



Context

On Sunday, Pastor Kyle took us through some seminal moments in the Book of Acts where the church was established. We looked at this through the lens of trying to understand whether church membership was something that was practiced in the 1st century church.

Getting Started

- What questions or insights have you had going through this series, “The Church?”
- If someone asked you if church membership is important, how would you respond?
- Which metaphor for the church was most helpful for you to consider?

Digging Deeper:

The Early church was empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Peter, one of Jesus’ disciples – the one who had denied Jesus in the face of his crucifixion stood up and began to speak – he spoke with a boldness that had not been seen – he gave witness to the fact that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the Living God – but that the very people whom Jesus came to save, had killed him.

Acts 2:37-41

37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” 38 Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.” 40 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” 41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

- What does this passage say about the necessity of the Holy Spirit?
- How did this event spark the growth and spread of the church?

The early church counted those who believed; they knew their members.

- Why is it significant that the early church intentionally counted its members?
- How did this moment set the foundation for the rest of the events in Acts?

The early church baptized its members...everytime.

- What does it mean to believe inwardly?
- What is the outward expression of belief mentioned in the verse?
- Look at v.41 - What might this verse imply about the importance of baptism in the early church?
- How does this passage challenge the idea of faith as just a personal belief rather than a communal commitment?

Acts 2:42-47

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

- How would you define "the church" based on this passage?
- What is most compelling to you about this community of people?

The early church cared about those on the outside of the church.

Acts 5:15-16

15 As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. 16 Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by impure spirits, and all of them were healed.

- How does this event dispel any belief that the early church was only about gathering together?
- How else did the early church demonstrate care for those outside of their community?
- What does the passage suggest about the church's responsibility to those who are not yet believers?
- Why do you think serving others was such a central focus of the early church?

- How does meeting physical needs of others contribute to spiritual growth and evangelism?
- In what ways do you see this happening at Revive Church?
- How are you doing this where you live, work, study, and/or play?

The early church scattered throughout the world to plant other churches.

Acts 11:19-24

19 Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews. **20** Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. **21** The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. **22** News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. **23** When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. **24** He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

- What happened to the early church that caused them to scatter?
- What was Jesus' royal charter, and how was it being fulfilled through this scattering?

The early church had elders who were charged with the care of the flock.

Acts 20:28-31

28 Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. **29** I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. **30** Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. **31** So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.

- What responsibilities did elders have in the early church?
- Why does Paul emphasize being on guard and watching over the flock?
- Why is it important for churches to have structure and leadership?

Why should you consider membership in the church?

- 1. Church membership demonstrates the Gospel.**
- 2. Church membership invites each member to orient their lives around other members.**
- 3. Church membership allows pastors/elders to shepherd the flock.**
- 4. Church membership is less about joining a church and more about submitting to authority.**

- Which of these statements is the easiest to grasp? Which is the most challenging?
- What does it mean to be saved *into* something, not just *from* something?
- What does it look like to live out the "one another" commands in a church community?

- How does church membership encourage deep investment in the lives of others beyond just attending services?
- Why is submission to church authority important for personal and communal spiritual growth?

Mark Dever, in his book [Nine Marks of a Healthy Church](#), writes,

“Church membership is our opportunity to grasp hold of each other in responsibility and love. By identifying ourselves with a particular church, we let the pastors and other members of that local church know that we intend to be committed in attendance, giving, prayer, and service. We allow fellow believers to have great expectations of us in these areas, and we make it known that we are the responsibility of this local church. We assure the church of our commitment to Christ in serving with them, and we call for their commitment to serve and encourage as well.”