spirit, and the reality of future judgment. When the people were convicted by the Holy Spirit (“cut to the heart,” vs. 37), they cried out, **“What shall we do?”**

 **Acts 2:38** Then Peter said to them, **“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”**

 While this verse is quite difficult, please understand several things about it:

- (1) “You must repent (*that is, turn from sin to Christ*)” (**in this verse**) or “You must believe (*that is, put all your confidence in Him!*)” (**Acts 16:31**) or “You must repent and believe” (**Mark**

1:15) or “You must receive Christ” (John 1:12) or “you must be born again” by the Holy Spirit (John 3:7) — these are all acceptable biblical ways of saying, “**YOU MUST BE CONVERTED TO CHRIST! YOU MUST RESPOND TO THE GOSPEL! YOU MUST BE SAVED!**”

- (2) In the Early Days of Christianity, a profession of faith in Jesus and the act public water baptism — these usually happened on the same day in someone’s life (Acts 16:31-33). There was not usually a gap in time, as we see today. And so the day of one’s conversion to Christ could have been spoken of as the day of their repentance, the day of their faith, the day of their faith and repentance, the day of their baptism, the day of their being born again, and the day in which they received the Holy Spirit (or really any combination thereof!).
- (3) Peter’s words, then, “*Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins...*” — this could be understood and translated, “Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus, because of (or on account of) the remission of sins.” *In other words, the passage could be understood as saying that we all must repent (that is turn from our sin to Christ), and THEN be baptized because our sins have now been forgiven by Christ through repentance!*

 Acts 2:40 And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “**Be saved from this perverse generation.**”

 In short, Peter preaches the gospel message — how Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah, whose death on the cross provides

forgiveness of sins for all who will respond appropriately. *And our text says that some “received His word.”* In other words, they were converted.



**Illustration:** This past Monday, I was out on another long training run, but this time with Tim Struska from Lakewood (*thankfully, no phone calls of shame this week!*). We were running on one of my favorite routes and ended up on Waterville Rd. and noticed a house on an island in one of the small lakes. For some reason we started talking about what would happen if an island house caught on fire during that time of the year when the ice had just started breaking up and how difficult it would be to get the fire team to the house before it was totally lost. I mentioned that it would be both an irony and a tragedy for a house to go down surrounded by water. **And the more I thought about that statement the more I thought of its parallel.** What an irony and a tragedy it would be for someone who attends a gospel preaching church — someone who is constantly and weekly surrounded by truth of the gospel and people who actually believe it — **how tragic it would be for this one to face the fires of hell when they have been surrounded by a lake of gospel truth for their entire lives!**



Friends in Christ, my greatest fear as a pastor is that there are unconverted souls in this room every single Sunday — people who are surrounded by the truth, but have never personally embraced the gospel of Jesus Christ. *Notice that those who heard Peter preach the gospel “gladly received the Word.”*

⚠ Peter had told them that they were responsible for crucifying the Lord of glory (*You have taken [the Christ] by lawless hands, have crucified, and put [Him] to death, Acts 2:23*), but yet he also tells them that Jesus has been exalted and is now enthroned at the Father’s right hand until a future time when His enemies become His footstool (vs. 35, cf. Psalm 110). **At this point, they should be trembling, because** Peter is reminding these people who were responsible for the death of Christ that He would one day return and **RULE** in the midst of His enemies — **and this will certainly include their utter judgment!**

📣 The good news, however, is that these same people — who are present God’s enemies — they have the opportunity to repent, to be saved, and to receive the message — for, in a gracious irony, the cross for which they were responsible with wicked hands, was also the cross to which the Father delivered the Son in order to provide for their salvation (**Acts 2:23**). **AND SOME RECEIVED THIS MESSAGE!**

*To receive the gospel is to believe it; these same people that received Peter’s word are described in vs. 44*

📖 **Acts 2:44a** Now all who believed...

*Notice the parallel...*

📖 **John 1:12** But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name...

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## SLIDE — BE BAPTIZED!

### 2. Be Baptized

 **ACTS 2:41** THEN THOSE WHO GLADLY RECEIVED HIS WORD WERE BAPTIZED; AND THAT DAY ABOUT THREE THOUSAND SOULS WERE ADDED TO THEM.

- Those who received Peter’s word (which was the gospel) — these are the same ones who believed the gospel (in **vs. 44**) — **THESE SAME ONES** were then baptized.

 **Objection:** *Ah but Pastor Dave, I see where you are going with this... you think that if I have received the gospel, then I should be baptized! But are you sure that baptism is still for today? Wasn’t this just an early church thing?*

 **SLIDE — Matthew 28:19-20** Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.

 You see, Jesus commissioned the church to make disciples, to baptize them, and to teach them to do everything that Jesus commanded — and this commission has an expiration date — **“to the end of age.”** In other words, it lasts until Jesus returns!

 **Simply:** If you have received the gospel, you must be baptized; it’s a step of obedience to Jesus Christ.

 **SLIDE — What is water baptism?** It’s a ceremony in which a believer in Jesus Christ is immersed (i.e. dipped) into water in

order to picture (or symbolize) the gospel and to publicly identify with Jesus Christ. *Let’s dig into that just a little bit...*

- **Water baptism is for believers!** There are many examples of baptisms in the New Testament and surprisingly to some there is absolutely no record of anyone being baptized who was not already a believer or a follower of Jesus Christ. To be clear, this means that the New Testament never records the baptism of an infant or of an unbeliever. Notice how the rest of the data from the Book of Acts follows the same pattern found in **Acts 2:41** — they received the Word AND THEN were baptized!

 SLIDE — **Acts 8:12** But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.

 SLIDE — **Acts 16:14-15** “Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. 15 And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.” So she persuaded us.”

 SLIDE — **Acts 16:31-33** “So they said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.” 32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. 33 And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized.”

 SLIDE — Acts 18:8 “Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.”

- **Water baptism is to be practiced by immersion!** Only the practice of immersion — in which the believer is placed totally under the water and then is raised out of the water — only this ceremony clearly pictures the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

 Furthermore, the word “**baptize**” itself comes from the Greek word, *Baptizo*, which means “to dunk” or “to immerse.” Interestingly still, the Greeks had a different Greek word for the action of sprinkling, and that word is used by the Holy Spirit in the NT on several occasions. In fact, two times in Hebrews (9:13) and one time in 1 Peter (1:2), the Scriptures speak of the sprinkling of blood of Jesus. On another occasion in Hebrews, the author speaks of the sprinkling of the ashes of an heifer.

 **What’s the point here? What do ashes of a heifer have to do with baptism?**

 Simply this, when the authors of the Bible desire to communicate the splattering or sprinkling of a liquid, they did not write *baptizo*; rather, they wrote *hrantizo*. The same could be said for when the authors of the Scriptures spoke of pouring a liquid; they did not use *baptizo*, but rather they used other words.

 Likewise, when the Scriptures speak of the baptism ceremony, they do not use the words for sprinkling or pouring, instead they use the word *baptizo* for immersion — expecting that the persons involved would be fully placed into the water.

 **Now, some of you are skeptical.** *Ah, you can make those Greek words say whatever you want them to!*

 So let me assure you that this is not a case of a baptist spinning the original language for his own purposes. Notice what even Martin Luther and John Calvin wrote about the word *baptizo*. These are men who did not practice immersion.

 SLIDE “The word ‘baptize’ means ‘to immerse’; it is certain that immersion was the practice of the early church.” —John Calvin

 SLIDE “For this reason I would have those who are to be baptized completely immersed in the water, as the word says and as the mystery [gospel] indicates. Not because I deem this necessary, but because it would be well to give to a thing so perfect and complete a sign that is also complete and perfect. And this is doubtless the way in which it was instituted by Christ.” —Martin Luther

★ Even Luther admits that immersion was the way that Christ instituted baptism and that immersion is what the Greek word *baptizo* means!

 Furthermore, the pattern of the Scriptures is indeed clear that baptism should be conducted by immersion. *Consider Jesus’ own baptism...*

 [SLIDE] **Matthew 3:16** “When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him.”

 **Illustration:** Once of my favorite events in the life of Lakewood is baptizing publicly in our community. We used to do baptisms

in the Bark River downtown Delafield, and so I’ve gone out there the Saturday before — in my swimming trunks — in order to see if the water would be deep enough for immersions. Apparently, John the Baptist had done some scouting of his own for a suitable baptism location.

 [SLIDE] **John 3:23** Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized.

 John chose Aenon to baptize because there was much water there — and he needed much water to do pour-overs on people, right? No, of course not. Much water was needed because John put them all the way under. *Consider also...*

 [SLIDE] **Acts 8:38-39** So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. 39 Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing.

 **Illustration:** This summer, the Lakewood calendar is getting packed out with weddings, which of course, is tons of work, but a huge joy! In our culture, wedding rings are a symbol of marriage. When I officiate a wedding I typically say something like this during the exchange of the rings, “*Wedding rings symbolize an unending commitment to one another — a fitting symbol as this couple enters into a covenant relationship designed by God for permanence. The precious and abiding nature of these metals signify the precious and abiding nature of marital love. May these rings be the outward and visible symbol of an inner spiritual bond that unites your two hearts in a love commitment that never ends.*” The shape of the

ring symbolizes a never-ending love. The precious metals symbolize the value of the love. And the wearing of the ring publicly communicates, “**I’m committed to someone in marriage!**”

 A similar thing is true of Christian baptism! Just as a marriage ring is a symbol of a pre-existing relationship, so baptism is a symbol of a pre-existing relationship with Jesus. **When the believer is baptized, he publicly identifies with Jesus, as a believer!** Not only that, baptism is intended to be a living symbol of the gospel, so that when the believer is dipped under the water, they are picturing the death and burial of Jesus, and then when they are raised from the water, they are picturing the resurrection of Jesus. And they are saying that they have a relationship with Him; they are in union with Him.

 In keeping with this analogy, when Lutheran or Roman Catholic clergy members attempt to administer baptism to infants (*that is, people that have not come to saving faith in Jesus*), **they are doing the equivalent of putting wedding rings on unmarried people!** On the other hand, and in keeping with our analogy, in baptist churches there are far too many “married” people that are not wearing their rings. There are too many people that say they have a relationship with Jesus, but don’t think it’s urgent to identify with Him publicly.

 **Friend, if you have been born again, following the Lord Jesus Christ in believer's baptism by immersion is not an option for you; it’s a command!**

## BELONG!

### 3. Belong to a Church

 **ACTS 2:41** THEN THOSE WHO GLADLY RECEIVED HIS WORD WERE BAPTIZED; AND THAT DAY ABOUT THREE THOUSAND SOULS WERE ADDED TO THEM.

 **How many of you have heard something like this before when you ask someone what church they belong to?**

 *I am a spiritual person, but I find that I get so much more out of long prayer-walks in the woods than I do from being a part of organized religion.*

 *I don't want to talk about going to church, I want to talk about being the church.*

 *I don't believe in local church membership; I'm a member of the universal church and that is sufficient.*

 *I love Jesus, but I don't care much for church.*

*(BTW, that's kind of like saying, “Hey, I think you're really cool, but next time we get together, please don't bring your wife. She's super annoying and kinda smelly”).*

 I certainly do not want to ridicule the many well-intentioned people, who think this way (i.e. that church is dispensable). But folks, these perspectives on the church will simply not survive a biblical examination.

 The word “church” itself comes from the Greek word *ekklesia*, which was used widely in the first century, even in the secular world, to refer to a public assembly. In other words, that's what the word “church” itself means — an assembly or a gathering.

And so you can't rightly say that you are *being* the church in any significant way unless you are gathering with other believers to do what God says the church should do. Certainly, gathering is not all that a church does, but if you subtract regular gathering, then you don't have a church anymore. *That's why the author of Hebrews tells us in...*

 **Hebrews 10:24-25**, “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”

 Beyond that, if you are a child of God, God has gifted you with a spiritual gift, which Paul says in **1 Corinthians 12** has been given to you not for private usage on prayer-walks in the woods, not for the edification of the trees in the forrest, not for your blog or Facebook page, not so you can show your coworkers how smart you are, and not so you can use it when the universal church *finally assembles* in eternity — BUT RATHER, God has gifted you for ministry among the flesh-and-blood, problem-having-members of a real church, located in a real, tangible place.

 Beyond all of this, if you take the totality of the New Testament, the picture of a local church which emerges is a loving family of believers who have each been saved by faith in Jesus Christ, baptized by immersion, and are now unified in fulfilling the great commission, held accountable to live godly lives, cared for by elders, served by deacons, and regularly assembling for corporate worship —which should include prayer, the public

reading of Scripture, singing, teaching & preaching, and the proper observance of the ordinances.

 Now, the implication of this morning’s text (**Acts 2:41**) is that every professing Christian should be a known part of a church. The text says that they were “added to them.”

 **Added to what?** Thankfully the context makes this crystal clear that it was not a nebulous group.

 **Acts 2:47b** “And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”

 While it’s true that you should watch out for a church that’s preoccupied and infatuated with attendance numbers, conversion numbers, etc, it’s equally true that you should also watch out for a church that doesn’t care at all about numbers, because numbers are souls, and souls are precious. **The Early Church, while not infatuated with numbers, nevertheless, kept track of people.** *Consider these verses that describe how the church at Jerusalem kept track of the progress of the gospel...*

 **Acts 1:15** And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said...

 **Acts 2:41** Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.

 **Acts 2:47b** “And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”

 Acts 4:4 However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

 Acts 5:14 And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women...

 Acts 6:1 Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying...

 Acts 6:7 Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

 **The church at Jerusalem was tracking numbers; they knew who was a part of them, who belonged to them.** And this accounting of people cannot simply be explained by the transitional nature of the Book of Acts, for the rest of the New Testament assumes that the churches know who is a part of them and who is not a part of them. *Consider...*

 SLIDE — **Matthew 18:15-17** “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. 16 But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ 17 And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

 *How do you tell something to the church if you do not know who is part of it? How do you stop treating someone like they are part of the church and rather treat them like an unbeliever, if they aren’t known to be a part of the church to begin with? Consider...*

 **1 Corinthians 5:1-2** It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—that a man has his father’s wife! 2 And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you.

✓ Two more times in that text, the Corinthian church is told to remove this brother from the church (“deliver him unto Satan,” vs. 5 and “Purge out the leaven,” vs. 7).

 *Again, how do remove someone from a church of which they are not known to be a real part? (Isn’t that kind of like breaking up with someone who never agreed to be your girlfriend?!)*

 **Hebrews 13:17** Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

✓ Our pastors are not pastors of the universal church; rather, we are pastors of the local church. And we will give an account to God for how we watch for souls.

 While we are not accountable for every soul in Waukesha county, how do we know for which souls God will hold us accountable?

 Each of these texts presupposes that the church must have a mechanism to know who is “in” and who is “out” — who is part of the church and who is not.

**Conclusion:** Folks, at this season, Lakewood needs more partners. Believe, be baptized, and belong — these are the foundations to partnership in the gospel.

- In the early days of Lakewood, I was so concerned with being legalistic that it's possible that I failed to emphasize simple these steps of Christian obedience.
- There is an appropriate time for investigating a new church. There is an appropriate time for healing. It's ok to be investigating. It's ok to be healing. You just can't stay in that spot, investigating and healing for the next 3 years. You've got to move on!
- Lakewood needs more partners in the gospel. Which step do you need to take?
-