

THE CHURCH...The Community Of True Believers
The Master's Plan For His Church
Acts 2:37-47

There was a popular TV show a few years ago called "**Extreme Makeover...Home Edition.**" It's where a deserving family was chosen, and their house was totally rebuilt or remodeled from start to finish in only a week. It took a huge number of workers to pull it off, but the joint effort of all the people working together resulted in the house being finished within that week. This is a beautiful picture of how the church should operate.

But all too often when a need arises, or a task needs to be done...only one or two individuals in the church seem to be willing to do it. Eventually this results in these one or two becoming discouraged...and ultimately it will lead to burnout. All the while, the need was God inviting "**the church**" to walk in the work that He initiated. When the combined efforts of all members of the church works together in harmony, it will accomplish the task faster and better under the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit in a way that God will be most glorified...and the church will have the blessing of experiencing God.

This is how God designed His Church to operate. We are the Body of Christ! A **living organism...a physical body** made up of **many different members** that are designed to **perform many different roles** and **jobs** so that **the body** can function properly. It pleases God when **everyone comes together** using their **spiritual giftedness** and **talent**...for His **purpose** and **calling**. It brings **honor** and **glory** to Him.

The word for church (Gk. **Ekklesia**) means **an assembly of called-out ones**. The church is made up of people **called** by God to be His **children** (**Acts 2:39**)...to do His **work**...His

way...works that He "**prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them**" (**Ephesians 2:10**).

The church has **changed** a great deal **over the centuries**. It quite often functions more like a **business** rather than a **body** ...a **factory** rather than a **family**...and a **corporation** rather than a **community**.

I. THE MAKE-UP OF THE CHURCH: (vs. 37-41, 47; Acts 2:5-12)

- **True Repentant Believer...(vs. 37-41)** Those whom God draws to Himself.

Saved...repented...born again...regenerated...believers.

Pierced to the heart (vs. 37)...Gk. **katanusso**, appears only here in the New Testament and means **to penetrate** or **stab**. It depicts something **sudden** and **unexpected**. It reveals one's **inability** to **evade the indictment** that they are **sinners**, and therefore **guilty** before God...resulting in being **overcome by grief** and **remorse**.

This may seem **elementary**, but it's **significant**...because today, to many churches either **don't know** the Biblical meaning of **salvation** or they **refuse to accept** its essential **truth**. This is the reason so many churches are **ineffective** today. This is why there's a **mixture** of **wheat** and **tares**...even among the **leadership**. Having **unregenerate** people in the **church**...and especially in places of **responsibility** and **leadership**...**works against** God's **design** and **confuses** the church's **message**. A **saved church** will **give evidence of personally knowing** the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast."

~Ephesians 2:8-9

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

~John 3:3

When you have a ***totally regenerated*** assembly of people moving through a community ***in the power*** of the Holy Spirit, they are bound to make a ***great impact***.

Sanctified...refined...holy...pure...lordship.

The ***pursuit*** of the Christian is to be ***like Christ***.

A.W. Tozer said that if a hundred pianos were merely tuned to each other, their pitch in the end would not be very accurate. But when they are all tuned to one tuning fork, they would automatically be tuned to each other.

Similarly, ***sanctification*** doesn't come by ***comparing ourselves*** to others. It's being ***molded*** to the ***image of Jesus Christ...becoming Christ-like***.

The ***genuine character*** of the church's ***salvation*** is apparent in its ***purity*** and ***holiness***.

“Like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I AM holy.’”

~I Peter 1:15-16

Surrendered...submitted...yielded...bond-servants.

In our day of ***civil liberties***, it is ***difficult*** for us to ***comprehend*** what it was like for people living in ***biblical times*** under the ***authoritarian rule*** of a king. He was a dictator with ***absolute control*** over every person in his kingdom, and ***fairness wasn't being examined*** by every news agency around the world...and the ***legality*** of it ***wasn't challenged*** in court by the ACLU. There were ***no protest*** marches outside the palace...the king's authority was ***absolute*** and ***simply accepted***...you ***didn't question*** it.

Occasionally, one king would decide to ***invade*** the kingdom of another. He knew if he won the ensuing battle, that everybody in that king's realm would ***become his subject***, including the other king himself. One Old Testament king boasted, ***“Seventy kings with their thumbs and their big toes cut off used to gather up scraps under my table...”*** (***Judges 1:7***). When ***Nebuchadnezzar*** captured ***Jerusalem*** the second time, he had ***King Zedekiah's sons*** put to death in front of him, then had his ***eyes gouged out*** and sent him off to ***Babylon*** in chains, a ***broken man***. When ***Ben-Hadad***, the ***king of Syria***, decided he was going to attack the ***northern kingdom*** of ***Israel***, he sent the following message to ***King Ahab***, ***“Your silver and your gold are mine; your most beautiful wives and children are also mine. The king of Israel answered and said, ‘It is according to your word, my lord, O king; I am yours, and all that I have.’”*** (***I Kings 20: 3-4***). When one king ***surrendered*** to another, he understood what it meant... ***“I am yours, and all that I have.”*** It would be an ***unconditional surrender***.

This is a picture of ***true surrender*** to the Lord. After many years of tyranny, the ***king of SELF***...along with Satan, the real power behind his throne...is ***overthrown*** and a ***new King*** is ***installed*** when we become a ***child of God***. How unfortunate it is when people come to the benevolent King and conqueror with a ***list of conditions!*** He calls for ***unconditional surrender!***

“Submit therefore to God...”

~James 4:7

Absolute surrender...no conditions!

Set apart...

“Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord...who has called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity.”

~II Timothy 1:8a-9

“Therefore...walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called.”

~Ephesians 4:1

- **From Every People Group...**(Acts 2:5-12; Revelation 5:9)...15 different cities, regions, and countries are listed in Acts 2:9-11.

“And they sang a new song, saying, ‘Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation’.”

~Revelation 5:9

II. THE MESSAGE OF THE CHURCH: (vs. 38-42; Acts 2:22-36)

- **Truth (Doctrine)...***proclaim truth...teach and preach.*
“Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.”
~John 17:17
- **Repent...(vs. 38)...**Gk. *metanoeo*, involves more than *fear of consequences*...literally *hates sin* for what it is. The same message that **John the Baptist, Jesus, Peter, Paul**, and the *rest of the disciples* preached. (Acts 3:19; Acts 5:31; Acts 8:22; Acts 11:18; Acts 17:30; Acts 20:21; Acts 26:20).
- **The Gospel (Salvation)...***repent, forgiveness, baptize, disciple (vs. 38-42).*

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.”

~I Corinthians 15:3-4

III. THE MANIFESTATION OF THE CHURCH: What the church *looks like*...a *healthy church* that’s *ALIVE*... one that’s the *bride of Christ*...the *body of Christ*.

- **A Church that Worships...**(vs. 42, 46-47; Acts 3:1; Acts 20:7) Worships in *spirit* and *truth*.
- **A Church of Prayer (Personal/Private and Corporate) ...**(vs. 42) (Acts 1:14 (the disciples gathered in the upper room with other women); Acts 4:24, 31 (when the persecution began); Acts 12:5 (when Peter was in prison))
- **A Church Filled with the Spirit...**(Acts 2:4, 43; Acts 4:8, 31; Acts 6:3, 5; Acts 7:55; Acts 9:17; Acts 13:9, 52) I truly believe that the Church today is *afraid of the Holy Spirit!*

Awe...(vs. 43)...Gk. *phobos*, means *fear*...literally, *fear of God...fear that refines*. The *only fear* that the Church should every have is a *fear of God...missing God...not hearing God...not obeying God*. Fear *ultimately leads to reverence...obedience*.

Grieve the Spirit...(Ephesians 4:30). The Holy Spirit is *grieved* or *pained by sin*...especially sins of the tongue (Ephesians 4:29, 31; James 3:8).

Quench the Spirit...(I Thessalonians 5:19). The Holy Spirit is often likened to *fire* (Matthew 3:11; Luke 3:16; Acts 2:3). The Spirit is *quenched* whenever we *don’t obey* Him...and His ministry is *stifled* in the Church or *through* an individual.

- A Church with a Passion for the Word...(vs. 42)
Devoting...Gk. *proskartereo*, literally means *to endure* ...to *continue steadfastly*...to *cleave faithfully* to...to *continually insist on*. Typically describes a *mature believer* in direct reference to *Bible study* and *prayer* (**I Corinthians 3**).
- A Church that Minister's and Serves Others...(vs. 42, 44-47; Acts 3:1-10; Acts 4:1, 4-ff) Has a *heart for others*...*serves others*.
- A Church with Unity...(vs. 44, 46; Acts 4:32) *One mind, one heart, one soul, one purpose*.
- A Church that Gives...(vs. 45; Acts 4:32, 34-37) Meeting the *basic* and *practical needs* of others... *sharing*.
- A Church with Fellowship...(vs. 42, 44, 46)

IV. THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH: A Healthy Church that's *ALIVE*...results in a Church *GOING*...(Acts 3-ff).
On mission *with* God!

- Exalt the Savior...*Worship*.
- Edify the Saints...*Discipleship* and *Spiritual growth*...
- Evangelize the Sinner...*Missions* and *Evangelism*...
partnership mission trips...community outreach...
festivals.
- Enlarge the Spectrum...*Church Planting*...local,
regional, international.

Righteousness, Holiness, Obedience...leads to **Spiritual awakening**...

Acts 2:37-47

37 Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?” 38 Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.” 40 And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation!” 41 So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. 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 those who had believed were together and had all things in common; 45 and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have 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.