

Signs of a Healthy Church

6 week series



First Worship
COLLEGE OF
MINISTRIES

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BRYANSTON

Week 4

Welcome to session 4 of “Signs of a healthy Church” As a community, we are journeying together through Acts 2:42-47 as an example to us of what a healthy Church looks like. In our last session, we looked at the outworking of miracles, how the church should treat one another and what unity in the body of believers looks like. Before going into our next few lessons that we learn from this passage, we would love to take some time to discuss as a group what God has been doing in and through us this week.

Pause for discussion:

1. This week, what has worked well as you have been intentional about the practices we covered last week?
2. What has been a struggle?
3. 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.

The three practices for this week are generosity, day by day Christianity and the prioritising of the corporate gatherings.



Generosity:

**“...and had all things in common...
Selling their possessions and
belongings and distributing the
proceeds to all, as any had need.”**

An underlying theme of the New Testament is the attitude of generosity, a generous God giving us His only Son who, in turn, gave us His life. The

Holy Spirit generously empowered the Church with grace and love, and this text shows that this toddler Church generously cared for its members to the point that everyone was satisfied.

We live in a culture that highly prioritises accumulating material gain. Our society teaches that it is a good thing to pursue wealth, and this has found its way into the Church. An extreme version of this would be the prosperity gospel, but even in our church culture it is easy to get sucked into the pursuit of wealth. A nice house, good schooling for our children, a nice car, all of these things are good things but they can become a distraction from what really matters.

If we compare the average believer to the average non-believer, would we see any differences in their finances and possessions? If we look at the early Church as an example it appears that we should.

God's heart for those who lack is clear in both the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament, we see the mandate that God gives to His people over 10 times is to look after widows and orphans.

Jesus himself, when he was on earth, teaches regularly around the idea of wealth accumulation. That we are to store up our treasure in heaven not here on earth.

The Church in Acts carries on this legacy. The Greek word for common here is “Koinos”. You may recognise this word from our session on fellowship, where the word used is “Koinonia”. The Greek for “generosity” is “Koinonikos”, coming from the same root.

Generosity

ΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΚΌΣ (*koinōnikos*)

WEEK 4

Session 10

The understanding of fellowship in the early Church is more than just a friendship with those in the community. The words for fellowship, common and generosity are all intertwined, and we see the outworking of this in the description of the Church.

In a culture where everyone is striving for gain, the Church understands that this is not their home. We are guests here on earth, and while we are here, material gain is a distraction if it is not seen as a tool for the kingdom. The Church community is to be marked with generosity, trusting the Holy Spirit as he guides us into how to properly steward the finances and possessions that He has entrusted to us.

The generosity of the Church is not confined to material possessions. The early Church was also radically generous with their time and their

abilities or gifts. We see in how regularly they gathered together that they were devoted to giving of their time. I recently had a conversation with a Church leader who spoke of having multiple prayer meetings per week, as he had been doing research into revivals through history, and they were all built on a foundation of prayer. My response without thinking was, “That would never work in our context.” Time in our culture is spoken of with economic terms. We spend time, we save time, we waste time. He challenged this response by asking me which culture we should yield more to, Kingdom or Johannesburg.

It is counter-cultural to live as the early Church did. It takes a degree of intentionality to not fall into the same groove as society. Again, Jesus teaches us that where our treasure is, there our hearts are also.

Pause for discussion:

1. In our context, what does it look like to live in generosity that exemplifies the heart of God?
2. Does our Church community resemble that which we see in scripture? If not, what would need to change in order to do so?

WEEK 4

Session 11



SESSION 11

Christianity 24/7, 365:

“...and day by day...”

Nothing erratic here. Everyday and continued are wonderful words describing consistency and courage. No attitudes of indifference wrapped up in excuses of self-indulgence. This was a divine visitation that required sober, unrelenting, steadfast, individual commitment.

The early Church was what many of us would call “radical” in their devotion to their faith. Many of us downplay the potential for us to be the same. It’s easy to disregard the seriousness of the faith of the early Church with phrases like, “It’s just not practical in our day”, or “that worked in their context but would never work in ours”.

Jesus had some interactions with individuals who wanted to follow Him, often genuinely, yet they struggled to properly prioritize Him in the hierarchy of devotion in their lives. The rich man who followed the law but was unwilling to part with riches, the young man who wanted to bury his father, another who wanted to say goodbye to his family first, and many that we see today genuinely want to follow Jesus. Jesus’s teaching is that His grace is costly. Costly because it requires our all, and grace because it redeems us and secures our eternity with Him. The exchange is unequal. He gives us all and requires nothing but our complete devotion to Him.

WEEK 4

Session 11

Complete devotion to Jesus is not an extreme version of Christianity. It should be the status quo of believers if we take the words of Jesus and the example of the early Church seriously. Christianity was never meant to be another part of our lives. It should be the center of everything we think, say and do. Jesus didn't redeem us to compete for our devotion.

When we discussed prayer, we spoke of the idea of us wanting the fruit we see in the lives of the greats throughout Church history, yet we do not want to embrace the lifestyle in which they bore the fruit. Those who have changed Church history allow Jesus to be all-encompassing. We will never see the same in our lives as long as Jesus is just another compartment of our lives.

The Acts 2 Church gave the Lord their time, money, belongings, families, homes and anything

else the Lord required for the body of believers and to further the Kingdom. This is not an extreme example, it is a prescription of how we could be if we properly order our lives under the Lordship of Jesus.

Luke 9:23

"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?"

Pause for discussion:

1. How does this concept of costly grace compare to common understandings of grace in contemporary Christian culture? What does it look like to practice this level of devotion in everyday life?
2. What challenges might we face in making our faith central to all aspects of our life?



Priority of corporate meetings:

“...to meet together in the temple courts...”

One will chase a thousand, two will chase ten thousand... When the people of God gather, something spiritually exponential takes place. The mathematics of heaven do not mirror the logic of earth. When believers unite in worship, prayer, and devotion, their individual flames converge into a bonfire of witness, power, and purpose. In the gathering, our faith is strengthened, our burdens are shared, and our vision realigned.

The early Church understood this deeply. They met together:

Acts 2:46a

“...day by day in the temple courts...”

They were not satisfied with an occasional attendance or a compartmentalised faith. Their gatherings were frequent, fervent, and full of purpose. To them, meeting together was not an optional supplement to Christian life—it was the atmosphere in which Christian life flourished.

From the beginning, Scripture has portrayed the people of God as:

- a Body
(1 Corinthians 12:27)
- a Family
(Ephesians 2:19)
- a Temple
(Ephesians 2:21)
- and a Bride
(Revelation 21:2)

WEEK 4

Session 12

None of these metaphors suggest isolation. All speak to interdependence, covenant, and community. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote in *Life Together*,

“Christian community means community through and in Jesus Christ.”

There is no solitary Christianity. We were saved not just from something, but into something—a people, a Church.

The priority of gathering together was more than tradition—it was obedience to Jesus' design for His Church. Hebrews 10:24–25 exhorts us,

The warning here is sobering. To neglect the gathering is to risk spiritual drift. The Church assembled is the context in which we are exhorted, encouraged, corrected, and commissioned.

For the early believers, temple worship was not simply a religious obligation. It was a declaration. They gathered not only in homes, but in public,

visible spaces. Their collective presence in the temple courts signified bold allegiance to Christ amidst a hostile culture. In gathering, they made their faith visible. In worshipping, they made Jesus known.

The rhythm of their gatherings also testified to their reordered priorities. Meeting together daily reflected that Jesus had become their first love and His people their new family. As A.W. Tozer noted,

“The Christian is strong or weak depending upon how closely he has cultivated the knowledge of God.”

That cultivation happens not only in solitude but in community. The early Church knew that devotion to Christ required devotion to His body.

In our modern context—particularly in cities like Johannesburg—such daily physical gatherings may seem impractical. Work schedules, traffic, digital overload, and fragmented communities all pose legitimate challenges. But these realities should not lead us to passivity. Rather, they invite us into intentionality. If we cannot gather daily, we must still gather meaningfully. The call is not to legalism but to love. We must ask:

Is Church something we attend, or something we are?

Hebrews 10:24-25a

“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another...”

WEEK 4

Session 12

The prevailing culture urges us toward individualism. Church becomes just another commitment, weighed among many others, often relegated to the periphery. But the Church that changes the world is the one that is committed to showing up—not just on Sundays, but in prayer groups, small gatherings, shared meals, acts of service, and persistent love. We gather because Jesus did not redeem individuals into isolated faith, but into a people—a collective that would reflect His glory.

C.S. Lewis, in *The Weight of Glory*, reminds us that

“Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself, your neighbour is the holiest object presented to your senses.”

We gather not just for ourselves, but for others. In the Church gathered, we see Christ reflected through His people. We are sanctified in the friction of community and strengthened in the joy of it.

The challenge for the Church today is not to mimic the early Church's exact structure, but to embody their same spirit. If we are truly members of one body, we will long to be together. If Jesus is central to our lives, then His body will be central as well. The gatherings of the Church—large and small—must become priority, not peripheral.

To live as the Church is to commit to the gathering, not merely as an act of attendance, but as a rhythm of transformation.

Pause for discussion:

1. How does the early Church's devotion to gathering challenge our cultural norms around individualism and busyness?
2. What practical steps can we take to elevate the priority of gathering with other believers in our lives?
3. In what ways can we experience “temple court” moments — public, communal faith — in our own communities?

WEEK 4

Conclusion

Conclusion:

We hope that you enjoyed this week's session and that it sparked some interesting discussions in your connect group. It's such a privilege for us to study together in community!

Again, we know that the Church is a community made up of individuals. You and I are the Church, and in us moving toward the health of our Church it takes individual practice.

As we go into this week, we would love to invite you to partake in the following individual practices based on today's sessions:

01

Generosity:

The early Church was radically generous. We live in a culture which strives for material gain. This worldview opposes Kingdom principles. Coming into this week, ask the Holy Spirit to lead you into generosity. Ask Him to present you with opportunities to give to others. This doesn't only apply to our money. How can you be generous with your time or your gifts?

02

Day by day Christianity:

The Church in Acts didn't only meet on Sundays. Their faith was something that overarched their entire lives. This can be a challenge in busy Johannesburg. Take time this week to evaluate how much of your daily life is surrendered to God.

03

Priority of corporate gatherings:

Gathering together in a number of ways is clearly God's intention for his Church. This doesn't always have to be formalized by the Church. We have our monthly prayer, Sunday meetings and connect groups each week. As an individual, how can you follow the example set before us in Acts 2 and prioritise fellowship within our community?