

## WHEN THE CHURCH NEVER LOOKED BETTER

### I. Acts 2:42-47

A. It is good for us to gather here today to pray, worship, hear God's Word, and fellowship around a wonderful meal. We've been doing so periodically for 32 years and counting. The early church actually did this more often than we do. **Jeff Lucas**, in his book, ***Creating a Prodigal Friendly Church***, writes: "We are now part of the grace-family called the people of God, and what a beautiful family it is. Together we cry, laugh, share burdens, worship, grieve, pray, eat, and serve. And this community is no austere, formal bunch. We're famous for our parties--or at least we should be." **The late J. Vernon McGee echoes:** "There is a brotherhood within the body of believers, and the Lord Jesus Christ is the common denominator. Friendship and fellowship are the legal tender among believers."

B. Our text takes place right after Peter preached his famous sermon on Pentecost where 3,000 people became believers. It was a steady flow after that. The disciples' workout routine was baptizing lots of people. They were body builders, in the natural and the spiritual. Let's go to the text...

C. Acts 2:42-47 (ESV) **42** *They (the first church) devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, (Apostles' teaching: what Jesus taught and illuminated; Fellowship, Gk: **Koinonia**: covenantal togetherness, not mere "hello-ship"; to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 46 Every day (how often?) they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God (Worship!) and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

D. In his excellent book, ***The Church Awakening***, Charles Swindoll says this about what we just read: "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." (Acts 2:42) "In this one verse we have the lowest common denominator of a church. This is ground zero. It would help greatly if God's people reminded themselves of this single verse of Scripture every day. When the first body of believers gathered together, they devoted themselves to four essentials. Did you notice them? Here are the four essentials: teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer. This verse is not only descriptive of what the early church did; it is prescriptive of what the church must do." (Yay and Amen!)

E. We live in a time where the church is striving to please people, be attractive to the world, be hip, cool, and otherwise. They want to schmooze with the *cool kids*. It's like the Bride of Christ is trying to dress up to catch the eye of suiters other than *The Groom*. But in Acts 2:42-47 we see a picture of the Bride as drop dead gorgeous. Of course *She* wouldn't always look so nice. She's had many wardrobe malfunctions through the centuries. Read Paul's letters to the Corinthians or Galatians or Jesus' cryptic warnings to the 7 churches in Revelation, and some of those outfits could break mirrors. "*Do you happen to still have that Acts 2 dress in your closet? Wear that one again! You're gonna like the way you look, I guarantee it.*"

**F. In Edwin Gray Hurley's sermon titled, "The Perfect Church." He writes:** "What makes a church perfect is imperfect people like you and me caring enough about God and each other, and bringing enough of our real, broken, imperfect lives to the Lord who can take them and make us new. Jesus Christ, who turned water into wine, can turn imperfect people like you and me into new people. He can create the perfect, or the real, church."

**G. Let me impart some renewed vision as to what you're a part of and what you're coming to each time we gather. Hebrews 12:22-24 (NASB) says:** *22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, 24 and to Jesus, the Mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.*

**H. The blood of Christ was shed for His church, His Bride, the Family of God, the Redeemed Community. And with all my heart I pray you are a part of that great assembly! If you are, then times like today are more than just a bunch of people sitting around after church eating a meal and shooting the breeze. These should be definitive gatherings. Don't waste your words talking drivel when you can build-up one another in the most holy faith! May you soak in what God has made you all a part of and may you relish being a part of it forever and ever!**

\* Close with Prayer...

## **Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff**

### **Acts 2:42-47 (ESV)**

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### **Quote by Jeff Lucas**

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And this community is no austere, formal bunch. We're famous for our parties--or at least we should be."

- Jeff Lucas, *Creating a Prodigal Friendly Church*, p. 92.

### **Quote by J. Vernon McGee**

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"What makes a church perfect is imperfect people like you and me caring enough about God and each other, and bringing enough of our real, broken, imperfect lives to the Lord who can take them and make us new. Jesus Christ, who turned water into wine, can turn imperfect people like you and me into new people. He can create the perfect, or the real, church."

- Edwin Gray Hurley, sermon titled, "*The Perfect Church*," Wednesday, January 01, 2003.

## **Video Clips & Important Articles**

**Belong To A Church - John Piper**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U8EIN2syoTs>

**Me Church**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cGEmlPjgVI>

**Ronnie**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t20GJ8T\\_9o8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t20GJ8T_9o8)

**The Church--A Cruise Ship or A Battleship?**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HIUaa1P5fTY>

## **Bonus Stuff**

**[Jude 1:20-21 \(NLT\)](#)**

**20** But you, dear friends, must build each other up in your most holy faith, pray in the power of the Holy Spirit, **21** and await the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will bring you eternal life. In this way, you will keep yourselves safe in God's love.

### **Hebrews 10:24-25 (AMPC)**

"And let us consider and give attentive, continuous care to watching over one another, studying how we may stir up (stimulate and incite) to love and helpful deeds and noble activities, not forsaking or neglecting to assemble together [as believers], as is the habit of some people, but admonishing (warning, urging, and encouraging) one another, and all the more faithfully as you see the day approaching."

### **1 Corinthians 3:16-17 (NLT)**

**16** Don't you realize that all of you together are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God lives in you? **17** God will destroy anyone who destroys this temple. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

### **Ephesians 2:19-22 (NIV)**

**19** Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of His household, **20** built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief Cornerstone. **21** In Him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. **22** And in Him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit.

### **1 Peter 2:1-12 (ESV)**

**1** So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. **2** Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation-- **3** if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. **4** As you come to Him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, **5** you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. **6** For it stands in Scripture: "*Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in Him will not be put to shame.*" **7** So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, "*The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,*" **8** and "*A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.*" They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. **9** But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. **10** Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. **11** Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. **12** Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

### **Quote by Martin Luther**

"To gather with God's people in united adoration of the Father is as necessary to the Christian life as prayer."

**Quote by John Calvin**

"So highly does the Lord esteem the communion of His church, that He considers everyone a traitor and apostate from religion who perversely withdraws himself from any Christian society which preserves the true ministry of the word and sacraments."

**Quote by John Bunyan**

"Christians are like the several flowers in a garden that have each of them the dew of heaven, which, being shaken with the wind, they let fall at each other's roots, whereby they are jointly nourished, and become nourishers of each other."

**Quote by Alec Moyter**

"When we look at the merest sliver of a crescent moon we don't say, 'Oh, there's part of the moon.' We say 'Look, there's the moon.' In the same way each local church, however small—or in the eyes of onlookers, insignificant—is meant to be a mirror and image of the whole, an earthly replica of the heavenly reality where Christ is all."

- Alec Moyter, *Isaiah by the Day: A New Devotional Translation*, excerpted from p. 306, on Isaiah 63:15-64:12.

**Quote by D.L. Moody**

"It may not be an easy thing to live in sweet fellowship with all those with whom we come in contact; but that is what the grace of God is given to us for."

**Quote by D.A. Carson**

"What binds us together is not common education, common race, common income levels, common politics, common nationality, common accents, common jobs, or anything else of that sort. Christians come together because they have all been loved by Jesus Himself. They are a band of natural enemies who love one another for Jesus' sake."

**Quote by Paul Tripp**

"The church is not a theological classroom. It is a conversion, confession, repentance, reconciliation, forgiveness and sanctification center, where flawed people place their faith in Christ, gather to know and love Him better, and learn to love others as He designed."

- Paul D. Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change*.

**Quote by Tim Challies**

"The church is not an art museum to display perfect masterpieces. It's not a natural museum to display perfect specimens. The church is a hospital to heal the sick, and it takes time to heal people from a deadly disease. You can't act surprised when a hospital is full of sick people and shouldn't be surprised when a church is full of messy, sinful people. After all, it is not those who are well who need a doctor, but those who are sick. It is not those who are righteous who need Jesus, but sinners."

### **Quote by Jonathan Leeman**

"The local church should be the antidote to both individualism and tribalism, a place where each person stands individually before God and as a member of a new people and family"

### **Quote by Dietrich Bonhoeffer**

"The temple of God is the holy people in Jesus Christ. The Body of Christ is the living temple of God and of the new humanity."

### **Quote by Charles Spurgeon**

"The existence of hypocrites does not prove the non-existence of true believers."

### **Quote by Philip Yancey**

"As I look around on Sunday morning at the people populating the pews, I see the risk that God has assumed. For whatever reason, God now reveals Himself in the world not through a pillar of smoke and fire, not even through the physical body of His Son in Galilee, but through the mongrel collection that comprises my local church and every other such gathering in God's name."

- Philip Yancey, *Church: Why Bother?: My Personal Pilgrimage*. p. 68.

### **Quote by C.S. Lewis**

"Enemy-occupied territory - that is what this world is. Christianity is the story of how the rightful king has landed, you might say landed in disguise, and is calling us all to take part in a great campaign of sabotage. When you go to church you are really listening-in to the secret wireless from our friends: that is why the enemy is so anxious to prevent us from going."

- C.S. Lewis, quote found in *The Book of Worship*, Bethany House, 2007.

### **Quote by Kevin DeYoung**

"The Church acts as a sort of embassy for the government of the King. It is an outpost of the Kingdom of God surrounded by the kingdom of darkness. Just as an embassy is meant to showcase the life of a nation to the surrounding people, so the Church is meant to manifest the life of the Kingdom of God to the people around it."

### **Quote by Martin Luther King, Jr.**

"There was a time when the church was very powerful in the time when the early Christians rejoiced at being deemed worthy to suffer for what they believed. In those days the church was not merely a thermometer that recorded the ideas and principles of popular opinion; it was a thermostat that transformed the mores of society... But the judgment of God is upon the church as never before. If today's church does not recapture the sacrificial spirit of the early church, it will lose its authenticity, forfeit the loyalty of millions, and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning for the twentieth century."

- Martin Luther King, Jr. (Letter from Birmingham Jail, April 16, 1963)

### **Quote by E.M. Bounds**

"The church is not a democracy in which we have chosen God, but a theocracy in which He has chosen us. The church is the only society in the world that never loses any of its members, even by death. The church upon its knees would bring heaven upon the earth."

**Quote by E.M. Bounds**

"The life of the church is the highest life, and its office is to pray. Its prayer life is the highest life, the most fragrant, the most conspicuous. When God's house on the earth is a house of prayer, then God's house in heaven is busy and powerful in its plans and movements. 'For mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people' (Isaiah 56:7), says our God. Then, His earthly armies are clothed with the triumphs and spoils of victory, and His enemies are defeated on every hand... The very life and prosperity of God's cause - even its very existence - depend on prayer. And the advance and triumph of His cause depend on one thing: that we ask of Him."

**Quote by Corrie Ten Boom**

"When a Christian shuns fellowship with other Christians, the devil smiles. When he stops studying the Bible, the devil laughs. When he stops praying, the devil shouts for joy."

**Quote by Mrs. William P. Janzen**

"Can I be a Christian without joining other Christians in the church? Yes, it is something like: being a soldier without an army, a seaman without a ship, a businessman without a business, a tuba player without an orchestra, a football player without a team, or a bee without a hive."

**Quote by James H. Aughey**

"Jesus organized the church, which is His vineyard. He commands all to go into the vineyard and work. All who are united to Christ by faith, and are thus members of His mystical body, should be members of His visible church."

**Quote by John Piper**

"The body of Christ, universally, is expressed in the bodies of Christ locally. To belong to THE body of Christ means in the New Testament to belong to A body of Christ. Let me say that again because that's very very threatening for many Lone Ranger Christians. To belong to THE body of Christ in the New Testament meant to belong to A body of Christ. They weren't separate. They weren't like, 'Oh I'm a part of the universal church and I just cruise. I just go from church to church and small group to small group and to parachurch ministry to parachurch ministry and I have no roots like this anywhere.' That's not Biblical!"

**Quote by Mark Dever**

"We are all called to initiate involvement in each other's lives... We covenant together to work and pray for unity, to walk together in love, to exercise care and watchfulness over each other, to faithfully admonish and entreat one another as occasion may require, to

assemble together, to pray for each other, to rejoice and to bear with each other, and to pray for God's help in all this."

- Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, Crossway, 2000, p. 221.

**Quote by A.W. Tozer**

"If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the church today, 95 percent of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference. If the Holy Spirit had been withdrawn from the New Testament church, 95 percent of what they did would stop, and everybody would know the difference."

**Quote by R.C. Sproul**

"How desperately sad is the fact that the church is known by schism, not unity; ignorance, not knowledge; and indecisiveness rather than maturity. How it must break God's heart to see us continue in such a poverty stricken condition in light of what He has done, stands ready to do, has the resources to accomplish, and has defined as our calling in Christ."

**Quote by R.C. Sproul**

"The church is the most important organization in the world. It is the target of every demonic, hostile attack in the universe. Jesus personally guaranteed that the gates of hell will never prevail against the church. He made no guarantee that the gates of hell would not be unleashed against it, however."

**Quote by Sam Allberry**

"Church is not for your entertainment, as a consumer, but for you and others to find encouragement, as a contributor."

**Quote by D.L. Moody**

"Small numbers make no difference to God. There is nothing small if God is in it."

**Quote by Charles Spurgeon**

"The day we find the perfect church, it becomes imperfect the moment we join it."