

Qualities of a Healthy Church and God's Children 2

Acts 6.7 ⁷ And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

❖ Intro

- **I am starting our look into these Qualities**
 - From Acts 6:7 because these qualities have contributed to the truth of verse 7
 - That God's word was increasing, and disciples were multiplying...
 - We will pick back up in 6:8 next week, Lord Willing
- **Each of these 5 Qualities is so important.**
 - They are not an exhaustive list of Qualities for a Child of God
 - But they are some of the main ones that others flow from
- **We should all pray for God to help us Grow in these qualities.**
 - They are staring us right in our face very clearly
 - We do not even have to spend time asking God what we need to do
 - He is telling us through His Word very clearly
- **We just need to ask for His help...**
 - In applying these very practical qualities in our Life
 - Praying for them for our Church
 - And Practicing them with others in our church
 - Help others grow in these qualities
 - And the only way to do that, is to pattern them with other believers
 - And pray with other believers that they grow in them
- **Let us be believers:**
 - That look out for the growth of other believers
 - Lets walk along side each other and help each other
 - Walk in the ways of God

❖ Outline:

- 1) Evidence of the Holy Spirit 2) Sharing the Gospel 3) Generous With Their Possessions
4) Praying Frequently 5) Devoted to the Word of God

❖ Recap

- 1) Evidences of the Holy Spirit 2) Sharing the Gospel

❖ 3) Generous With Their Possessions

- **The Texts we get this from are:**
 - Acts 2:44-46 ⁴⁴ And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵ And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶ And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts,
 - Acts 4:32,34 ³² Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common... ³⁴ There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold ³⁵ and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.
- **There are other places we see the generosity of believers in Acts and throughout the epistles**
 - As the church grew and people gave to the growth of the kingdom of God

- We see clearly that the early church was built on Generosity.
- We know the people gave generously for the relief of the saints and the forwarding of the gospel
- **We spent a lot of time here a few months back.**
 - So I am not going to spend a lot of time here today.
 - I will hit a few of the main things we saw though
- **Lets Look at the Details of their Generosity again from ch 4:**
 - 1) Not a needy person among them
 - 2) Owners of lands and houses sold them
 - 3) They brought the proceeds to the leaders of the church
 - 4) And it was given out as any had need...
- **So... I think we see two main things here...**
 - **1) The People were very generous**
 - As we saw in the previous verses...
 - ◆ , and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common.
 - **2) The Church wisely gave to those who were in need**
 - When a need arose, they were able to meet it...
 - I am sure they were taken advantage of...
 - But they were able to meet the needs of the needy
- **I Made A Blanket Statement to Us All**
 - If you have not prayerfully asked God to lead you in what to Give: You are in Sin
 - If you have not looked Biblically at what God asks of You in conjunction with your prayers
 - You are in Sin
 - If you have not given what God has led you to give in your heart: You are in Sin...
- **God allows us to give as we want.**
 - God let's us be as generous as we want to be...
 - 2 Cor 9:6-7 ⁶The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.
- **Notice:**
 - In the same way that their Salvation led them to think more of others...
 - It led them to think less of their possessions...
 - When the person became a believer:
 - His strong ties to his worldly goods were cut...
 - He thought less of this world, and more of the world to come...
- **Giving Was Great in the Early Church:**
 - Consider this... Our starting point when it comes to giving is the Tithe...
 - The Early Church gave the tithe, and then gave more on top of that
- **Why were they so Generous?**
 - **Because God had been generous with them.**
 - And that statement is not enough to answer the question....
 - God has been generous with us today, but do we give as we should?
 - **They knew the depths of God's generosity with them.**
 - **They saw themselves as the servant with the debt He was unable to pay**
 - ◆ And they saw God remove all their debt...
 - ◆ And when God did this, He severed their ties to the world around them
 - ◆ And they lived not for themselves, but unto God
- **Worldview: Every Decision was made with a Biblical Worldview... Or a Godly Worldview.**

- They made their family and personal decisions from God’s standpoint
 - Not what was good for their career, or their moving up in the world
- They saw their money and possessions as a Gift from their Father in heaven
- **So it was easy for them to first and foremost set aside their gift to God**
 - Then they lived on the rest...
- **We do things in the opposite way often**
 - We look at **our bills...** our home, our vehicle, our satellite or cable, our electricity, our Netflix, or Spotify, maybe our furniture payments, the internet, our credit cards...
 - **And if there is any left... then we give something to the Lord...**
 - Maybe a \$20 dollar bill here or a \$10 there...
- **I have known and still know of women with almost no income**
 - That give more than people with jobs paying them 30k to 80k dollars a year.
 - And they do this because they see this world as passing
 - And their attention is placed on God
- **So, One of the Reoccurring Qualities of the Early church**
 - Is that they were generous

❖ 4) Praying Frequently

- **It is not my intention this morning to teach you**
 - Everything there is to know about prayer
 - That would take more time than we have...
 - **I simply want to show you how the early church modeled this quality**
 - And from that I pray that it encourages you to become more prayer focused
 - Hopefully it will lead you to study up on prayer.... And practice prayer
 - There are numerous examples of prayer scattered throughout the Bible.
 - Great prayers of faith that God answered
- **32 Times in Acts we see Prayer mentioned in some way**
 - The Early church knew the importance of prayer
 - **The were Devoted to Prayer**
 - Devoted: It means they persisted in it... they persevered in prayer...
 - **Like many of us are devoted to our favorite television shows**
 - ◆ Every week for 30 min or a whole hour
 - ◆ We watch a TV show
 - **Like many of us being devoted to eating**
 - ◆ We stop and eat 3-6 times a day usually
 - Sometimes good, sometimes bad...
 - **Devotion....**
 - ◆ The early church was devoted to prayer
- **What happened after the church prayed?**
 - 1. Pentecost (1:14) **“devoting themselves to prayer”**
 - 2. Earthquake and Evangelism (4:31;) **“the place shook, they were filled with the spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness”**
 - (16:25) Paul and Silas out of prison by an earthquake and share gospel with jailer’s family”
 - 3. Resuscitation (9:40) **“Peter prayed for Tabitha and she came back to life”**
 - 4. Miraculous Release (12:5) **Peter’s release from prison**
 - 5. Healing (28:8) **Paul’s prayed and healed the chief of the island of Malta**
- **II. What did the church pray for?**

- 1. Its leaders (1:24; 6:6; 14:23*) **Matthias, servants to handle widows provision, appointing elders**
- 2. The manifestation of the Holy Spirit (8:15) **Peter and John prayed for Samaritans to receive Spirit**
- 3. Sinners to Repent (8:24; 26:29) **Simon the magician and King Agrippa**
- 4. Missions (13:3*) **Paul and Barnabas sent out**
- 5. Physical safety (27:29) **while sailing**
- 6. Healing (9:40; 28:8) **Tabitha, Chief of Malta**

➤ **When did the church pray?**

- 1. In times of Crisis (7:59; 12:5, 12; 16:25) **Stephen as he is stoned, Peter in prison, Paul in Jail**
- 2. When making decisions or establishing leaders (1:24; 6:6; 14:23) **Matthias, Servants, Elders**
- 3. When repenting (8:22; 9:11*) **For Simon the magician, Saul was Praying after being blinded**
- 4. When saying "Goodbye" (20:36; 21:5) **Paul leaving the Ephesians, leaving Tyre on way to Jerusalem**

➤ **IV. The church prayed habitually: (This one is Great... Great to us to learn from)**

- 1. The whole church (2:42) **devoted themselves to prayer**
- 2. The Apostles (1:14; 6:4) & Leadership (13:3*) **The apostles were devoted and whole church in Antioch**
- 3. Peter (3:1; 10:9; 11:5) **Going to the temple at the 9th hour, on the house at 6th hour, praying in joppa**
- 4. Paul (22:17) **praying in the temple**
- 5. Cornelius (10:2, 4, 30-31) **prayed continually to God**
- 6. Jewish Women (16:13, 16) **The women had a place of prayer**
- 7. Actual prayers (1:24-25; 4:24-31) **We see their prayers for God's will, and for spread of the gospel**

➤ **What can we pray for?**

- Anything...
- **Just pray in the will of God...**
 - He wants to hear your prayers, even the ones you think of as silly
 - He is your Father in Heaven

➤ **What do we learn:**

- If We want to be a healthy Christian...
 - We must pray frequently...
 - We must Be devoted to Prayer

➤ **So how do we know the how, what, when, where and why about Praying...**

- Well it is obvious.... We look to the Word of God (as we have done)

❖ **5) Devoted to the Word of God**

- **Much to say here, can not come close to saying it all**

➤ **Devotion to the Word is the foundation the other qualities rest upon**

- Where the Evidence of the Spirit is vital to the work of the church
- And people do not even believe unless the Spirit works in them
- It is the Word that the Holy Spirit uses as it convicts, comforts and leads people.
- Without the Word of God, We would have none of the other qualities

➤ **Let Me Begin With Some Passages from the Book of Psalms: The Disciples were familiar with**

- **Psalm 1.1 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; ²but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. ³He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. ⁴The wicked are not so, but**

are like chaff that the wind drives away. ⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; ⁶ for the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

- Psalm 119:1-5 Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord!
² Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart, ³ who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways! ⁴ You have commanded your precepts to be kept diligently. ⁵ Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes!

➤ **We see in the book Acts a devotion to the Study of the Word of God:**

- Acts 2:42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching
- Acts 4:31 they spoke the Word of God with boldness
- Acts 6:4 But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.
- Acts 6:7 And the word of God continued to increase,
- Acts 8:14 the Samaritans received the Word of God
- Acts 11:1 The gentiles received the Word of God
- Acts 12:24 the Word of God increased and multiplied
- Acts 18:11 And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

➤ **We see clearly:**

- The Word of God was studied earnestly
- So it could be taught to others
- And proclaimed with boldness...

➤ **The #1 Reason they early church was so successful doing God's Will**

- Is because they knew God's will through His Word
- The disciples spent personal time for three years with the WORD OF GOD in Jesus
- Then they continued their devotion to His Word after Jesus left

➤ **They Saw God's Word as Reliable**

- **They would say things like...**
 - What God promised through the mouth of the prophets... He has done
 - All the prophets spoke of this... and it happened
- **They saw the Word of God as Supernatural**
 - They saw that only God could say something would happen 100's and thousands of years early
 - And then see it come to pass exactly as He said it would

➤ **Should We Read God's Word, or Meditate on it?**

- I believe the Word of God was meant to be thought upon more than just read.
 - There is a great place for reading through the Bible every year
 - ◆ I promote that
 - And we should be consistently doing this
- But, just reading through the Bible trying to get it done, is not what God has called us to.
 - He has not called us to simply read His Word.
- He has told us to meditate on it.

➤ **Illustration: Meditate on the Word of God**

- When I drink Protein drinks... Or special vitamin drinks... Or V-8 (starting to like it now)
 - I guzzle it down.
 - I just drink it as fast as I can
 - Cause I do not want to taste it
- Give me a Cadbury bunny egg... and I am chewing slowly, savoring each bite
 - Or a nice steak, if I can slow myself down
 - I want to chew on things I like
 - I want to taste them in my mouth

- I want to enjoy how yummy they are
- God's Word is not meant to be swallowed whole.
 - It is meant to be chewed upon
 - Savored and enjoyed

➤ **Meditation:**

- Psalm 63:5-6 My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food, and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips, ⁶ when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night;
 - Look at the connection to eating...
 - Jesus told Satan quoting from Deut 8
 - ◆ Matt 4:4 Man can not live on bread alone, but by every word that comes out of the mouth of God
- Josh 1:8 God personally told Joshua that He should meditate on His Word day and night
- In Psalm 1: we read that the blessed man meditates on God's Word day and night
- Psalm 77:12-13 I will ponder all your work, and meditate on your mighty deeds. ¹³ Your way, O God, is holy. What god is great like our God?
- 8 times in that great chapter of Psalm 119 it mentions meditating on God's Word

➤ **Savoring God more than the affections of this world**

- When we find God as more pleasurable than sin
- We can overcome our temptations...
- Our overcoming of sin does not happen with 12 step plans
 - And plenty of accountability
- **Overcoming Sin happens when we find God as more pleasurable and satisfying than sin.**
 - And this takes the experience of time and testing and God's grace
- **How do we come to find God more pleasurable than sin**
 - By meditating on His Word...
 - The Psalmist figured this out when He said in:
 - Psalm 84:10 For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

➤ **Practical Bible Reading: Looking for God when You Read**

- Take some time to look for God when you read.
- Every time you come across God's character or an attribute, or how He works
- Underline it... Highlight it with a special highlighter color
- Look for who God is so you will trust Him... So you can love Him
 - You can not love or trust someone you barely know

➤ **How do you grow in your faith in God**

- Get to know who God is:
- Romans 10 teaches us that Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God

➤ **Read of**

- His Love through Jesus in the Gospels
- Read of His judgments in Revelation
- Read of His plan to come in Isaiah
- Read of His grace through Paul's letters
- Learn of His faithfulness to His people in Judges
- Learn of His providence in Genesis

❖ **Invitation**

- To Unbelievers to trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior
 - Repenting of your sins and following Jesus