



**Are you healthy?** I can not think of a more personal or important question. Praise God that we have excellent health care providers in the BHM metroplex to help us maintain health. I can be said that a primary care physician is essential to help an individual navigate to good health and stay healthy; preventing disease by identifying risk factors; coordinating and managing chronic disease care for longevity and a better quality of life. **This is why we have check-ups!**

**When was the last time you had a spiritual check-up?** When was the last time our local church had a spiritual check-up? Wouldn't you, wouldn't we want to know you are healthy? Thankfully, our Father never leaves us empty handed. He doesn't tell us good luck, you figure it out. What we see in the Book of Acts is a picture of a model church, a healthy church. **Church, time for your check-up!**

## [A Healthy Church– Acts 2:1, 32-42]

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No text has received closer scrutiny than this passage, Acts 2. Whole theologies and denominations were built upon this narrative. Why do we start here? Because this passage is often called the “birth of the church.”

What you just read occurred during Pentecost or 50 days after the first Sunday following Passover. This also coincided with the festival of first fruits (Savuot) and later traditions held that this was when Yahweh gave the law on Mount Sinai. Luke brings your attention to Jesus the Passover lamb who fulfilled the law and sent the promised Holy Spirit, an event that paralleled Sinai. What a bold claim!

The 120 are huddled together and a violent wind comes from heaven, tongues of fire descend, and they all begin to speak in different languages. And amid all this Peter, “the one who Jesus said upon this rock I will build my church,” stands to deliver the very first Christian sermon (no pressure). The establishment of the church gives us a basis for every healthy church.

- 1. Is Established on the Gospel (2:32-28)?** Peter's message was clear: Jesus Christ was crucified for the sins of the world. God raised Him from the dead and exalted him to the right hand of the Father. Then Jesus sent the Holy Spirit as He promised. This is the Gospel!

**What you believe about sin and God tells me everything about what you believe about salvation and Jesus.** A 2016 Barna poll reported that **more than half (65 percent) agree that everyone sins a little, but most people are good by nature.** Additionally, **more than half (52 percent) agree that by the good deeds that we do, we partly contribute to earning our place in heaven.** If you believe this you don't believe the gospel! The reality according to Scripture is that you do nothing to contribute to your salvation because you not and will never be good! There is no power in ourselves. This is why Paul said:

**Rom. 1:16** For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek. A right understanding of the gospel leads to a right understanding of conversion. The reason many churches are dying is that they are filled with unconverted unregenerate "members." There is no power in your religion, your baptism, your dedication, your membership, your walking an aisle, or even your alms giving. The power is faith alone by grace alone in Christ alone!

**And when you hear with believing ears this good news, it does something to you.** The people were pierced to the heart. Only one gospel has the ability to pierce the heart of man. **This verb refers to a sharp stab of emotion. It is also the unique word that Homer used to depict horses stamping the earth with their hooves. And they cried: what must we do!?**

A right understanding of the gospel leads to a right understanding of conversion. Peter presents us with four essential elements of conversion to Jesus Christ: repentance, baptism, forgiveness, and the Holy Spirit.

For salvation, repentance is plainly called for. **What is repentance?** It is a **complete change of heart, a spiritual about-face. The Greek idea means to change your mind and the Hebrew means to change direction.** Being **sorry for your sin is not repentance**, until that sorrow leads to an alteration of attitude towards God. This repentance is human responsibility—something you are commanded to do. But it is also the gift of God—only possible by His enabling. **What must we do? Repent!**

And be baptized. The rite of baptism is not a magical religious experience. It vividly pictures what repentance is asking God to do, forgive and wash clean. To get baptized is to affirm in a public act what your heart has already done to come into relationship with Yahweh. This is your "I'm His" moment! June 23<sup>rd</sup> celebration service.

For forgiveness. Forgiveness is not found in baptism, it is found in Jesus Christ. And for every believer, complete forgiveness is offered. **"I thought I could have leaped from earth to heaven at one spring when I first saw my sins drowned in the Redeemer's blood."** – Spurgeon

Gift. At the core of the gospel is the offer of the gift of the Spirit and what the Holy Spirit provides to the one who believes.

If this is your baseline, how healthy are you? Have you repented, been baptized, been forgiven of your sin, and received the Holy Spirit. If you can answer yes, yes, yes, yes then rejoice my brother that you have accepted the gospel!

**Embraces all people (2:39)** Who is the gospel for? This promise is for you, your children, and those who are far off. Peter is alluding to Isaiah and those Diaspora Jews scattered throughout the world who would respond. But, also looks to anyone who responds, which eventually would include Gentiles to the uttermost ends of the earth.

A healthy church looks to the world and declares, you can be saved! You who are far off, come close! The moment you, I, or any church begins to use “those people language,” you might as well and go ahead and close your doors because you are not standing upon the Word of the Lord. We were the far off! I was the Pharisee zealous for religion yet hating God. Praise our Savior that he died for all people!

**Expects the Lord to move and save (2:41)** When the whole gospel is proclaimed to the whole person, God sized moments happen. That day alone 3,000 souls were added to the kingdom. Can you imagine how many verses of “**Just as I am they had to sing?**” In a city that swelled to 200,000 during festival week, this number was still significant.

Do you expect the Lord to move in a mighty way in your life? Did you drive here this morning expecting and believing the Lord to pour out his abundant favor and mercy upon this people? I believe we see God doing little because His people expect little. Oh that we would be an expectant church, an eager people, a healthy community.

**Equipped for the purposes of Yahweh (2:42)** This brand new church, full of the Spirit began to do the only thing they knew, life for Christ. Really, we witness two essential components of this new ecclesia: Word and Community.

They immediately devoted themselves to the apostles teaching. Why? Because it was handed down from Messiah. We still have Christ’s words, the Bible. For the Christian, ethical and practical teaching is rounded in the central promise God had given in Jesus. We will know we love him if we keep his commands. Are you healthy devoted to the word of Messiah? **This is why we want to help you. You will find a reading plan in the bulletin for this week, or a yearly guide on the resource table.** Get into the Word into it gets into you! The greatest indicator of your spiritual growth is daily interaction with the living Word.

**Community.** The Greek word used here is [koinonia](#) meaning “association, communion, fellowship, close relationship.” Luke underscores the personal interactive character of

relationships in the early church at all levels. There is a real sense of connection for one another. How healthy are your relationships. Is someone else healthy because you are in their life? Too often we are content to **be spiritual unicorns. What is a unicorn? Something that we discuss but doesn't exist.** The "Christian" who has no personal connection with the local saints is nowhere to be found in the NT. If you have distant for far too long, welcome back, there is a place for you here.

We know in Acts that the 1<sup>st</sup> church was **First Baptist of Jerusalem. Why? Because they liked to eat!** What else do you expect when you worship the Messiah, the bread of life. Its unclear if this phrase refers to the Lord's Supper or taking of other meals because communion was part of a larger meal in the earliest church. There is something spiritual about gathering around the table with others of faith. When was the last time you opened your home? When was the last time you had a meal for the purposes of Christ. **What would it look like if you had one person in you home/month for a meal? If we all did that we would share a table with almost 5,000 people. How healthy are your spiritual eating habits?**

**Prayer.** The roof, the exclamation point on a healthy church is prayer. As for the prayers in which they participated, there is no doubt to appointed seasons for united prayer. You see, a healthy body seeks God's direction and is dependent upon God because God's family of people do not work by feelings or intuition but by actively submitting themselves to the Lord's direction.

When was the last time we spend time on our face for no reason than to submit ourselves to the revealed will of the Father.

## Conclusion (Head-Heart-Hands)

**It has been said that Christianity is Christ. Peter's message at Pentecost give us an indication why we can make such a claim.**

Do you know the gospel? Do you believe the Gospel? Have you repented, baptized, forgiven, and gifted the Holy Spirit?

Are you healthy? Are we healthy?

# Notes

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The NT never uses the word church for a place or a building, it is always for a people.

No text in Acts has received closer scrutiny than Acts 2. Whole theologies and denominations have been built up around the Acts 2 accounts (BW3, 128).

**Acts 2:1** When the day of Pentecost had arrived, they were all together in one place.

Pentecost has often been called the “birth of the church.”

The day of Pentecost was so called because it fell on the 50<sup>th</sup> day after the presentation of the first sheaf to be reaped of the barley harvest, that is, the 50<sup>th</sup> day from the first Sunday after Passover. Also known as the feat of weeks or sabuot or first fruits because on that day the first fruits of the wheat harvest were presented to God (Bruce, 50). At a later date, it was reckoned to be the anniversary of the giving of the law on Sinai.

If Luke knew such traditions (as evidences by Philo) his portrayal of these Pentecost events could be taken to suggest not only that Christianity will have a worldwide impact, but that the giving of the Spirit is parallel to the giving of the Law (BW3, 131).

Although the date may originally have been a moveable one, by NT times the fifty days were calculated from the Feast of the Passover (Peterson, 131).

**Acts 2:32** “God has raised this Jesus; we are all witnesses of this. **33** Therefore, since he has been exalted to the right hand of God and has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit, he has poured out what you both see and hear. **34** For it was not David who ascended into the heavens, but he himself says:

**The Lord declared to my Lord,**

**‘Sit at my right hand**

**35 until I make your enemies your footstool.’**

**There is a kind of syllogism here:** 1- The Messiah will rise from the dead as Scripture shows. 2- But God raised Jesus. 3- Therefore Jesus is the Messiah (Bock, 130).

## Witnesses

The resurrection is not a symbol or a metaphor for anything; it was a real event that changed the direction of the witnesses' lives. That is precisely the point Peter makes here. Witnesses exist to underscore the resurrection's reality (Bock, 130).

In Jesus' own teaching no emphasis is laid on his Davidic descent, but his identity and authority were early interpreted in terms of a "Son of David" Christology (Bruce, 66).

Psalm 110:1 was a favorite text for the early church (there John 3:16). Used in Mark 12:35-37; 1 Cor. 15:25; Heb 1:13, 10:13; Rom 8:34; Eph 1:20; Col. 3:1; and Pet 3:22 (Polhill, 115).

In the ancient world, the right hand was often identified with greatness, strength, goodness, and divinity (Peterson, 150).

**Acts 2:36** "Therefore let all the house of Israel know with certainty that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah."

To the Jew there was only one name 'above every name' – the ineffable name of God of Israel, frequently represented in synagogue reading and in the Greek Bible by the designation 'Lord' (Bruce, 68).

The order of the Christological title is important because Lord is in the forward and emphatic position in Greek (Bock, 136).

The title Lord was used by Palestinian Jews as a title for Yahweh, as is not attested by numerous sources (Bock, 136).

The final words in the Greek text "whom you crucified" prepare for the call to repentance that follows, indicating where the audience stands in relation to the message about Jesus (Peterson, 153).

**Acts 2:37** When they heard this, they were pierced to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles: "Brothers, what should we do?"

## Cut to the heart

An uncommon word Homer used to depict horses stamping the earth with their hooves (Polhill, 116).

The verb refers to a sharp pain or a stab, often associated with emotion (Bock, 140).

**Acts 2:38** Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Peter’s response was almost programmatic in that he presented them with four essential of the conversion experience: repentance, baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, forgiveness of sins, and receipt of the Spirit (Polhill, 116).

Most significant is the usual connection of the forgiveness of sins in Luke-Acts is with repentance and not with baptism at all. In fact, in no other passage of Acts is baptism presented as bringing about the forgiveness of sins (Polhill, 117).

With his response Peter presents forgives and the Spirit as the principal gifts of God that Jesus provides; he is the entryway into a life with God (Bock, 141).

## **Repent**

That Peter was calling the audience to repentance was not unprecedented, for this is exactly the message of John the Baptist earlier.

Repentance was plainly called for: a complete change of heart, a spiritual about-face, was essential if those who failed to recognized their God-sent deliverer in Jesus were nevertheless to enjoy the deliverance (Bruce, 69).

The Greek use often refers to “changing one’s mind.” The overwhelming Hebrew employment of the term indicates a change of direction.

Repentance and forgiveness are two sides of the same coin.

The OT regularly shows that genuine sorrow for sin involves an alteration of attitude towards God that brings about a conversion or reorientation of life (Peterson, 154).

Repentance is a human responsibility—something we are commanded to do. But it is also the gift of God—repentance is only possible by God’s enabling (Peterson, 154).

## **Baptism**

The rite is not magical but represents and pictures what repentance is asking God to do, to give forgiveness. To agree to baptism is to affirm in a public act what the heart has already done to come into relationship with God (Bock, 143).

## **Spirit**

At the core of the gospel is the offer of the gift of the Spirit and what the Spirit provides to the one who believes (Bock, 144).

**39** For the promise is for you and for your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call.” **40** With many other words he testified and strongly urged them, saying, “Be saved from this corrupt generation!” **41** So those who accepted his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand people were added to them.

### **Far off**

Echoes Isa 57:19 and alludes to responding Diaspora Jews and God-fearers. The expression also looks to anyone who responds, which eventually would include Gentiles (Bock, 145).

Are they future generations of Jews, Jews in distant lands, or Gentiles? Using Luke’s geographical approach to God’s redemptive expansion (Acts 1:8), it is quite likely that all three are in view.

### **3,000**

The soul is part of the person and makes one a responding being, so it comes to stand for the person as a whole (Bock, 146).

The number is significant in a city that swelled to somewhere between 55,000 and 200,000 during feast time (Bock, 146).

This no doubt would have drawn the attention of the Jewish authorities rather rapidly, as Acts 3 shows (BW3).

**Acts 2:42** They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer.

**Pesch** has suggested that in fact only two things are really mentioned here, teaching and koinonia, with the latter further defined as involving the breaking of bread and prayer. (BW3, 160).

### **Teaching**

For the Christian, ethical and practical teaching is grounded in the central promise God had given in Jesus (Bock, 150).

## **Fellowship**

The Greek word used here (*koinonia*) is one Paul often employed, but it appears only here in all of Luke-Acts. Its basic meaning is “association, communion, fellowship, close relationship.” (Polhill, 119)

Luke points to fellowship to underscore the personal interactive character of relationships in the early church at all levels. There is a real sense of connection to, between, and for each other (Bock, 150).

Greek definition normally meant ‘to share with someone in something’ above and beyond the relationship itself (Peterson, 160).

## **Bread**

It is unclear here whether the phrase refers to the Lord’s Supper or is a reference to taking some meals together, of which the Lord’s Supper was a part (Bock, 150). What makes the choice difficult is that communion was part of a larger meal in the earliest church.

## **Prayer**

As for the prayers in which they participated, their primary reference is no doubt to their own appointed seasons for united prayer (Bruce, 73).

It seeks God’s direction and is dependent upon God because God’s family of people do not work by feelings or intuition but by actively submitting themselves to the Lord’s direction (Bock, 151).

# **Illustrations**

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The relationship you build with your primary care doctor is one of the most important you'll ever have.

A primary care physician is essential to help an individual navigate to good health and stay healthy; preventing disease by identifying risk factors; coordinating and managing chronic disease care for longevity and a better quality of life.

# Application

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Christianity is optimistic about grace, but pessimistic about human nature (Fernando, 116).

“I have come to the conclusion that most people come to Christ in order to have a felt need met, but they stay with Christ because they have come to believe that the gospel is true” (Fernando, 113).

## **Beliefs about Goodness and Sin from Barna (2016)**

More than half (65 percent) agree that everyone sins a little, but most people are good by nature. Americans with evangelical beliefs are less likely to agree (54 percent v. 68 percent).

A large majority (69 percent) agree with the claim that people have the ability to turn to God on their own initiative (only 9 percent strongly disagree).

A large majority (69 percent) disagree with the claim that even the smallest sin deserves eternal damnation. Even among Americans with evangelical beliefs only 47 percent agree with the claim.

More than half (52 percent) agree that by the good deeds that we do, we partly contribute to earning our place in heaven.