

The N.T. Church (Acts 2:42-47)

Before making a major decision it's often wise to examine its characteristics. We do this with many of the major items we buy. When buying a house, we examine where it's located and look at how high the cost of taxes will be every year. Even when it comes to people it's wise to examine their characteristics. What kind of friends do you choose? Usually our closest friends have good characteristics. Are they friendly, kind, listen, can they be counted on, available to you?

The church has several characteristics that should make us really appreciate what it means to be part of it. The church of Christ is precious.

1 Peter 2:6, tells us why. Jesus is "The precious cornerstone" and to you who believe this stone is precious." The church is precious because Jesus is the precious cornerstone.

When Jesus wanted to emphasize how great it is to part of his church, He said it likes finding a treasure hidden in a field and selling everything you have to purchase the land. Mathew 13:44.

Then in verse 45, Jesus said, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it."

I invite you to look with me at the wonderful characteristics of the church of Christ. I believe the best place to go is Acts 2:42-47.

I. The Lord's church is a Learning church (42)

"It persisted in listening to what the Apostles taught."

When the church was first established, it was not immediately handed a manual of instructions. The last book of the N.T. was not written until 60 years later. Until that time, God provided the apostles to teach members of the church personally what to believe about Jesus and what to do. They were happy to do this and those who were baptized were eager to hear their teachings. They were excited to learn about this new way of living. They enjoyed hearing the word of God proclaimed and explained.

Isn't it wonderful to get together in the morning for Bible class where we can learn and discuss the meaning of the scriptures? It is a teacher's delight to have a church that hungers for the word. Don't just go through the Bible, but let the Bible go through you and will change the way you live. Try learning at least 1 new thing about the Bible every day. Let's continue to learn all that we can and be part of a learning church.

II. It was a church of Fellowship (Vs 42)

The word fellowship means "Sharing a common bond." Think about the common bond all of us share.

We have a fellowship with God. We have fellowship with Christ and we have a fellowship with each other. The word fellowship is also used in reference to the Lords Supper (1 Cor 10:16). It's where we get the word "Communion."

Another way we have fellowship in Christ is by eating together. Verse 46 says, they were "Breaking bread from house to house and they ate their food with gladness." Since the word "breaking bread" in verse 42 can either mean the L.S or a potluck meal, I don't know which one it is, but the point is still true. As we partake of the Lord's supper every first day of the week. Or when we eat together what are we doing? We our expressing our common faith and fellowship with Christ.

III. It was a praying church (Vs 42)

Those early Christians knew that there was no way to meet life on their own strength and they didn't need to. Before they went out into the world they went to God in prayer.

1 Thes 5:17 says, "Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks to God for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

When we pray, express thankfulness, share with God your burdens, ask him to help you be a better Christian, a better soul winner, and a better person. The church is a praying church.

4. It was a Reverent Church (43) "Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe"

This sense of awe was a response to the many wonders and signs that were taking place through the apostles. Earlier, Jesus promised this would happen (Mark 16:17). Later in Acts, Luke records some of the miracles that were taking place. Healing the sick (Ch 3). Casting out demons (Ch 5) Even raising the dead (Ch 9)

To see those miraculous would be incredible. However, sometimes I wonder, do we sometimes lose our amazement for how great our God is? Are we still amazed about Christ? The char- of Christ's church is an awe-stricken church as we think about the Holiness and greatness of God.

5. It was a church where things happened (43)

Signs and wonders were there.

If we expect great things and attempt great things, great things will happen. What makes the Lord's church a great church is that it's a place where things are Happening.

6. It was a sharing church (44-45) "They gave to anyone as he had need."

These early Christians had an intense feeling of Responsibility for each other. The phrase "they had all things in common" means "They understood that nothing they owned really belonged to them, but rather all they had belonged to God. They were merely stewards of God's possessions (1Cor 4:2)

They were ready to use what that had (which belonged to the Lord anyways) to meet the church family's needs. Gal 6:10 "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith."

7. It was a Worshipping Church (46)

How do you express commitment? How do you express growth? How do you express faith? The answer is worship. How often did the early Christians worship? Look closely. Daily. The Bible says nothing specifically about midweek service, but there are many indications that the early Christians met together every chance they had. This verse is one of those indications. They gathered for spiritual fellowship, they gathered to study God's word, and they gathered to train for Christian service, etc. They enjoyed being with God and being with God's people.

8. It was a happy church (46-47) Gladness was there

"Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people."

The early church had a vibrant joy because of their new relationship with God through Jesus. Perhaps some of us have been Christians for so long that we have forgotten the excitement of being purged from our sins. We may need to pray like David, "Restore to me the joy of your salvation" (Ps 51:12)

Conclusion:

From Acts chapter 2, I've given you 8 Characteristics to examine about the N.T. Church.

It's a Learning church, it's a church that values relationships, it's a praying church, it's a Reverent church, it's a active church, it's a sharing church, worshipping church, happy church.

Wouldn't it be wonderful to be part of a congregation like the one described in vs. 42-47?

Before you nod your head, we need to understand that if we do what they did, that's exactly the kind of church we are.