

What is a Church?
Part of the Pioneer Evangelism Series
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Purpose of this study:

This study is designed to help show a group of believers how God both began and grew His church after the death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. These lessons will also help show the reader the key characteristics and purposes of the New Testament church. At the conclusion of the study, our hope is that a group of believers can apply these principles in order to form at least one, healthy New Testament church.

This study is part of the Pioneer Evangelism series and was designed to be a church planting follow up to the evangelistic and discipleship Bible studies called “Good News of Jesus” and “Beginning a New Life in Christ.”

How to use this study:

- 1) This study is to be used with a group of people in which many have already made a decision for Christ. The leader is going to try to help these believers form at least one church in the area. The Lord might guide you to start several churches. If many in the group have not made a decision for Christ, they can be taken through a Pioneer Evangelism evangelistic Bible study such as “Good News of Jesus” by Christy Brawner or “Good News for you” by Charles Brock. If available, it is also always helpful to take new converts through a discipleship Bible study such as “Beginning a New Life in Christ” by Christy Brawner or “Six Truth for New Believers” by Wade Akins. This will help them become grounded in some basic principles of the faith.
- 2) First, gather a group of people together to study “What is a Church?” There is no set number of people that can participate in this study. Begin every study with a time of fellowship and conversation. Remember that the church is a place to form a family. Families need to laugh, cry and pray together. Start each lesson with this time of group conversation so that they can form friendships with those people they don’t already know.
- 3) After the conversation, take a few minutes to pray for each others’ needs, thank the Lord for who He is and what He has done, and pray for the future of this church you are about to start. After prayer, take time to sing a few songs of praise and give testimonies of what God is doing in your lives. Maybe even begin to practice tithing to the church. We will discuss these issues specifically later in the study. These practices will begin to form a model for your future worship services.
- 4) Begin the first lesson reading the narrative of the story. The leader may read the story or he/she may allow the participants to each read a paragraph. The leader may also retell the story in his own words to make it more understandable. After the first week, there will be revision questions about the narratives from the week before.

- 5) Take the group through the oral questions. The purpose of the questions is to help reinforce step by step what happened in those chapters in the Bible.
- 6) Read through the spiritual truths. Spiritual truths are important characteristics we can learn about God, ourselves, and His church from Scripture. Allow the members of the group to express their thoughts on each spiritual truth. Your church will be making important decisions about who it is during these next few weeks. Guide them to look at the chapters in the Bible that are listed during the week so they can reflect more on what they have learned.
- 7) Close each group with prayer taking time to reflect on what you have learned. Urge each person to go home and read that chapter in the Bible. It is the Bible that will be the basis of our understanding of the church.
- 8) Of course, last but not least, begin to apply what you have learned to plant more churches for His kingdom!

Acts 1-13

Lesson 1- The Holy Spirit is Promised (God's Promise for us today and Prayer)- Acts 1

Lesson 2- The Church Begins (Fellowship and Worship)- Acts 2

Lesson 3- The Church's Ministry Expands (Ministry)- Acts 3-4

Lesson 4- The Church is Attacked from Within (Discipleship)- Acts 4-5

Lesson 5- The Church is Attacked from the Outside (Delegation, Persecution)- Acts 6-7

Lesson 6- The Church's Leaders Spread the Word (Baptism and Lord's Supper)- Acts 8

Lesson 7- The Church's Greatest Missionary is Saved (Evangelism)- Acts 9

Lesson 8- The Church Gets a Vision for the World (Missions)- Acts 10-13

The Holy Spirit is Promised (God's Promise for Us Today and Prayer)

Lesson 1- Acts Chapter 1

Key verse: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth."
 Acts 1:8
 (NKJV)

One of Christ's followers, Luke, was guided by the Holy Spirit to write the book of Acts. Luke tells the readers that in his first book (the Gospel of Luke) he discussed all that Christ had done up until the moment He ascended into heaven. After Jesus was crucified, He rose from the grave and for forty days He appeared to the apostles. During this time, he explained many things about God's kingdom. Jesus told them to wait for the Father's Promise for them. That Promise was the Holy Spirit. Christ told them that "John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

The disciples wanted to know if this was the time that Jesus would do great things for their country of Israel. Christ answered that it wasn't for them to know the answer to that question. Instead, they should wait for the Holy Spirit, so that they could be "witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

After Christ said those things he was taken up into heaven by a cloud. As the disciples looked on, two angels came and asked them why were they looking into heaven. They told them that someday Christ would return here to earth in the same way that He went to heaven.

Then all of the disciples: Peter, James, John, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James “the less”, Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James went to the upper room in Jerusalem where they were staying. There the disciples prayed with one another. Jesus’ brothers were also there as well as many women- including His mother Mary.

Then the Apostle Peter stood up and began to speak to the group about the need to replace Judas Iscariot. Peter told them how Judas was once part of their group, but how he had betrayed Christ and committed suicide shortly thereafter. As he hung himself his body fell onto the ground below tearing open his body. The field where this suicide occurred was called the “Field of Blood” until that day.

Peter then discussed how they needed to replace Judas. They needed to find a man who had been with them since the beginning of John the Baptist’s ministry until Christ’s resurrection. They decided that two men, Matthias and Barsabas qualified to be apostles. They all prayed for God to show them who should be chosen. They then cast lots and Matthias was chosen to become one of the apostles.

Oral questions:

- 1) What person wrote the book of Acts? Who guided him?
- 2) How many days did Christ appear to His disciples after He rose from the grave?
- 3) Who is God’s promise for us?
- 4) Where are we to be witnesses? (Christ listed 4 places)
- 5) How did Christ go back to heaven? How will He return?
- 6) Who met in the upper room?
- 7) Who betrayed Jesus? How did the betrayer die?
- 8) Who replaced Judas?

Spiritual truths:

1) God has sent the Holy Spirit for us today. (Acts 1:5)

Christ came to Earth as a sacrifice for our sins. He died on the cross and three days later rose from the grave. He is alive today and is at the right hand of the Father as an advocate for us. (I John 2:2) Christ promised that after He left the world, He would send the Holy Spirit for us today. Who is the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit is one Person of the Trinity of God. There is God the Father, God the Son (Jesus) and God the Holy Spirit. All Three are one and the same, but all three are also separate with different purposes, ministries and beings. The Bible teaches us that the Holy Spirit has various ministries for the church. He is the one who testifies (or tells) of God. He is our Helper and Counselor. He also shows the world their sin, need for righteousness and of judgment. He gives us as believers such wonderful things as true love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. He also renews us

spiritually, gives us assurance of our salvation, and gives spiritual gifts to do ministry. This study will discuss the ministry of spiritual gifts in the next lesson.

As you begin to discuss the process of beginning your church, remember that you will need a lot of wisdom to begin this process. Ask the Father to let the Holy Spirit be your guide in all that you do and say. After all, He sent Him to us for just that purpose.

2) The first purpose of the church is PRAYER (Acts 1:14)

After the disciples saw their Lord taken up into heaven they did not split up or run away and panic. They stayed together, waited and prayed. They started their ministry in the correct way. They wanted to talk to God and learn what to do next. They certainly already had been praying during Christ's ministry (Luke 11:2). Now they were putting prayer into practice as they awaited the Holy Spirit. PRAYER is the first purpose of the church that this study will examine.

Prayer is our way to communicate with the Father through Jesus Christ (I Tim 2:5). Many people have said that the Bible is God's way of talking to us, but that prayer is our way of talking back to God. In earlier Pioneer Evangelism studies you may have learned five things to do in prayer:

Ask- Ask God to help you in your daily needs.

Thank- Thank God for all that He has done for you or for others.

Praise- Give God the glory for all that HE IS.

Seek Forgiveness- Ask God to forgive you for your daily sins

Supplicate- Take time in asking God about the needs of others.

For those of you have already come to Christ, these aspects of prayer should be part of your daily prayer life. However, as you begin to look at forming a church, you will not only pray individually, but you will pray as a group. There is special power in group prayer. As Christ said, "when two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am there in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). Note that when Christ taught his disciples to pray, He taught them to pray as a group. After all, he started the Lord's Prayer with the words "**Our** Father in heaven," (Matthew 6:9) instead of "**My** Father who is in heaven!" Instead of thinking individually about the Father, he wanted them to focus on how He relates to the group.

Think about how you as a group can come together for prayer. When can you meet? What are specific needs you can pray for? Take some time at the end of this lesson for intense prayer for yourselves and for others. Prayer should be an integral part of all the other purposes we discuss in the following lessons: fellowship, worship, ministry, discipleship, evangelism and missions.

3) It is important to always look for new leadership (Acts 1:26)

Judas was one of the disciples. In fact, he was probably one of the more respected disciples during Christ's ministry among his peers. After all, he was the disciple that was in charge of the ministry's money. (John 12:6). You wouldn't put someone in charge of

your money without having a degree of respect for that person. Losing Judas was probably a painful loss.

One of the most important aspects of a New Testament church is the job of finding new leadership. After Judas betrayed Christ, it was important to find someone to fill his leadership role. As your church develops you will find the need to have new leaders. For example, someone may move away, you might want to plant a new church or your church might grow and you need leaders in new areas. Begin to pray now for God to show you who will be the people that He will raise up to have various positions of leadership in your church.

On a side note, observe that the disciples allowed prayer to guide them in their decision. In this story you see that they also used “lots” in the decision. This is not an endorsement in the Bible to gamble. This was the last time that “lots” were used in helping to make a decision. After the coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, the disciples never used lots again.

In the next lesson, we will see how the Holy Spirit began his ministry, and how that brought the era of the church to the world.

The Church Begins (Fellowship and Worship)

Lesson 2- Acts Chapter 2

Key verse: “Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”
Acts 2:38 (NKJV)

Review questions:

- 1) For how many days did Jesus appear to his disciples after His resurrection?
- 2) Who did Jesus promise would come after Him?
- 3) How did Christ return to heaven?
- 4) Where did the disciples go and what did they do after Christ returned to heaven?
- 5) What did Judas do after he betrayed Christ?
- 6) Who was chosen to replace Judas?

The disciples were still gathered together in the upper room when the day of Pentecost finally came. Pentecost was a great feast that the Jewish people celebrated every year, a celebration of the first fruits of the harvest. On this day, while the disciples and followers of Christ had all come together, Christ’s Promise came.

Suddenly they heard a sound from heaven. It was like the sound of a great and mighty wind. What appeared to be tongues of flame fell on everyone individually in the house. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit guided them.

Devout Jews from all over the known world were in the city of Jerusalem for the festival of Pentecost. When they heard the great sound they came to where the followers of Christ were. People were confused because everyone could understand what the believers were saying in their own native language. They wondered how these men from Galilee (or northern Israel) could possibly speak in the languages of countries such as Egypt, Libya, Italy, Mesopotamia, as well as many other countries and cities around the world. Many were amazed as they heard these men and women giving wonderful praises to the Lord. Others, however, truly doubted what was going on and assumed that the disciples were drunk.

Peter and the other disciples stood up and began to preach to the people who were listening. He told them that the men speaking foreign languages were not drunk. Put simply, everyone was seeing the fulfillment of the promise given in the book of Joel. This was the Promise of the Holy Spirit.

Peter told them many things about Christ. He said that the crowd had previously crucified Jesus Christ, an innocent man. Christ had proven who He was by doing many miracles. However, God resurrected Christ from the grave because death has no power over Him. He talked about how one of the Jews greatest kings and prophets, David, had

spoken about Christ's resurrection. He said that now Christ is at the right hand of God, and he has sent the Holy Spirit for all to see and hear. Peter finished by saying that all of Israel should know that Jesus is Lord and Christ.

When Peter finished speaking, many people had great spiritual conviction, and they asked the disciples what they should do. Peter replied, "Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

After Peter preached a little longer, three thousand people gladly received what he had to say and were added to the church. Then all of the new converts came together with the apostles. They studied about the Lord and fellowshiped as they ate and prayed. Then the apostles (disciples) did many miracles. Everyone who believed in Christ came together and shared all of their possessions. They continued to worship together in the Jewish temple, and they ate together in each others homes. These new believers did these things with true gladness and with simple faith. They praised God and gained respect among their countrymen. God grew the church daily as more people came to know Jesus Christ.

Oral Questions:

- 1) The Jewish people come to Jerusalem to celebrate a feast. What was the name of that feast?
- 2) What happened to the disciples of Jesus on the day of Pentecost?
- 3) What did the Jewish people from all over the world think when they heard the disciples speak their languages?
- 4) Who spoke to all of the people who had gathered around?
- 5) How many people gave their lives to Jesus after Peter's sermon?
- 6) Describe what the early church was like after these new believers entered the church?

Spiritual truths

1) **A new era begins (Acts 2:1-4)**

On the day of Pentecost, God sent the Holy Spirit to the followers of Jesus. He did this in a great and miraculous way that showed all those around that the Holy Spirit's ministry to the church had begun. The Holy Spirit has worked for all eternity, but His ministry for the *church* began on this day. God showed devout Jews from all over the world that a new day had come.

When someone gives his life to Christ, the Bible teaches that he receives the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 12:13). As we learned in last week's lesson, the Holy Spirit has many ministries for new believers, but one of those ministries is giving each believer in the church SPIRITUAL GIFTS. These gifts are tools that God uses through us to help glorify Him and to build His church. We can study many of these tools in Romans 12 as

well as in I Corinthians 12. The Spirit gives us such gifts as preaching, teaching, faith, giving, and leadership, as well as others listed in Scripture. From the very beginning of your new church, each member should look to see what his strongest gift or gifts are. The Bible does not limit you to just practicing one gift. You might find that there are several gifts in which you excel. When determining your gift look to see where you feel most comfortable, and the most joy, in helping the church. This will probably be a process of trial and error, but one of the keys to a healthy church is that all believers become active in the body of Christ.

One gift that has been difficult for many churches to understand is the gift of tongues. On the day of Pentecost, ALL of God's believers were miraculously given the ability to speak in languages from all over the world. Pentecost was a slightly different experience than what many churches view as the outpouring of the gift of tongues. We learn in Scripture that no one gift is given to all believers all of the time. (I Corinthians 12:4-11). Yet, in this instance we see that our Lord gave this ability to speak in other languages to all of the believers. It was a sign to the world around them that a new day had come for the Jews. For a study on this same outpouring of the Spirit for the Samaritans (mixed blooded Jews) see Acts 8. For a study on how this same sign was given for the Gentiles see Acts 10. Finally, for a study on how this same sign was given to Old Testament believers, or followers of John the Baptist, see Acts 19.

Two thousand years later, there is still much theological debate about the gift of tongues. Some churches teach that this gift stopped after the time of the disciples, other churches teach that this gift is still active today. There is also great debate as to whether the languages in the Bible were actual spoken languages of man, while others believe 'tongues' means an angelic language that we can't understand without an interpreter. You and your church are going to have to prayerfully consider what you believe Scripture teaches on this subject, but at the same time, understand that other good churches in your area might not hold the same view as you. This should certainly not be a point of division in your church.

2. There will always be doubters (Acts 2:13)

Even with all that happened at Pentecost, many men immediately assumed that the disciples were drunk and what was happening must be false. Your church will always face people that doubt what you do and maybe even mock or persecute you. Have you faced doubters or mockers of your faith yet?

3. The second and third purposes of the church is FELLOWSHIP and WORSHIP (Acts 2:40-47)

As we study the church, we will look at its seven core purposes. Everything you do should be centered on trying to meet one of the specific purposes. This will help your keep its focus on its most important tasks. Remember a good church has a balance of ALL SEVEN purposes. In this study these purposes are not placed in any order of importance. All are important.

The second purpose is FELLOWSHIP. As the Bible describes the early church, we can see that the church did things with ‘gladness of heart’ and that they gained respect among the people in Jerusalem. We can see that they ate together. They worshiped together. They also shared their time, money and possessions. They were a family.

The Bible tells us that once you have given your life to Christ that you now have entered into the family of God. The church is called the ‘bride of Christ’ (Rev. 22:17), and he loves you. You are part of a family of people whose basis of life is Christ. You should make a commitment to come together in prayer and spend time together in fellowship with one another. The joy that you share with one another is real and contagious. As others see the joy among you it will help them desire to experience the love of Christ in their own lives. Now that you are a believer, you never have to feel alone again. Even if you are the only believer in your home, you now have a family in Christ that can give you the love and support you need.

How can you practice fellowship together? The Bible gives us several examples. We have already mentioned eating together. What better way is there to relax with friends than by cooking and eating a meal together (the cleaning up part might not be as fun!). Certainly coming together to worship is another way to have fellowship.

A key aspect of fellowship is also having fun. I know many churches that never go out and simply relax with one another. Their fellowship is always centered around ministry. However, fellowship should be a time to show the world your joy in one another. Go play soccer, have a picnic, and do something you can enjoy together as a family.

If you are in a country in which you simply cannot meet together openly for fun, learn to fellowship more discreetly. How? If you cannot come together as a group for fellowship, come together as individuals. Two or three can come together discreetly in order to have fellowship and uplift one another.

Now that we have discussed fellowship, let us look at the purpose of WORSHIP. In reading Acts 2, one gets the sense that worship played a key role in the early church’s daily lives. You see the new believers coming together and praising the Father for all that He had done in their lives. (Acts 2:47) You can see this pattern of prayer and worship throughout Acts. After Jesus ascended into heaven the disciples gathered together to pray (Acts 1:14). Although the Scripture only discusses the aspect of prayer in this verse, we can learn from other verses that they were busy praising God as well. The book of Luke tells us that, “and they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen.” (Luke 24:52, 53) Why were they praising God? Their leader, the Lord Jesus, who had died, had not only rose again, but literally had ascended into heaven. They probably had a mix of emotions at this time. They probably were in awe at the power of God. They probably had extreme joy in the fact that 40 days earlier they thought that all was lost, but now they realized that all was gained. Their natural desire would be to praise and worship God for all that was happening around them.

In all of these instances of true worship, one can see a definite pattern- the Bible consistently mentions the unity of the believers (Acts 1:14, 2:1, 4:24). As your group of believers begins to experiment with forms of worship, remember that true worship comes when you can be unified. It is very, very hard to worship our Lord when you are mad at the person sitting next to you!

Worship is simply God's way of allowing us to give Him the honor he deserves. The Bible tells us that God longs to be praised. EVERYTHING we should do should be an act of worship. Giving, preaching, teaching, studying, evangelizing all should be based in worship. However, even though worship can be a very individual experience, there should definitely be a time of corporate worship.

How should you begin your corporate worship? You possibly have already started worshipping as a group. If you have been following the books of Pioneer Evangelism, you were already asked to put some aspects of worship, such as singing, into your studies. May we suggest however, that there is no better time to begin a specific time of worship as a group than right now? Do not put off worshipping as a group, begin as soon as possible.

This study is not designed to give you a step by step format for a worship service, but we suggest that you include prayer, praise through singing, testimonies, giving, the ordinances, or maybe even a question and answer time as part of your worship service. We typically only think of singing as worship, but ALL of the above mentioned acts are worship. There are many other ways you can worship the Lord. Design your worship service around your reality and what would help your people give praise to the Father. In Brazil, the believers like to sing, sing and sing. In the United States of America, believers seem to have a little less singing but more preaching. In Africa, the believers like to dance in honor of the Lord. Include these items above, or other ideas, as you see fit. Make the worship service the length of time that your people will enjoy. Make the order of events in a manner that your church would like. You have to decide what works best for your culture. Please remember to worship in unity and in order, allowing the Bible to be your guide in all you do.

In the next lesson, we will look at how the church continued to expand through the work of simple men looking to minister for the Lord Jesus.

The Church's Ministry Expands (Ministry)

Lesson 3- Acts Chapters 3 and 4

Key verse: "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."

Acts 3:6

Review Questions:

- 1) Who did Jesus promise would come after Him?
- 2) What happened on the day of Pentecost?
- 3) Did everyone believe what was happening on Pentecost?
- 4) How many people came to Christ after Peter's sermon?
- 5) Describe some things the church did after they gave their lives to Christ.

Peter and John went up to the temple to pray at about three in the afternoon. There was a lame man that sat at the temple gate everyday. He saw Peter and John and asked for a donation. Peter and John commanded him to look at them and then they said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." They helped the man stand up and immediately the strength returned in his feet and ankles. The formerly lame man jumped and walked and praised the Lord. All the people in the area were amazed because they knew that this newly cured man always sat daily at the gate.

All the people ran to them, and Peter began to talk to the crowd. Peter told them to stop admiring him and John. Peter said that it wasn't them but Christ who had healed the man. The lame man was cured because he had faith in Christ's name.

Peter then told them that the crowds had crucified Christ in ignorance, but now was the time to repent of their sins. He said, "repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord."

As Peter and John were speaking, the priests and other religious leaders came to them. They were upset at the fact that Peter was teaching the people about Christ's resurrection. They took Peter and John and put them in prison. Even so, many people believed and on that day the number of people in the church grew to five thousand.

Peter and John were sent to the religious leaders to be judged by them. The leaders asked by what power or what name they were doing their miracles. Peter replied that they helped the lame man become well by the power of Jesus Christ. Peter told them that, "nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven, given among man by which we must be saved."

The religious leaders could see that Peter and John were simple, uneducated men, and they were amazed at what they were saying. The religious leaders met together and decided that they could not deny that a miracle had been done, but they decided to command Peter and John to no longer speak about Jesus to others.

Peter and John replied that they had to obey the Lord and not simply obey the commands of men. The priests then threatened Peter and John, but they couldn't punish

them because all of the people were glorifying God for what had happened. After this, Peter and John were released.

The two men went back to the other believers and told them all that had happened. Everyone began to praise God for all that He had done. The church prayed to God and asked Him for boldness in preaching the Word, as well as for more healings and miracles to occur. The Bible says they were then filled with the Spirit and spoke the Word of God with boldness.

Questions:

1. What two disciples went to the temple to pray?
2. What did the lame man want, and what did he receive instead?
3. Were the religious leaders happy about what had happened?
4. What did the religious leaders tell Peter and John they had to do? Did Peter and John obey?
5. Where did Peter and John go after they were released?
6. What did everyone do after Peter and John returned, and what did they pray for specifically?

Spiritual truths:

1. Silver and gold have I none (Acts 3:6)

Most people around the world would like to have a lot of money. In like manner, most churches would certainly like to have a lot of money in order to do more ministries. However, from the very beginning of the church we find that most believers, even the leaders, were not wealthy people. Peter and John were two of the key leaders of the early church, but they were not walking around that day with much money.

Most churches throughout all of Christian history have not been wealthy. Perhaps your church is not a wealthy church either; God still wants to use you in a mighty way. He will use you in the same way he has used your brothers in Christ around the world for close to 2000 years. Do not be ashamed or embarrassed with your finances. God will use what He has given you to grow His kingdom.

On the other hand, if God has blessed you with money, praise the Lord for that blessing. However, note that Peter and John knew that the true need for the lame man was not only to be healed, but to have faith in the Lord. (Acts 3:16) Use your money wisely for the kingdom in order to help others have “faith in His name”.

2. Peter and John were going to pray but they stopped to help to MINISTER to the hurting man. (Acts 3:4)

The fourth purpose of the church is MINISTRY. In other words, the church is to reach out to other not only to help their spiritual needs, but also their physical and emotional needs. Peter and John were headed to the church to pray. We have already learned that prayer should be the basis of all our ministries because we need the Spirit’s guidance in

all things. The two disciples were doing exactly what they should have been doing at that moment. However, Peter and John were able to stop while going to do this important task (pray) to let the Lord guide them to do something completely different. God wanted them to help that man physically and spiritually.

God has designed the church to be His means to help a hurting world. It is not only the government's job to support the needy. It is our job as a church to help those around us. Why must we do this? Did you see what happened to the man after he was healed? He PRAISED God. All the people around the man saw this happen. When you reach out to others in Christ, the world will see Christ's love through you and He will get the praise because of your obedient action.

How can your church reach out to a hurting world in order to meet physical and emotional needs? Can you buy food for a hungry family? Can you teach adults how to read so that they can find employment? Can you befriend an unwed mother or father and help them with their children? Can you visit those who are sick or elderly? As a church, we need to stop and pray and ask God to show us how we can help a hurting world.

The church is not only to minister to the world, but they are also to minister to those WITHIN the church. As we saw in the last chapter, from the very beginning the church sought to meet the needs of their brothers and sisters in Christ. (Acts 2:45) Is there anyone in your fellowship that might have physical, financial or emotional needs right now? Pray and seek out how you can meet those needs.

This purpose of MINISTRY is for all of the church. The Bible shows us that God has specifically endowed some believers with spiritual gifts for ministry (Romans 12:7). However, all believers should participate in the purpose of ministry. Do not forget, we have found that the best time to start ministering to others is at the BEGINNING of the church, not after the church becomes large and more mature. If you create the habit early, it will stay with you throughout the ministry of the church, and God will bless.

3. The leaders perceived that Peter and John were uneducated men. (Acts 4:13)

God uses simple people who have proper hearts of humility to grow His church. Peter and John were simple fishermen that Christ had chosen. However, they allowed the Spirit to guide them in their work. Consequently, they did miraculous things, preached incredible messages, and saw thousands come to Christ. However, do not forget, that Peter and John recognized the amazing things that were happening were not by their power, but by Christ's. When the people wanted to honor them they assured the crowd that it was not by their power but by the Lord's. (Acts 3:12)

God wants to use you as well. Most of us are just simple people. We are not famous. We are not powerful, but we do want to be servants of God. In fact, God tells us that he purposely chooses the simple people of the world to accomplish His purposes. (See 1 Corinthians 1:26-31)

In the next lesson we will look at how sin began to creep into the church and how the Lord dealt with this issue.

The Church is Attacked from Within (Discipleship)

Lesson 4- Acts Chapters 4 and 5

Key verse: “But Peter said, Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself?” Acts 5:3

Review Questions:

- 1) What happened on the day of Pentecost?
- 2) What did the crowds do after Peter’s sermon?
- 3) What did the Bible say the early church did together after so many people converted?
- 4) What two disciples went to pray in the temple?
- 5) Who did they heal and what happened?
- 6) What was the religious leaders’ reaction?
- 7) How did Peter and John reply?

The church was in complete unity. Everyone who was part of the church shared all that they had. The apostles were spending their time proclaiming to the world the resurrection of Christ. Many who owned homes or land would sell their property and give the proceeds to the apostles and to the church. For example, one man named Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement) sold his land and gave it to the church.

However, there was a couple named Ananias and Sapphira. They also sold their land and gave it to the apostles, but they were not honest in disclosing the cost of the land. Ananias told the leaders of the church that he was donating all of the proceeds to the church, but instead, they kept part of the money for themselves. Peter confronted Ananias. He asked him why he had lied to the Holy Spirit and kept the money for himself. After he heard these words from Peter, Ananias died.

Three hours later Sapphira, his wife, arrived. Peter asked her how much were the proceeds from the sale of the land. She also lied about the price. Peter told her that she would die like her husband for what she had done. Immediately she fell at his feet and died. Then the church buried her and great fear fell upon all of the church.

The apostles kept doing many “signs and wonders among the people”, and the church continued to grow. Many people came to be healed by the apostles and Peter. The masses even tried to get Peter’s shadow to fall on them in the hope that they would be healed. The people of Jerusalem held the church in very high regard.

Once again the high priest put the apostles in prison, but at night an angel of the Lord freed them and told them to go back to the temple to preach. The next morning the priests wanted to have the apostles brought to them from the prison, but when the officers went to get them, they found that they were already gone. They learned that the apostles

were at the temple preaching. The authorities went and peacefully brought the apostles back to them (they were afraid to bring them back forcefully because of all the people that were around). They asked the apostles why they were still preaching about Christ after they had been told not to do so. The authorities told the apostles that they had “filled all of Jerusalem with your doctrine.” Peter and the other apostles replied that they had to obey God. They had to preach about Jesus Christ for the repentance of sins.

The religious leaders became very angry and wanted to kill them. However, one of their leaders named Gamaliel persuaded them not to do so. He reminded his peers that there had been other men who had tried to change things in Israel to no avail. He told them that “if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it- lest you even be found to fight against God.”

The leaders agreed with Gamaliel. They had the apostles released but not after having them beaten. The apostles were once again commanded not to preach in Christ’s name. So the apostles left and rejoiced that they were able to suffer in Christ’s name. They went back and daily taught and preached in the temple, as well as in people’s homes, about Jesus Christ.

Questions:

1. Who were Ananias and Sapphira?
2. What happened to them after they lied to the apostles?
3. Why did many people come to see the apostles?
4. What did the religious leaders do to the apostles?
5. How did they get out of prison?
6. What did the religious leader Gamaliel say about the church?
7. What did the apostles do after they had been released from prison?

Spiritual truths:

1) The church people gave to one another (Acts 4:32-37)

At the start of the early church, it is obvious that the believers had great love for one another. They showed that love through giving. In fact, they started to sell their belongings in order to give to their brothers in need.

God does not need our money. He already owns everything. However, he does use the money that we give for His purposes. As your church starts, you will want to begin ministering to others who have special needs both inside and outside the church. Do not be afraid to start talking about the need to give tithes and offerings in order for your church to function. Giving a tithe (or 10% of your earnings) and an offering (above and beyond that 10%) are acts of worship. These gifts give honor to the Lord and publicly show that all that you possess is His.

The principle of giving dates back to the beginning of Biblical history in the Old Testament. (See Malachi 3:6-12, Hebrews 7:2) In fact, the day of Pentecost, or the day that the Holy Spirit began His ministry in the church, was during the festival of first

fruits. That was a time when Israelites were to share their first bounty from their crops. God chose to start the church during the time that the Jewish people celebrated this sacrificial giving.

Your pastor or leader shouldn't be ashamed to talk to his brothers and sisters in Christ about giving money to the church. All of the church members should be honored to give their tithe to the church. Have you discussed the issues of tithes and offerings with your fellow believers? Have you decided who or what group will be in charge of the money? Remember some people have been specifically given the spiritual gift of administration. Pray and seek out what individuals will be in charge of organizing the money and what your church will do with those tithes and offerings.

Another important note, remember that Scripture teaches us that your leader is deserving of a salary (1 Corinthians 9). If your pastor/leader is working to guide, teach and protect you, it is your duty to make sure that he and his family are taken care of. Have you discussed taking care of your leader financially? Have you thought about the expenses he might already have had in leading the church? Have you thought about how many hours he spends in leading, studying, and evangelizing in order to guide the church? Maybe you cannot support your leader full time in the ministry. He might need to take on another job at least part time. This is also Biblical. After all, at times the apostle Paul had two jobs (Acts 18:3). He was a tentmaker as well as a missionary! However, you and your church should prayerfully decide what to do about financially taking care of your pastor. Even if you can only pay your leader a token amount at first, paying your leader is a sign of honor and respect for his work. It is a sign that the church considers their pastor worthy of his wages.

2. Truth and integrity matter in the church. (Acts 5:1-12)

The truth mattered so much to the Lord in His early church that He actually killed Ananias and Sapphira for lying about the price of the land they donated to the church. Let us remember it wasn't the sale of the land that got them in trouble. It was the fact that they lessened their integrity and lied to the church about the cost of the land. God obviously doesn't always kill believers when they lie, or probably all of us would have been killed a long time ago! However, these deaths showed the believers at the time, as well as believers thousands of years later, that the church must be composed of people with integrity to one another and to the Lord.

Maybe God is going to take your small group of believers and make you into a large church. Maybe your church will grow and multiply into other churches. Although those results would be wonderful, none of those things are as important as being believers of integrity. The world is watching you and you can minister to the world by who you ARE more than by what you DO.

3. Do signs and wonders exist today? (Acts 5:12)

Time and time again we see in the book of Acts how the Apostles did signs and wonders. God chose to do wonderful miracles through them. However, today we don't

seemingly see these signs and wonders as often. Does God still work through believers today?

First of all, God has the power to ALWAYS heal and ALWAYS do miracles. However, he hasn't chosen to always perform miracles in all situations throughout history. As we look at Scripture, we can learn that God basically did a majority of His miracles in a few periods of time. In the Old Testament it was during the time of Moses and the time of Elijah. In the New Testament it was during the life of Jesus and the early, early church. God uses miracles at special times and under special circumstance to reveal Himself.

It seems that in the beginning God used miracles through Christ and the church leaders to establish the credibility of the church. Today, he doesn't give every believer today the power to do miracles as he gave to Peter and the apostles. However, he did send us the Holy Spirit, who can show us on a day-to-day basis what God does naturally and supernaturally in the world around us. When and if God chooses to do miracles today is for Him to decide. When they occur, we can be glad to have experienced them, but we do not have to base our faith on miraculous moments. Our faith is based on Christ.

If you take time to reflect as a group, you might begin to remember some miraculous moments in your own lives. Remember when God performed acts of protection or acts of love for you without you even realizing it at the time. You'd be amazed how many times God intervenes in our lives. Thank the Lord for these moments that have already happened in your lives.

4. Discipleship is the third purpose of the church. (Acts 5:42)

This study has already looked at two of the purposes of the church- fellowship and ministry. In this lesson we see that the early church took very seriously the idea of DISCIPLESHIP. We see that DAILY they met in the temple as well as in their homes to study about Christ. (Acts 5:42) At the time the believers didn't have the New Testament that we have today, but they did have the Old Testament as well as the witness of the disciples. God gave you and me the complete Bible- both the Old and the New Testament. As a believer in Christ it is so important that you come to know God through His Word. Both the New and Old Testament are important to understanding who God is and what He wants to do in your life.

We have already learned that prayer should be present in all we do in ministry. In like manner the Bible is the guide that God gave us to know Him and His will. The Lord can choose to reveal Himself and His will for your church in many ways. He might reveal His will through dreams, through the testimony of other believers, or through nature. However, He TYPICALLY reveals who He is and His will for your life through Scripture. The Bible must be the guide in your understanding of the Father and in your understanding of how your church should follow His will.

God wrote the Scriptures so that we can learn about Him. In 2 Timothy 3:16 we learn that, “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction of righteousness.” The Bible has four main purposes.

The Scripture is to:

- 1) teach us about Him
- 2) to rebuke us when we have done wrong
- 3) to correct us and point us in the right way
- 4) to show us how to live a Godly and righteous life.

Your church needs to take very seriously the idea of the study of God’s word. Your leader will need to learn God’s word. The last study of this lesson series will teach you how to gain spiritual truths from God’s Word. It will be of the utmost importance that everyone learns how to study His word in order to gain spiritual insights. For the leader, this practice will be very important as he leads you in worship week after week.

Every member of the church has responsibilities in the area of discipleship. First of all, you need to begin to DISCIPLE YOURSELF by meditating on the Word of God (Psalms 119:11) My suggestion is that you take 15 minutes a day to study the Word of God by yourself at home. Depending on the day, you might take much more than fifteen minutes; however, fifteen minutes is a good goal for new believers as they try to learn more about Him. If you want to learn even more about how to have a quiet time with the Lord, see the second Bible study in the Pioneer Evangelism series, “Beginning a New Life in Christ”. If you do not have that study, you can use lesson nine in this series to learn how to gain insights from God’s word.

Your second task in the area of discipleship is DISCIPLING OTHERS. Your pastor should be trying to disciple you, but at the same time, as you grow in the faith, you should try to disciple others. Why? As your church grows, your pastor will be limited in just how many people he can spend time with. It is the job of the church to help your pastor in the process of growing new converts in the faith by discipling them. Only when you, as a church, can commit to discipling others, will your church as a whole begin to multiply (I Timothy 2:2). There are those in the church who God has gifted for this ministry of discipleship. Pray that God shows you specifically who should be involved in this very important ministry.

Some people think that discipleship is only teaching. This isn’t true. Remember, discipleship isn’t only studying the Word of God. It is spending TIME with new believers and teaching them by allowing them to observe you. Christ spent years eating, sleeping, working and laughing with his disciples. All the while He was teaching them the Truth. God can use you to be involved in the same process in the lives of new disciples. New believers should have someone with whom they can pray, study the Bible, play and minister together.

In the next lesson, we will see how the persecution in the church increased and how the early church responded to the problems.

The Church is Attacked from the Outside (Delegation, Persecution)

Lesson 5- Acts 6 and 7

Key verse: “Lord do not charge them with this sin.”

Acts 7:60

Review questions:

- 1) What happened on Pentecost?
- 2) What did Peter do after the crowd questioned what happened? What was the response of the people after he spoke?
- 3) Who went to the temple to pray? What happened there?
- 4) What was the response of the Jewish leaders?
- 5) In the beginning how did the church meet each others financial needs?
- 6) What happened shortly after the church began to share all things? Who are Ananias and Sapphira?
- 7) What did the church do daily in the temple and from house to house?

As the church grew there began to be some complaints among the believers. Some of the “Hellenists” or Jewish people that lived outside of Israel didn’t feel like their widows were getting their share of the church’s daily distribution of food. This problem was brought to the disciples. The disciples decided that they would appoint seven wise and honorable men to meet this need. The apostles said they appointed the seven men to this task in order to “give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” One of the seven men was named Stephen. He was called a man “full of faith and the Holy Spirit.”

Then the Word of God spread and the number of disciples multiplied. Even many of the religious leaders were coming to faith in Christ. Stephen did great signs and wonders in his ministry.

Many of the Jews from outside Jerusalem began to debate Stephen, but they were not able to defeat him. So they conspired against him in order to say that he had said things against Moses and God and they brought him before a council. As men accused him of attacking their law, people on the council noted that the face of Stephen looked like the “face of an angel.”

Stephen then was asked if these charges were true. In his answer he gave a brief history of Israel. He talked about how the father of the Israelites, Abraham, was called to leave his homeland to establish his family in a new land. The new land of Abraham was the Jewish homeland of that day. He went on to tell how God promised to Abraham a son in order to be the heir to all that land. God gave him Isaac as the heir. Isaac had a son named Jacob. Jacob had twelve sons which became the twelve tribes of Israel. He talked about how the sons sold their brother, Joseph, to slave traders heading to Egypt. God was with Joseph and made him one of the great leaders of Egypt under Pharaoh. God then used Joseph to save his brothers from a famine.

Stephen went on to talk about how the Jews grew in power in Egypt, and how God had raised up Moses to be their leader. Moses had killed a man when he was forty years old in defense of a fellow Jew. He then fled to the wilderness and God met him in a burning bush. From the bush, He told Moses what He wanted him to do. Moses then began to lead the people. However, it wasn't long before they began to rebel.

The Israelites created an idol in the wilderness and then God "gave them up" to worship the sun, moon and stars. Stephen then began to talk about the tabernacle the Jews used in the wilderness for the worship of God. He talked about how the Jews possessed the land under Joshua and then flourished under David. Finally, Solomon built a temple for God, but God didn't "dwell in temples made with hands."

Having said this brief history of the Jewish people, Stephen scolded the Jewish leaders. He told them that they had always rejected the Jewish prophets all through their history, and now they had rejected and killed Jesus. When he said that, the people became very angry. Stephen gazed into heaven and had a vision of Jesus standing in heaven at the right hand of the Father. Stephen then proclaimed to everyone around what he saw. At this the Jews took him outside the city and stoned him.

A young man named Saul held the people's coats as they killed Stephen. Stephen's last words were, "Lord do not charge them with this sin." After this, he died.

Oral questions:

1. What was the specific problem in the church in these chapters?
2. How did the apostles fix the problem?
3. What was the job of the seven men?
4. How did Stephen defend himself when he was accused by the Jews of saying things against Moses and God?
5. What happened after Stephen's defense?
6. What were Stephen's final words before he died?

Spiritual truths:

1. People will get their feelings hurt in church (Acts 6:1)

In the last lesson we saw that sin had crept into the church. In this lesson we see that one group of people felt like they weren't being treated properly in the church. As a church, it will be very important that you realize that different people have different types of feelings and needs. However, one of your utmost tasks as a church is to stay unified. God wants your church to be in strong fellowship with one another in order to have unity. The last prayer of Christ recorded in Scripture before the cross was in the Garden of Gethsemane (John 17). What do you think he prayed for- evangelism, many believers, the Word of God to spread? . . . No! He prayed for UNITY among the believers. Guard your church against any types of divisions and be aware when someone isn't feeling right about what the church is doing. Do not just discount his or her complaints. The apostles

didn't ignore the complaints of the Hellenists. They decided that the people had a legitimate enough complaint, and they met their needs.

2. Share responsibilities (Acts 6:2-4)

The apostles did not have time to fulfill their ministry and meet the needs of the widows. Therefore they delegated this task to seven Godly men. God is going to raise up Godly men besides your pastor who can be leaders in the church. As you pick your leaders, your first task shouldn't be to think about what they are going to DO, you should think about who they ARE. In other words, are these men of honor and character that can be servant leaders alongside your pastor?

Many churches call these leaders DEACONS. Good deacons take on a servant role in order to help the church, the Kingdom, and their pastor. The Bible gives a list in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 of some of the characteristics of a good deacon. For example, among other things, deacons should be serious on important matters, not be hypocritical, not drink too much, and not be greedy for money. They are to be men of experience that have been tested in life. There also is a list of requirements for their wives. To be a deacon is an honor because the church recognizes the chosen men as persons of character. It is a privilege to be asked to be a part of a life of service.

3. God uses the Old Testament as well as the New (Acts 7:2-50)

Stephen gave a long response to a simple question. They asked him if he had said things against Moses and the Law. Stephen responded discussing Moses, Abraham, the Temple, Joshua and other Old Testament figures. If you are a new believer or a new church, you may not know many things about the Old Testament yet. However, you can be assured that there are many stories in the Old Testament that teach us who God is and what He is like. Begin to read and study the Old Testament, and this will open a whole new world of knowledge about the Lord for you.

4. God doesn't dwell in temples (Acts 7:48)

Throughout the Old Testament there were the tabernacle and temples. These were places where Israel could meet God. Israel took great pride in these places. These temples and the tabernacle were good things, but God is NOT like us. He does not need shelter to live. Those meeting places were good for the Israelites but they weren't mandatory for God to be present. The Bible is filled with examples of the Lord interacting with man outside of any building. For example He met with Jacob in the wilderness (Genesis 28), Moses in a bush (Exodus 3), and the Apostle Paul on a road (Acts 9).

As you begin your church, you might have the desire to have a church building. In many countries around the world that might be impossible. However, if you do want a church building, pray to make sure that is the will of God for your people. Remember that when we build a building, we are not building it for the Lord to have shelter. He is

not bound by space. We are building a meeting place for ourselves: a place for study, recreation, fellowship and worship.

Of course, most new churches do not have the money to build a church building. Many new churches find it better to never build at all. Others choose to save up money and build at a later time. If you simply do not have the money to own or rent a building, there are certainly other places to meet. The Bible tells us that the church met in homes (Acts 16:40, 17:5,6; 18:7), in schools (Acts 19:9) and also publicly and from house to house (Acts 20:20). Pray for the Lord to show you in what venue you are to meet.

5. Persecution is real and your response is critical (Acts 7:60)

Stephen was filled with the Holy Spirit. He was a good, Godly man. However, he was not immune to persecution. In the end Stephen was a martyr for the faith. In many, many places around the world Godly believers in Christ face persecution as a church for their faith. Christ himself warned us that we will face trouble in this world. (Matthew 6:34) If this is your case, hold fast to the understanding that the sufferings we face here, pale in comparison to the glories we will have in heaven. (Ephesians 1:18). God can also use persecution to lead others to him. Stephen's response of love and forgiveness to those who hated him, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin," obviously had an effect on Saul. Saul later became known as the Apostle Paul and became one of the greatest apostles and church planters who ever lived.

In the next lesson we will look at how the church spread to different types of people and different lands. We will study how the early church's actions can be applied to your church today.

The Church's Leaders Spread the Word (Baptism and Lord's Supper)

Lesson 6- Acts Chapter 8

Key verse: “. . . What hinders me from being baptized? Then Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart you may.”

Acts 8:36b-37

Review questions:

- 1) What happened on Pentecost? Did all of their countrymen believe?
- 2) Describe the church after so many converted on the day of Pentecost?
- 3) Who did Peter and John heal at the temple? What was the reaction of the priests?
- 4) Who were Ananias and Sapphira?
- 5) Who was Stephen and how did he die?
- 6) What are three purposes of the church?
- 7) How does God generally reveal himself and His will to us today?

Saul consented to the death of Stephen. During that time the church began to come under attack. The believers were scattered all over Judea and Galilee- except for the apostles who were able to stay in Jerusalem. Saul began to attack the church, entering every home and taking the believers to prison.

Those that were scattered began to spread the Word of Christ. One of the seven men appointed by the apostles, Philip, went to the city of Samaria and began to preach the Gospel to the inhabitants there. Many came to Christ, many demons were exorcised, and many people were healed. There was great joy in the city.

There was a man in that city who practiced sorcery called Simon. Being a sorcerer, he had astonished the city with his tricks. However, as the city began to turn to Christ, Simon also believed and was baptized. He was amazed at the signs and miracles that were happening through Phillip.

The apostles heard that the Samaritans had turned to Christ. Peter and John came to examine what was happening. They wanted to lay hands on the new believers so that they too could receive the Holy Spirit. As of yet, none of these people had received the Spirit. Simon was intrigued by the fact that the apostles could do this. He offered money to have this same power of giving the Holy Spirit. Peter told him his money could die with him. Peter rebuked him and told him to repent of this desire. After Peter said this, Simon asked him to pray that nothing bad would happen to him.

Peter and John preached the Word of the Lord, they went back to Jerusalem preaching in many other villages of the Samaritans along the way.

Then an angel appeared to Phillip and told him to go to a desert road to meet a man from Ethiopia. This man was a person of influence, a eunuch who worked for the queen of Ethiopia. He was in charge of all of her treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship. While returning home, he was reading the book of Isaiah. The angel told Philip to overtake the chariot.

Philip asked the man if he understood what he was reading. The Ethiopian replied, "How can I, unless someone guides me." So Philip began to explain this passage as well as explain the story of Christ to him. The Ethiopian then asked, "See, here is water, what hinders me from being baptized?" To which Philip replied, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." The Ethiopian then affirmed that he believed and commanded the chariot to stop. Philip went down to the water and baptized him. As they came up out of the water, Philip was taken away by the Spirit of the Lord to another city called Azotus and from there he went preaching from village to village until he finally arrived in Caesarea.

Review questions:

- 1) Who began to attack the church?
- 2) Who was dispersed around the country and what believers stayed in Jerusalem?
- 3) Where did Philip go to spread the gospel? What was the response of the people?
- 4) Why did Peter and John go to Samaria?
- 5) What did Simon want to buy?
- 6) Who did God lead Philip to witness to in the desert?
- 7) What did the Ethiopian eunuch do after he heard the message of Christ?

Spiritual truths:

1) **Reach out to the unloved (Acts 8:5)**

Philip was a Jew. For the Jewish people it was very difficult to work with the Samaritans. The Samaritans were not pure blooded Jews, but had mixed with Gentiles (non-Jews) in their lives and in their religious practices. The Jews looked down upon the Samaritans and didn't want to have anything to do with them. However, through the love of Christ and the power of the Spirit, Philip went out to tell the Samaritans about Christ. He overcame prejudice in order to lead the Samaritans to faith. Whether you are reading this story in Africa, South America, North America or Asia, all of us know people with whom we have a difficult time getting along with. Maybe it's people from a nearby town or village. Maybe they are a different tribe of people or different ethnic background than you. In every case, God wants you to share with them. This is an important idea in EVANGELISM. We will be discussing this principle of evangelism in later lessons. However, at this time, think about if there are any people that you as a group would have difficulty sharing the love of Christ with. If you don't feel sufficient love to tell them about Christ now, ask God to give you that love.

2) Your disciples can disappoint you (Acts 8:9-25)

Philip helped an influential man named Simon make a decision for Christ. Many debate whether Simon actually “believed” or not. However, there is probably no debate that Philip THOUGHT this man had believed. As Peter and John started to do wonderful things in Samaria, it became obvious that Simon was concerned with the wrong things and wanted to buy “power” from Peter and John. Certainly as you begin to share Christ with others, the people you lead to Christ will make mistakes (Christ’s disciples certainly did). Some people you share with and begin to disciple may surprise you and not even be true converts. However, that is not an excuse to stop evangelizing. Simon’s mistake certainly didn’t cause Philip to stop. Remember that after Samaria Philip helped evangelize the Ethiopian Eunuch and went on to minister to various other cities all the way to Caesarea.

3) Christ did not only go to the “west” (Acts 8:26-40)

Many people feel as if Christianity is basically a “western” (European and American) religion. However, after God began to spread the good news of Christ to Israel the first recorded place that the Gospel went was AFRICA. After all, the Ethiopian eunuch was an influential man in Northern Africa. More than likely the Gospel spread in various directions at this time, but it is interesting that God included Africa in the Bible as the first recorded direction of the spread of the gospel. To follow Christ is NOT a white man’s, or “western man’s” religion. Christ builds His church in all nations.

4) God gave us two ordinances as a church. (Acts 8:38)

In this study we have learned that the power of the Church comes from the Holy Spirit. We have learned that the basis of our ministry is prayer. We have learned that the church should be vigilant in the study of Scripture because that is how God generally reveals His will to us. We have already discussed five of the purposes of your new church- prayer, worship, fellowship, ministry, and discipleship.

However, God also gave two ordinances for every church, in every country, in every century to practiced. God has commanded every group of believers to practice BAPTISM and THE LORD’S SUPPER.

Baptism- Philip evangelized the Ethiopian eunuch. He told the Ethiopian that if he believed in Christ as the Son of God he could be baptized. The Ethiopian believed and was baptized immediately. Baptism is a sign of our decision to give our lives to Christ. It is not a necessary part of salvation (I Corinthians 1:17), but is a necessary act of obedience after we give our lives to Christ. When a believer is taken and placed under the water (in a pool, in a lake, in the ocean, in a baptistery) and then is raised up again, this symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (Romans 6:1-6). This also symbolizes that person’s death and burial to his old sin nature and his resurrection to walk in new life with Christ.

You as a church should begin practicing baptism. When? Now is as good a time as any! If you have members of your fellowship that have come to Christ, but have not been baptized, then they need to be baptized! In fact, the Bible seems to show that baptism happened very quickly after conversion (Acts 9:38, Acts 2:38-41). Some churches feel as if there should be a class before taking someone to be baptized in order to make sure the person is certain of his decision. Your church needs to decide what your process will be before someone will be baptized. Be careful not to ADD stipulations that are not in Scripture. The only prerequisite to baptism is that someone has repented and given his or her heart to Jesus.

Who can baptize? We see that the disciples baptized (John 4:1-2), Philip the evangelist baptized (Acts 9:38), and “certain disciples” baptized (Acts 9:10). Your church needs to decide who you will authorize to baptize. Baptism is done under the authority of the church. However, note that Philip was not the “pastor” he was simply an evangelist that had been appointed by the church. There is no indication that only pastors could baptize in Scripture.

The Lord’s Supper- This is the second ordinance that Christ commanded us as a church to do. The Lord’s Supper is simply a way for the church to remember Christ’s death on the cross for our sins. It is the partaking of the bread and wine in order to symbolize the body and blood of Christ. There is never ANY indication in Scripture that the bread and wine actually become the body and blood of Christ as some churches around the world teach. There is never any indication that you must partake of the Lord’s Supper in order to receive grace for salvation as some churches teach. After all, if we must constantly receive grace for salvation week after week then Christ’s death on the Cross wasn’t sufficient for us! (Hebrews 7:27). His one time death on the Cross provides sufficient forgiveness and grace for our lives. We don’t need to receive grace from any other action or ceremony.

If you would like to see how Christ led the Lord’s supper, you can read the following passages in Scripture (I Corinthians 11:17-26, Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:19,20). These can help you decide how your church will partake of the bread and wine in order to remember our Lord’s death. In the coming weeks, celebrate together the Lord’s Supper. Read Christ’s example again in Matthew, Mark, Luke or I Corinthians. Find the bread and wine (or juice if necessary) and advise all of the believers to be prepared. Remember to read Paul’s advice in I Corinthians 11:27-34. Prepare yourself spiritually before drinking the wine and eating the bread. Confess your sins to the Father so that you can remember His Son’s sacrifice with the right attitude and the right spirit. Notice that it is only the believers or “brethren” (Acts 11:33) that partake of the supper.

Periodically, remember to celebrate the Lord’s Supper together as a church. Discuss, as a church, how often you want to do this.

The next study will look at two of the great leaders of the early church. The lesson will examine how they applied the sixth purpose of the church in their lives.

The Church's Greatest Missionary is Saved (Evangelism)

Lesson 7- Acts Chapter 9

Key verse- "Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God."

Acts 9:20

Review Questions:

- 1) How did Christ return to heaven?
- 2) What happened on Pentecost?
- 3) Who went to the temple to pray? What happened there?
- 4) What are four purposes of the church?
- 5) What was Ananias and Sapphira's sin?
- 6) What happened to Stephen?
- 7) Who held the coats at Stephen's death?
- 8) Who evangelized the Samaritans? Why was this so difficult?
- 9) How did the Ethiopian eunuch come to Christ?

Saul continued to persecute the church. He sought permission from the high priest to go to Damascus to put the followers of "The Way" into prison. On his way to Damascus, he saw a great light. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying, "Saul, Saul why are you persecuting Me?" Saul asked who was speaking, and the Lord replied that it was Jesus. Saul, trembling, asked the Lord, "Lord, what do you want me to do?" The Lord Jesus told him to go to the city and wait. The men who were traveling with Saul heard the voice but didn't understand it. Saul arose from the ground, but he could not see. His traveling companions helped guide Saul to the city. There Saul waited for three days. For those days he could not see, and he also didn't eat or drink.

Meanwhile God spoke to a man named Ananias. He told Ananias to go to a street called "Straight". He was to find Saul, who was praying, and help him regain his sight. Ananias did not want to go. He had heard a lot about Saul and what he had done to the Christians. God assured Ananias that he should go because God's purpose for Saul was to take the Gospel to the Gentiles, kings, as well as the children of Israel. However, God wanted to show Saul how he had to suffer for the kingdom first. Ananias obeyed the Lord and arrived at the house where Saul was staying. He laid his hands on Saul so that he could regain his sight. Immediately it was as if scales fell of his eyes and he could see again. He arose and was baptized. After this Saul ate some food to regain his strength and spent some time with the believers in Damascus.

Immediately Saul went out and began to preach Christ in the Jewish synagogues. Everyone was amazed because they knew what Saul had done in the past to the church. God began to use Saul to show many people that Jesus is the Christ. Soon the Jews began to plot to kill Saul, so the disciples in Damascus had to help Saul escape by lowering him from a large basket down the wall of the city.

Saul then wanted to go greet the disciples in Jerusalem, but they were afraid of him. So Barnabas brought him to Jerusalem and spoke on Saul's behalf to the apostles. Saul went to the disciples and related the story of his conversion on the road to Damascus, and how he had preached boldly in that city.

So Saul stayed at Jerusalem and continued to preach the word, but soon the Jews sought to kill him. Saul went back to Caesarea and then to Tarsus. Then the churches began to grow and prosper.

The ministry of Peter continued during this time. As he was going through Israel he helped cure a paralyzed man so that he could walk again. He also helped a good disciple named Dorcas. Dorcas had been a kind person who had done many deeds of charity. She had died, and her friends sent for Peter to see how he could help. Peter arrived and told Dorcas to "arise". She rose from the dead and soon many in that town believed in the Lord. After this event, Peter spent some more time in the city of Joppa in the home of Simon the tanner.

Oral Questions:

- 1) Who was Saul?
- 2) What city was he going to in order to persecute the believers?
- 3) What happened on the road to Damascus?
- 4) Who came to help Saul see again?
- 5) What did Saul do after he regained his sight?
- 6) Did the believers in Jerusalem want to meet with Saul?
- 7) The Lord healed two people through Peter in this story, who were they?

Spiritual truths-

- 1) **Some of the hardest people become some of the greatest leaders in the church (Acts 9:1-19)**

Sometimes it is easy to look at certain types of people and think that they would never come to Christ. After all, let us examine Saul. He was a devout Jew. He was trained in all of the right schools in Judaism. He was a great persecutor of Christians. He threw many Christians in jail. He even watched his fellow religious leaders as they killed the first martyr for Jesus- Stephen. How could such a man ever come to Christ? However, Christ had a plan for Saul's life. He revealed himself to Saul on the road, and Saul (who later became known as the Apostle Paul) converted.

There are people in your city that seem very far away from converting, but do not give up hope; God might have a great plan for them yet. A missionary once told me, "I look for those tough people to the gospel; they might make the next Apostle Paul." When evangelizing, your church should FIRST seek out those people who seem to be the most OPEN to the gospel. God may already be working on their hearts. Then it is simply a matter of picking the fruit that God has prepared. However, at the same time, pray that God will also show you those men and women that seem so, so far away from the Gospel. It might be that "tough person"- a tribal leader, or business woman, or intellect at

the university that might become a bold witness for the Gospel. Do not shy away from sharing your faith with them as well.

2. EVANGELISM- the sixth purpose of the church. (Acts 9:20-43)

We have looked at prayer, worship, fellowship, ministry, and discipleship. Today this study will look at EVANGELISM. A great pastor named Rick Warren once said that all of the other purposes of the church we will do for all eternity. We will worship the Lord in heaven. We will be in fellowship with other believers. We will minister in heaven. We will grow in your understanding of the Father (billions and billions of years in heaven will give you plenty of time to learn more about Him!) However, we can't evangelize there. We cannot tell others about Jesus. In heaven, it will be too late to share Christ with people.

The church's task of evangelism is of immense importance. Your evangelistic heart as a church will help define what type of church you will be. It will help form you into a church that is either inward focused on your own needs, or a church that constantly reaches out and focuses on the spiritual needs of those around it. Evangelism can also be the most DIFFICULT of the purposes. For example all of the other purposes of the church can be done among fellow believers. You can have fellowship with one another, disciple together, worship together, and minister to one another (as well as to the world). However evangelism is ALWAYS done with the lost, and that can be difficult. To do evangelism correctly, believers have to open themselves up, form friendships, and risk sharing what Christ has done for them with people that might not want to hear what you have to say. All of that can be a very intimidating experience. For this reason, many churches forsake this purpose.

However, the church in Acts didn't stop fulfilling the purpose of evangelism. In this chapter, two of their leaders, Peter and Saul were out spreading the Gospel. In fact, Saul began to preach Christ IMMEDIATELY after he had converted and regained his strength. (Acts 9:20). Peter was out traveling around Israel and through his actions he was able to spread the gospel so that entire cities heard of Christ. (Acts 9:35, 42) Evangelism started with the leaders of the church!

However, not just the leaders, but all believers are called to share as well. In last week's lesson we already saw how Philip shared his faith. In lesson two we studied that after Pentecost, the church grew DAILY (2:47) and we see that the people prepared themselves through the Spirit to preach the word boldly (Acts 4:31) The church's daily witness spread like wildfire around the world, until finally it made it to your home today!

Your church should be built on the premise that you will be an evangelistically minded church. From the very beginning you should strive to evangelize the lost in order to begin the process of making disciples for the Kingdom.

How should you evangelize others? There are many ways to share your faith. If you are participating in this study, you might already have used one of the other studies of the Pioneer Evangelism series such as "The Good News of Christ" or "Beginning a

New Life with Christ". These studies are EXCELLENT if you would like to help someone study the Bible in order to share Christ with them. They guide you step by step in how you can lead someone through a seven to eight lesson study of God's Word. If you do not have these studies, or any other type of solid evangelistic Bible study material, here are two other simple ways to evangelize others.

The first method is by sharing your "testimony." A testimony is simply a brief conversation about how Christ changed your life. When I share my testimony, I like to divide my testimony in three parts- 1) my life before Christ 2) how I gave my life to Christ 3) my life with Christ now. I take a minute or two for each part and explain how my life was slowly changed by Christ. After I have done this, I like to share with that person how they can give their life to Christ as well.

Take a minute and practice sharing these three parts. Remember, keep this brief (5 minutes) and keep it simple. Let the Holy Spirit guide.

The second method is called the Roman Road. These are six verses that you can use to share your faith in just a few minutes and show WHY someone can come to Christ. The verses are as follows:

- 1) I John 5:13- This verse shows that God's Word was written to show you how to have salvation.
- 2) Romans 3:23- This verse shows that we are all sinners.
- 3) Romans 6:23- This verse shows God's punishment for sin.
- 4) Romans 5:8- This verse shows that God sent Christ died for us.
- 5) Romans 10:9-10- These verses show what we have to do to accept Christ- believe, and call Christ as Lord (make a commitment)
- 6) Romans 10:13- This verse shows that anyone can come to Him.

As a church take, 10-30 minutes and read through these verses- talking about how you can explain each verse to your friends.

Please remember that when you evangelize, you shouldn't be worried that you will say exactly the right thing. The Bible promises us that the Holy Spirit will guide us in what to say. (Luke 12:12, John 14:26, 16:13), God simply has chosen to use you as the instrument that delivers the Good News to that particular person. If you help evangelize a lost world, you will be part of a team of people that have helped spread the love of Christ from the time of His resurrection until now.

In the last lesson, we will see how the Gentiles finally began to be reached for Christ and what that means for you today.

The Church Gets a Vision for the World (Missions)

Lesson 8- Acts Chapters 10-13

Key verses: “Then Peter opened his mouth and said, “In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality, But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.

Acts 10:34, 35

Review questions:

- 1) What happened on Pentecost?
- 2) Describe how the early church met and acted toward one another.
- 3) What happened when Peter and John went to pray at the temple?
- 4) Why did Ananias and Sapphira die?
- 5) How did the apostles deal with the problem of feeding the widows?
- 6) How did Stephen treat those who were stoning him?
- 7) Where was the eunuch who Philip evangelized from?
- 8) What are the five purposes of the church?
- 9) What should be the basis of our ministry?
- 10) What should we study to find who God is and what His will is for our lives?

There was a man named Cornelius who was a leader in the Roman army. He was a devout man who prayed to God always and was very good to the Jewish people. One day at three o'clock in the afternoon, an angel appeared to Cornelius while he was praying. The angel told him that his prayers had been answered and that he should call for Peter, who was in Joppa, to come to him.

So Cornelius sent some trusted men to go find Peter. The next day Peter was praying about 12:00 in the afternoon. He became very hungry, and as he was waiting for the food he fell into a trance. He had a vision that heaven opened up and a sheet, bound at the four corners, was lowered from heaven. The sheet was filled with all kinds of animals- both clean and unclean according to Jewish law. A voice then told him to kill and eat the animals. Peter told the Lord that he couldn't do that because he couldn't eat the unclean animals. The Lord told him that what He had cleansed Peter could not call unholy. This all happened three times.

Peter was still thinking about the meaning of the vision when Cornelius' men arrived at the door. They asked for Peter, and he came down to greet them. They told Peter that an angel instructed Cornelius to summon him. Peter invited them in to stay the night. The next day they went away to Cornelius.

So the next day Peter, some fellow Jews, and Cornelius' servants arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius had invited his relatives and his close friends to be with him. They were at his house waiting for Peter. When Peter arrived Cornelius began to bow down and worship him. Peter told Cornelius to get up because, after all, Peter was only just a

man like Cornelius. Peter then told him that as a Jew he wasn't allowed to keep company with someone of another country, but God showed him that he couldn't call any man "common or unclean." Therefore he came to Cornelius' house with objecting to the Lord.

Peter began to preach about Christ. He said that all of the apostles were commanded to preach about the forgiveness of sins for those who believe in Christ. As he was saying this the Holy Spirit fell on the home. All of the Jews that traveled with Peter were amazed that the Gentiles had received the Holy Spirit in the very same manner that they had received the Spirit. Peter commanded that the household be baptized. Then Peter and his companions stayed there for a few more days.

Now some of the Jewish believers in Jerusalem were very angry because Peter had spent time with the Gentiles. Peter explained all that had happened. He told them about how the Lord had sent the vision of the animals in the sheet and then how he was summoned to Cornelius' house. He told how he began to preach the Gospel and then how the Holy Spirit came on the new Gentile believers. He told about how he remembered the words of Jesus Christ when he taught them about the Holy Spirit. Peter said that if God had chosen to give the same gift to the Gentiles that had given to the Jews, how could he fight against God? When the Jews heard this, they glorified God that He had given the Gentiles "repentance to life."

After Stephen's martyrdom, many of the followers of Christ went to neighboring countries sharing Christ with the Jewish people. Some of them went to a city called Antioch in Syria and began to witness to the Greeks. Many people in that city came to Christ. The believers in Jerusalem heard about this and sent Barnabas to confirm what was going on. Barnabas took Saul and they went to Antioch. They taught the believers in Antioch for an entire year and the disciples were first called "Christians" in Antioch. Then a prophet came up from Jerusalem and proclaimed that there would be a great famine. So the disciples in Antioch decided to send money to the church in Judea back with Saul and Barnabas to help during this time.

After this, Herod, the King of Palestine (or the area of Israel), began to persecute the church. He killed James the brother of John by the sword and then decided to put Peter in prison. He did all of this in order to please the Jews. So the church prayed for Peter. In the middle of the night, before he was to be brought to the Jews an angel of the Lord came and freed him from the prison. Peter thought he was seeing a vision and didn't realize that all that was happening was truly real until after he was free. Peter went to the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark. A young girl answered the door but she got so excited when she saw Peter that she forgot to let him in. Peter kept knocking. When the believers answered, he motioned for them to keep quiet and told them to tell the other disciples that he was free. He soon left for another location. Finally he went from Judea to Caesarea and stayed there.

Herod was very angry about Peter's escape and had the prison guards killed. Later Herod was facing a problem with some neighboring cities. He negotiated a peace with them and during a celebration ceremony Herod began to speak and the people

praised him as a god. The angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give the glory to God, but took the praise for himself. Herod was then eaten by worms and died

Even among these trials, the Word of God multiplied. Saul and Barnabas went back to Antioch from Jerusalem. The church of Antioch, with much prayer and fasting, appointed Saul and Barnabas to go on a missionary journey.

Review questions:

- 1) Who was Cornelius?
- 2) What vision did God give to Peter?
- 3) Why did Peter have a difficult time going to visit Cornelius?
- 4) What happened when Peter arrived at Cornelius' house and preached the Gospel?
- 5) What happened when the Jews in Jerusalem heard about this?
- 6) Where were people first called 'Christians'?
- 7) Who was the first of the twelve apostles to be martyred?
- 8) How did Peter get freed from prison?
- 9) How and why did King Herod die?

Spiritual truths:

1) As your church spreads- be prepared to expect resistance (Acts 11:3)

You have already learned in this study to expect persecution from the world. Did you also know that you can expect resistance from fellow believers? For example, some church members may want to keep the church "small" so that it will feel more like a family. Some church members may not want to reach out to certain types of people. Other churches in your area (if you are in a country with other churches) may not want you to plant churches in their same neighborhood or town. As you expand, you can constantly face resistance! However, never forget that the church in Acts continually expanded in spite of all this. Our Father is patiently waiting because He wants all to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). We have a mandate to spread farther and farther in order that all men can hear and make a sincere decision to accept or reject our Savior. When the resistance comes, continually remind yourself and others that God wants all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. (I Timothy 2:3,4)

2) As your church spreads- be prepared to help other churches (Acts 11:27-30)

The church started in Jerusalem. The Lord spread the believers first all over Judea and Samaria and then to the surrounding countries. Shortly thereafter, due to a severe drought, the newer churches in the surrounding countries helped the mother church in Jerusalem financially. They shared what they had because they LOVED their brothers in Christ.

We must do the same thing two thousand years later. As your church grows, be prepared to help other churches in three ways: financially (monetary offerings of love

when needed), physically (a new church might need workers as they try to become established), and spiritually. How can you help spiritually? One of the great joys in the ministry is being able to pass on things that you have learned to younger believers and newer churches. You can help new churches in your area with training and guidance. There is great joy in training others and then watching THEM go out and reap a harvest of souls for the Kingdom.

3) As your church spreads- be prepared to go to other cultures, countries or peoples. (Acts 10:34 and Acts 13:3)

It is the assumption of this study that you are completing these lessons in the hopes of starting a church. Maybe you just have a small group of people- 2, 5, or 12 people meeting and praying about the future. Maybe you have many groups already meeting. Maybe you have an established church but you are trying to help your church have a bigger vision of the Kingdom of God. Whatever your situation, from the very beginning you should be thinking about how your church is going to grow and reproduce through MISSIONS. God has called us to spread His name in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the Earth (Acts 1:8). In other words, He wants you to start with your town and at the same time have a vision of how you can minister in neighboring towns, states, and nations. God took Peter and showed him that it was His will that Peter not only witness to the Jews, but also to the Gentiles. To whom will God tell your church to minister? What group of people that live near you are a part of God's plan for you to reach?

God took Saul and Barnabas and began a ministry that spread the gospel during their lifetimes all of the way to Rome (Acts 27:16-30), and possibly even to Spain (Romans 15:24). As we close out this study, we see the church doing Christ's final commandment. The church shifted focus also to the Gentiles and began to spread around the world. The church in Antioch sent Saul (or Paul) and Barnabas on their first of four missionary journeys.

From the actions of these early disciples the church spread far beyond the borders of Jerusalem. It spread until it reached your country and your home. Praise God that he brought the truth to your ears. Praise God that he brought your group of believers together. Whether your group is small or large, rich or poor, God wants to use you as a church. After all, if you are following His will by basing your ministries on prayer and Scripture, practicing the ordinances, and following the seven purposes of the church: prayer, fellowship, worship, ministry, discipleship, evangelism and missions, your group of believers will make a fine, healthy church. Ask God to show you where your CHURCH is to go next, to bring others the same joy you now have in Him.

All honor and praise be to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

What Next?

Lesson 9

As you closed out this study, you may be wondering, “What should I do next?” You might be concerned as to how you are going to teach your people now that the pre-written studies are done? After all, in some cases your church may have started from the very beginning of the Pioneer Evangelism series. You may have used pre-written Bible studies for possibly the past 23 weeks. In other words, that is almost half a year of studies that were already prepared for you by someone else. So what should you do now?

One of the goals of these lessons was to help you to grow in your understanding of the Scriptures. You might have studied Matthew or John in the evangelistic and discipleship studies. Now you have looked at the first section of the book of Acts. Our hope is that you now have a basic understanding of those books, and that you have begun to grow to love the study of Scripture.

In these Bible studies we hope you have noticed that God gives many spiritual truths to us through His Word. For 23 lessons, you have been getting spiritual truths written by other people, now we hope to help you find your own spiritual truths from His word. If you are like most churches around the world, you will not have the resources to keep going out and finding prepared Bible studies. You need to gain your own insights and own truths from your Bible. God wants to reveal Himself to YOU through His Word.

You can find spiritual truths anywhere in the Bible as you meditate on His Word. As you begin to study His Word for spiritual truths or insights, our suggestion today is that you try to study the rest of the book of Acts. Why Acts? We have been studying this book in depth, and it only seems logical to complete the study we have started.

Let us begin with chapter thirteen. There are several truths to be learned in chapter thirteen, but how do you get the spiritual truths?

- 1) Begin with prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the truth to you. After all, we have already learned that it is He that reveals all truth. (John 16:13)
- 2) When you finish praying, begin to read Acts chapter 13. It is a good idea to read at least several chapters before thirteen and several chapters after to get a good idea of the context of the situation.
- 3) Meditate on what you are reading. Don’t just read this passage quickly. You can easily finish this passage in a short time. However, you are trying to allow God to speak to you about what is going on in His Word.
- 4) Let the Lord speak to you before you speak to others. Spiritual truths need to be personal. They need to be ideas that can be applied to your own life or to the life of the church body. Don’t read a passage waiting for the Lord to tell you something about someone else. Let Him touch your life first and then you will be able to teach

with more passion to others. When you meditate on a verse and it really touches your heart, this might be the Holy Spirit trying to teach you.

- 5) As you meditate on the verses, there might be one verse, or one story, that really touches you. For some reason, this verse will simply stand out to you. You might have read the passage 20 times, but today you need to dwell more on that one verse. In “What is a Church?”, beside every spiritual truth you can see the chapter and verse where we got a spiritual truth. Those verses touched our hearts. However, you might reread those chapters and catch spiritual truths in other verses that are specific to your life.
- 6) Stop. Ask God to help you apply that particular verse or section to your life. Think about what happened in that verse and see what you or your church is going through that might be similar to that situation. Or, look and see what that verse is teaching you about the Father that you’ve never thought about before. Take your time. There is no rule that you need to finish all of Acts 13. There might be enough truths in that passage for your church to study for several weeks. I personally found further truths for my life in Acts 13:44 and Acts 13:51. God might have totally different spiritual truths for you.
- 7) Confirm- If you are newer in the faith or newer to the Bible, confirming your spiritual truth with other Scriptures might be more difficult. However, you want to make sure that what you have learned actually agrees with what the Bible says. After all, someone can take any verse out of Scripture and make it say just about anything they want. God will never tell you to do something that is in direct contrast with His Word. Study other parts of Scripture to make sure you are teaching sound doctrine. This will become easier as you have more time in the Word.
- 8) Apply- As you’ve gotten your spiritual truth and confirmed with Scripture, then you can apply it to your people’s hearts as well as your own. Try to find examples and illustrations that are applicable to this truth. Your people will not learn unless they understand how this truth applies to them.
- 9) Close with prayer- Always thank God for all that He has shown you, and ask for His help as you show your people what you have learned.

NEVER FORGET TO ASK HIM TO HELP YOU TO TRAIN OTHERS TO DO THE SAME THING IN THEIR LIVES. Remember God wants you to raise up more leaders for His kingdom. There will be many men and women in your church that you can train to study Scripture so that **THEY** can teach others.

You can use these ideas above to daily get spiritual truths from the Bible. Using these ideas from a daily devotion time with the Father, you never have to rely on others’ pre-written Bible studies again. You will probably still use others’ Bible studies from time to time, but you will never **HAVE TO RELY PRIMARILY** on others’ studies for your church again. The only book that you will have to have to guide your church is the Bible. Let him teach you **DAILY**, so that you can teach others.

May God bless you as you begin your church or maybe even as you begin **MANY** churches. May they be well rounded churches that are guided by the Spirit, based on the Bible and prayer, practice the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and fulfill

the seven purposes of the church- prayer, fellowship, worship, ministry, discipleship and evangelism and missions.