



Questions for Every Christian

I've heard people comment that we need to get back to being a New Testament church. My reply to that is, "Which one?" The churches in the NT certainly had problems.

The church at Ephesus forgot its first love; the churches at Pergamum and Thyatira allowed false teachers in their classrooms; the church at Sardis was egotistic.

The church in Laodicea was lukewarm in its love for Christ; and oh, what about the Corinth church—they couldn't get along with one another, allowed immorality and lawsuits among the believers, and made a mockery of the Lord's Supper.

The church in Jerusalem was biased and prejudiced, wanting only Jews to be allowed in. The point is, there are no perfect churches. Why? Because churches are made up of imperfect people.

There's a saying: "If you find a perfect church, don't join it because then it will no longer be perfect." It doesn't matter the brand of church, or whether it's large or small, none are perfect.

Yet, now get this, Jesus Christ died for the church. And the local, individual churches are so important that most of the New Testament is written to or about the local church.

So which NT church should we emulate? Fortunately in the book of Acts is a model we can follow. Acts tells about the birth and development of the church, and helps us define its life and ministry.

More important than finding the perfect church is correctly answering three questions that God asks every believer—questions about our salvation, our fellowship, and our witness.

1. Will you trust me?

This makes perfect sense. We have to believe He is who the Bible says He is; then trust Him for our salvation and our lives.

Acts opens with the ascension of Jesus into heaven. His small band of followers then return to Jerusalem. Acts 1:15(NIV) In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty).

A group of 120 believers formed the nucleus of the first church. There were other believers—Jesus appeared to more than 500 following His resurrection. But the immediate nucleus of the church was only 120—about 1/3 of Del Norte Baptist.

While Jesus was on this earth He preached to great multitudes of people. But they were pseudo followers. After His crucifixion and resurrection there were relatively few true followers.

Now turn the page. In 2:41 we learn that the numbers grew.

Acts 2:41(NIV) Those who accepted his (Peter's) message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. (see v.38)

Three thousand responded to Peter's message and were saved. That's 250% growth in one day! What would we do if 8000 people showed up today? Now look at 2:47.

Acts 2:47(NIV) praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

This is a vivid reminder that we don't save anyone—God does! The Lord added to their number daily, those who were being saved.

Look at Acts 4:4(NIV) But many who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about five thousand. God does the saving but we are His voice to share the message of good news. But we're not done...

Look at Acts 6:7(NIV) So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

The number of disciples were rapidly increasing, and a large number of priests accepted Jesus as their Savior.

Notice the common ingredient here. The first church was made up of people who understood that Jesus, the Son of God, died on the cross to provide salvation. They trusted and accepted Him as their Savior.

A church is not a social club; it is not a fraternal or economic group; It is not political organization, though we must certainly jump on the politicians for passing immoral laws and acts.

The church is believers who trust Jesus, and who choose to live the rest of their lives following Him. We have said, “Yes, we trust You. Yes we will follow You.”

2. Will you identify with My people?

Will you join with others who believe as you do? In the NT people trusted in Christ for salvation. Then they committed themselves to a group of people who had done the same thing.

Acts 2:42-47 (read) is the summary of the life and ministry of the first church. The most obvious thing you see is that those believers and followers were committed to each other.

They studied and learned together (v.42). They fellowshiped and broke bread together. They had pot-luck dinners. They spent time together.

They shared each other’s needs; encouraged each other to walk in the way of Christ; and made financial commitments to their church. These verses describe a way of life.

Yes, we live in a different time and culture than that in which the first church sprang up . . . but church life requires essentially the same thing it did for those early believers—identifying with a church and commitment to Christ through it as a way of life.

3. Will you serve me?

This question reminds us that after we have answered the first two with a “Yes,” that we now belong to God’s family of believers in Jesus Christ.

God wants all people to belong to His family. This is the dimension that sets the church apart—we are God’s family, not just another organization. We have the presence of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5, 8; 2:1-4, 14-17).

There are two ways we know the power of God is experienced in the life of the church:

(1) Miracles show the power of God

In Acts 3 God heals a crippled beggar through Peter. As you read through the pages of Acts you will discover other miracles.

These apostolic miracles form an unrepeatable era in the church age. But the presence of the Holy Spirit is still felt and seen in the church.

If you have been a Christian for any length of time, you have seen things physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual that can only be explained as a miracle.

Many of you could testify of miracles in your life and in your family—something you prayed about; someone healed after doctors gave up; an accident without a scratch; etc.

(2) Prayer shows the power of God.

A crowd gathered following the healing of the crippled man. Peter and John told them about Jesus—His death and resurrection. They were arrested for this

Of course, this gave them the opportunity to share about Jesus with the religious leaders and the ruling council. When they were released, they returned to the church and told them all that happened.

The church began praising God in united and fervent prayer (Acts 4:24ff). When the church prays miracles happen. Verse 31 records the result of that prayer meeting:

“After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.” When God’s people pray, the power of the Holy Spirit is unleashed.

Those are the three questions—will you trust Me, identify with My people, and will you serve Me? One final question...

4. Will you let others see Jesus in you?

I’ve known people who have said, “Yes, I’ll trust the Lord,” but refuse to serve Him. I’ve known others who say yes to Jesus as Lord, and yes to Jesus to serve, but they don’t identify with His people.

They claim to be Christians, but they want to live detached from the church and unaccountable.

Look at the eighth chapter of Acts. When persecution started up against the church in Jerusalem, the believers scattered all over the known world. And look what it says in v.4:

“Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.” From this point on the rest of the book of Acts is about how the church took seriously their mission of being God’s instrument of bringing the Gospel to the world.

Pastors and deacons, evangelists and missionaries, and everyday men and women, joined together to spread the Gospel. That's the primary function of a church.

Everywhere they went a church was started and believers gathered together to worship and serve Jesus Christ. That's the NT example.

So, how well are we fulfilling God's blueprint? Have you trusted Jesus—is He your Savior? Have you identified with a church? Are you serving Him? Have you made a commitment to Christ?

Are you committed to spreading the Gospel? How available are you to God to be used as His instrument?

Why not resolve to be faithful to Jesus through this church. Faithfulness is the foundation of discipleship, following Jesus. There is no substitution for steady and systematic participation in the life of your church.

Commit yourself to a more meaningful prayer life. Pray alone—I do most of my praying in my office, and quite a bit in my car. Some like to pray with someone—prayer partners.

There is power in prayer. God hears our prayers, and moves in His mighty ways in our lives.

Be a "doer." The Bible says, "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says" (James 1:22). Our church needs people who will be servants.

You may not be a teacher or on a committee, but you and I, and every other Christian in this church are Christ's servants. There is still much you can do in Christ's name. You can be Christ's hands, feet and voice in our community.

Application:

We exist for the glory of God and the salvation of the world. When we stop giving God the glory, and stop preaching the Gospel, we stop being a church of Jesus Christ. Have you said "Yes" to each of the three questions from God?