

## 2.9.25 / The Church Thrives / Acts 2:42-47

Pick one person near you: Share name and one piece of info

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What's a good picture of you thriving? graduation, getting the job, wedding day, retirement party, anniversary celebration, award

Brently... thriving. STM, Wedding, each kid being born, vaca. – Important things going really well.

No one expects all of life to be like that. However, all of us would be wise to **notice** some of the things which were in place that contributed to these **thriving** moments.

We've spent the last two weeks examining two different themes in the New Testament book of Acts:

1. The Lord Acts (work of the Spirit on display)
2. The Word Spreads (the message of the Gospel is powerful – don't succumb to being quiet about it.)

The theme we'll examine today is this: **the Church Thrives**. We'll start by looking at a verbal snapshot of the Church: a moment in time when the Church was absolutely thriving. Then... we'll take time to **notice** some of the things which were in **place** that contributed to that moment or season.

**Acts 2:41-47** – This is a beautiful picture of the Church Thriving. So let's notice some things that were in place that contributed to this moment/season in the life of the Church.

**Vs 42** This lays out an overview of this thriving church: **Learning church, loving church, worshipping church**. *Unpack.*

### Learning Church

"Devoted themselves to Apostles teaching" – I suspect this is less about the **Apostles** and more about **the teaching**.

Think about what did the apostles taught: 2:36, 38; 3:19; 4:10-12, 9:20; 13:38;

**Jesus** is the Son of God. **Jesus** is the Messiah. Place your faith in **Jesus**; repent and be baptized. The forgiveness of sins comes through faith in **Jesus**.

This is the teaching to which the church was devoted. It centered on the person of Jesus. This thriving church was devoted to learning about Jesus. That's why they gathered in the temple courts. That's why they gathered in each others' homes. That's why they listened intently to the Apostles teaching – they were devoted to learning about Jesus. They were becoming more and more **devoted to Jesus**.

Through out the book of Acts crowds gather to listen to Peter and Paul **not** because they were amazing teachers, but because they proclaimed an amazing **Jesus**!

**V43** – Not only did they listen intently to the apostles teaching about Jesus, but they **were in awe** as this teaching was backed up with signs and wonders. There are so many great stories of these signs and wonders that we'll examine as we walk through Acts! *(examples)*

Awe – fear, reverence, respect, warning. This teaching brought news of salvation and punishment and a radical call to follow Jesus with your whole life.

**This Thriving Church was a learning church:** they were devoted to learning about Jesus.

Are you devoted to learning about Jesus? How does that play out for you? I love the way I see that playing out in us. *Examples*

### Loving Church

Devoted to the apostles teaching **and to fellowship** – Koinonia - close association, emphasizing what is in common, generous sharing. This *fellowship* is close warm generous community following Jesus together.

Turn to that same person (or 2) beside you and simply declare which of the following statements is most true for you:

- I'm seeking to follow Jesus.
- I'm exploring Jesus.
- I'm not sure how I feel about Jesus but I'm open to learning more.

The significant thing that most of us in this room have in common is we are seeking to follow Jesus **and** as we encounter His love, we're compelled to share it.

If you are someone who is **exploring Jesus** or at least open to **learning more about Him**, I pray that as you experience this church family, you experience the love of Jesus. That is the deep and bonding commonality of the thriving church in Acts **and** of this church family. We seek to follow Jesus.

Now listen to this description of the loving community of the church in Acts. **V 44-45**

1. They were together – following Jesus is a **joint endeavor**
2. They demonstrated their love for one another through their generosity

I don't want to get distracted or side tracked by what sounds like a perfect (and therefore unrealistic) community sharing **everything**. Here's the point I want to focus on: **Radical generosity** is both taught and frequently exemplified in the church in Acts:

- Acts 20:34 Paul provides for companions
- 28:10 Paul and companions provided for by others
- 2 Cor – Corinthians generous gift to the church in Jerusalem
- Acts 6:1-3 – daily distribution of food

That's radical generosity fueled by love. Now... the church wasn't perfect – not then and not now

- Acts 5 – some lie about their generosity
- Acts 6 – arguments about the daily distribution of food.

**Acts does not paint** a picture of a perfect church but it does paint a picture of a **loving church**: in love, they were radically generous in caring for the needs of one another.

While the Gospel message is hard for some to swallow...

How many times do Peter/Paul tell the crowd – “you rejected and killed the Messiah!” No sugar coating it...

While the Gospel message is hard for some to swallow - non-christians throughout the first century had a difficult time denying that there was something amazing about the love these Christians shared with one another.

This really is a Gospel of extravagant love. God sharing His love **with** us in Jesus and then as we place faith in Him it's God sharing His love **through** us with His Holy Spirit – leading us to love God, love His people, and pour His love out on the world.

Are you/we radically and generously loving each other? How does that play out for you? I love the way I see that playing out in us. *Examples*

### **Worshipping Church**

Devoted to learning about Jesus, devoted to fellowship, and...

#### ***The breaking of bread and prayer***

V 46 (*read it*) Worship played out in formal and informal ways – temple courts and in homes – both are important. For several practical reasons, the early church practice of observing communion was in the context of shared meals in homes. This was fellowship and worship joined together.

With glad and sincere hearts... (simple and honest) – joyful and reverent – They saw God's acts among them and they were humbled by the displays of power. The love of Jesus, the power of God, the movement of the Spirit – it beckoned them to worship with glad and sincere hearts... together... in community.

Not everything was easy for the early church. We'll read about persecution, beatings, being imprisoned, shipwrecks, arguments... but in the midst of all of that, this thriving Church was a worshipping church.

What happens when you have a learning, loving, worshipping church...

### **Multiplied Church - V47**

Chapter after chapter in Acts, we read stories of the Lord adding to their number those who were being saved.

The Thriving Church in the book of Acts is **learning, loving, worshipping, and multiplying...** as they were united by, empowered by, and sent out to share the **love of God**.

I'd like to close our worship service today by remembering and recommitting to this love together.

The night before Jesus was crucified, he shared a meal with his disciples and considering the extravagant love that he was soon to display he broke the bread and he said – this is my body broken for you. Later he took the cup and he said this is my blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in remembrance of me.

Jesus invites **everyone who places faith in Him** to walk through this sacred practice remembering and declaring His sacrificial death— love

So I invite you in the next 15 minutes or so to respond to the love of God in worship. Our worship will play out in three different ways:

1. coming forward to share in communion (or raise hand)
2. by praying for or with that person that I had you share with
3. by raising your voice in praise to our heavenly Father

Ushers, come forward. Church family let's worship our loving God.