



# Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church

## Building a Healthy Church

### Birth of the Church

**Acts 2:22-47**

**01/06/2019**

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## Main Point

The Church is God's plan for evangelizing and discipling the world.

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## Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Would you describe yourself as a planner? To what detail do you plan?**

**What happens if things do not go according to your plan? How do you feel? How do you react?**

Those of us who are planners love our plans and itineraries, but they can fall apart. God's plans are all-encompassing and He orchestrates the world to His plan. When we fail to understand God's plan we can miss the most important things. In the resurrection story we see that the disciples did not understand God's plan until the resurrection showed them all that Christ had

come to do. Peter and the rest of the disciples were forever changed by Christ and went forth proclaiming who He was.

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## Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 2:22-36.**

**What were the conflicting opinions about Jesus that Peter would have been confronting with this testimony? What are the conflicting opinions about Jesus now?**

**Peter quoted from Psalm 16:8-11 (in vv. 25-28) and Psalm 110:1 (in vv. 34-35). Why do you think he picked these two passages as support for his message?**

**What are the implications of the resurrection and ascension for Jesus (vv. 24,30-31,33-36)? For the people?**

**What would life be like for us today if Jesus hadn't risen from the grave? If He weren't seated at the right hand of God?**

Peter proved his point by quoting from the Scriptures that were so meaningful to the Jewish people as God's way of revealing truth and defeating the doubts. Peter knew the people could not dispute the point he made from Psalm 16:8-11, which clearly teaches that the Messiah's body would not decay (Acts 2:25-28). He pointed out that because David's body had been buried and had not come back to life, the psalm had to be speaking about someone other than David (vv. 29-31). Peter asserted that Jesus' death and resurrection proved Him to be David's heir of whom the Scripture spoke. Not only had Jesus been raised from the dead, but also He had been exalted to the right hand of God. As further proof of this, Peter quoted David's statement that the Messiah would sit at God's right hand (Ps. 110:1).

## **What did these truths about Jesus and His fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy have to do with the events of the Day of Pentecost?**

Based on these points, Peter's conclusion was clear: Jesus, the very same One who had been crucified, is both Lord and Messiah! God had designated David's "Lord" to sit at His right hand. That "Lord," Peter indicated, is Jesus. He taught that the proof of this was found in the fact that the Lord Jesus in heaven had poured out the Holy Spirit who in turn empowered His disciples to speak in different languages. As Peter's sermon demonstrates, the message of the gospel rests on historical facts coupled with prophetic foundations intended to lead believers to a repentant faith.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 2:37-43.**

## **To whom does the promise of God apply? Why?**

**Why do you think so many turned to Jesus that day? What makes the difference as to whether people at this crossroads accept or reject Jesus?**

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 2:44-47.**

**According to these verses, what are the marks of a healthy church? What attitudes accompanied these actions?**

**What did the people demonstrate by selling their possessions and by their unified commitment to the church?**

**How do our church's commitments align with the mission of the Acts 2 church?**

**How are these connections strengthened by living in community? What might happen if we tried to live out these values on our own?**

All four things that are listed in 2:44-47 happened as part of the church community: they were devoted to learning God's Word, fellowship, breaking of bread, and to prayers. First-century believers were motivated by the gospel to learn and grow together as disciples and to do their part to spread the good news. The early church also made sure that every member's physical needs were being met. They saw each other as a close family, bonded together by a saving relationship with Christ.

**What impact do you think the early church's community had on its rapid growth (v. 47)? What does the world learn about God through healthy Christian community?**

The unity of the church was a testimony to God's presence, and "every day the Lord added to them those who were being saved" (v. 47). The early church was a growing church. They first had a reverent fear for God that guided them in their daily living (see v. 43). Next, they made loving other believers as themselves a priority for their fellowship, even to the point of selling private property in order to provide for members in need (vv. 44-45). They followed Jesus' great commandment to a "t." And God honored them for that by blessing them with new members every day.

**For first-century Christians, what was the draw for becoming part of a local body of believers? Is it the same draw today?**

**What are some of the unique challenges we face as we practice biblical community?**

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## **Application**

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**How does the gospel message go beyond a beginning repentance and faith? What does it look like to live a repentant and faithful life every day?**

**Would people outside of our church say we model the characteristics of the Acts 2 church? Where do we excel, and where might there be room for improvement? What can our group do to help?**

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## Pray

Thank God for the plan to send Christ to earth as a human to die for us and be raised. Ask that we would be constantly reminded of the truth of the gospel. Pray that God would give us a spirit of evangelism like Peter and the apostles in Acts. Ask God to build up the faith of each person so that he or she may love God with all his or her being and that each might truly demonstrate love for one another. Thank God for the opportunity He gives us to be a part of His church.

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## Commentary

### ACTS 2:22-47

2:22. During Jesus' time on earth, His ministry was guaranteed by threefold evidence—miracles, wonders, and signs—precisely the marks of an apostle, which Paul identified in 2 Corinthians 12:12. Interestingly, first-century Jews didn't deny Jesus' miracles; that seems to be a theological characteristic of more modern times. Jesus' mighty acts pointed to divine power behind His life and ministry, thereby certifying that He was the Messiah.

2:23. Frequently, the New Testament links predestination and free will, the two elements of a divine paradox. God handed over Jesus for crucifixion, but wicked men put Him to death. So

often people ask, "Does God choose us for salvation, or do we choose to believe the gospel?" Human reason searches for philosophical solutions, but the only biblical answer is a simple yes. Somehow in God's eternal plan, these two seemingly parallel roads come together.

2:24-28. Peter's sermon progresses well; in typical New Testament form, he comes right to the point: resurrection. Verses 25-35 in this chapter contain four evidences of the resurrection: David's tomb, the witnesses, that very Day of Pentecost, and the ascension witnessed by the eleven disciples. God may have handed Jesus over for crucifixion, but He also raised Him from the dead. As strange as it might seem to the human mind, the Messiah's death was God's will. Thus Peter turns to Psalm 16:8-11. Surely readers of the Old Testament up to this point had applied Psalm 16 only to David. Peter, speaking through the Holy Spirit, now certified it as a messianic prophecy. He did not use the psalm to prove the resurrection, but to affirm the messiahship of Jesus. Peter didn't bother to prove the resurrection at all—he just proclaimed it.

2:29-30. Not only was David's psalm a messianic prophecy, but the application of the psalm to Jesus is also linked with the fact that the Messiah came in David's line. David may have considered himself a shepherd and a king, but Peter tells us he was also a prophet. We see here a major key to understanding Scripture: Christ is the unifying link between the Old and New Testaments. Luke had already concluded his first report to Theophilus on precisely this point (Luke 24:45-48).

2:31-32. Not only did David understand Jesus' coming, he also foretold His resurrection. Standing in the crowd that day were many local residents who were familiar with the events that had transpired in Jerusalem less than two months earlier. Just in case their memories had lapsed, Peter raised again the broad banner of those courageous early Christians: "we are all witnesses of the fact."

2:33-36. Peter wanted to proclaim the whole gospel, so he could not stop at the crucifixion and resurrection. In these verses he moves on to the exaltation and the coming of the Holy Spirit, bringing his listeners right up to the moment. Another quote from the Psalms (110:1) surely must have stabbed their collective attention. The humble carpenter of Nazareth was not only the Messiah, but now He lives in heaven and has caused all the Pentecostal commotion that evoked this sermon in the first place. Showing an enormous confidence in his God and his message, Peter used a phrase appearing only here in the New Testament ("all Israel") and hammered home his final point: "God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

2:37. The combination of God's Scripture and God's Spirit working through God's servant had the intended effect. From their initial question "What does this mean?" (2:12) the people now progressed to specific response—"Brothers, what shall we do?" Had some people listening to Peter that day also screamed for blood in Pilate's hall? While the word "conviction" does not appear in our verse, this clearly reflects that heart attitude. The New Testament uses this word to describe the work of the Holy Spirit by which we see ourselves as we are in God's sight.

2:38-39. Peter hesitated not a moment for the answer to their question, calling for repentance and baptism and offering forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Repentance is not a new theme in the New Testament, having appeared in the ministry of John the Baptist (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3) and in the preaching of Jesus (Mark 1:15; Luke 13:3). The context shows "baptism" here refers to water, not the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Holy Spirit then became the seal of salvation.

2:40-41. Luke hastens to tell us we do not have the entire sermon recorded in his book. Peter spoke many other words and pleaded with his hearers who responded. That day God added three thousand people to the small number of believers already serving as Christ's witnesses. But wait. Don't miss the importance of what Luke does not say. This time there was no sound, no flame, and no foreign language. These people received the Holy Spirit because that's what Peter promised in Jesus' name. Pentecost was a one-time event, with only a mild echo or two appearing elsewhere during the first century.

2:42. These four practices—teaching . . . fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayers—provide insight into the priorities of early Christianity. These same practices should be considered normative for the church today. The apostles' teaching was probably similar to Peter's message at Pentecost. That is to say, it focused on making Christ known by appealing to eyewitness testimony and the prophecies of the OT. Early Christians gathered together regularly for edification, prayer, and exhortation. The breaking of bread probably included fellowship meals and participation in the Lord's Supper (1Co 11:17-34).

2:44-45. As part of their fellowship, the early church practiced a community of goods for a short time. Distribution to members of the faith community took place according to individual need. This practice did not last long, likely because it was logistically difficult and fraught with potential abuse (see chaps. 4-6).

2:47. The early church was an evangelizing church. Luke recounted that every day the Lord added to those who were being saved. He did not say how this took place, but it appears that

evangelism took place primarily through the gathering of Christians in the temple and in individual houses. The crucifixion and resurrection of Christ were at the heart of early Christian preaching, which called for immediate response from anyone who listened.

## ACTS 2:14-41

### **The Church Witnessing to the Lost (Acts 2:14-41)**

Peter did not preach in tongues; he addressed his audience in the everyday Aramaic that they understood. The message was given by a Jew, to Jews (Acts 2:14, 22, 29, 36), on a Jewish holy day, about the resurrection of the Jewish Messiah whom their nation had crucified. The Gentiles who were there were proselytes to the Jewish religion (Acts 2:10). Peter would not open the door of faith to the Gentiles until he visited Cornelius (Acts 10).

There are three explanations in Peter's sermon.

**He explained what happened: the Spirit had come (vv. 14-21).** The joyful worship of the believers was not the result of too much wine; it was the evidence of the arrival of God's Holy Spirit to dwell in His people. Orthodox Jews did not eat or drink before 9 A.M. on the Sabbath or on a holy day, nor did they usually drink wine except with meals.

Peter did not say that Pentecost was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel 2:28-32, because the signs and wonders predicted had not occurred. When you read Joel's prophecy in context, you see that it deals with the nation of Israel in the end times, in connection with "the Day of the Lord." However, Peter was led by the Spirit to see in the prophecy an application to the church. He said, "This is that same Holy Spirit that Joel wrote about. He is here!" Such an announcement would seem incredible to the Jews, because they thought God's Spirit was given only to a few select people (see Num. 11:28-29). But here were 120 of their fellow Jews, men and women, enjoying the blessing of the same Holy Spirit that had empowered Moses, David, and the prophets.

It was indeed the dawning of a new age, the "last days" in which God would bring to completion His plan of salvation for mankind. Jesus had finished the great work of redemption and nothing more had to be done except to share the Good News with the world, beginning with the nation of Israel. The invitation is, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:21).

**He explained how it happened: Jesus was alive (vv. 22–35).** News travels fast in the East; and probably most of the adults in Jerusalem, residents and visitors, knew about the arrest, trial, and crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. They also had heard rumors of an “official announcement” that His followers had stolen the body of Jesus just to make people think that He had kept His word and been raised from the dead.

But Peter told them the truth: Jesus of Nazareth had indeed been raised from the dead, and the Resurrection proves that He is the Messiah! Peter gave them four proofs of the resurrection of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and then he called on them to believe on Christ and be saved.

His first proof was the person of Jesus Christ (vv. 22–24). Peter’s audience knew that Jesus was a real Person from the town of Nazareth and that He had performed many signs and miracles. (On “Jesus of Nazareth,” see Acts 2:22; 3:6; 4:10; 6:14; 10:38; 22:8; 26:9; also 24:5.) It was clear that God’s hand was on Him. They had heard Him speak and had watched His life. They had even seen Him raise the dead, yet they could find no fault in Him—and these things were not “done in a corner”! (Acts 26:26)

It was incredible that such a Man should be defeated by death. From one point of view, the crucifixion of Jesus was a terrible crime (Acts 2:23), but from another point of view it was a wonderful victory (Acts 2:24). The word translated “pains” means “birth pangs,” suggesting that the tomb was a “womb” out of which Jesus was “born” in Resurrection glory (see Acts 13:33).

Peter’s second proof was the prophecy of David (vv. 25–31). He quoted Psalm 16:8–11, verses that obviously could not apply to David who was already dead and buried. Being a prophet of God, David wrote about the Messiah, that His soul would not remain in hades (the realm of the dead) or His body in the grave where it would decay.

The third proof was the witness of the believers (v. 33). After His resurrection, Jesus did not appear to the world at large, but to His own followers whom He had commissioned to give witness to others that He was alive (Acts 1:3, 22). But were these people dependable witnesses? Can we trust them? We certainly can! Prior to Christ’s resurrection, the disciples did not even believe that He would be raised from the dead; and they themselves had to be convinced (Mark 16:9–14; Acts 1:3). They had nothing to gain by preaching a lie, because their message aroused official opposition and even led to the imprisonment and death of some of the believers. A few fanatics might be willing to believe and promote a lie for a time, but when thousands believe a message, and when that message is backed up by miracles, you cannot easily dismiss it. These witnesses were trustworthy.

Peter's fourth proof of the resurrection of Christ was the presence of the Holy Spirit (vv. 33–35). Follow his logic. If the Holy Spirit is in the world, then God must have sent Him. Joel promised that one day the Spirit would come, and Jesus Himself had promised to send the gift of the Holy Spirit to His people (Luke 24:49; John 14:26; 15:26; Acts 1:4). But if Jesus is dead, He cannot send the Spirit; therefore, He must be alive. Furthermore, He could not send the Spirit unless He had returned to heaven to the Father (John 16:7); so, Jesus has ascended to heaven! To back up this statement, Peter quoted Psalm 110:1, a verse that certainly could not be applied to David (note Matt. 22:41–46).

Peter's conclusion was both a declaration and an accusation: Jesus is your Messiah, but you crucified Him! (see Acts 2:23) Peter did not present the cross as the place where the Sinless Substitute died for the world, but where Israel killed her own Messiah! They committed the greatest crime in history! Was there any hope? Yes, for Peter gave a third explanation that was good news to their hearts.

**He explained why it happened: to save sinners (vv. 36–41).** The Holy Spirit took Peter's message and used it to convict the hearts of the listeners. (In Acts 5:33 and 7:54, a different Greek word is used that suggests anger rather than conviction for sin.) After all, if they were guilty of crucifying their Messiah, what might God do to them! Note that they addressed their question to the other Apostles as well as to Peter, for all twelve were involved in the witness that day, and Peter was only first among equals.

Peter told them how to be saved: they had to repent of their sins and believe on Jesus Christ. They would give proof of the sincerity of their repentance and faith by being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, thus identifying themselves publicly with their Messiah and Saviour. Only by repenting and believing on Christ could they receive the gift of the Spirit (Gal. 3:2, 14), and this promise was for both the Jews and the "far off" Gentiles (Eph. 2:13–19).

It is unfortunate that the translation of Acts 2:38 in the King James Version suggests that people must be baptized in order to be saved, because this is not what the Bible teaches. The Greek word *eis* (which is translated "for" in the phrase "for the remission of sins") can mean "on account of" or "on the basis of." In Matthew 3:11 John the Baptist baptized on the basis that people had repented. Acts 2:38 should not be used to teach salvation by baptism. If baptism is essential for salvation, it seems strange that Peter said nothing about baptism in his other sermons (Acts 3:12–26; 5:29–32; 10:34–43). In fact, the people in the home of Cornelius received the Holy Spirit before they were baptized! (Acts 10:44–48) Since believers are commanded to be baptized, it is important that we have a clean conscience by obeying (1 Peter 3:21), but we must not think that baptism is a part of salvation. If so, then nobody in Hebrews 11 was saved because none of them was ever baptized.

Acts 2:40 indicates that the Apostles continued to share the Word and to urge the people to trust Jesus Christ. They looked on the nation of Israel as a “crooked generation” that was under condemnation (Matt. 16:4; 17:17; Phil. 2:15). Actually, the nation would have about forty years before Rome would come and destroy the city and the temple and scatter the people. History was repeating itself. During the forty years in the wilderness, the new generation “saved itself” from the older generation that rebelled against God. Now, God would give His people another forty years of grace; and on that day, 3,000 people repented, believed, and were saved.

### **The Church Walking in the Spirit (Acts 2:42–47)**

The believers continued to use the temple for their place of assembly and ministry, but they also met in various homes. The 3,000 new converts needed instruction in the Word and fellowship with God’s people if they were to grow and become effective witnesses. The early church did more than make converts; they also made disciples (Matt. 28:19–20).

Two phrases in Acts 2:42 may need explanation. “Breaking of bread” probably refers to their regular meals, but at the close of each meal, they probably paused to remember the Lord by observing what we call “the Lord’s Supper.” Bread and wine were the common fare at a Jewish table. The word fellowship means much more than “being together.” It means “having in common” and probably refers to the sharing of material goods that was practiced in the early church. This was certainly not a form of modern communism, for the program was totally voluntary, temporary (Acts 11:27–30), and motivated by love.

The church was unified (Acts 2:44), magnified (Acts 2:47a), and multiplied (Acts 2:47b). It had a powerful testimony among the unsaved Jews, not only because of the miracles done by the Apostles (Acts 2:43), but also because of the way the members of the fellowship loved each other and served the Lord. The risen Lord continued to work with them (Mark 16:20) and people continued to be saved. What a church!

The Christians you meet in the Book of Acts were not content to meet once a week for “services as usual.” They met daily (Acts 2:46), cared daily (Acts 6:1), won souls daily (Acts 2:47), searched the Scriptures daily (Acts 17:11), and increased in number daily (Acts 16:5). Their Christian faith was a day-to-day reality, not a once-a-week routine. Why? Because the risen Christ was a living reality to them, and His resurrection power was at work in their lives through the Spirit.

The promise is still good: “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:13). Have you called? Have you trusted Jesus Christ to save you?

