

What is church (Acts 2:42-47)

Café Church - 19-Nov-17

Intro

There are Bibles on the tables, there's an outline to take notes, and there are questions on the table.

Let me pray first...

Recap/Context

Just a recap where we got to in the Book of Acts - last week

[Powerpoint 1-Recap/Context]

Recap/Context – Acts 2

- The Apostles waiting in Jerusalem to be baptized by Holy Spirit as Jesus promised
- Holy Spirit appeared as wind and fire
- The Holy Spirit enabled them to speak in different languages
- The people in Jerusalem hear the Apostles speak in the people's own language
- There were 2 responses from the crowd:
 - a. V12 - "What does this mean?"
 - b. V13 – "The Apostles are drunk!"
- The Holy Spirit changed the Apostles from wimps to bold, brave witnesses for Jesus 1

[Powerpoint 2-Recap/Context]

Recap/Context – Acts 2

- The Apostle Peter preaches the first ever sermon
- Tells people who Jesus is – Son of God – the Messiah – who came to save people from sin and give forgiveness
- Tells the Jews they killed the Messiah
- They are cut to the heart and ask what they should do
- Peter says – they must Repent and be baptised

2

See chapter 2:38

[Powerpoint 3-Acts 2:38]

³⁸ Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

So as people believe in Jesus - they are born again - born of the Spirit

The Holy Spirit comes and lives inside all believers

And changes - transforms people

And so the early church was established - when 3000 people believed in Jesus (v40)

So what is Church?

[Powerpoint 4-Church?]

Greek word is Ecclesia

Where we get ecclesiastic from

It's not a building! Although that's the word we use for the building

Church is actually:

an assembly of Christians gathered for worship in a religious meeting

the whole body of Christians scattered throughout the earth

So with Holy Spirit living inside Christians

What should the church - this gathering of people look like?

We get the answer in our passage tonight - we see the effect that the Holy Spirit has on people gathered together - doing church

4 Marks of a Church

And there's 4 marks of a church here...

[Powerpoint 5a-Learning]

The first thing we see is that the church was a *learning church*

See verse 42

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching

It's like the Apostles opened a school that day in Jerusalem

Where the teachers were the Apostles and the pupils were 3000 new believers

Devoted here means

They gave constant attention to what the Apostles were teaching

We can learn from this too

The Apostles are teaching what Jesus has taught them - which is *God's Word* (in fact Jesus is *God's Word* in flesh form) - so these 3000 people are committed to listening and following *God's Word*

We must be committed to *God's Word*

The Holy Spirit leads believers to submit to the Word of God

The question is: Are we committed to *God's Word*?

Do we devoted ourselves to the teaching in *God's Word* - each day - or only what we hear on Sunday?

Are we a learning church?

The second mark is the church was a *loving church*

[Powerpoint 5b-Learning]

They devoted themselves ... to fellowship

The word for fellowship - in *Greek* - has the idea of

- a) Sharing *IN* God himself - having fellowship with Father, Son and Holy Spirit
- b) Sharing *OUT* too - sharing their possessions with one another - so they had everything in common - and they even sold property and possessions to give to anyone in need - see v44 and v45.

[Example of Pastor Fred in the Philippines]

[Powerpoint 5c-Worshipping]

The third mark is the church was a **worshipping church**

⁴² They devoted themselves ... to the breaking of bread and to prayer

So the people in the church - not only learnt from God's word and cared and loved one another - they met together in corporate worship

Breaking of bread - suggests celebrating the Lord's Supper together - and most likely also sharing in a larger meal (like we do at Café Church)

Prayer here - refers to prayer services or prayer meetings rather than private prayer

And notice this worship was both formal - in the temple courts - v46 and in their homes - also in v46

And worship was also both with gladness (exceeding joy) and with sincere hearts

And worship clearly involved praising God - giving thanks to God for all things

Basically there was a healthy balance in worship - between formal and informal

And notice their worship was daily

See v46 again

Every day they continued to meet together...

There's one more mark of the church - and it's in v47b

And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Now clearly people can't be saved and come to believe in Jesus

Without someone witnessing - telling them about Jesus

[Powerpoint 5d-Evangelistic]

So the fourth mark is the church is an *evangelistic church* (evangelistic = good news being shared)

The early church in Jerusalem were not so preoccupied with learning, sharing and worshipping, that they forgot about witnessing

The Holy Spirit - inside us - is also a mission minded Spirit - who desires to create a Missionary church - that reaches out to others

The Lord's Work (v47)

Before we get too carried away with the idea of the Church

Look at v47b

And note it says

[Powerpoint 6a-The Lord's Work]

And the Lord added...

It's the Lord's work

Jesus himself grows the church

Now clearly this is also done by the preaching and teaching of the Apostles from God's Word and the witnessing of the church members

The sharing and love amongst the church - encouraged others to come and join

And notice the Lord's Work includes

[Powerpoint 6b-Being Saved]

Those being saved

So the Lord's is not interested in adding people just to boost the number of people attending church - it's not about bottoms on seats - it's about adding people to the church who have been saved from their sin and rebellion against God - and received the gift of forgiveness and eternal life - by believing in Jesus - and then receiving the Holy Spirit living inside them!

And notice too, the Lord's work includes

[Powerpoint 6c-Added daily]

Adding to their number daily

Literally he kept on adding to their number

So church growth is not a one-off thing - or a sporadic thing - it's continually growing

Our Response

So what should our response be to this picture of the early church?

Well let's look at the 4 marks of the early church and formulate a response to each mark:

[Powerpoint 7a-Learning Church]

1. If we are a learning church - then we must be devoted to learning

How can we achieve that?

[Open for answers]

Reading the Bible ourselves

Reading the Bible with others

Growth Group/Bible Study - my prayer is we would all be in a growth group

Study the Bible at home - on your own or with your family

Frequency - not just Sunday - the early church met daily

Question - is God calling you to be more devoted to His Word and learning more about Him and His Son?

(pause)

[Powerpoint 7b-Loving church]

2. If we are a loving church - how can we demonstrate that love?

[Open for answers]

Samaritan boxes

Hampers/Toys/Toiletries

Sharing our stuff

Support missionaries

Share meals together

Friendship Group

Visiting

Phoning

Invite the community in - Comms corner

Notice who is in need in our church family and in our community

Question - Is God calling you to be more devoted to loving others - by visiting, calling, sharing your gifts, sharing your stuff etc?

(pause)

3. If we are a worshipping church - how can we show that?

[Open for answers]

[Powerpoint 7c-Worshipping church]

Are we sharing the Lord's Supper together?

Are we sharing a meal and having fellowship together?

Are we praying together regularly? (Prayer meetings, ministry groups and growth groups)?

Question - Is God calling you to worship more consistently and pray more diligently?

Remember we have a prayer chain too!

(pause)

4. If we are an evangelistic church - how can we demonstrate that?

[Open for answers]

[Powerpoint 7d-Evangelistic]

Currently we have 3 people on our evangelism team

Yet we also witness through our events

Through Comms Corner

Through personal contact

Through SRE, Jaffa and Xcelerate

Question - Is God calling you to evangelize to someone - and you're ignoring Him?

Lookup 1 Corinthians 3:5-7

Conclusion

To finish up then

[Powerpoint 8 - Conclusion]

How would you rate our church - out of 10?

In the 4 areas - Learning, Loving, Worshipping and Evangelizing?

(pause)

How would you rate yourself - out of 10?

In the 4 areas - Learning, Loving, Worshipping and Evangelizing

(pause)

What action do you need to take?

Remember - just like the early church

We have the Holy Spirit - inside us - let's claim that Spirit

Let me finish with Paul's words from

Galatians 5:25

²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit

Q & A

[Powerpoint 9-The Church Mp4]