

Signs of a Healthy Church

6 week series



First Worship
COLLEGE OF
MINISTRIES

NC
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COVENANT
CHURCH
BRYANSTON

Week 3

As a church community we are journeying together through Acts 2:42-47 unpacking what it looks like for us to be a healthy Church. Welcome to our third session. In our last session we looked at the practices of prayer, the fear of God and seeing the miraculous affirming the message of the Gospel. To start this session we are going to take some time as a group to reflect and discuss our week in light of the practices that we have been focussing on.

Pause for discussion:

1. This week, what has worked well as you have been intentional about practicing prayer, having the fear of God at the forefront of your mind and expecting the miraculous as an affirmation of sharing your faith? What has been a struggle. If you have a testimony of something that God has done this week, why not share it during this time and stir the faith of others?

This week we will be looking at the next three practices from Acts 2:42-47 which says,

Acts 2:42-47

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

This week we will be looking at the wonders and miraculous practiced by the early church, no compartmentalization in the community and the unity of the believers. Enjoy!



Believing for Miracles:

“... and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.”

Patience and sensitively flowing in the gifts creates faith for more. God is always willing and able to teach us that miracles are what He does best. When the results seem to suggest differently, we patiently believe His word to be true since our theology determines our behaviour.

At NCCB, we want to be a Church that has faith, creating a space that allows God to do the miraculous. The miraculous is not something that comes passively on our part. It is the work of God, yet He chooses to partner with us as his Church.

Mark 16:17

And these signs shall follow those who believe...

Miracles were never intended to just be seen at Church. The miraculous follow those who are going out in obedience to what the Lord Jesus

commanded in the Great Commission. The early Church understood this. Throughout the book of Acts, we see the early Church advancing in power. The miraculous was a huge part of what they saw as they took ground for the Kingdom of God. It is when we are obedient to God's commission that He partners with us in the miraculous.

This Church that we read of in the book of Acts had seen Jesus's ministry first hand. They had witnessed His miraculous signs of healing the sick, raising the dead and casting out demons. The Lord says to these followers:

John 14:12–15

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.”

WEEK 3

Session 7

Before His ascension, the Lord then says to the same followers,

Acts 1:8

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

The early Church is a community who saw directly the works of Jesus and then were filled with the Holy Spirit which enabled them to witness in power.

We are a community who see the works of Jesus in the scriptures and are filled with the Holy Spirit, who enables us to do the same. On top of this, we also have 2000 years of Church history

saturated with the miraculous. When we step out in faith and obedience and stop asking, “What if He doesn’t?” and start expecting that He will, He will show up.

“Religious history shows two phases, the dynamic and the static. The dynamic periods were those heroic times when God's people stirred themselves to do the Lord's bidding and went out fearlessly to carry His witness to the world. They exchanged the safe of inaction for the hazards of God-inspired progress. Invariably, the power of God followed such action.

“The miracle of God went when and where his people went. It stayed when His people stopped.”

(A. W. Tozer)

Pause for discussion:

1. What does it look like to expect and experience the miraculous in our workplaces, homes, and communities? How can we be agents of God’s miraculous power outside the church environment?
2. What are some practical ways we can create a space in our lives and church for God to work miracles? How does our theology determine our behavior towards expecting and facilitating miracles?
3. What steps can we take to move from a static phase to a dynamic one, where we actively engage in God's work and expect His miraculous power to follow?

WEEK 3

Session 8



SESSION 08

No Compartmentalisation:

“All the believers...”

No segmentation of believers here. This was all dynamic. The rich, the poor, the young, the old, the counter-culturalist, the conformer, the fashionable and the unfashionable. They were in this together. No thoughts of community irrelevance or “we will do it our way with our type.” This was an all-of-us culture.

The Lord Jesus taught against the temptations of treating people differently in the Church based on profile. He did this because, in reality, it is a

temptation that affects all of us as believers. How easy it would be if everyone else in the Church community were like us. It does not take being saved to relate easily to those we identify with.

Matthew 5:47

“If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?”

WEEK 3

Session 8

What sets us as the Church apart from the rest of the world is our love for one another. This love is unique because it overcomes potential barriers of race, culture, status, and interests. This unity comes from the fact that we are all “in Christ”. We are baptised into the body of believers, becoming a part of the body. Church is not a social club. What sets the Church apart from the rest of the world is that our relationship with one another is based solely on Christ.

Galatians 3:27-28

For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male or female, for you are all one in Christ.

Our inclusion of all without bias should be something that the world looks at with intrigue. If we get this right, it will be what we are “known for”, set apart from typical social spaces where non-believers attempt to satisfy their intrinsic desire for community. This disregard for social differences is something that was exemplified in Jesus. He continuously connected with the outcast, those on the fringes of society, often to the rejection of those who were deemed “important” by society. Hierarchy in the social ladder has no place in the Church. The believer recognises Jesus in every believer he meets and this is the basis for any Christian relationship.

Pause for discussion:

1. In the early church, all believers, regardless of their background or status, were united. How does this compare with our current church community?
2. Jesus taught against the temptation to treat people differently based on their social, economic, or cultural profile. Why do you think this temptation exists even within the church?
3. What sets us as the Church apart from the rest of the world is our love for one another." How does this love manifest in practical terms within a diverse church community?

WEEK 3

Session 9



SESSION 09

Unity:

“... were together...”

Without unity, nothing gets accomplished. When everyone has a clear understanding of their duties, coupled with an urgency to perform these duties – and this then becomes the one thing that only they can do- the dynamic of the team ensures that everyone achieves more. Making a difference can only happen when what we need to do gets done immediately. United hearts with singleness of purpose become part of the winning recipe.

There's a moment in human history recorded in Genesis 11 where humanity is unified in one goal, “To make a name for ourselves...” Here, we see the tower of Babel built in opposition to God. God then confuses humanity's languages, but before doing this, he comments that “They are one people, with one language...” Because

of their united goal and the lack of a language barrier, God says that “Nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them.” This was humanity in rebellion to God. How much more is this the case in a humanity united under God-given vision? The early Church exploded; they were united in their goals, and they moved forward with incredible efficiency. This is the example set before us today.

Psalm 133:1,3b

“Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity ...

...For there the Lord has commanded His blessing, life forevermore”

WEEK 3

Session 9

When we live in unity, we solicit the Lord's blessing within our community. This unity is not something that happens without intention within the community of the Church. Jesus taught us that we would be known by our love for one another.

How easily we can fall into the trap of disunity with those in our Church community not realising that,

Ephesians 6:12

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

There is a very real enemy to the Church and the Even though “the gates of hell will not prevail” against the Church, we disqualify ourselves as a community from the fullness of God's blessing when we do not walk with one another in love.

This unity is not something that the believer does in their strength, nor are they expected to. Ephesians 4 tells us to “bear with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit”. It is the work of the Holy Spirit within us that unites the body, and our submission to Him that determines how successful we are in this endeavour.

Pause for discussion:

1. Reflect on the story of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11. How does this example of unity used for self-glorification contrast with the unity displayed by the early Church in Acts?
2. Psalm 133 celebrates the goodness of living in unity. How does this vision of communal life compare to the modern-day church experience?
3. What are some concrete actions that members of a church community can take to foster unity?

WEEK 3

Conclusion

Conclusion:

As we reflect on scripture as our standard, it often highlights places in our church community in which we are potentially falling short. This is good. Conviction is a blessing and a grace from God.

We have reflected on some points today that highlight culture within our community. Again, this community is made up of you and I as individuals. As God works us through a journey

of sanctification with us as individuals, we as a Church will look more like the Church which God originally intended.

As we do every week, we want to challenge ourselves not only as a collective but as individuals. Let's focus on the following practices this week:

01

Miracles:

The miraculous follows those who are actively in pursuit of establishing God's kingdom. This week, let's be intentional about seeking the miraculous in and through our lives as we seek to build His kingdom. In our interactions with those we encounter, let's be bold and have faith for God to do what we see in the early Church.

02

No compartmentalization:

The early believers did not differ in how they treated people based on social norms. As an individual this descriptor may already apply to you. Maybe this is an area where we ought to repent in our lives. This week, let's be intentional about how we treat those we encounter.

03

Unity:

Wherever human beings come together, there will be conflict. We have reflected on the power of being unified as the Church under the vision of God and the blessing that God pours out when we get this right. This practice forms culture. This week, the challenge is to spend some time reflecting on how I as an individual can help form a culture of unity. Is there an issue that I potentially need to resolve with another in our community? "if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matt 5:23)