

# Christian Basics: Church Membership

Lesson 7

# Selecting A Church To Attend

- How do people today know what church to attend?
  - How would anyone know that they have found a church that would help them grow spiritually?
  - How would they know they had found a church that was doing God's work.
- The first church in Jerusalem ([Acts 2:40-47](#))
  - They were the only church in Jerusalem
  - In one day, the Jerusalem church grew from 120 members ([Acts 1:15](#)) to about 3,120 members ([Acts 2:41](#)).
  - What were the practices of this first century mother church?
- What to look for in a prospective church today....
  - The first thing you ought to look for is Bibles. Do the members bring their Bibles to church because they know the pastor is going to be preaching from his Bible.
  - Whether preaching to non-Christians or Christians, the truth of God's Word has to remain at the heart of the mission of the church.

# Programs Of The First Church

- Preaching
  - This passage on the church begins with the preaching of Peter at Pentecost ([Acts 2:40](#)),
    - Over 3,000 came forward to repent, profess their faith in Jesus, baptism and joining the Jerusalem church. Remember most were Jews from around the world.
  - Proclaiming the Gospel is at the heart of the mission of the church ([Mark 16:15](#))
  - Luke noted that the church continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine ([Acts 2:42a](#))
  - The apostles were those who had been with Christ – they learned their doctrine from the Lord and taught it to the first church in Jerusalem and in other churches subsequently planted.
    - The text was the Old Testament
    - The apostles demonstrated how Jesus was the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies.
    - The apostles added to the Old Testament that which Jesus himself had taught them.
  - Preaching and teaching God's truth has to be the core of any New Testament church.
    - A church without preaching and teaching of the Word of God at its core will have nothing eternal to offer its community or the world.

# Selecting A Church To Attend

- How do people know what church to attend?
- How would anyone know they have found the right church that will help them to grow spiritually?
- How would they know that church is doing God's work.
- The best indicator is illustrated by Jerusalem's first church [Acts 2:40-47](#).
  - This church was led by the Holy Spirit. Its Pastor (Apostles), lay leaders and members
  - Devoted to the study of God's word
  - Devoted to celebrating the Lord's Supper
  - Devoted to fellowshiping with each other

# Four Levels Of Church Involvement

- There were four primary levels of participation (involvement) in the early Church ([Acts 2](#))
  - Membership
  - The Memorial Feast
  - Meetings
  - Duties
- Church Membership
  - Luke makes a note of many people were 'added to them'. It is obvious that the first church were cognizant of the number of people involved and that they counted them all as part of the church
- The Lord's Supper
  - When we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we "proclaim the Lord's death till he comes" ([1 Corinthians 11:26](#)).
  - Communion keeps the meaning of the death of Christ fresh in the mind of the church.
  - We talk about the body and blood of Christ, what He suffered on the cross of Calvary to purchase forgiveness and redemption for us.
  - Every Christian is brought face-to-face with Christ's sacrifice at every celebration of Communion.
- Meetings Of The Church
  - The church met privately in homes and publicly in the temple in the middle of Jerusalem.
- Duties
  - Duties were assigned to assist in the care and management of the church so the leadership could focus on their primary ministries ([Acts 6:1-7](#))

# Prayer & Praise

- Prayer
  - The first church preached, professed, participated, and prayed ([Acts 2:42](#))
  - They gathered to pray about many different things, with many different forms of prayers. Notice that prayer is plural in Vs 42.
  - God Answers prayer. Many churches would be stronger and larger than they are today if their members and leaders would ask God to make it so.
  - Prayer is a conversation between two people who love each other, God and you.
- Praise
  - The church praised God ([Acts 2:47](#))
  - The early church praised God continually in the temple and in each others homes.
  - When it comes to worship and praise, first and foremost is the attitude of our hearts – our desire to focus our adoration on the Savior who has gifted us with eternal life and the forgiveness of sins.
  - It was likely that the first church’s “gladness and simplicity of heart” fueled their praise and that caused the Jerusalem community to look upon them with favor ([Acts 2:46-47](#))
  - Jerusalem had never seen anything like this – people praising a man who had been crucified a couple of months earlier and been raised from the dead and then disappeared into heaven.
  - The city was in awe of this church’s praise and their gladness of heart.

# The Practice Of The Church

- The practice of the church is how the congregation implemented the programs of the church that was just described in the last four slides
- They Opened Their Hearts To One Another
  - Acts 2:42 uses the term “fellowship” which means to hold things in common. It denotes a partnership or sharing of life.
  - Spiritually it refers to the spiritual oneness of the body of Christ united by the Holy Spirit.
  - This spiritual fellowship is expressed in the sharing of life together in practical ways.
    - Meeting together in homes, worshipping together, sharing meals together, etc. are practical ways we express our spiritual fellowship.
    - When the church meets in “homes” (small groups) fellowship is expressed at its best.
- They Opened Their Hands To One Another
  - The church met in the temple and individual “homes” so they were not practicing an ancient form of communism or socialism or living in a commune.
  - They maintained some of their private property (for example, their homes).
  - It wasn’t mandatory to sell one’s possessions and pool their resources and divide them among all, as anyone had need. Everything they did, they did willingly and voluntarily
  - Remember that many of the first wave of converts were from foreign countries.
  - The church expressed their oneness by pooling their resources to meet one another’s temporal needs.
- They Opened Their Homes To One Another
  - They opened their homes to one another ([Acts 2:46](#)).
  - This was the beginning of the small group ministry that is widely used by many churches to this day.
- The first church’s programs and practices caused the Jerusalem church to explode. Churches can still explode today.