

## Important Lessons from Acts – Church Life – Acts 2:36-47

Last week we began a series of messages looking at **Important Lessons from Acts**. Today, I want you to consider this question as we make our way through the message: *How does my relationship with Jesus impact the identity of MFBC?* To help answer this question, we need to return to the second chapter of Acts and look at the results of Peter's heartfelt message on salvation. If you study the Scriptures as I hope you have, and attempt to find out what kind of person Peter was, you will discover that he often acted out of impulse, he was known for his boldness, and once he became one of Jesus' closest followers, he is known for his loyalty and faithfulness. Peter's life is a fitting example of how a person can be tugged back and forth between following Jesus and living in this world. His personality displays for us a mixture of vulnerability as well as courage and strength. God used this man at Pentecost, as we saw last week, to preach a five-to-ten-minute sermon that delivered the truths of the Gospel to a group of unbelieving Jews. How cool is it that God would bring a person full circle, who had just a few days prior denied knowing Jesus, and have him preach boldly about the hard and straight truths experienced by a man who now proclaims Jesus as his Savior and Lord? Peter's turn around is evidence for how true repentance brings about authentic forgiveness, and that forgiveness assures us that God has pardoned us of all sin.

Now, let's look at the ending words from Peter's sermon that day. **Read Acts 2:36-41.** Peter's words about Jesus in that moment did their work in the hearts of the Jews - Not because of who Peter was, but because of who Jesus is and because God's Spirit was present with Him. In verse 36, Peter powerfully and boldly informed the crowd about the real Jesus. He summarized his entire message with this powerful statement of certainty. **Read Acts 2:36 again.** He wanted them to know with all certainty Jesus was God in the flesh, and He was indeed the Messiah they had all been waiting for. I love their response. They were shocked to hear Peter accuse them of killing their long-awaited Messiah. The word "cut" here is more like a "stab." Peter's truth bomb stabbed directly into their hearts. So much so, that they didn't know what to do. It was at this point; Peter added the application to his message. He instructed them to do several things. First was "repent," which was a call to acknowledge their individual sins and for each of them to turn away for those sins and embrace the saving work of Jesus Christ in their life. Next, he invited them to be baptized. Why? Because he wanted them to publicly demonstrate their new trust in Jesus. Baptism doesn't save, but it does show the world around us that we are committed to following Jesus and that we wholeheartedly believe in the cross, the tomb, and the resurrection. This is what Peter meant by, *"in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins."* Peter closes by informing them about another of God's promises - the receipt of the Holy Spirit. So, Peter's message summed up was this: Repent, receive your salvation, be baptized, and then "join the local church." Peter didn't say that about joining the church, but when the people did what Peter asked, we know some 3000 people became members of God's family on the spot. Talk about church growth.

This brings us to the real meat of today's message. Most people attend church for one of two main reasons. Either you are lost, destined for an eternity separated from God, but you're curious about Jesus and what He has to offer, so you're here to find out. Or you're already saved, you've given your life to Jesus and you're here trying to figure out how to better follow Him. I understand there could be other reasons, but these are the two main reasons why someone goes to church. What is recorded for us next will help us answer the question I posed for you at the beginning. **Read Acts 2:42-47.** In my Bible, these six verses are marked as: The Fellowship of the Believers. These verses inform us about what happened next for this group of early church members. The first thing we should notice is that these early believers were together more than once or twice each week. Look at the verses that tell us this. Verse 42, 44, and 46. How were they together? Fellowship, breaking bread, prayers, and attending temple. Devotion was the key to their time together. Yes, they were devoted to each other, and to the things we have already mentioned. They were also devoted to hearing the Scriptures being taught. They were devoted to the new lifestyle that came with following Jesus. And of course, they were devoted to Jesus, which is why they did the things we have just read about. Devotion is the key. Being committed and involved is the key.

Look. The early church, as we often reference, was not perfect, but they did understand the need for community among people with a common interest. Luke says, they "*had all things in common.*" What Luke is teaching us is that individualism cannot be part of the church. That's a worldly mindset and not one that builds a healthy church family. This group (all of them), characterized by their loyalty to Jesus and each other desired to be together (fellowship), learn the Scriptures (the Bible), worship and pray together (day by day in the Temple), shared resources (to meet real needs), and dined together (daily meals in their homes and participation in the Lord's Supper). Don't view these things as a checklist. Instead view these things as an all-inclusive lifestyle with Jesus as the Shepherd led by the Holy Spirit. Gathering for worship, hearing the Word preached, taking of the Lord's Supper, and corporate prayer are not individual tasks but are things that can only happen when God's people are together. And it requires us to be devoted to it.

To close, the final piece is that all these devoted church members did these things to share the Gospel of Jesus with anyone who wanted to hear. Just look at what God did through these folks. Remember, God did these things because of their commitment and faithfulness. Therefore, He blessed them. **Read Acts 2:47.** Salvation comes only from the Lord, and it is His sovereign work conducted in the lives of lost people. We just get to be a part of that. Knowing this should be all that's needed to motivate us to do the same things these early believers were willing to do. Have you ever heard this statement? *I wish we could get back to doing church the way the early church did it.* Boy, we would never need to ask for money or volunteers ever again if this were the case. This church in Jerusalem had "*glad and generous hearts*" because their single focus was on Jesus. It was this focus coupled with the receiving of the Holy Spirit that allowed them to live life in the manner they did and have such a tremendous impact on the world.