

Three Marks of a Healthy and Vibrant Church (Acts 2:42-47)

Pentecost occurred 50 days (seventh Sunday) after Passover. This marks a new beginning of the church era and a reversal of the Tower of Babel.

The reason why these devout Jews from every nation under heaven (v.5) were in Jerusalem is because Pentecost happened during the Feast of Weeks (Shavuot) which was held in the early stages of the wheat harvest. These godly Jews would have traveled from their homeland in order to offer a burnt offering at Jerusalem (Ex. 23-24; Numb. 28:26-31; Deut. 16). While in Jerusalem, 3,000 of these men were saved and baptized (v.41). The church has been born.

Three Marks of a Healthy and Vibrant Church:

1. The Teaching and Preaching of the Word of God (v.42)

- Those who were saved “devoted” themselves to the apostles teaching. This is in the imperfect tense, which means “continually/habitually/without ceasing.”
- Even though the word “preaching” is not in the Greek, it is implied. Biblical preaching informs the mind, moves the heart, and assaults the will.
- Biblical preaching always has teaching as the foundation, but not all Biblical teaching possesses the imperatives of Biblical preaching. Peter’s sermon in Acts 2:14-36 includes the teaching (v.14-21, 25-28, 34) but adds two elements lacking in teaching; the heart and the will (v.22-24, 29-33, 37-39).
- The ministry of the apostles’ preaching and teaching is mentioned more than any other activity in which they were engaged (Acts 2:42; 3:11-26; 4:1-2, 8-12, 19-20, 31, 33; 5:20-21, 29-32, 42; 6:2, 4, 7, 11, 13-14; 7:1-53). When the demands of the ministry grew, they would not divert from their central tasks of preaching (Acts 6:2). They preached and they taught everywhere; Solomon’s Portico (Acts 3:11-26; 5:20, 42), in public gatherings (Acts 4:2, 33), before the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:8-12; 5:28-32), or from house to house (Acts 5:42).
- The apostles’ teaching includes both the form and the substance. The nature of Biblical preaching (form) and the substance (doctrine or teaching) is what the early church devoted themselves to.

2. The Belonging of the Word of God (v.42, 44-47)

- Fellowship (v.42): this Greek word is not the superficial, contemporary meaning of Christian “fellowship” that we have today which essentially mirrors a social club. Instead, it means “active, joint participation and cooperation through genuine belonging through shared interests.”
- Faithfulness (v.44): they held on to their possessions very “loosely.” They had “all things in common” which meant that they had more in agreement than doctrine.

Many of these Jews stayed longer than expected. They were faithful to gathering regularly and sacrificial towards each other, even to the point of selling their own possessions.

- Frequency (v.46): they regularly met in the temple and at their homes for fellowship meals.

“Gladness” (v.47) in the Greek is found nowhere else in Scripture. It means literally “without a stone.” This refers to the unity of mind, love, and affection toward one another in Christ. There was a “smoothing out” of any secondary or tertiary issues that would normally cause division in those who are without Christ.

The “breaking of bread” (v.42, 46) can refer to the LORD’s Table, and/or meals that included the reading of Scripture, eating food together, and true belonging.

The “awe” (v.43) was a result of their being filled by the Spirit of God through the teaching of the apostles and also witnessing the many supernatural wonders and signs that the apostles produced.

The regular meeting of the saints in Jerusalem, both at the temple, and in the homes, complemented the regular preaching and teaching that occurred Sunday mornings.

Small groups in many ways model the early church and its regular gathering beyond corporate worship on the LORD’s Day. Small Groups:

- create an outlet for growth in spiritual giftings (Rom. 12:1-8)
- provide a channel for greater intimacy through relationships and forging life-long friendships that would otherwise take years to develop
- contribute to the attaining of unity and maturity (Eph. 4:11-14) which complements Sunday morning gatherings
- establish an environment where prayer can be shared in greater detail (Col. 4:2)
- allow for needs to be met that otherwise would go unnoticed, along with accountability of the one making request for help (Heb. 13:16)
- form a level of discipline that otherwise may be lacking in a saint’s personal and devotional life
- help to generate a greater love for the saints

3. The Saving and Sanctifying Work of the Word of God (v.47)

- The LORD was adding to their numbers daily. The saints in Jerusalem were red hot for the LORD and many were saved as a result. There is no description of the methodology for how they added to their numbers. We know nothing of the techniques or processes used by the saints which caused their “numbers to be added day by day” other than that the LORD did it, and His people were joyous, generous, and Spirit-filled.