

Vital Signs of a Vital Church

Introduction

This series is all about the church ... and what our part is in it!

The first sermon in the series was: **Acts 2:42-47 - Church Priorities**

Starting off

Read Acts 2:42-47 together

Regular Questions to Start

Each time you meet we'd love you to start by asking some basic questions around the group:

[For next time ... How did you get on? How has God changed things in your life as a result of your response to the last study?]

- Was there anything in the sermon that you didn't really understand or had you confused?
- What particular things did God challenge you about to apply in your life / heart?
- Was there anything you struggled with or disagreed with?

Understanding the passage

Try to summarise the context of the passage – what happened in the preceding weeks? (see Luke 24, Acts 1), what had just happened? (Acts 2), and what was the result? (Acts 2v41)

→ Notice that the response we find in v42-27 isn't some pre-planned event ... it's the *natural* response of hearts that are turned to Jesus wholeheartedly!

There was huge commitment and enthusiasm in that early church ... break into threes / fours and identify some of the words or phrases in the passage that capture this sense, then report them back and write them down on a large sheet of paper.

- Which of these words still characterise us as we gather?
- Are these characteristics we should expect now? [Discuss!]
- What causes 'devotion' in the believe like this?

What were they devoted to? ... let's investigate ...

1. The Church was a listening church (v42)

What would you have expected they'd be excited about? (see v43)

But what was the first priority in the list? (v42)

What does this phrase mean? (see also 1 Cor 2:2, Lk 24:27)

What does it look like to be devoted to God's Word

- As a church? As a Home Group? As a family? On your own?

It was more than gathering knowledge – it was 'devotion'. What is the difference? How can we guard against losing that 'devotion'?

2. The Church was a caring church (v42)

They were also devoted to 'fellowship'

What springs to mind when we use the word 'fellowship'?

What kinds of words would you use to explain what Christian fellowship is? (imagine telling someone who maybe isn't a believer)

What is true fellowship modelled on? (Mk 12:29-31, 1 Jn 4:10-11)
(see also Eph 5:22-33)

How should this be outworked in this Small Group?

- What does it primarily mean for us individually? (see Phil 2:4)
- What should it mean for how we run this Small Group?
- What does it mean for when we go to church on Sunday?

3. The Church was a worshipping church (v42-43, 46-47)

What were the focal points of their worship? (see end of v42 to v43)

We praise things that are dear to us, which we are thankful for, and which amazed and encouraged us. So, what does this indicate was dear to them, that they were thankful for, amazed and encouraged by?

How, practically might this small group encourage worship by what we spend time considering and talking about in the small group?

“They had glad and sincere hearts, praising God”

- What do you think it means by 'sincere hearts'?
- How is that fundamental to their praise?
- => Ask yourself: Is my heart like that? How can it be?

4. The Church was an evangelising church (v47b)

What was the final distinguishing characteristic of the church? (v47b)

Is this an unrealistic expectation of the church today? [Discuss]

Read Acts 8:4. What does this indicate was crucial, humanly speaking, in so many coming to faith?

→ Notice that this wasn't the result of a seminar series on 'how to evangelise' ... it was the result of hearts bubbling over with love for Jesus!

Actually, everything we've looked at is related to our hearts!

→ we need to have hearts that are passionately taken up with Him!

=> How can we have a right attitude to and involvement with Church?

Regular Questions to End

Each time you meet we'd love you to end by asking some searching questions around the group. Be honest, so you can support one another as you learn and apply these things together in the days ahead!

- If there was one thing you could highlight that God is challenging you about to pray over / change / seek His help in, what is it?
- What can others pray for you to help you respond to His challenge?