

## **Acts: Barrier Breaking Faith #3**

Focus: Acts 2:42-47 & 4:32-36

### **The New Testament Church**

Acts 2:42-47, along with Acts 4:32-36, are considered foundational for understanding the functions of not only the first century church, but for all churches. Five basic purposes of a healthy and growing church are found in examining of the activities of the early church.

#### **1. Growing Deeper by Discipleship**

*2:42 They devoted themselves to the apostles teaching.* It led them to be obedient word-saturated and gospel-centered people, full of the joy of their salvation in Christ. Their actions came from knowing their purpose from scripture as the people of God. The teaching would have been from seeing the Old Testament from the eyes of Jesus. His teaching was authoritative giving the correct understanding of faith in God. A prominent example of his teaching is found in Matthew 5-7, the Sermon on the Mount.

See the handout: *100 Prophecies Fulfilled by Jesus*

In the Great Commission Jesus said: *Go, therefore, and **make disciples** of all nations.* (Mt. 28:19-20). Discipleship remains a priority of the church.

The disciplines of the faith include Prayer. **Prayer** undergirds all that the church does as we pray in Jesus' name. Jesus taught his disciples to ask in His name John 14:13-14. Out of ten days of faithful prayer came Pentecost. Peter asks for prayer for more boldness in spiritual warfare Acts 4:29-30, as did Paul in Ephesians 6:18-19. Later in Acts, out of prayer Peter was set free from prison 12:12 as were Paul and Silas 16:25.

#### **2. Growing Stronger in Worship**

*2:42 to the breaking of bread 2:46 meeting in the temple 2:47 praising God*

One pastor wrote, when we gather for corporate worship we SING the gospel Word, PRAY the gospel Word, READ the gospel Word, HEAR the gospel Word preached, and even SEE the gospel Word in the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. There is a lot of truth to his statement, but worship is an encounter with the living Word made present by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, who lives in us, centers our life of faith in the truth of our relationship of faith in Christ.

God is the center of worship! The tabernacle was at the center of the Israelite camp and the temple was at the center of Jerusalem. Love of God, as spoken in the Great Commandment (Mt. 22:37-38) focuses our worship! The elements of worship assist us in knowing God and growing in our relationship to God, and then honoring him in the worship of doing His will (Rom. 12:1-2). Corporate worship in homes and in the temple gave energy to the mission of the church.

Their worship included great testimony and signs and wonders for the authentication of the gospel and of the church as witnesses. All gifts are given for the common good, but not all gifts are held in common by each believer (1 Cor. 12:4-11). Each gift helps the church fulfill its full mission.

### 3. Growing as One in Fellowship

2:42 *...to the fellowship* 2:44 *Now all believers were together and held everything in common* 2:46 *Everyday they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple and broke bread together house to house.* 4:32 *..were of one heart and mind.. they held everything in common..*

Fellowship includes food and meeting the needs of life together, but there is much more. As with worship, at fellowship's very core is Jesus' command to love. *Love one another.. love one another so that the world will know you are my disciples* (Mt. 22:38; Jn. 13:34-35). To "Love like Jesus" is not just a phrase, but is at the center of encouraging, united, and gracious fellowship.

The witness of fellowship is in the unity or oneness of the church (Jn. 17:21). It shows that believers are living in a right relationship with God and one another. Oneness, peace and love as expressed in grace to each other is attractive. God uses "sweet fellowship" among Christians to draw people to hear the gospel and be saved.

### 4. Growing Broader in Service Ministry

4:34 *there was not a needy person among them.* 2:43 *..many wonders and signs were performed through the apostles* 4:33 *with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and great grace was upon them all*

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 4:20, *For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.* He also wrote in Ephesians 2:10 NLT *For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.* Power and works go together as we serve in Jesus' name. Wonders can be works, for healing is both a help and miracle at the same time. Works that are done out of grace gifts, charisma, can be a wonder to people, that you would love them that much.

Jesus authenticated himself through acts of service and signs and wonders. See Luke 4: 18-19; Matthew 11:4. Also see John 20:31. Jesus' teaching in the Parable of Talents, "well done good and faithful servant", and the Parable of the Sheep and Goats, "as you have done unto the least of these so you have done unto me", as found in Matthew 25, speaks of acts of service as an indication of genuine faith. James 2:14-18, 1 Peter 2:12, 15 and 1 John 3:17-18, echo speaking truth and doing good.

### 5. Growing Larger in Evangelism

Acts 1:8 set the tone. Every event of worship and service became an opportunity to preach, and declare Christ as the Savior, 3:16; 4:10-12. *"let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified and whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing here before you healthy. <sup>11</sup> This Jesus is the stone rejected by you builders, which has become the cornerstone. <sup>12</sup> **There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved.**"*

The Word - Wonders – Bold Witness: all combined powerfully and led to many salvations. *Every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.*