

A Spirit Guided Growth

- Please take your copy of God's Word and turn with me to Acts 2:42-47, and if you're able, please stand in honor of the reading of the Word of God.
- [Prayer}
- Last week we looked at the response of the People to the Powerful Message Peter brought at Pentecost. And
- There were 3 specific results that we saw beginning with The Spirit's conviction.

- Peter had pointed the people listening / to their Messiah, the one they had rejected and put on a cross and crucified. And because the Spirit was working in them through the message preached, the scripture says they were "pierced to the heart"
- They suddenly were now understanding the awful nature of what they had done to the one they were waiting for.

- And their response was, "Brothers, what shall we do?" They knew they needed to do something after they fully understood the nature of what they had done to Christ.
- And I said to let that be a lesson to us, that when the gospel is clearly presented, as it was, the Spirit will bring conviction and repentance and He did.

- This led us to the 2nd result of Peter's sermon and that was The Spirit's Direction. The Spirit's conviction led to the Spirit's Direction.
- And I said that the Spirit is not going to convict without giving some sort of direction... a way in which we should go.
- In this circumstance, the Direction was to repent and be baptized.

- And in repenting of their sin, they would receive the forgiveness of sins they so desperately needed and realized was needed, and they would also receive the Holy Spirit who would guide them as to what they should do... the first step / in being Baptized.

- And this is the step that would mark them as having changed their allegiance from the Jewish Religion / to the Person and work of Jesus Christ... and that was no small decision.
- They needed to break away from the path that led them to kill their Messiah and embrace Him and His ways fully. And boy would they!!
- And as a result of their obedience, the gospel would spread far and wide.

- Which then led us to the 3rd result and that was The Spirit's Fruit.
- They are baptized, added to the church, and as we are going to see today, lived on in that Spirit of Obedience.

[pause]

- You know as a church, we can make a lot of excuses as to why we aren't where God would have us to be as a body of believers. And I mean our church specifically / as well as the church at large. And
- I'm going to share some excuses with you today that I have heard in ministry and if they strike a nerve it's not because I'm trying to call you out... I don't even know if you've used these before, but keep in mind that the Holy Spirit may be trying to convict you if you have used them before...

- And these excuses demonstrate the absurdity of things that we will say, so that we don't have to do or be held accountable to what we should do and hopefully, as I mentioned a moment ago, they allow the Holy Spirit to do in us / what needs to be done / so that we can be where God would have us be as a church family.

- Here now are some of the excuses:
 1. Why would we want to support that particular outreach?
How's it going to benefit us?
 2. My son has his soccer games every other Sunday, that's why we can't be here.
 3. We don't get to be together as a family much so we just decided to go out of town and play.

4. I don't want to confront that person in their sin because I may hurt their feelings.
5. The music is too loud and we're thinking about leaving the church.
6. There have been a lot of church activities this week so I won't be at that important meeting.
7. You get paid to do this Pastor!
8. I have a problem with someone and you're the shepherd so you confront them so I don't have to.
9. I want to complain about this issue but I don't want to do the leg work to make the changes because it will be too much sacrifice
10. I'm not going to make that visit because my spouse doesn't like to do that type of thing.
11. I'm not going to teach that class because I'm not comfortable with teaching even though I'm considered a leader in my area.
12. We didn't come because we slept in and that's the only day we can do that.
13. We didn't come because we don't like that Bible Class teacher..
14. We don't participate in those things because there is too much gossip!
15. We decided to go have breakfast together to have fellowship instead of being with the church family!
16. You need to buy your own stuff for your ministry... this is ours. "I'm glad they didn't say that in Acts."
17. We're not serving in ministry because our feelings got hurt in our last area of ministry...
18. You guys are out at the office anyway you should be doing it.

- Well, I think you're going to see pretty quickly / that this is not the attitude of the early church.
- So let's dive into our text this morning... Acts 2:42-47 and the title of the message this morning is A Spirit Guided Growth!

- This is God's ideal for the church. No if's, and's or but's about it! This is God's desire!
- And 3 powerfully illuminating distinctives pour forth from the text.
- Folks, what you are about to see... This is a church. This is supposed to be what it's like... in many cases we've made it something drastically different. But this is the direction we, as a church, are going to go in.
- And you're going to see how this church lived out core Biblical values, how it modeled essential Biblical characteristics and how it resulted in lasting Biblical impact or Growth
- First, let's take a look at their

I. **Biblical Values** (vs. 42)

- You know what the sole focus of this church was? Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit and God's Word. Not a complicated strategy.
- Think of their success with this focus ... and you'll see their success as we move forward. So what were their values?

1. **A Saved Church** (They - from 41)

- These people had just come to faith in Christ... that's the **“they”** part.
- Amidst the great struggle of coming to Christ at this time, they came and they remained... John 15: 4; 1 John 2:19)

4 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.

 - We have to abide in Christ and Christ's body - the church. And to be a part of the church we must be in Him - saved from our sin. And when we are in Him, we are connected to His body.
 - What about those who claim to be saved but leave and don't fellowship or identify with the church... on any consistent basis

19 They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.

- Now what John says here... unfortunately happened... people went out
- You see the church was not designed for non-Christians. Romans 3:11

THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;

- Our text this morning gives no hint of that whatsoever in this church. What is said here is completely descriptive of Christians. Those who have truly given their lives to Christ. 2 Cor. 6:14ff
14 Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? 15 Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?
- The Church Service is for those who are saved and is to worship the Lord together as one body.
- Now those who are seeking the Lord are welcome! But the structure should be such so that they are confronted with their sin and moved to repentance. And if the church is TRULY the church, this will happen.
- The church is for believers to glorify God and grow in Christ likeness. When or if we move away from that we're not the church!
- This church was a saved church made up of born again believers in Jesus Christ.
- Second, they were...

2. A Biblical Church (42a). The Apostles Teaching

- They taught revealed truth.
- Paul said this in 2 Timothy 2:2

The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

- Timothy was to teach faithful men who would teach others also... that would be the church!
- At our core there must be biblical teaching and preaching in the church. Why? Peter would later say in
- Turn to 1 Peter 2:2; 1 Tim 4:13; Titus 1:9 like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,
 - We teach and preach the Word because this is how we grow.

Paul says in 13 Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching.

9 holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. He's speaking there about the responsibility of the Pastors of the church

- This church sat and heard what the apostles preached ... and we must teach what they wrote.
- When or if we move away from this we need to hear the warning of Hosea 4:6
 - 6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.
- Acts 17:11 must describe us at church AND through out the week if we are going to be a Biblical Church!
 - 11 Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.

- You see, We can only act on what we know / and what we are taught.
- If it's contrary to the Bible, it doesn't matter how spiritual or how godly we think it is... IT'S WRONG!
- If you're not studying the Bible... you're going to get mal-nourished...
- The church was for believers to be taught the Bible and this church valued that.... And our church will value that...
- Third, they were a

3. A fellowshiping Church (42b)

- Fellowship is merely challenging each other to growing in our relationship with the Lord and serving in the body of Christ. And it requires being together...
- You can't have fellowship alone!
- We see it in the one another's in Scripture... which I'll address in a second....
- The term here for fellowship is koinonia and it carries the basic meaning of partnership or sharing. How do you partner or share by yourself? You don't!
- To fail to participate in the life and function of the church is inexcusable. WHY? Because it is so clearly set forth in Scripture Serve (Gal.5:13), Accept (Rom.15:7), Forgive (Col.3:13), Greet (Rom. 16:16), Bear Burdens (Gal. 6:2), Be devoted to (Rom.12:10), Honor (Rom.12:10), Teach (Rom.15:14), Submit to (Eph.5:21), Encourage (1Thess.5:11); Matthew 18: Confront one another.
- Turn to Hebrews 10:24-25 The Christian life is not to be lived alone. 24 and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, 25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is

the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

- If you know someone that is not in worship regularly, you need to challenge them to be here.
- One of the reasons a church / and perhaps our church / is not where it should be is because the body is not using the gifts God has given it in fellowship with one another.
- Often times we want to use gifts for things that we think are important pieces of the church / rather than / discovering God's will by using the gifts He's given to us.
- They were a fellowshipping church, 4th they were a

4. A Communion Church (42b) Breaking of Bread/Communion

- Taking communion together is commanded of all believers
- Turn to 1 Cor. 11:24-29
 - 24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." 25 In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." ...28 But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup.
- When we partake of Communion together, it demonstrates that we are of one heart and mind in Christ Jesus; ... As Christians we were called to...
 - 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, as it says in Ephesians 4:5
- 1 Cor. 10:16-17
 - 16 Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? 17 Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread.
- Communion is a time of remembrance of what Christ has done... and it's a reflection of our oneness in Him. Communion is also a time to

examine ourselves for sin and ask for forgiveness so that we can go on in unity by remembering what Christ did for us on the cross.

- Look where you are right now in serving... is Christ your motivation... is His Church the motivation of your particular area of ministry? Is the unity of His Body on your radar or is it just on yourself.
- A saved church, a biblical church, a fellowshiping church, a communion church and ...

5. A Praying Church (42c)

- This church was committed to prayer. This is not just prayer alone but prayer as a body!
- Here's what Jesus told his disciples before He left... John 14:13-14
13 "Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 "If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.
They were to pray in His name and we are to do the same.
- Biblical encouragements for prayer are seen in... Ephesians 6:11;
Romans 12:12
11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.
(18) With all prayer and petition... pray at all times.
... that as a body we are to be 12 rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer,
- The early church was committed to prayer.
- They knew the church was for Christians, that it must have bible teaching, that the people needed to be together to encourage one another and serve one another, that their foundation was Christ as their constant focus and that they be continually in prayer
- Because the church was committed to these core Biblical values it produced their Biblical Fruit.

II. Biblical Fruit (43 – 47 a) ...praising God

1. They were always in awe (43a)

- Awe: fear or holy terror related to divine presence. This is Reverence for God.
- It's the overwhelming feeling you get when you realize God is at hand. You see because they valued the right things, they experienced the fruit of great things.
- In Acts 5:11 - we read of the response of the church to the instant deaths of Ananias and Saphira.
11 And great fear came over the whole church, and over all who heard of these things. (They were in Awe of what God just did)
 - The healing of the lame man that we will see next week in Acts 3 - filled them with wonder and amazement
 - In Acts 4 the testimony of the Apostles to the resurrection of the Lord was recognized as coming with great power.
- The presence of God was never ending in that church... and it wasn't in relationship to a program they were doing, or a book they were reading, or a speaker they heard... it was because of God's presence and that presence was reflected in the character and life of the body.
- And if we were to hold these values mentioned and operate in accordance with the gifts God has given us in a unified manner, we would recognize God's presence with us as well.
- And guess what would happen? 1 Cor. 14:24,25
24 But if all prophesy, [if all taught and spoke the word accurately] and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all; 25 the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you.

- This would happen here if we functioned according to God's design. We don't reach our full potential because we don't operate according to the gifts that we've been given. Where through those gifts we all proclaim the Word of God and the lost are drawn to Him.
- Instead, we often want to do things on our own terms.
- I think we've lost our sense of awe... for HIM.
- When was the last time you left here in AWE or worshipped in AWE?

2.They were always seeing miracles (43b)

- The sole purpose of these miracles was to point to the truth.
- Acts 9:32-35
32 Now as Peter was traveling through all those regions, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda (Lida). 33 There he found a man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years, for he was paralyzed. 34 Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; get up and make your bed." Immediately he got up. 35 And all who lived at Lydda and Sharon (Sharun) saw him, and they turned to the Lord.
- The apostles were given this ability to show that they were indeed messengers from God.
- Miracles confirmed teaching then... now we compare teaching that we hear to God's established and sufficient Word. 2 Peter 1:19-21 - The Word is more sure!
- And God still performs miracles, though not as a public sign but in response to the prayers of His people praying in His name.
- How often do we pray for God to do miracles in our church?

3.They were always sharing (44-45)

- This is not Biblical proof for communism. The verb form doesn't allow it. This is selling and sharing of their own accord.
- 1 John 3:16-18

16 We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 17 But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? 18 Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

- True love produces Action! ... and they were always sharing.

4.They were always united (46-47a)

- They were united with gladness and sincerity of heart.
- The word for sincerity here literally means simplicity. It comes from a root word meaning “free from rocks or smooth”. “There were no stones of selfishness in their hearts.”
- How many of us are like that?
- Their simplicity was part of their joy... as well as praising God.
- J.O.Y. Jesus first, others next and yourself last. This was the first church.
- They existed for the glory of God and serving each other and this brought tremendous joy.
- Phil. 2:1-2
1 Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, 2 make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. (Glorifying God and Growing together in Christ.)

Their Core Biblical Values led to Biblical Fruit that produced lasting Biblical impact...

III. Biblical Impact (47b). What impact was this?

1.They were an attractive church.

- They were wide open about their faith. Remember last week when we talked about what Baptism meant for those Jewish Believers? It was a VERY PUBLIC statement that they had changed Allegiances. Everyone could see what God was doing in their lives. God was doing the transformation and everyone saw it. ... and many were drawn to it.
- They lived out John 13:35
35 "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."
- No wonder this is a place people wanted to be. They loved each other deeply and They were an attractive church. They were also a ...

2.They were a growing church.

- Their values and their character produced growth. This totally flies in the face of things the church tries to do today.
- We try gimmicks, gadgets and good books rather than Christ, Scripture, Fellowship and Prayer. ... which is what they focused on.
- The Greek here of “was adding” and “day by day” show that people were continually coming to Christ as a result of their observance of the church being the church.
- Evangelism flowed from a healthy church and the church grew.
- This group was worthy of the name CHURCH. Why? Because Biblical values produced Biblical character and that lead to Biblical impact.

Conclusion:

So let's evaluate:

1. Are we worthy of the name church?
2. Do we hold the values the first church did?
3. Do we exhibit those characteristics?
4. Do you?

Before you look at others and point the finger, point to yourself and start there.

What excuses have you made? What excuses are you making?