

Acts of the Holy Spirit pt 3 the life of the early church

Intro: Stefan Duerksen Lead Pastor

Church-Wide Prayer: Next Gen (Ps 78:7-8): Encounters with Jesus, strong mental health, boldness & belonging

- Pray for our grads – congratulations! Next steps, boldness in their faith, wisdom as they navigate career paths & passion for living their life on mission
- Pray for grads to be filled with the Holy Spirit and to be salt & light in the culture.
- Pray for revival in the youth. That they would find their life in Jesus.
- Pray for them to overflow with love, joy and peace as they say, “YES” to Jesus

Recap: We are going to jump back into our summer series – Acts of the Holy Spirit!

The last 2 weeks P. Ray did a short mini-series on the enthronement of Man and then followed up with the enthronement of Jesus in the millennial Kingdom and Restoration of all things!

When talking about Eschatology: What are we supposed to DO? Remember – a few weeks back, I said to resist falling into Camp Irrelevant or Camp Fear... but to get into Camp “get ready” – this remains true whether Jesus literally comes back in our lifetime, or not.

Matthew 24:44 Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Acts 2:42 - 3:26 (Fellowship of Believers) And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

A. Characteristics of the early Church

People were attracted to the early church – Yes, because of the Gospel message – but also because of the way the church – believers – lived! They were DIFFERENT.

1. Connect – invest in your relationship with Jesus & other believers

- a. The early church did life together – this was a critical part of Christianity!
- b. **Hebrews 10:22-25** Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.
- c. **FIRST:** we draw near to God through faith in Jesus! **SECOND:** we join ourselves and regularly meet with the Body – to strengthen and encourage one another!

- i. **Went to the temple together** – this isn't a temple – but what an idea? To not just come, listen, and leave. But to bring others. TO meet up with your friends, your small group, the café, etc.
- ii. **Broke bread together** – they were in each other's homes regularly – breaking bread was a BIG part of Jewish community and communities throughout the ages! Something happens when we gather around a table and share a meal together. It brings people together!
- iii. **Shared their possessions – so that no one had any need!**
 - 1. CAVEAT: some people have claimed this was the earliest form of Communism – NOT TRUE. It was not STATE controlled. But voluntary by each person.
 - 2. REMEMBER Ananias & Saphira “you could do as you chose.”
- iv. **Gratitude, Praise & Prayer**
 - 1. They centered their relationships around Jesus – and because they focused on the Him first... they overflowed with joy, generosity, love to other people
- v. **Their community MODELED → PEOPLE > POSSESSIONS**

2. Grow - Devoted themselves to the Apostles teaching.

- a. This would have included Jesus' teachings in the Gospels – AND Jesus' discourse given between the resurrection and the ascension.
- b. **Acts 1:3** He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.
- c. **Luke 24:25-27** And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.
- d. **This is one of our BIG weaknesses in the Western Church!** We have stopped STUDYING. This has left the church anemic and ripe for deception.
 - i. **What is the best antidote for lies????? TRUTH.**
- e. **John 8:31-32** So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”
- f. **STUDY & APPLICATION – orthodoxy and orthopraxy!**
- g. **BE DISCIPLED - this happens BEST in the context of COMMUNITY**

3. Serve – the early church served each other in the Body of Christ and served those in their community!

- a. They sold their possessions and distributed their food and goods as people had need
- b. **It says they had “favor with all people”**
- c. We need to look for ways to SERVE and minister to those INSIDE & OUTSIDE the church!
- d. If we want to say “go and sin no more” we should FIRST be DEMONSTRATING our love to those we wish to share Jesus with! SERVING is a great way to do this!

- e. **Romans 12:1-21** So we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. ... Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality... To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink;

4. Go – Make disciples – love, serve & disciple people to Jesus

- a. **Matthew 28:19-20** Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Imagine: we have 2000 people attending here... Imagine if HALF – 1000 said, "YES" to making their mission, "EACH ONE, REACH ONE."

Acts 2:47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

This is what Church was like in the early days after Pentecost! This is what Church is supposed to be TODAY.

Connect – Grow – Serve – Go (these four verbs have been used by MANY in the church – because they define so simply the actions required to create godly community!)

B. The Importance of the Word & Prayer in the early Church

Acts 3:1 Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.

We already saw how they devoted themselves to Scripture & prayed together in Acts 2

But Acts 3 gives us a clue to the depth of their prayer lives that often goes unnoticed in the West!

Power of 4 – will spend a whole message or two on this at some point! Lower SIN

Power of 4 – will spend a whole message or two on this at some point! Higher Love & obedience to Jesus!

Legalism: is saying there is another way to salvation- e.g. works "be a good person and you will be saved" We are NOT saying you have to pray and read the Bible a certain amount to be SAVED – NO.

We are saying you need to get into the Word & Prayer DAILY if you are to BEAR FRUIT for the Kingdom and to be able to ENDURE hardship & temptation.

Not in the Bible: the Bible doesn't say I have to spend X amount of time in the Word & Prayer

Question: do you want to know Jesus more? Do you love him? Do you want to bear fruit for him? Do you want to endure hard things and temptation without giving into sin? Do you want to be ready for him when he comes?

The Prayer life of the early church:

1. **Evening prayer** - the start of the day for early Jews (Psalm 55:16-17 & Daniel 6:10)
2. **3rd hour:** 9AM is the first hour of prayer [Acts 2:15] when the Temple gates opened.
3. **9th hour:** 3PM is the second hour of prayer [Acts 3:1; 10:9]. This hour of prayer was known as the "hour of confession."

Psalms 55:16-17 But I call to God, and the Lord will save me. Evening and morning and at noon I utter my complaint and moan, and he hears my voice.

Daniel 6:10 When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously.

- a. Daniel was NOT just praying out of distress either! He was so predictable in his prayer life that his accusers knew to follow him and when he'd be praying!

Objection: that's Old Testament – the New is different!

Answer: look at the New Testament – Jesus did not lessen the call, rather the bar was raised!

Luke 18:1 And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Never mind that Jesus MODELED prayer and told his disciples the way to go through temptation and trials without faltering was to, "Stay awake and pray"

Luke 6:40 A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.

For example: Paul used exercise as an example to highlight this! I will too. Imagine you were going to compete at a Powerlifting competition. You had watched a lot of shows. You had observed others lifting heavy weights. But you resisted the need to train and when others mentioned your need to train so that you don't FAIL at your meet, you responded, "that's legalism, I don't HAVE TO"... how do you think your competition would go?

C. Reflection: where do you need to grow? Evaluate these areas personally and with others! KEYS PLAYING

1. **Connect** – are you investing into your relationship with Jesus? AND other believers? (daily devotion, small group, etc.)
2. **Grow** – what are you being discipled in? are you growing godly character?
 - a. How often are you in the Word & Prayer? 0x – 1-2x – 3-4x – 5-7x a week?

- b. Take the next step towards daily time with Jesus!
 - c. Repent from any sin or sinful habits in your life.
- 3. Serve – are you using your gifts, resources & abilities to help others? Where can you serve? In the church? In the community?
- 4. Go – “each one, reach one” who are you discipling?
 - a. Mission field: where do you spend your time? That’s a mission field!
 - b. Pray: for the people in your mission field! Allow Jesus to highlight one person he wants you to reach out to.
 - c. GO: love, serve & disciple them to Jesus

Evaluate these VERBS & questions personally, with your family & church community – We were NOT meant to do the Christian walk alone. We were designed for fellowship with Jesus and other believers!

AFTER SERVICE PRAYER – PRAYER ROOM – 9AM ONLY

MARANATHA!! Come soon Lord!

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SC CHURCH WIDE PRAYER REQUESTS 2023

Cruise ship → → → → → Battleship

1. **Life on Mission** (Mt 28:18-20, Mt 22:37-40): Love, serve & disciple people to Jesus
2. **Next Gen** (Ps 78:7-8): Encounters with Jesus, strong mental health, boldness & belonging
3. **Persecuted Church** (Lk 21:13): Faith, fortitude & wisdom “to not waste the opportunity to share the Gospel”
4. **Heart of Prayer** (Ps 27:4): Every generation to find Jesus & learn to bring their needs to Him in prayer
5. **Church Renewal**: Directors for India and other new countries & many global disciple makers