



REVOLUTION

“The Priorities of the Church

Acts 2:41-42
June 28, 2015

The Gospel Brings Growth

Acts 2:47, 4:4, 5:14, 6:1, 6:7

Numerical Growth and Spiritual Depth Must Connect

Acts 2:41–42

Priorities Must Come From Devotion

✓ **Devoted to Learning**

Ephesians 2:19-20; 1 Timothy 1:3,4, 4:6,13,16; 6:20; 2 Peter 1:2; Romans 12:2; 2 Timothy 2:1-2, 14-15; 3:10-17; 4:1-4

✓ **Devoted to Loving**

1 John 1:3; Romans 12:5

✓ **Devoted to the Lord**

▪ **Prayer**

Psalm 145:18; Matthew 7:7-8; 18:19-20; John 14:13-14; Luke 18:1; Ephesians 6:11; Romans 12:12; Colossians 4:2

▪ **Lord's Supper**

Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:24-29; 10:16-17

How Will We Respond?

- ✓ Would you realize and understand that the Lord will go to any length to say “This Message is for You?” Today, I plead with you to accept the greatest gift you could ever receive the Gift of Eternal Life? Would you give Him your heart & life today? Jesus can bring the life change that you have been seeking. Remember it is as simple as **ABC!** **A**dmit to God you are a sinner, **A**sk for His forgiveness, **B**elieve Jesus is God’s Son, **C**onfess Him as Savior & **C**ommit Your Life to Him as Lord. (the Boss of your life)
- ✓ Have you asked Christ into your heart but never made it public. Have you not been baptized? You can come & make that decision today public today. He was willing to humble Himself and be obedient, will you? We have baptism sets for the next several Sundays. Contact us and let us know that you are ready to follow through in obedience to the Lord’s command!
- ✓ Are you a part of a church family? If not, you need one! Is the Lord calling you to Petal FBC today? Why wait any longer? Step over the line and join us in reaching this community with the gospel of Jesus Christ!
- ✓ Are you connected to a LifeGroup? You need to be! It is a Biblical thing that goes all the way back to the early church? Get connected to one next Sunday!
- ✓ We have experienced that growth...but are we seeing that growth sustained and continuing? Yes and No!
- ✓ As the growth comes, we must be certain that we are growing deeper – which means that we must be making disciples of new believers? Are we doing this on a focused and purposeful level? No, but we need to!!
- ✓ Are these priorities in your life? Are you committed to learning privately and then corporately? Are you devoted to loving others in this Church Family? Are you deeply passionate about praying and the Lord’s Supper?

THE ACTS: REVOLUTION

“The Priorities of the Church”

Acts 2:41-42

June 28, 2015 AM Service

We are living in perilous days no doubt. Should we be surprised? No! The Lord told us these things would happen – it shouldn't really shock us. The Church is on a decline in America according to latest Pew Research – we are fast heading towards what Europe is now. SBC latest report showed we lost another couple of hundred thousand members – back down to 15.5 million or so – down from well over 16 million a decade ago. However as one commentator said, the Church is not dying, but in reality it is becoming clearer who the true believers are. The line is being drawn in the sand and it is why today's message and the ensuing ones will fit into exactly that Christianity isn't normal anymore and that's good news. IN the Book of Acts is wasn't normal then either!

My reaction this week – especially yesterday – anger, sadness, great concern – wondering how this will impact our church, our community, my children and in the generations to come and even grief, frustration, feeling helpless, frustration, disgust – disgusted over our president who one minutes talks about freedom and choice and then goes inside a church and sings amazing grace – yet it's that same grace that covers me can cover him too! Make no mistake, the line has been crossed

Our Response should really be what we will talk about this morning with a few extra thoughts I really feel compelled to share. I have been deeply troubled and burdened by the shooting last week and the ensuing response and then this past Friday with a ruling that really has shaken our country
3 P's

We Must Pray

Did we spend as much time praying as we do talking about it or posting on social media? I mean really pray for the mercy of God to fall upon our land and upon our churches and upon our lives. For him to forgive our sin and to heal our land, not the sins of others – our sins it says

We Must Practice Love & Show Compassion and Mercy

Be reminded that our sin is just as much as an offense to the Lord as theirs

They need to see that we are living out our faith. And before we go pointing fingers, we are certain that we are right with the Lord and walking with Him and being a true Christ Follower who is living it without compromise.

We Must Be Prepared – Stand Solidly on the Word of God without compromise and yet answer with great winsomeness, answers seasoned with salt – ready to give a defense

In great love with great conviction without compromise

In [Acts 4:19-20](#) which we will look at later this Fall – Peter talks about this very thing –

We Must Place Our Eyes on the King – This ruling doesn't change the fact that marriage is still of God's design and is between a man and woman and the Lord is still sovereign and in control.

We Must Ponder our Brothers and Sisters in Christ in regards to the Confederate Flag

I know this and other issues are political and it one more intrusion of the government. – Talking with Bro Carl Burkett of Mt Vernon.

The Gospel Brings Growth

[Acts 2:47, 4:4, 5:14, 6:1, 6:7](#)

There was an exchange – giving up their lives and giving it to Christ. Because of their decision to follow Christ and be baptized they would be kicked out of the synagogue. It wasn't adding Jesus to what they already had, no more than it is for us! It is an exchanging our old life for the new. The problem today is there are many people who have only added Jesus to their lives and that is never what He asked for – He doesn't want to be added to our lives – He wants to be our life!

And that is exactly what happened to these 3,000 people that day!

If we are proclaiming the life changing message of the Gospel both here in our Church and as believers to other people, then there will be growth.

There was immediate and explosive growth and that brought many good things but it also brought great challenges as we will see later in Acts 6 where widows were being left out and not being served. Though let me say I would rather deal with growth problems than decline!

ILLUS: Family – We can handle one kid, ok, we can handle, 2, 3 etc.

You have to reorient everything that you do in order to accommodate that.

The Church here has grown exponentially. We have been blessed in that last 3 years the Lord has grown our Church family over 110%! That is amazing! Rejoicing over that!

By Acts 8 there were over 20,000 believers.

We get nervous about numbers – afraid we will lose our focus! That's ok Everything that can be counted doesn't necessarily count and everything that counts can't be counted.

ILLUS: count how much \$, cars, can't count the time spent with family – countless – counts but can't be counted.

3,000 Jesus fed the 5,000, with 5 loaves and 2 fishes, 12 baskets left over 12 disciples, sent the 70 out John 21 caught 153 fish, Book of Numbers Can't be focused on that but we to look at it.

Numeric Growth and Spiritual Depth Must Connect

Acts 2:41–42 3

As we talked about in our Vision 2020 – we talked that this growth must be measured by transformed lives – not just numerical growth.

Means that the both must happen. We can't be a mile wide and a ½ inch deep – there must be great spiritual depth or otherwise it will not last!

I believe beyond a shadow of a doubt that the Lord wants His Churches to grow. We don't have enough churches to hold all the people in Petal by the way!

Our community continues to grow – we know the last 3 years the Primary School has grown 8% each year so much so that the Primary school will be overflowing this year! We have to grow to reach those already here and those that are still coming and yet!

That's what Vision 2020 is vital – that we have a clear and undeniable and clear Vision that helps us makes us a healthy church that will grow. It's the automatic response of a healthy church.

Our Vision – We want to be a people who are being radically transformed by the Lord into a people he can use to transform others.

How do we do that – We are called to Connect, Grow, Commit, and Go and we see all 4 of these in the priorities of the early Church. They should be our priorities. What are we to do in response to our culture and where it is heading? We focus deeply on these priorities – we keep our focus clear.

Priorities Must Come From Devotion

The Primary things that they were about to help us evaluate our own context and situation to make sure that these are our priorities as well.

4 priorities that are described for us here or identified here by Luke that the NT church engaged in.

Notice in the language of the NT they continued steadfastly in these things...

The verb actually means to devote one's self and the verb tense that is an ongoing action

Not just possibilities, not some things by chance, not things that happened by accident, these were things that they devoted themselves to, intentionally to do on an ongoing basis.

Safe for us to say, theses were the non-negotiables, the common denominators, these things that if nothing else were done, these were the things that had to happen and they devoted themselves to them on a regular basis.

As we list them, let's continually be asking ourselves, are these priorities for us, are they the non-negotiables for us, if we don't do anything else accomplish anything more, don't add any more programs or ministries, don't get anything else done, we will do these things, and we will prioritize these things as they did in the NT Church.

✓ **Devoted to Learning**

[Ephesians 2:19-20](#); [I Timothy 1:3,4, 4:6,13,16; 6:20](#); [2 Peter 1:2](#);
[Romans 12:2](#); [2 Timothy 2:1-2, 14-15; 3:10-17; 4:1-4](#)

To the apostles doctrine, meaning teaching

Gave themselves, devoted themselves to the study of the Word of God.

NO accident that it is listed first before the others.

In the ministry of these apostles and Paul as he came along after them cautioned the Ephesian elders and warned them that ravenous wolves would come in and try to suck the life out of them with heretical teaching and take away sound teaching

As the rest of the NT unfolded Paul, was constantly writing to the NT churches about the importance of doctrine, of foundational teaching of the Word of God in their midst.

Show one place [Ephesians 2:19-20](#)

Translate the apostles doctrine into our day and time, the majority of the NT, outside of the 4 gospels which are about the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ and then the rest is a reflection upon his life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

Jesus had said in Matt 5, I didn't come to destroy it the Law, (the OT) to abolish but instead to fulfill it, to bring it to fruition, to show you what it all meant

Jesus is making the connection with our OT, and consequently we are on safe ground when we equate with what is happening here in Acts 2 with the study of our Scriptures, Old and New Testament

Paul is writing to the gentile believers in Ephesus, he is trying to help them understand that just like the Jews that accepted Christ they had been made of the body of Christ, trying to help them understand who they were as the church and what the church was all about.

Ever thought about the imagery?

What is Paul referring to here?

Doctrine, teaching, not these physical men, not about them as human beings,

What was the foundation, not these people's bodies, but what they taught and preached.

Paul said, the church is built upon that teaching and Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone. He is the one by which every brick is laid in this building is measured by, He is the one who holds it all together, He is the center of it, but that is built upon the teaching of the apostles and prophets.

Look at [I Timothy](#)

Primary theme is encouraging Timothy, warning Timothy, cautioning, exhorting, and encouraging him to make sure that he opposes the heretical doctrine and that he teaches sound doctrine in the church.

[I Timothy 1:3,4, 4:6,13,16; 6:20](#)

the word knowledge - the reference in Scripture is to transformation that comes through knowledge

Peter said in [2 Peter 1:2](#)

[“Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord” \(NASU \)](#)

Where do we get knowledge? Through teaching
Where does that transformation come from? Through understanding
There is a false thinking that if we just get with the right people, doing
the right things as far as busyness of spiritual activity that that will mold
us into the image of Christ and everything will be ok
NO, NO, NO!!

Transformation comes through the Word of God, and we receive the
Word of God through understanding it in our minds

Paul talked to the Romans about this, in [Romans 12:2](#)

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the
renewing of your mind...” (NASU)

[2 Timothy 1:13\(NKJV\)](#)

“Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in
faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. 14 That good thing which was
committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.”

[2 Tim 2:1-2\(NKJV\)](#)

“And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses,
commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

[2 Tim 2:14-15 NKJV](#)

“Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to
strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers. Be diligent to
present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be
ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

[2 Tim 3:10-17 NKJV](#)

But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose,
faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, 11 persecutions, afflictions,
which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra — what
persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. 12
Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer
persecution. 13 But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse,
deceiving and being deceived. 14 But you must continue in the things
which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you
have learned them, 15 and that from childhood you have known the
Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through
faith which is in Christ Jesus.

16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Here is why in verse 3 here's why it is foundational, here's why it is at the top of the list of the specific activities of the NT church.

2 Tim 4:1-4 (NASU)

“I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: 2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, 4 and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.”

Paul knew that they day that happened is the day the church is sunk! When it loses it foundation of right doctrine! Don't ever let anybody tell you that doctrine is secondary.

Heard of people who make comments, let's don't get all caught up doctrine, let's don't let theology and doctrine divide us, let's just be one, let's commit ourselves to evangelism and missions and that's what unites us. That's ridiculous!

The only way we know we are to do evangelism is through the Word of God! The only way we develop a passion for missions is because of the teaching of the Word of God, we don't know anything else to do outside of the OT, the NT, life of and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, the teaching of the apostles on that, folks we have no where to go, there is nothing to unite us.

One of the pointed things we will see, the 2 things that we would think would be on the list of non-negotiables of the NT church are strikingly absent are evangelism and worship!

Both of them are mentioned in the passage of Scripture, but we will study through the coming weeks, where they fit in, but they are not on this first list of the priorities of the NT Church. You know why?

The only way you know you are supposed to do evangelism is through the Word of God, we have no unity outside of it, nothing to bind us

together outside the truth of God's Word and the Christ that is revealed in Scripture

And that's why in Acts 2, that at the top of the list of these apostles and the NT Church that was birthed here, was the teaching of the apostles.

Word of Affirmation:

It is no accident that we have prioritized in the past the preaching of the Word of God, and an organization we call LifeGroups.

Because both of those two things, involve these two things right here!

Word of Caution:

Some of us who would say, we'll I don't need that, I can get that on my own. Need to come back to the Word of God and ask yourself, am I being obedient to what the NT church in its birth prioritized by not being a part of Bible Study. This is why we do what we do.

If we let secondary activities take over the teaching ministry of the local church, SS, and we do not prioritize having men and women in those positions who know doctrine, truth, theology, and are teaching rightly then all we are really doing is going through the motions of an organization. We have to make it a priority because it was a priority of the NT Church.

Everything we do stems from our doctrine, from the teaching of the Word of God.

✓ **Devoted to Loving**

[1 John 1:3](#); [Romans 12:5](#)

Expressed in the One another, love, share, pray, give,

This is a term that has changed meaning,

For example the word Samaritan, means to be good, no way! In the context, hated, nobody wanted to be called a Samaritan

Koininia Usually what we think, fellowship hall, talking, sharing, line up tables, food, get a lines, and we stand around and talk. As we have talked about. We have done that even this morning, but our prayer and our desire is that it leads to much more than that!

Nothing wrong with, we need that, but it is a minute part of what we this word means.

Communion/Relationships/Sharing

Complete wedding of one life to another.

Remember, they committed themselves not just one day a week, but daily on an ongoing basis

One of the specific activities of fellowship meant they had come into a relationship with one another where their lives were not their own and they shared with each other their lives.

Some of you know what that is

But in our day and time, when we live in a world of quick fixes, where the end justifies the means, a day in which we look at the most number of people baptized in our church,

We sometimes ignore this truth or cancel it out all together.

We work hard to protect people's anonymity, people don't to be known, and at the beginning perhaps that it is ok, but it certainly cannot stay that way! We must be known.

We build our programs, our schedules many times around people's busyness so that we do not infringe upon their life, because after all people have a life, right.

That's what we say, we all have schedules, we are all busy

We want the church to be inserted at the places that are convenient that doesn't infringe upon the busyness of our lives and schedules.

Listen carefully, both of these philosophies are in complete and utter contradiction to the Word of God and this quality and characteristic of the NT Church.

A group of people who committed themselves to share their lives together on an ongoing basis. It is not an option, if you don't want to know what is going on in my life. It's not an option if I don't want to know what is going on in your life. When we became a part of the church we are saying that our lives come together and listen, you don't have a life outside of your relationship with the church!

That doesn't mean that we are the church 24 hours a day, or that we are exclusively with church people, that is a tragedy if we are doing that.

The church is not a building, but people! But there ought not be one day of our lives that goes by that there is not a connectedness between us and other believers.

Some people come to join the church and want to just one slice of it,

that consumer mentality, of what can I get out of it, what is offered for me, but don't let the church impose itself on me.

I will get what I want, when I want it and then I'll be on my merry way. That is not church and it is not an option!

Many churches go to great extent to make it as easy as possible to join a church, thinking that if we can just get them in and all of the sudden this church thing, this Jesus thing will just ooze out and get all over them.

We need to be thinking more to make it more difficult

We don't mean by that to try to keep people out, let people know we love them and want them, but making sure that when people come in that the church is a living thing, full of people who are sharing their lives together, and you should not enter into a covenant with that if you are not willing to share your life with other believers.

Leads us to a question, are you sharing you life right now with other believers? Could we expect that from new people who would join this fellowship, if are not doing that in our own lives.

There is such a disconnect, I will be a part of this church, the body of Christ, but I don't want to get too connected, it might tie me down too much, have too much to do, and I certainly can't get that connected to other people.

That is absurd, ridiculous, which is why it was a non-negotiable in the NT Church, they said we are going to devote ourselves to sharing our lives together.

The Bible never even talks about or envisions a Christian who is not a part of a local body of believers, the church. When we people say that they cannot find it in the Bible.

Not saying that church is a necessary part of salvation, but after salvation is the natural and essential part of being a believer it be connected to a church family, not just a member, but connected. There is a difference. I can show you a huge church role of people who are there, but are really not members, just names on a piece of paper.

Here we see the connection to the teaching of God's Word connected to a Sunday School Small Group where we study God's Word more intimately and also where we can fellowship together. This small groups leads to deeper fellowship, not necessarily during every class

time, but outside of that class where those relationships can grow and strengthen. We must be able to know one another, love another, and hold each other accountable.

✓ Devoted to the Lord

▪ Prayer

Psalm 145:18; Matthew 7:7-8; 18:19-20; John 14:13-14; Luke 18:1; Ephesians 6:11; Romans 12:12, Colossians 4:2

“Prayer is the slender nerve that moves the muscle of omnipotence.”

The NT church knew that.

Disciples went to Jesus one day, did not ask Lord teach us to preach, teach us to do miracles, teach us to raise the dead, no Lord teach us to pray. Why?

Because they had seen something in His life that they knew was rooted in communion with the Father and obviously these Christians had seen it in the lives of these apostles, called the NT Church to it, and when the church was birthed they said if we don't do anything else we will devote ourselves to pray.

Prayer reminds you that you are not in control and keeps you close to the One who is.

All of those days leading up to the coming of the Holy Spirit, remember the Word says the continued there in prayer. Engaged God, they knew it was their lifeline, they knew their was no communion with the Father outside of the teaching of the apostles hearing from Him that way, and talking to Him and listening to Him. Don't understand all of the things about prayer, but that is laid out as foundational for the NT Church and it was the very lifeline!

And see here, not just individual prayer which is vitally important, but just as important as the corporate gatherings of prayer.

And as we have made the adjustments to prayer times together, prayer is not getting together listing requests for an hour and praying for 5 minutes. That's talking about praying. We believe God has called us to engage in prayer, to do the hard work, seeking His face for more than five minutes. For many that can be a stretch, but as you do it more the time just seems to fly away as we get lost in the

Lord's presence, praising Him, crying out to Him, and seeking His face!

This time we spend in our prayer meetings, gatherings is crucial to the life of our church. Without our church will not grow, we will not reach our community, we will not see those who are disconnected reconnected, we will not see the hand of God heavy upon our church. I encourage you to be a part of our Wednesday night prayer times.

“We spend more time praying the saints of God out of heaven than we do praying lost people out of hell!” Vance Havner

- Lord's Supper

[Luke 22:19](#); [I Corinthians 11:24-29](#); [10:16-17](#)

Reference to the Lord's Supper and Communion – breaking of the bread

Primary visible representation of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ

It was the music video if you will, that visible picture and reminder of what they stood for, the foundation of the church, the cross.

It was so they would not forget their moorings, their central message that of Jesus Christ and his life and death.

This must be a part of our worship, perhaps we need to do it even more as a incredible reminder and a wonderful opportunity to never forget what Jesus did and to worship and thank Him for paying the ultimate sacrifice for you and for me.

It also gives us specific times to make sure our hearts our right, for self-examination of our spiritual lives.