

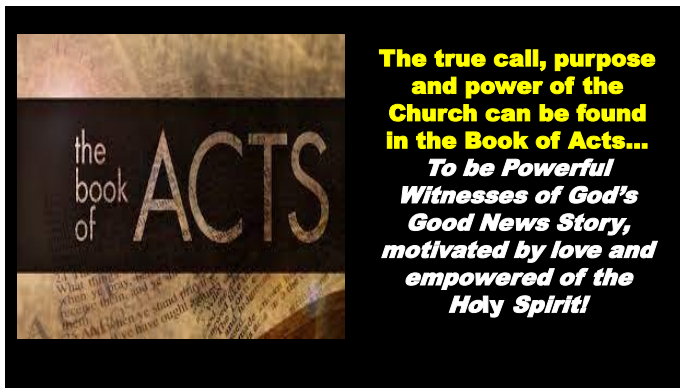
February 25, 2024

God's Good News Story: The Church Alive & Growing

The Book of Acts Pt 4

Acts 2: 42-47 – A Healthy Church Body

Our theme for 2024 is God's Good News Story, Continued... ***"The Church Alive & Growing"***. For the past few weeks, we have been looking at the basic descriptions and the true call & purpose of the Church.



Today we pick up with the early church members basking in and enjoying the new found power and joy of the Holy Spirit within each of them. This passage shows us that when we truly allow the Holy Spirit to fill and guide us we will be healthy and holy. It is interesting to point out that Luke, the writer and compiler of the Book of Acts, was an actual Physician, a Doctor who helped people be healthy physically. Here he is also guiding us how to be healthy Church spiritually!

Let's read **Acts 2: 42-47**... ⁴² *They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*

⁴³ *Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.* ⁴⁴ *And all the believers were together and had all things in common;* ⁴⁵ *and they would sell their property and possessions and share them with all, to the extent that anyone had need.* ⁴⁶ *Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart,* ⁴⁷ *praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.*

This is one of the Key passages in the Book of Acts. It helps us get a clear picture of what the early Church saw as their role and calling. It shows the personal and powerful commitment of the people to be the true body of Christ and to continue God's Kingdom Mission to bring salvation to all people, everywhere.

DESCRIPTIONS OF A HEALTHY CHURCH FROM DR. LUKE

• **Devotion to the Word** (Acts 2:42a)

⁴² *They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*

They had a healthy diet of reading & studying God's Word, the Bible. They blended the study of the Bible along with the insight and guidance of the Holy Spirit. That is a powerful & healthy combination.

- **Devotion to Fellowship With One Another**
(Acts 2: 42b, 44)

⁴² They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

In addition to a passion and devotion to God's Word, they also had a great love and care for one another. It is obvious that God wants His children to care for one another and show true love and concern. Below is just a sample of the approximately 59 "one another sayings in the New Testament.

Love one another (John 13:34 - This command occurs at least 16 times)

Be devoted to one another (Romans 12:10)

Honor one another above yourselves (Romans 12:10)

Live in harmony with one another (Romans 12:16)

Build up one another (Romans 14:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:11)

Be likeminded towards one another (Romans 15:5)

Accept one another (Romans 15:7; (Romans 15:14; Colossians 3:16)

Greet one another (Romans 16:16)

Care for one another (1 Corinthians 12:25)

Serve one another (Galatians 5:13)

Bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2)

Forgive one another (Ephesians 4:2, 32; Colossians 3:13)

Be patient with one another (Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:13)

Be kind and compassionate to one another (Ephesians 4:32)

Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs
(Ephesians 5:19)

Submit to one another (Ephesians 5:21, 1 Peter 5:5)

Consider others better than yourselves (Philippians 2:3)

Look to the interests of one another (Philippians 2:4)

Bear with one another (Colossians 3:13)

Teach one another (Colossians 3:16)

Comfort one another (1 Thessalonians 4:18)

Encourage one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

Exhort one another (Hebrews 3:13)

Stir up one another to love and good works (Hebrews 10:24)

Show hospitality to one another (1 Peter 4:9)

Employ the gifts that God has given us for the benefit of one another.
(1 Peter 4:10)

Clothe yourselves with humility towards one another (1 Peter 5:5)

Pray for one another (James 5:16)

Confess your faults to one another (James 5:16)

- **Devotion to Breaking of Bread** (Acts 2:42c, 46b)

⁴² They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴⁶ Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart.

In these earliest days of the Church, it appears they gathered together often, if not every day with other believers for a meal and the Lord's Supper or Communion. It seems that as time passed the frequency often moved to once a week or less as the church grew and scattered. The point doesn't seem to be the frequency, but the fact that it should be a regular and vital part of the life of the Church. Also, this shows that the Church needs to place a high priority on meeting together on a regular basis utilizing both small group and large group settings.

- **Devotion to Prayer** (Acts 2:42d)

⁴² They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Prayer was another vibrant part of the early church. Numerous times in the books of Acts it describes the church at prayer and the importance of also praying with other church members. A healthy church is a praying church.

- **A Spirit of Awe & Powerful Movement of God** (Acts 2:43... *Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.*)

This verse is a little challenging in some ways. It can be misinterpreted if not careful. I am not 100% sure what the full meaning of this verse might be, but I am sure that the key point is that the people were intensely aware, attuned to, and expecting of God's might work among them. The early church knew that their God was powerful and was moving mightily among them. In these early days it appears that signs, wonders, and miracles were more prominent than in later times. It may be that the great number of wonders was God's way to help establish the authority the early church as His chosen vessel to

extend and build His Kingdom. Once these wonders were shown there is no need to keep "testing God" or demanding "signs" to prove authenticity. Once this foundation is laid it is not necessary to keep it up. However, I do believe that God still does great and mighty things. It is His decision if and when, these events will take place. We can be assured that our God is able to whatever is needed according to His will.

- **Gracious Generosity** (Acts 2:44, 45)
(especially within the Church)

⁴⁴ And all the believers were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵ and they would sell their property and possessions and share them with all, to the extent that anyone had need.

This is another passage that needs to be interpreted carefully. It does not appear that God is teaching a "socialistic" or communal form of living. Luke is simply recording how these early church believers decided to care for one another's needs in a country and time when governments did not provide for social welfare concerns. I believe this passage is simply teaching that we need to have a spirit of gracious generosity that shows itself by meeting the genuine needs of others, especially those of the "household of faith".

- **Harmony, Gladness & Sincerity (Acts 2:46)**

⁴⁶ Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart,

In addition to meeting regularly, generously sharing and caring for one another, they also maintained a deep desire for harmony, a gladness of spirit and a genuine sincerity in their thoughts and actions toward one another. Jesus said in **John 17:22, 23**... “²² *I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—* ²³ *I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.*”

We as a Church should strive to be in harmony with genuine gladness and sincerity in all our dealings with one another. It doesn't mean that we all robots that all think alike and never have a difference of opinions; it just means we should seek to be loving, peaceful and strive to have God's will be the unifying factor. We should treat one another with loving care, even in our differences.

- **Praise of God & Favor with People (Acts 2:47a)**

^{4a} praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

The Church should be characterized by this two-pronged goal...

(1) to worship and Praise God...i.e. LOVE GOD. And
(2) Seeking to be at peace and favor with people i.e. LOVING ONE ANOTHER.

This is not only our FBC Broussard motto and purpose, but also what God stated in the Old Testament (*Deuteronomy 6:5 & Leviticus 19:18*) and in the New Testament by Jesus Himself. (*Matthew 22:36-40 & Mark 12:28-34*).

We should strive to honor God and at the same time build bridges of loving relationships with people so that we can share the Good News Story of Salvation.

- **Consistent Evangelism & Active Growth**

Acts 2: 47b... And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Lastly, we see that evangelism was a common and priority focus and practice of the early church. They sought to fulfill what Jesus had told them...To be powerful witnesses through the power of the Holy Spirit. They followed God's plan and God moved mightily to save the lost.

Now that is Dr. Luke's description of what the Healthy Early Church looked like. Now let's summarize them and see how we as the modern-day Church can take these patterns and do a *Vital Signs Check* to see how we are doing.

Healthy Church Vital Signs to Check

Vital Sign # 1 = Biblical Nourishment

A Healthy Church, meaning healthy believers, requires that we have a steady and consistent diet of Biblical Nourishment.

Matthew 4:4...*But he answered, "It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."*

So, let me ask you?

- How is your daily intake of God's Word?
- Are you biblically anemic or robust?
- Are you in a regular Bible Study group?
- Do you make a habit of gleaning insights from the Bible for your daily decisions?

Vital Sign # 2 = Loving Fellowship

- Do you have a loving and personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ?
- Do you intentionally strive to cultivate and build loving relationships with other people?
- Do you take the time to interact and share with other believers at church, or are you a 'Ninja Christian'... slipping in late and out early?

Vital Sign # 3 = Vibrant Worship

- Do you have a personal time of worship during the week at your home or office?
- Do you make time to have worship experiences with your family or friends?
- Do you come to church on Sundays with an attitude of anticipation to have a powerful and

vibrant worship with others at church?

- Do you approach our Lord's Supper/ Communion Services with a repentant spirit and an awe filled heart?

Vital Sign # 4 – Outreach in Both Words & Deeds

- Are you practicing "Phillip Evangelism", sharing the Good News everywhere you go?
- Are you practicing "Andrew Evangelism", inviting people to church and 'bringing them to Jesus.'"
- Do you step out of your comfort zone to both speak the Gospel as well as live it in out?
- Do you prepare for Good News Sharing by using tracts, or have basic evangelism scriptures ready, and have ready your personal testimony?

(Invitation)

**Choose this Day
to Become a
Part of God's
Good News
Story Team**

**Powerful
Witnesses
motivated by
Love and
Empowered by
the Holy Spirit**

