

Essentials Of A True Church

Acts 2:42-47

Pastor John Miller

I want you to follow with me in Acts 2:42-47. Dr. Luke records, “And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine and in fellowship, and in the breaking of bread and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done by the Apostles. And all that believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and their goods, and they parted them to all men, as every man had need; and they continued daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they did eat their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”

As Christians, we are not only to be committed to Christ, but I believe we are to be committed to the church. The church is the body of Christ—to use the familiar metaphor the Bible uses—that we are the body, and Christ is the head. And we are all knit together in one body. An essential of the Christian life is not only a commitment to Christ but a commitment to His church.

When I say “church,” I need to explain that the church, Biblically speaking, comes in two categories. We use the term, first of all, to describe the universal church. Some call it the “invisible church,” but I don’t think that’s the best term to describe the universal church. Some say the invisible church is the one that meets on Wednesday night, because they don’t show up. But we use the expression “universal church.” What does that mean? In simple language, it means every true Christian. I use the word “true” because a lot of people profess, but they’re not really true Christians. Everyone who has been born again, everyone who has a relationship with Jesus Christ—a true born-again child of God—is part of the universal church. Automatically, the moment you are saved, you repent of your sins and you believe in Jesus Christ, you are taken out of Adam and you are placed into Christ. You are taken out of darkness, and you are placed into the marvelous light. You are taken out of the world, and you are placed into the universal church.

This church is universal; it’s located all over the world. It’s not a matter of a denomination, and it’s not a matter of an organization; you may be a Methodist or a Presbyterian or a Lutheran or a Baptist or you may be a Pentecostal or you may be a “Bapticostal.” That’s a Baptist who gets the Holy Ghost and starts speaking in tongues, and now he’s a “Bapticostal.” It doesn’t matter in what denomination. In all of these different denominations there are true Christians, true Christians who are part of the church universal. Only saved people are part of the church universal; to be part of that universal church, you must be saved.

The second category is the local church. And we use the word “local” because we mean an individual congregation like Revival Christian Fellowship. We are a local church, but we are not “the church.” The church is much bigger than this congregation. When we congregate on Sunday, we are Revival Christian Fellowship, but there are churches all around the community, all around the area, all around the nation and the world that congregate that are part of the

universal church. But we are part of a local church.

Now the thrust of this passage is that if you have been born again and you are part of the universal church, you should be connected to, involved with, committed to or a member of a local church. The Bible knows nothing of "Lone Ranger Christianity." "Me and the Holy Spirit [Tonto], and we're just serving the Lord together. I don't need Christians." I've met people who have said, "I'm a Christian, but I don't like Christians. They're so creepy. They sing and they clap and at Revival Christian Fellowship, they all sing and smile and clap. It's just kind of creepy. I don't do church. I'm just into Jesus. I'm a Christian, but I'm not one of those kinds of Christians." I've met people who say, "I'm a Christian but not the born-again kind." What other kind of Christian is there but the born-again kind?

If you've been born again, you're part of the universal church, but then you must make a commitment to a local church. Some people don't make a commitment to a local church. They just go from church to church to church. I call them "steeple chasers"; they just go from church to church to church trying to find the perfect church, the happy church, the lovely church, the fun church, the cool church or whatever it might be. And a lot of people today, when they pick a church, are not thinking about doctrine. The first essential of a Spirit filled church is the Apostles' doctrine; being devoted to the Word of God and the study of God's Word. We need to be a part of a local church. If not this church, then find a church and be a part of.

The church was bought with the blood of Jesus Christ, and one day it will be "caught up to meet Christ in the air, and so shall we forever be with the Lord." But right now, Jesus is building His church. I believe the church was born in Acts 2, and it will be "caught up to meet the Lord" in the Rapture. Everything in between those two events is known as "the church age." We're living in that age right now.

What is God doing in the world today? The number-one work that God is doing in the world is forming the church, the body of Christ. It's also called the "bride of Christ." He's our heavenly bridegroom, and when we're caught up to meet Him, there's going to be a wedding of the bride being caught up to be with the heavenly groom. One day we will "meet the Lord in the air, and we will forever be with Him." But in the interim, Jesus is building His church. That's what God is all about right now.

What does the church look like? We have a description of it. I would call Acts 2:42-47 a cameo. This is a cameo of the early church. It doesn't go into great depth or great detail, but it gives us a little survey of some of the essential elements of a Spirit filled church.

What has happened in the context? In Acts 2, the day of Pentecost has come. There were 120 in the upper room. They were waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Jesus has been crucified, buried, resurrected, risen and ascended back to heaven. And He said, "Wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father." So they were in this upper room waiting for the Holy Spirit to come. Forty days after the Crucifixion, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit; they all spoke in tongues, there were the cloven

tongues of fire, and the people who were gathered for the feast of Pentecost heard this and thought they were drunk. Then Peter stands up and says, "These men are not drunk as you suppose, but they are filled with the Holy Spirit." "It's only 9:00 in the morning, and the bars aren't even open yet," is what he is actually saying. He actually said that: "It's 9:00 o'clock in the morning, and they're not drunk as you suppose. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel," when God promised that He would pour out His Spirit on all flesh.

And Peter went on to preach the Word. He gave a Christ centered, expository message from the Old Testament how Jesus Christ was the Messiah, He was rejected, crucified, risen and that He is Lord and Savior of all. Then the Bible says that they were "cut to their hearts" and were convicted. And they asked, "What must we do?" Then Peter said, "Repent and believe in Jesus, and you will be saved."

Now back up one verse to get the context, in verse 41. It says, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized..."—an outward showing of an inward work—"...and the same day there were added unto them about 3,000 souls." They counted the number. Now the church is born, and the number is 3,120.

But here is the point: What does the Spirit filled church look like? What do they do? There are four things. Number one, they were a learning church. Notice it in verse 42. "They continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine." This was the first and paramount thing that they did: They studied the Bible. You might say they were a Bible centered church. They were a Bible-studying church. It's no accident that Dr. Luke tells us that the first thing that these new believers did was to study the Bible.

In simple terms, I believe the number-one thing that we are to do as Christians is to study the Word of God. When you come to Revival Christian Fellowship, you will always hear the Bible taught and preached. We're going to read the Bible, we're going to preach the Bible, we're going to study the Bible and, God willing, we're going to live the Bible in our daily lives. The Bible is to be central in everything we do. Nothing is more important for the church's growth and health than learning and living out the truth of God's Word. We must keep first things first. And by the grace of God, we're going to continue to do that at Revival Christian Fellowship. We are a Bible focused, Bible centered church.

They did not focus on the great experience of Pentecost; they weren't focusing on speaking in tongues, the cloven tongues of fire, the miracles, the miraculous. All those things were wonderful, but they didn't say, "Lord, give us those again. Lord, send the fire." Rather, they studied the Word of God.

What is your idea of a Spirit filled church? Do you think a Spirit filled church is a jumping church? Or a clapping church? Or a roll-in-the-aisle church? I believe a Spirit filled church is a Bible-studying church. The Spirit of God and the Word of God are not incompatible. It's sad to me that you find so often in Pentecostal churches a focus on the experience. They deny the Word of God. They don't really focus on the Word. They don't study the Word. I believe that

we need both: We need the Holy Spirit and we need the Word of God. I believe the Spirit of God uses the Word of God to transform the child of God into the image of the Son of God. I believe that's God's method. We can't grow or mature without the Bible. The Bible needs to be central to our lives, to our marriage and to our church. That's what we are going to continue to do: study the Word of God.

Notice that it says, "They continued steadfastly." Jesus said, "If you continue in my Word, then are you My disciples indeed." An indication of a true church is that it continues in God's Word. The mark of a Spirit filled church is that the people are learning God's Word. They are responsive to and receptive to God's Word. They are preaching, hearing and responding to God's Word. That's a Spirit filled church. The Bible and the Spirit of God are not incompatible.

"They continued steadfastly..."—ongoingly—"...in the Apostles' doctrine," verse 42. The word "doctrine" is simply the word "teaching." We shy away from the word "doctrine." We get the idea that doctrine is dry or stale or that it is just theology, and we don't need doctrine. We need practical, Christian living. But you cannot live the Christian life without doctrine or teaching. You cannot worship God without doctrine or teaching. You don't know who you're worshipping, and you don't know how to live. So the foundation for Christian life and Christian living is a knowledge of God, as He is revealed in His Word.

Doctrine can be either sound doctrine, which is right doctrine or Biblical doctrine or true doctrine, or it can be false doctrine. Some churches are teaching false doctrine. False doctrine is that which is contrary to God's Word. We read the text, study the text in its historical, grammatical, theological context; we want to get to the meaning of what the Scriptures say, so we can apply it properly to our lives. We don't want to take the Bible out of context.

No one has the right to take a verse and use it however they want to use it. So much of the preaching I hear today is simply that: a pastor has a message he wants to give, a pep talk he wants to give, so he'll throw verses in to justify that it's a Biblical sermon, but the verses are taken out of context. They are not properly set in their context and explained, but they are used for his purpose. As a result, they become pretext rather than submitting to the authority of what God has actually said in His Word.

The Apostles' doctrine was sound teaching. What was it? At this time, they didn't have Matthew, Mark, Luke, John or Acts. They were living it. They didn't have 1 or 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, 1 or 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James or 1, 2 or 3 John, Jude or Revelation. What they had was the Old Testament. The Apostles were taking the Old Testament and showing them the things of Christ. You can find Jesus in the Old Testament. In Psalm 23 we see that "The Lord is My Shepherd" and that we have everything we need. Even though it's an Old Testament psalm, we find Jesus, who is Jehovah, in that psalm.

I also believe that when Jesus promised the Apostles that when the Holy Spirit would come, He would bring "all things to your remembrance." The Apostles were telling them about the works

of Jesus, the ministry of Jesus and the person of Jesus. They were telling these new believers about the teachings of Jesus. Maybe He gave them the Sermon on the Mount. Maybe they went into the Lord's Prayer, and He instructed them in the things of Jesus. That was the doctrine of the Apostles.

How do we have the Apostles' doctrine today? We have the New Testament, and in our New Testament, we have the Apostles' doctrine. We study the Word of God to gain a knowledge of God through His Word. The number-one calling and responsibility of a pastor and church leaders is to teach God's people God's Word. In Ephesians 4:11-12, Paul the Apostle says that God has given to the church "evangelists and pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry."

My job as a pastor is to be a teacher. My primary job is to preach and teach the Word for the maturing of the church. My commitment to this church is to continue, by God's grace, to open the Bible, to read the Bible, to explain the Bible and to apply the Bible to our lives until He takes me home or the Lord calls me to go somewhere else. I'm going to keep preaching God's Word. And this happens because we at Revival Christian Fellowship believe the Bible to be the Word of God.

2 Timothy 3:16 says, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." Not "perspiration" but "inspiration." The phrase "inspiration of God" literally means in the Greek "God breathed." That's what it means when we sing the song Breathe on Me. God breathed on the human authors or superintended the human authors, so the very words they wrote were the words of God. They were "carried along," Peter says, by the Holy Spirit.

I believe in the divine inspiration and the infallibility and the inerrancy of God's Word. I don't believe the Bible contains any errors. I believe it's accurate in everything it talks about: in geography and history and in everything. It's all accurate. We have to understand that: the Bible is God's inerrant, infallible, inspired Word. This is why we study the Bible as a church, because when we read the Bible, God is speaking through what He has spoken. That is why I believe pastors should preach expository sermons and teach expository messages.

In 2 Timothy 4:2-3, Paul told Timothy, a young pastor, to "preach the Word." Do it "in season and out of season," when it's popular and when it's not popular. If everyone said, "We don't want the Bible. We don't want you to preach anymore," I'd keep preaching. I'm not here to do what you want me to do. You might go find another church, but as long as I'm in this church, I'm going to be preaching God's Word. If you said, "Just tell us a joke or tell us some stories, have a clown, juggle some balls—maybe a bear juggling balls would be really cool—we'll invite our friends," it isn't going to happen. As long as I'm here to pastor this church, I'm going to open the Bible and preach from the Bible every Sunday. That's what I do.

There are some people who say, "Too much Bible. Too much preaching. I want to go to a different church." That's your prerogative. But I believe it's no accident that Luke put it on the top of the list, that it's a priority that they continued in the Apostles' teaching. They were a

learning church. They were a Bible centered church.

I believe that true teaching is expository teaching, for Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:3-5 that “The time will come when men will not endure sound doctrine.” That time has come. One of the biggest heartbreaks I have is looking what other pastors do and knowing that it is not expository preaching. They’re not preaching the meaning of the text. They’re not preaching the Word of God. Men “will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts they’ll heap to themselves teachers having itching ears. And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned to fables.” But you “preach the Word.” Timothy was to continue in his ministry; “make full proof of your ministry.” A Spirit filled church is a learning church. To give the Bible its rightful place is to bring glory to God, health to the church and light to the word.

The second mark of a Spirit filled church is that it is a loving church. Notice it in Acts 2: 42. It says “and fellowship.” “They continued steadfastly in the Apostles’ teaching and in fellowship.” The word “fellowship” is misunderstood today. It is a Greek word “koinonia,” which means to “hold in common.” It’s interesting that the New Testament was written in what’s called koinonia Greek. Koinonia Greek was the common language of everyday people. When they spoke Greek in the street and in the markets and in their homes, they spoke koinonia Greek, and when the Bible was written, it was written in koinonia Greek. That means that God wanted us to understand His Word. John Stott said the word “fellowship” was born on that day of Pentecost. Every time the word is used in the New Testament, it denotes some kind of sharing.

True Christian fellowship has two aspects. Number one, it means to share in common salvation. If you are not saved, then you are not having true fellowship. You’re just showing up for church. But if you’re born again and become a partaker of the Holy Spirit—same God, same Savior, same Spirit—we share that in common. Every one of us who are saved are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. No one gets to heaven any other way. Those of us who are saved share that in common.

In 1 John 1:3, John says, “We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you may have fellowship...”—“koinonia,” same Greek word—“...with us. And our fellowship...”—“koinonia”—“...is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.” If you’re a Christian, we have the same Father. If you’re a Christian, we have the same Savior, Jesus Christ. If you’re a Christian, we have the same Holy Spirit dwelling in us.

Are you a Christian? Are you truly saved? I don’t take it for granted that everyone who attends Revival Christian Fellowship is saved and a part of the universal church. You can come every Sunday, you can get involved in the church if you want, but if you’re not born again, you’re not part of the church. You’re just a spectator. You’re a professor but not a true possessor.

Not only do we share in a common salvation but, secondly, we share out a common service. Fellowship is serving one another. It’s loving one another. It’s giving to one another. Fellowship is not only what we share in, but it’s what we share out. In Acts 2:44-45 it says, “And all that believed were together and had all things in common.” The word is “koinonia.” They “sold their

possessions and their goods, and they parted them to all men, as every man had need.”

Acts 4:32 says, “And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul. Neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common,” or “koinonia.” Again, it’s a description.

This was voluntary; it wasn’t forced. Not everyone sold everything they had. They still met in homes, so they all didn’t sell their homes. This wasn’t communism. It wasn’t forced communism. This wasn’t socialism; some owned more than others. Some had bigger houses than others. Some owned more land than others. This was koinonia, the work of the Holy Spirit moving on a person’s heart, filling them with the love of God for their brothers and sisters in Christ. If you needed help, I would sell something to help you, or I would give you money, I would invite you to my home, I would feed you, I would give you a coat, I would take care of you. We would help one another.

As a church congregation, this is what we are to do. Quite often, as a church, we help people pay a mortgage. We do that all the time. When you put money in the offering at Revival Christian Fellowship, and there’s somebody who loses their job and is in hard times—we don’t just buy your house for you, by the way. The Bible says, “If a man doesn’t work, he shouldn’t eat,” so be sure you’re out there looking for a job. But if you need help, we help; we have a benevolence fund here. We feed people. We help people who are part of this church. And we help people who aren’t part of this church who come to us. We show them the love of God. But primarily we help people who are part of our congregation.

That is what I mean by sharing out. We share in a common salvation. We share out in a common service. You come to this church and you use your time and your talent and your treasure to help others, to bless others and to serve others. If the Spirit is at work in our lives, we are serving one another. The New Testament is full of that phrase “one another.” The Bible says that as Christians we should “serve one another.” It says we should “bear one another’s burdens.” The Bible says we should “pray one for another.” Do you pray for others in this church? Do you serve others in this church? The Bible says that we should “forgive one another.”

The Bible says we should “wash one another’s feet.” You go, “I don’t do feet. I’ll take you to In-N-Out and buy you a hamburger, but I’m not going to touch your feet. I don’t touch feet.” You don’t have to literally wash their feet. It’s a phrase that conveys the idea of serving one another. Jesus said, “If I’m your Lord and Master and I wash your feet, you should wash one another’s feet.” I don’t believe that the Bible mandates that we have a foot-washing ceremony. To be honest with you, I’m kind of glad; I don’t touch feet either. But I’ll give you some money to buy socks if you need them. I will serve. I’ll give of my time. I’ll give my talent. I’ll give my treasures to be a blessing to you. You should do the same for me. And we should do the same for one another. Fellowship is giving out.

And fellowship involves sacrifice. I meet people all the time who say, “I come to your church,

and I don't get anything out of it." "Ask not what your church can do for you, but ask what you can do for your church." "Well, I just think the church should bless me and help me." What are you doing to participate? Do you serve? Do you bake? Do you help? Do you teach? Do you usher? Do you get engaged? Do you give of yourself? Are you plugged into a small group? What are you part of? Foundations class is on Monday nights. It's a great way to get foundation in the things of God. It's not just for new believers. It's to be able to get the essentials down. I really encourage you to get plugged into the Foundations class. In this day of Pentecost we are reading about, there are 3,000 new, baby Christians in the Foundations class. Can you imagine that? One invitation and 3,000 people got saved! The church went from 120 to 3,120. Wow! We're going to have to get a bigger room for the Foundations class.

We also have dinner fellowships that are just starting up. I realize that some people think all we do is get together and eat food, but we get together to study, pray and fellowship. With minimal commitment you get maximum benefits. It's only one night a month for three months, and you meet other people. You eat some amazing enchiladas, too. The best enchiladas I ever had were at dinner fellowship. I'm still dreaming about them. You get to know other people. You just have to break out of your comfort zone. You just have to say that you're going to sign up for dinner fellowship. You don't have to host it. You don't have to bring anything. I always crack up in the dinner fellowships when the single guys bring a bag of chips. The women make these beautiful enchiladas, and the men bring a bag of chips. And then they don't eat their chips. They eat all the enchiladas. But we love each other. It's fellowship.

In the early church, some of the best meals—and sometimes the only meals—the poor people got was when they went to church. When they had communion, it was surrounding a meal. It was called the love feast, an agape feast. Then they went into the Lord's Supper.

There are life groups that meet on a weekly basis. Small groups where you can get involved: marriage study, men's study, women's study, youth. Friday Night Vertical, the college group. God is blessing them. If you're of college age, come out on Friday night.

It's essential for your spiritual growth that you use your spiritual gifts for the benefit of others and for the glory of God. 1 John 3:14 says, "We know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brothers." If you're really a true Christian and you're a Spirit filled Christian, you're going to love church, you're going to love fellowship and you're going to be involved. It's not just commitment to Christ; it's commitment to His church.

The third essential of a Spirit filled church is that it's a worshipping church. In verse 42 it describes worship—which is not exhaustive on the subject of church worship—as "in breaking of bread and in prayers." They were learning the Word of God, they were loving the family of God and they were worshipping the true, living God. They properly related to God's Word, God's people and to God. They were worshipping Him. I believe that worship is our highest priority. But we can't worship God if we don't know Him. The foundation is His Word.

In the Greek, this would literally be translated "the breaking of the bread and the prayers." The

use of the definite article suggests a reference to the Lord's Supper and the prayer meeting. There are many facets of worship, but these phrases convey the concept that they would gather together to break bread to remember Jesus' dying on the Cross and to drink the cup to remember the new covenant in His blood.

There are two aspects to their balanced worship. First of all, it was formal and informal. In verse 46 in your Bible it says, "And they continued daily in one accord in the temple..."—this is their formal worship—"...and the breaking of bread from house to house"—that's their informal worship. They worshipped formally in the temple—probably in Solomon's Porch or what's called Solomon's Portico—and they informally broke bread and met together in their houses. They didn't have church buildings. The church is not a building. The church is people. God doesn't live inside this building. He lives inside you. You're the building of God.

Notice the balance, secondly, that it was both joyful and reverential worship. In verse 46 it says they ate their food with "gladness and singleness of heart." It's conveying the idea of joy. The Living Translation has, "They met in homes for the Lord's Supper. They shared their meals with great joy and generosity." Then notice verse 43. The Bible says, "Fear came upon every soul." That was their reverence. The word "fear" there means they had an awe or reverential fear or respect for God. I believe that when we congregate formally here on Sundays in this church that we should do so reverently, respectfully. There is joy in the Lord's house. We can clap and we can celebrate. Worship should be celebratory. We can have joy in the Lord's presence. We also come with the sense that God is on the throne; that God is holy and we are unholy. We come with a reverential, worshipful, fearful kind of a heart. Worship should be both formal and informal, joyful and reverential. The church's highest priority is to worship God.

In Ephesians 1:6, 12 and 14—three times—Paul the Apostle says that the church was saved "to the praise of the glory of His grace." We exist as a church to the praise of the glory of God's grace. Everything we do as a church should be an act of worship. We congregate to worship God. We celebrate all that God has done and is doing. We commemorate with the Lord's Supper, and when we have communion, everyone should be here breaking the bread and drinking the cup. We communicate by preaching and listening to God's holy Word. And we consecrate our lives in service to God as an act of worship.

I love Romans 12:1 where Paul says, "I beg you, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies." The word "bodies" doesn't just mean your physical bodies. It means your whole being, your whole personality. Your body, soul and spirit, your mind, your emotions, your will. Everything you are devoted to God, consecrated to God. When you come to church on Sundays, it should always be a consecration. "Take my life and let it be, consecrated Lord to Thee." "Help me to serve You. Help me to give to You. Help me to live for You. Help me to worship You." Everything we do on Sundays. When I preach, I preach as an act of worship. When you listen, you listen as an act of worship. When we pray, we're worshipping God. When you put money in the offering, you're worshipping God. When you serve, you're worshipping God. Everything we do in church should be an act of worship.

And true worship includes obedience. Moral obedience. You're not worshipping God in truth if you're not obeying God in holiness. It's not enough to say, "Well, I sang the songs. I put money in the offering." Then you go out and disobey God, or willingly engage in sinful behavior. Samuel the prophet told the disobedient King Saul that "to obey is better than sacrifice." He said, "To harken..."—or to listen to God and obey God—"...is better than the fat of rams." You say, "I come every Sunday." "To obey is better than sacrifice." "I give up a lot of time to get to church; I drive down here, I get in line, I come in. I do a lot of that." "To obey is better than sacrifice." I teach Sunday school." "To obey is better than sacrifice. To harken is better than the fat of rams."

You can't appease God because you came to church on Sunday. "Okay, God, I came to church. I actually sat in two services this week. So I can live how I want this week." God said, in the Old Testament, when people were worshipping, "Your hands are lifted to Me, but your hearts are far from Me." God wants your heart. He doesn't want your body in a pew on Sunday morning. He doesn't want your money in the offering plate. He wants your heart. And true worship in a Spirit filled church—this church filled with the Spirit—is going to be a church that obeys God, that lives in true holiness. There's going to be a reverential fear and awe of the holiness of God. God said, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." And we will obey Him.

The fourth, and last, essential characteristic of a Spirit filled church is that it is an evangelistic church. This is my prayer for Revival Christian Fellowship: that we would never lose our zeal for the Gospel, reaching out to people who do not know Christ. Notice it in verse 47. Luke says they were "praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." The word "saved" is in the Bible; it's a Biblical Word. I'm good with using Biblical words; if the Bible uses them, I'll use them.

Are you saved? Has the Lord added you to the church? A truly Spirit filled church is not preoccupied with in-reach; teaching, fellowshiping. Some churches have as their motto, "Us four, no more, shut the door." It's a "bless me club." "We have our own little pews." Some of you have your own little pews. Some of you show up and say, "What's that person doing sitting in my spot? In the name of Jesus, be ye moved!" It's not your pew. You should be glad there's a heathen in your spot. You should welcome them. Someone comes in and you say, "Did you see that guy who came to church? He looks like a wicked, vile sinner! But he doesn't sit next to me. I think he's got cooties!" The church is not a museum for the saints; it's a hospital for sinners. That's why we're here. We need help. God help us that we never get this mentality that we don't want new people because they mess things up. We have our own little potluck club. We have sanctified enchiladas. No; we need to be reaching out.

The church does have in-reach: we teach, we have fellowship. It has up reach; worship. But never forget outreach. We must always be reaching out. A Spirit filled church is an evangelistic church. If the church is not evangelizing, it will fossilize; it will die. Jesus said in Acts 1:8, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the world." Before Christ sent the church into the world, He sent the Spirit into the church. The same order must be observed

today. He said, "Tarry in Jerusalem until you be endued with power." The word is "dunamis" in the Greek. It means "dynamite." "So now that you have received the Holy Spirit, you need to go out and be witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea, in Samaria and the uttermost parts of the world."

We need to be witnesses in Menifee, in the Temecula Valley, in southern California, in Riverside County, in the United States and in the world. We need to be witnesses. Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel." That's the church's mission. It's the whole church's job to take the whole Gospel to the whole world.

I want you to notice in this text about the early church's evangelism. Number one, it was the Lord Who was working. In verse 47 it says, "the Lord added." The Lord is the one Who adds. I don't save anyone; God saves. You don't save anyone; the Lord saves. It is the Lord Who is working. How does He work? Through the preaching and the witness of the Apostles and the people. He wants people to be saved. That happens when His people open their mouths. Whenever someone was filled with the Holy Spirit in the Bible, their mouth opened up. What came out was one of two things, or both: praise and prayer. Every time in the book of Acts someone was filled with the Holy Spirit, one of two things happened: they either praised the Lord or they prayed. They either proclaimed the Lord or they praised the Lord. So a Spirit filled heart is a heart with a mouth that is open; they talked with others about Jesus Christ.

God used mass evangelism—Acts 2—on the day of Pentecost. Peter preached and 3,000 souls were saved. I believe as a church we should do mass evangelism. I still have this burning desire that we as a congregation go outside this sanctuary, we rent a stadium and do a city-wide crusade. We can do that. We can take our resources and our prayers and our gifting, and we can go out and invite people to come. We can take the Gospel to our community. We need mass evangelistic crusades in this Temecula Valley. We can do that. We can preach the Gospel. We can see people saved. God uses the preaching of His Word.

God also uses personal evangelism, Acts 8. Philip left a successful revival in Samaria because God sent him all the way down to Gaza to a dusty, dirty, desperate place to one man, who was an Ethiopian eunuch on his way from Jerusalem back to Africa. God said the Philip, "I want you to go to speak to that man." That man was saved, and he took the Gospel to Africa. So not just mass evangelism but also personal evangelism. I believe that we as individuals—even though we are not called to preach the Gospel in the pulpit—are called when we go to work to share our testimony.

You'll go to work tomorrow morning and someone might say, "What did you do yesterday?" "I went to church." "What did you do at church?" "Listen to the preacher." "What did the preacher say?" Tell him. You don't have to tell him my whole sermon. "Hey John, can I have your notes after the sermon so I can preach it tomorrow?" God will open the door. It can be as simple as "I was blind but now I see. I was lost but now I'm found. I go to church because my life's been changed. I don't go to church to win brownie points with God. I go to church because He saved me by His grace." Tell them what God has done for you. When they see the joy in your heart on Monday morning, they'll ask you, "Why are you so happy? It's Monday." You tell them.

"It's because I have Jesus in my heart. He changed my life." It could be as simple as, "Lord, open the door. Give me an opportunity."

A couple of weeks ago I was in San Clemente with a friend. We had gone surfing. We went to this little place, Pedro's Tacos. Praise God for Pedro's Tacos. We were out on the patio area, and we were the only ones there—me and my pastor friend. There were all these tables there. We started eating, and 25 or 30 young Mormon missionaries came. I didn't know Mormons could eat burritos. They ordered and then sat down all around us. I thought, "This is too good to be true." And the whole time I'm eating these fish tacos I thought, "I've gotta share! I've gotta share! They're all college age." So I threw out my Mormon-stumping question to them. I did it with a smile on my face. Then I began to ask questions and I began to talk. I was standing on the table preaching to these Mormons. They were listening. I actually gave them my whole Sunday sermon that day. I really challenged them to think about what they believe and why and who Jesus Christ is and that we're saved by grace. They were listening to every word. I'm praying that God uses that.

I was at an In-N-Out one time. I was just sitting there by myself having a hamburger. There were several businessmen sitting next to me at a table. One of them held up a cup and read on it, "John 3:16. I wonder what that means." I'm like, "Oooh. Oooh." I spoke in tongues for a minute. "Thank you Jesus." I said, "I know what it means." I preached John 3:16. I said it loud enough so that everyone on the patio could hear. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." "Have you believed in God's Son? Do you have everlasting life?" They go, "I just want to finish my Coke here. Who the heck is this guy?!" They probably thought I was hired by In-N-Out to do that on the patio.

It's amazing how God will open up opportunities. You're on an airplane and a person sits next to you while you're reading your Bible. "What are you reading?" Ah, man. "The Bible." It happens to me all the time; I get on an airplane and someone will ask, "What do you do for a living?" "Funny you should ask. Let me tell you what I do."

God will open those doors, so we go out and we evangelize. You are called by God. I never go out in this town to buy or shop or eat without running into someone from Revival Christian Fellowship. You're everywhere. Think about the impact we can have on this community. Salt and light. Psalm 127:1 says, "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it."

Notice in verse 47 that "The Lord added to the church." But He added to the church only those who would be saved. The point is that He did not add them to the church without saving them, nor did He save them without adding them to the church. And He added them to the church every day. The Greek word "daily" means that it was ongoing. It would actually be translated "those who were being saved."

I don't take for granted that those of you who are here this morning are saved. You're in church, but being in church doesn't make you a Christian any more than going to McDonalds makes

you a Big Mac. Going to church doesn't make you a Christian. You must believe in Jesus Christ. You must receive Him as your Savior. Jesus came from heaven, through the womb of the virgin, was the God-man, "spake like never a man spake," performed miracles and willingly gave His life as a sacrifice on the Cross. When Jesus died on the Cross, His death was a substitution. He died for you and He died for me to pay for our sins.

When you, by faith, receive what He did for you on that Cross—when He died, was buried and was resurrected—God will forgive all of your sins. He will give you the Holy Spirit, and you become a Christian, a child of God. Going to church doesn't make you saved. Being baptized doesn't make you saved. Just believing in the idea that there is a God doesn't save you. It's trusting in Jesus Christ as your Savior. Jesus said, "I am the way and I am the truth and I am the life, and no one comes to the Father except through Me." There's only one way to get to heaven, and that's through Jesus Christ.

If you are here this morning, I want to give you this opportunity. I want to give you an opportunity, right now, to invite Jesus Christ to come into your heart and to be forgiven of all your sins. Let's bow our heads in a word of prayer.