



CALVARY
TUSCALOOSA

TEACHING PLAN
OCTOBER 4, 2020



GATHER

ACTS 2:40-47

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TEACHING PLAN

PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying Acts 2:40-47. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools (such as a concordance or Bible dictionary) to enhance your preparation.
- > Determine which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > Pray for your pastors, the upcoming group meeting, your teaching, your group members, and their receptivity to the study.

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: The local church exists to glorify the one true and living God by connecting believers to Christ, His Word, and each other, and by laboring to be witnesses of the gospel of Jesus Christ so that unbelievers might connect to Christ also. This is the purpose for our gathering.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: Our gathering with one another is vital as the family of God.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: We are connected as family through the saving work of Jesus.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

- 1 Have you ever planted a garden or a field from seed? What was the process like? Was it difficult? Did you have success?
- 2 What contributed or detracted from the results you saw?

When the farmer sends the farmhand out into the fields in early spring to prepare the fields and plant seeds, he is to concern himself with completing that job and nothing else. It isn't his worry or responsibility to concern himself with the fruit that will be eventually produced. He has been given a specific responsibility, and to go beyond what his master has told him would be unwise. For example, he might decide that he wants to see the fruit grow faster so he goes into the barn to find some fertilizer to spread on the field. Or maybe he concludes the seeds would sprout faster if he plants them shallower. Yet, neither of these are the task he has been given. He is only to be obedient to the tasks given by the farmer.

Sadly, many Christians are like this unwise farmhand when it comes to conversions. They forget that God is the Master, and He will bring about fruit in the manner He sees fit. He has graciously allowed Christians (His farmhands) to labor in His fields, but not as we please. He has given us specific instructions. Our job is to trust the Master and complete our task faithfully. The results are to be left in His hands.

In our passage today, we will seek to discern some principles that can guide us as individuals and as a church concerning our efforts to connect ourselves and others to Christ.

ALTERNATE INTRODUCTION

How can a person determine what is most important in life? How might we discern this despite what we or others might say is most important?

What is to be most important in the life a follower of Jesus?

Those who truly treasure Christ will make whatever sacrifice necessary in order to connect to Him and help others connect to Him. If a Christian is willing to give up his or her own dreams, desires, and preferences to follow the instructions the Lord left in His Word, this shows where their true treasure is. The Lord has called Christians to be devoted to Him in the context of their local church as it gathers to worship the Lord according to Scripture. Let's consider what that means by studying Acts 2.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Notes:

From the time of Abraham, a people set apart for God has been a central theme of the history of God's purposes on earth. He chose Abraham through whom He established the people of Israel based not on their merit but on His good pleasure. Yet, their esteemed position was always intended for the glory of God and the blessing of the nations (Gen. 12:1-2).

So it is with the church of Jesus Christ across the globe today. Christians have been chosen and set apart by God. They have been adopted into His family, enjoy the many benefits of being His children, and look forward to eternal life. They are, indeed, the most blessed people on earth. However, this blessing isn't meant to be hoarded. Christians have been blessed so that they can be a blessing to others. All of this brings great glory to God.

> Have a volunteer read Acts 2:40-41.

With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation."⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

What does the Bible say about gathering? How did the early church gather? Acts 2 provides important insight for the church today as we seek to walk in obedience to the commands and principles found in Scripture. It's true that churches across the world gather in many different ways. However, the primary elements of the gathered church are timeless and universal. These were established in the first churches and are defined in the writing of the New Testament. We will discuss those elements with more detail in our second passage. First, let's establish what a church is.

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- What was the context for the events that we see in Acts 2:40-41? What do these two verses help us to know about the church?

Notes:

The gathered church is centered around the Savior, Jesus Christ. He is the author and finisher of our faith, and all that we hope for and hold dear to is linked to Him. The local church is all about connecting to Christ. But who is the church?

In Acts 2, Luke gave an account of the coming of the Holy Spirit, the gathering of the crowd, and Peter's preaching on Christ. The passage that we are studying today is what happened as a result of that. Peter ended his sermon by pleading with the crowd telling them to save themselves from their corrupt generation. Acts 2:41 describes what happened to those who connected to Christ through Peter's preaching. Luke reported, "Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day." This is extremely important. We are given a pattern to follow today to help us know who should be a member of the church and who is not. Luke mentioned three things that took place in those who came to Christ:

- They accepted the message.
 - They were baptized.
 - They were added to the group of believers.
- What implications does this have for churches today?

 - Why is it important that we continue to gather?

Churches are the context in which people can connect to Christ for the first time and then develop in their relationship with Christ. This is what we see happening in Acts 2. The Bible lays out the way in which a person is to come to Christ. We aren't free to change these fundamental parts.

Notes:

Peter preached the gospel first. This can't be overlooked. How should Christians seek to connect people who are dead in their sin to Christ? They should get the gospel to their ears. Other means to attract people to Christ that are incongruent or devoid of the gospel of Jesus Christ are ineffective and displeasing to the Lord.

The three markers that Luke laid out help churches today know what to expect from people who have truly been born again. First, they will receive the message of the gospel with faith and repentance. Second, they willingly and joyfully enter the baptismal waters. If a person refuses to be baptized after receiving biblical instruction and claiming faith in Christ, then there is reason to doubt their spiritual life. Finally, they will be added to the group. In other words, they will see themselves as a part of the local church and become a part of it through regular attendance and commitment to the well being and growth of other Christians.

> Have a volunteer read Acts 2:42-46.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts . . .

The church has been established by God as one of the primary avenues by which He accomplishes His purposes on earth. The church is made up of the redeemed of the Lord who have heard and responded to the gospel, followed the Lord in baptism, and committed themselves to the local church. This local church is led by pastors who faithfully watch for the souls of the sheep of the flock.

Notes:

Pastors, however, are not the supreme authority of the church. Jesus Christ and His Word are. It is for this reason that pastors are often referred to as undershepherds. They are stewards who have been put in charge of the flock. They aren't free to do as they please, but will be held accountable to the Chief Shepherd as to whether or not they cared for the flock according to the Word of Christ.

- What does Acts 2:42 indicate about the activities and priorities of the first church?

When the church gathers, the congregation connects with Christ. As individual members connect to Christ, they grow in the knowledge and grace of the Lord. They develop in their spiritual life. This is a right and fitting thing as we will see in more detail next week.

It is important to ask the question, "What should churches do when they gather together?" Pastors aren't free to do whatever they please with the flock, but are bound to lead and shepherd the flock according to the commands of Scripture. In Acts 2:42, Luke listed the priorities of the church. We must keep in mind that Luke was very careful about what he wrote, and he listed these four things on purpose. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit inspired Luke. It would be a mistake to take this verse as random or non-representative. Luke expressed, with precision, what the church did that might be used as a pattern for our gathering today. First, they were dedicated to the teaching of the

apostles. Second, they emphasized fellowship. Third, they practiced the Lord's Supper. Finally, they prayed.

What do we learn here? The number one priority for the early church was the teaching of doctrine. The next principle that we should notice is the fact that their activities were not geared toward attracting lost people, but toward feeding the sheep of the flock. We should be careful not to misapply this verse and assume that it is sinful for churches to do anything other than those four things. There are other activities that churches should engage in (such as singing) that are prescribed in Scripture.

Notes:

- What sticks out to you about the church in verses 43-46?

Luke painted a vivid picture of the rhythms and posture of the early church in these verses. We should note a few themes that we see here. First, the believers cared deeply and sacrificially for one another. The text says they had all things in common, and some even sold property and possessions to meet the needs of fellow believers. Second, their fellowship was anchored in Christ and their commitment to Him. This wasn't some social club. They were bound together due to their love for Christ. This is seen by the fact that they gathered together daily to worship. Finally, the lives and fellowship of the believers were marked by joy. Luke reported that they had glad hearts and praised God.

- What can we take away from these verses?
How should we apply these principles specifically to the ways we gather today?

The primary takeaway from this passage is that the Lord has designed the church to work in a certain way with certain parameters so that His children might experience the fullness of His goodness and grace.

Churches aren't free to gather according to their own wisdom and understanding but should seek to follow the commands and patterns of Scripture as they seek to complete the mission of connecting people to Jesus.

Notes:

> Have a volunteer read Acts 2:47.

. . . praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

The New Testament church was relentlessly focused on Jesus. They were either proclaiming Christ in the streets, worshiping Christ together, or rejoicing in Christ throughout the rhythms of everyday life. Something wonderful happens when Christians live, worship, and share in this way. The Lord adds to their number. There is a certain allurement of the gospel that God uses to draw people to Christ. When people live in close connection to Christ, this is often an entryway for others to connect to Christ who have never known Him before.

- How did the lives of the believers described in Acts 2:43-46 contribute to the result we see in Acts 2:47?
- How might our church look different if we lived together in this way? How might our community look different if we did this?

The believers that Luke described in Acts 2 made the teaching about God their Savior attractive (Titus 2:10). We know that the work of salvation is a deep and mysterious work of God and that we can neither force or argue a person into faith. But throughout the centuries, God has seen fit to reveal Himself in Christ Jesus to lost people through the allurement of gospel believing and living Christians.

When Christians let their lights shine before others that they might see their good works, then God is glorified and the gospel is beautified (Matt. 5:16). These are the good works for which Christians were created in Christ Jesus to perform. God uses our times gathered together to amplify His work in us as His body.

Notes:

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

- 1 Why is it important to gather together and worship the Lord in the way that He prescribed? Do you give God's Word and prayer the priority that they deserve in your own personal devotion times?
- 2 What needs to change in your life in order to make the truth of the gospel more attractive to others according to the way it has impacted you?
- 3 What opportunities do you have this week to adorn the gospel of Jesus Christ with your life? How will you respond?

PRAY

Give thanks to God for His mercy and kindness in rescuing you from your sins. Thank Him for your local church and the many opportunities that you have to connect to Christ and to connect others to Him also. Ask for the grace to be faithful and bold in these opportunities as we gather together.

FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following information:

Notes:

- > Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
 - How has God revealed that you need to treasure our gathering together more based on this week's study?
 - What are some ways you might give priority to this?

- > A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.

- > The challenge to memorize Acts 2:41.

ACTS 2:40-47

2:40-41. Luke hastens to tell us we do not have the entire sermon recorded in his book. Peter spoke many other words and pleaded with his hearers who responded. That day God added three thousand people to the small number of believers already serving as Christ's witnesses. But wait. Don't miss the importance of what Luke does not say. This time there was no sound, no flame, and no foreign language. These people received the Holy Spirit because that's what Peter promised in Jesus' name. Pentecost was a one-time event, with only a mild echo or two appearing elsewhere during the first century.

Notes:

Are we to believe that Peter baptized three thousand people on that one day? Of course not. The Bible knows no hierarchical system whereby people must be baptized at the hand of some official or titled clergy. We should probably assume all 120 believers assisted in this magnificent demonstration.

In the space of just a few verses, we see what happens when people trust Christ for salvation. First, they must recognize their need; then, they must receive God's gift; and finally, they must obey the message.

2:42. At various times in Acts, especially in the early chapters, Luke gives summary reports of how the church is doing. Here we have the first. In it our author describes what a biblical church really looks like, not only in the first century, but in every century from the Lord's ascension until his second coming.

A biblical church is marked by teaching. Thousands of new converts needed to understand precisely how Peter linked Old Testament text with the ministry of Jesus. Theologians call it "Messianic

Christology.” It became the core of New Testament doctrine.

Furthermore, the new Christians engaged in fellowship. Someone called the church “the colony of heaven.” Here the believers fulfilled the words the Lord gave his disciples just before the crucifixion: “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:34-35).

Notes:

Then the believers joined in breaking bread—Luke’s term for what Paul calls “the Lord’s Supper.” Quite possibly they practiced it differently than many churches do now, likely with a full meal. Still, the memorial to the Lord’s death until he comes again remains the central theme of believers breaking bread together. Quite likely, the phrase also describes Christians fellowshiping together at meal time.

Their worship also included prayer, in our text literally, “the prayers.” New prayers and old. Probably public and private.

2:43-45. In addition to their worship, these believers became actively involved in the work of the Lord. Luke uses the same language to describe the apostles that he used of Jesus in 2:22. The miracles showed evidence of a new era. God gave miracles when Moses brought down the law and when Elijah and other prophets thundered a new message across Israel. “Miracles” does not appear in Acts after chapter 15, even though God continued to do miracles beyond that point.

Their work also included learning how to live and love together. They sold their possessions and made sure everybody had plenty. Communism? Absolutely not—this was voluntary, contemporary, and discretionary.

2:46-47. The early church was marked by faithful attendance—meeting together daily in the temple courts. They prayed, gave, ate, and rejoiced together. They practiced the presence of Jesus—still a good idea for his people. Luke makes good use of the Greek word *homothumadon*, translated together, applying it in 1:14; 2:46; 4:24; and 5:12.

Notes:

Their witness included a demonstration of hospitality. No home would be large enough to house even a small group of believers for a short time, so they literally went house to house. Luke wants us to see how good it was— they enjoyed favor with the people. Not the Sanhedrin, but common folks all around the city. Witnessing may be the main theme in Acts, but praising certainly represents a secondary strain common in Luke's writings (the word *ainountes* is used nine times in the New Testament, seven by Luke). What happens to believers who worship, work, and witness for their Lord? The Lord grows the church. Let's not miss the order—first godly relationships with each other, then growth.