

Vision Series: Book of Acts

MISSION STATEMENT: To do what the first century church did, God's way, in our day.

Today we are going to take a look at the first century church as displayed in the book of Acts. Acts is a record of practicing Christianity under the power of the Holy Spirit. It teaches that believers were together in meaningful fellowship, they fasted and prayed fervently, followed the apostle's doctrine and their faith released the miracle working power of God. It shows us the establishment of Christianity with the provisions for future development. It is our foundation and the basis for which we stand. In addition, Acts is a testimony and work of the teachings of Christ, the instruction of the apostles and the filling of the Holy Spirit. It verifies the Gospel of the Kingdom and that truly signs follow those who believe!

What does it mean practically "to do what the first century church did, God's way, in our day"? To **recover** the essential characteristics of the first century church that enabled them to turn the world upside down, see miracles, signs and wonders, live a Kingdom Culture founded on love, bring an unadulterated message of sin, salvation and of transferring allegiance from the kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of Light and living faithful to the end.

Read Acts Chapter 1 & 2

What do you see in these chapters?

What changes are needed for us to operate at this level of life and effectiveness?

What can you take ownership of today and focus on changing?

If we can turn the corner in making God, our family and church the most important relationships in our lives above TV, our hobbies, extra activities and self we have a shot at being an ACTS type of church in this generation.

Acts 2:42-47- *"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved."*

Apostle's Doctrine – the instruction and teaching that has God's authority behind it. It is revelatory discourse (which is disclosing what was before unknown or the communication of truth to men by God himself.) God's own teaching. To instruct in sound teaching in contrast to false teaching; the education, lessons and training which has God as its author and supporter.

Fellowship – Sharing in close relationship and partnership; participating in a society with spiritual union and brotherhood which cements the believer to the Lord and each other. There is a devotion of communication and unity in God with each other. With a deep sense of spiritual unity, walking together as one unified body with one Head, Christ.

Prayers – displaying a “**complete dependence**” on the Father to give us our needs and accomplishing His Kingdom purposes.

Acts 4:25 *“And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.”*

Fear – In scripture, fear is used to express duty, obedience or an unquestioning passion, reverence, respect and honor for God.

“Fear is the passion of our nature which excites us to provide for our security, on the approach of evil (or punishment). In good men, the fear of God is a holy awe or reverence of God and his laws, which springs from a just view and real love of the divine character, leading the subjects of it to hate and shun everything that can offend such a holy being, and inclining them to aim at perfect obedience.” (Webster’s 1828 Dictionary)

Jer 32:40 *“And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me.”* (Fear is a gift from God received through faith and it keeps us from departing from Him. Receive it and, if you don’t have it or understand it, pursue it until you do.)

Prov 8:13 *“The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate.”*

Prov 14:27 *“The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to turn one away from the snares of death.”*

Prov 19:23 *“The fear of the Lord leads to life, and he who has it will abide in satisfaction; he will not be visited with evil.”*

Wonders and Signs – Supernatural activities; miracles that overwhelm or shock the natural characteristics of an event; heavenly elements that overrun natural activities; astonishing and miraculous deeds leading to the recognition of God's power; it is the sovereignty and uniqueness of God's actions (it is what the work of God looks like); it confirms the evidence of God's activity; it reveals the power that comes from God alone; it represents God's power for salvation; they are God's mighty deeds done among people and it is how God testifies of His Kingdom.

Mark 16:15-18 *“And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.’”* (It is God who wants to do the miraculous and attest to His own Name. He wants to do it through us!)

Luke 10:17-20 *“Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, ‘Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.’ And He said to them, ‘I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your **names are written in heaven.**’”* (God does it so more names will be written in heaven. The goodness of God leads us to repentance. We are in the age of the goodness of God and mercy of God. Our job is to give the goodness of God away freely as we have received and warn of the coming wrath.)

Together – had all things in common- as anyone had need - daily - one accord - breaking bread – One in unity, agreement, undivided as a whole with uniformity and had a deep felt need for each other in the Lord; Unified but separate from ever other thing in the world; oneness in affection and behavior; unanimously of one mind (This is the power of the Gospel and God’s church that is rarely seen in our generation. Will we dare to believe this possibility of unity and oneness?)

Ps 133 *“BEHOLD, HOW good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment poured on the head, that ran down on the beard, even the beard of Aaron [the first high priest], that came down upon the collar and skirts of his garments [consecrating the whole body]. [Ex 30:25,30.] 3 It is like the dew of [lofty] Mount Hermon and the dew that comes on the hills of Zion; for there **the Lord has commanded the blessing, even life forevermore [upon the high and the lowly].”** AMP*

Gladness – extreme joy and welcoming good cheer.

Ps 16:11 *“You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”*

Isa 61:10 *“I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.”*

Simplicity – Singleness of mind “Christ” in sincerity and humbleness of heart and life.

Conclusion: *“And the Lord **added to the church daily** those who were being saved.”* When we do it God’s way, in our day, He will save, add to the body and complete His purposes.

I believe the Lord is putting His hand out and saying, “We can do this. This is my good will and pleasure for you! Will you take My hand and let Me walk you through it?”