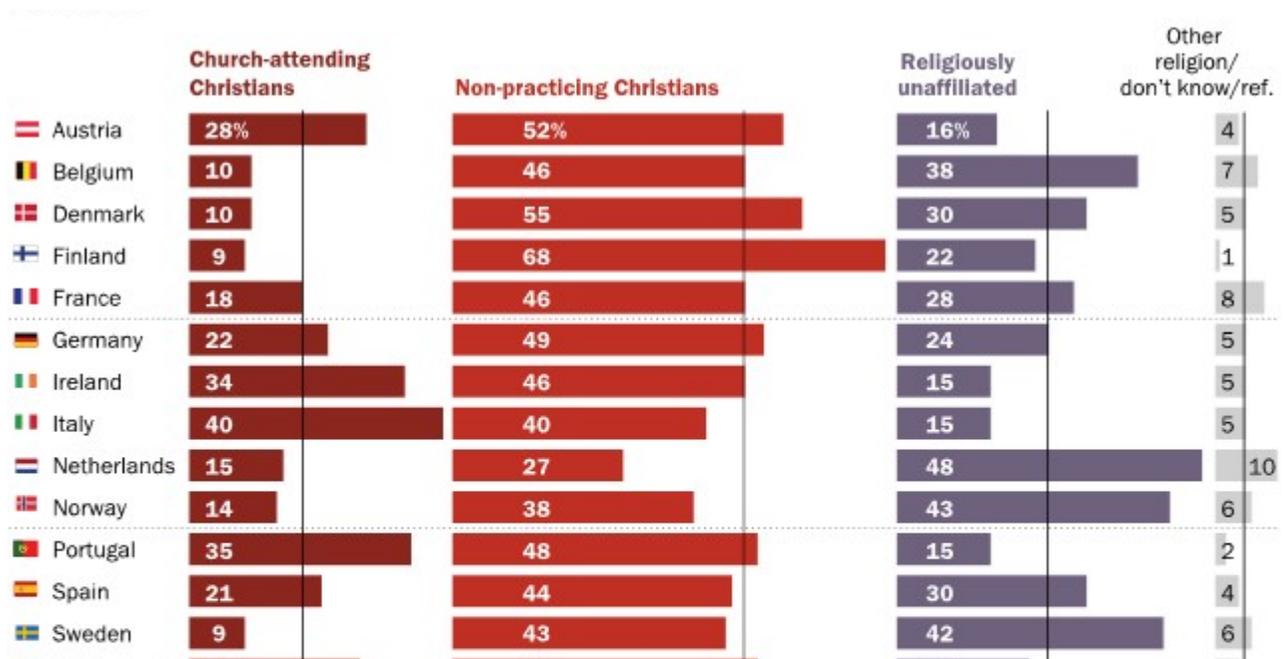




[Church 101- Acts 2:42-47]

Good morning, we know that you have an unlimited # of options this morning and you chose to gather in the name of Jesus Christ! May the Lord richly bless God the reading of His Word. Today we begin a new series entitled “Back to the Start.” The goal of this message is to reorient ourselves back to Jesus Christ. Last week we celebrated a *Back To Church Sunday*, which was a huge success. Where do we go from here? We go back to the start and ask what is the church: Church 101. Join me in Acts 2.

Why is church important? I fundamentally believe that people who call themselves Christians have an existential crisis. A recent 2017 Poll in Europe illustrates the great chasm between cultural belief and true life change: [See Finland-Sweden Norway.](#)



Here is the conclusion by the pollster: The idea that among your still-professing Christians the vast majority are non-practicing reveals this is the last generation of any significant cohort of professing Christians. **A non-practicing Christian is surely the final step before not professing any allegiance at all.**

I believe America is in the same crisis. The crisis is this, that we can self-identify with Christ whenever we choose at our convenience. **What about you?** Are you convicted and convinced that Jesus is Lord? I found a deep theological video that adequately sums up our dilemma

Play Andy Griffith Video

Let's go to church, no! We are the church: Today's big idea is that you would live out your new identity in Christ as the Church. [What are you?](#)

Read [2:41-47]

In Christ, you are the church! 5 Marks of your Identity

1. Identification with Christ Leads to a New Identity (2:41-42)

Listen to the power of the Gospel, those who accepted his message were baptized. Identification with Christ does not begin with a poll, a church, a baptism, a catechism, or any other personal strength. New birth, new live, new adoption commences with accepting the message that it is by grace you are saved! **Have you accepted the message?** For God- So Love- that whoever-believes.

Those who accepted the message immediately embraced their new identity in Christ though **obedience**. External obedience is the #1 indicator of your internal faith response. Obedience is not **delayed it is immediate**. It is as if those who accepted the message of grace **could not wait!** What about you? Baptism is the outward expression of a new identity.

Identification with Christ leads to an immediate and permeant New-Identity. This is not an "ill get around to it." But an immediate Hallelujah! **Our next baptism gathering is October 7th.** What are you waiting for?

When you accept/believe/put trust in Christ you fundamentally change. You are born again, you go from death to life, you are adopted into a new family, your sins are forgiven and the punishment that you deserve is fully satisfied in Christ. **Those who are made alive can never die again!**

You are the Church Mark #1→ New Identity **Say it: I am made new!!**

2. Devotion to Christ Leads to a Dedicated Life (2:42)

In Christ, not only is there an immediate identity change but an **instant devotion** to righteousness. Knowing Jesus changes *your delights and your desires*. “They **devoted**” themselves. This word means to adhere, be intently engaged and the construction of the verb speaks to the ongoing devotion they have. This is not a New Year’s resolution to church, this is a new dedicated life! This is not attendance—*I don’t get brownie points for “showing up” to my marriage. It’s a deep devotion to what God loves.*

Most likely what we have here in this verse is a summary of the earliest church: devoutly gathering around the Apostles teaching, the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer.

"Spirit filled souls are ablaze for God. They love with a love that glows. They serve with a faith that kindles. They serve with a devotion that consumes. –Sam Chadwick

How is your devotion? Do you find yourself starting strong yet fading? Are you **going** to church or are you **the** church? Devotion to Christ leads to a dedicated life.

Teaching Be devoted to the Apostles Teaching. For believers of later generations, the NT scriptures form the written deposit of the apostolic teaching (NICNT, 73).

Didache is a first century early church treatise. **Begins this way: 1. There are two Ways, one of Life and one of Death, and there is a great difference between the two Ways. And Ends with: 8. Then shall the world "see the Lord coming on the clouds of Heaven."**

Prayer A community at prayer is something Luke emphasizes about community life. 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 (ECNT, 151).

4th century Bible expositor John Chrysostom defined prayer as “conversation with God.”

You are the Church Mark #2→ Are you dedicated?

3. Fellowship with Christ Fills You with Awe(2:43)

And Everyone was filled... The power of Christ is not **invisible but tangible**. Scholars debate whether the “everyone” refers to those outside or inside the Christian community. My expert observation is yes!

When you see God as who He really is, or even have a glimpse of His beauty, majesty, and power (ie wonders and signs performed by the Apostles) it **changes** who you are. Awe-reverential respect mixed with wonder.

The fear of God is the death of every other fear; like a mighty lion, it chases all other fears before it. –Spurgeon

You are the Church Mark #3→ Fellowship with Christ fills you with AWE

4. Believing in Christ Brings You into Community (2:45)

Now- those who responded by faith to the Gospel- were together. Remember the summary of the early church? They were devoted to teaching- fellowship- to the breaking for bread.

The 19 occurrences of koinonia in the NT suggest that the church used this word for the unique sharing that Christians have with God and with other Christians (NIV, 120).

Believing in Christ brings you into Community. Togetherness- the sharing of material things in common is not a required communalism but a voluntary, **caring response to need** (ECNT, 152). **Motivation-** they are motivated by concern for the needs of the community. The picture is of a community that cares for all its members, even those in material need (ECNT, 153).

When was the last time you cared deeply about the community of faith that you are part of in Christ? Are you too busy? When was the last time you broke bread? **Fellowship-** Same word that was often used of the type of mutuality that takes place in marriage.

After ten years of marriage, Cindy and Chip Altemos were in the long process of getting a divorce.

Five years into the painful separation, Chip was in the hospital with kidney failure. With his health deteriorating rapidly, his soon-to-be ex-wife came to his aid—in spite of Chip's being in another relationship at the time. "He was still my husband. There was no way I could walk around with two kidneys, and he had none," Cindy told the press. " She agreed to donate a kidney, telling Chip there **were no strings attached**—no written agreement concerning a better share in divorce court.

The transplant took place on February 21, 2007, and a funny thing happened as they both recovered in the hospital: they fell back in love. Chip thought to himself, *Why would I want to date someone else, when I have a woman who would give part of herself so I can keep living?* He put an end to his other relationship and asked Cindy to come back home with him. Now the two have been married over 17 years

You are the Church Mark #4→ Community- Love for Christ deepens your love for the community of Christ. As we give and submit in mutual fellowship we grow.

5. The Love of the Messiah Leads to a Life on Mission (2:47)

If the Temple was the place of witness the Table was the place for fellowship. Because of the radical life change that only Jesus Christ brings, **others took notice**. How is your witness? Are you living missional?

When the people of God live as the covenant people of God, the world will see the grace of Christ. When the world hears the good news, many will respond. And the Lord added to their # daily

You are the Church Mark #5→ The Love of the Messiah leads to a life on mission.

Conclusion

Let us go to church? No, you are the church if you are in Christ. Do you bear the marks of His church? ***If not, are you His?***

Only God can change the heart of man. Col 2:¹³ **And when you were dead in trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, he made you alive with him and forgave us all our trespasses. ¹⁴ He erased the certificate of debt, with its obligations, that was against us and opposed to us, and has taken it away by nailing it to the cross.**

New Identity- A dedicated life- Awe- New Community- Missional life

Covenant Member? Next Steps Today

You Are the Church!

Notes

Important Words

(2:42 and 46) proskarterountes προσκαρτερω *proskartereō* 10x *to persist in adherence to a thing; to be intently engaged in, attend constantly to, Acts 1:14; 2:42; Rom. 13:6; to remain constantly in a place, Acts 2:46; to constantly attend upon, continue near to, be at hand, Mk. 3:9; Acts 8:13; 10:7 → attend to; (be) devoted to.*

(2:42) didachē GK G1439 | S G1322 διδαχη *didachē* 30x *instruction, the giving of instruction, teaching, Mk. 4:2; 12:38; instruction, what is taught, doctrine, Mt. 16:12; Jn. 7:16, 17; meton. mode of teaching and kind of doctrine taught, Mt. 7:28; Mk. 1:27 → doctrine; instruction; teaching.*

Didache is a first century early church treatise. Begins this way: **1.** There are two Ways, one of Life and one of Death, and there is a great difference between the two Ways. And Ends with: **8.** Then shall the world "see the Lord coming on the clouds of Heaven."

(2:43) phobos GK G5832 | S G5401 φοβος *phobos* 47x *fear, terror, affright, Mt. 14:26; Lk. 1:12; astonishment, amazement, Mt. 28:8; Mk. 4:41; trembling concern, 1 Cor. 2:3; 2 Cor. 7:15; meton. a terror, an object or cause of terror, Rom. 13:5; reverential fear, awe, Acts 9:31; Rom. 3:18; respect, deference, Rom. 13:7; 1 Pet. 2:18 → alarm; awe; fear; fright; respect.*

Possible that 2:42 is a summary of the early church life and 2:43-47 is specific

41 So those who accepted his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand people were added to them.

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

Devoted- the construction of the verb speaks of the ongoing devotion they have (ECNT).

Teaching- The centrality of Jesus and the preparation of members to share in the new life and witness are key community concerns (ECNT).

For believers of later generations the NT scriptures form the written deposit of the apostolic teaching (NICNT, 73).

Fellowship- Same word that was often used of the type of mutuality that takes place in marriage (ECNT), 150). 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.

The 19 occurrences of koinonia in the NT suggest that the church used this word for the unique sharing that Christians have with God and with other Christians (NIV, 120).

See 2:44-46. True fellowship focuses on God and helps people remember the good things he has done, which, in turn, causes praise (NIV, 123).

According to the Bible the entire Christian life, including spiritual growth, battling sin and Satan, and serving God, are intended to be done in community (NIV, 125).

Breaking Bread- probably denotes more than the regular taking of food together: the regular observance of what came to be called the Lord's Supper seems to be in view (NICNT).

Note the other three features of 2:42 are spiritual activities which suggest that this fourth one is also a spiritual activity (NIV, 121).

Christ's Last Supper was part of a festival meal (NIV, 128).

Prayer- A community at prayer is something Luke emphasizes about community life. 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 (ECNT, 151).

4th century Bible expositor John Chrysostom defined prayer as "conversation with God."

Acts 2:43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and signs were being performed through the apostles.

Everyone- probably refers to those outside the Christian community who were awed by apostolic miracles (NAC, 120).

44 Now all the believers were together and held all things in common. **45** They sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as any had need. **46** Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple, and broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with joyful and sincere hearts,

Believers- they members of this new community are called believers because of their response of faith in the preached message.

Togetherness- the sharing of material things in common is not a required communalism but a voluntary, caring response to need (ECNT, 152).

This phrase is notoriously difficult to translate. It seems to depict the gathered community, with a strong emphasis on their unity (NAC, 120).

Motivation- they are motivated by concern for the needs of the community. The picture is of a community that cares for all of its members, even those in material need (ECNT, 153).

Every day – this fellowship, like Jewish practice, extends beyond the sacred space (ECNT, 153).

If the temple was the place of witness, homes were the place for fellowship (NAC, 121).

47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. Every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

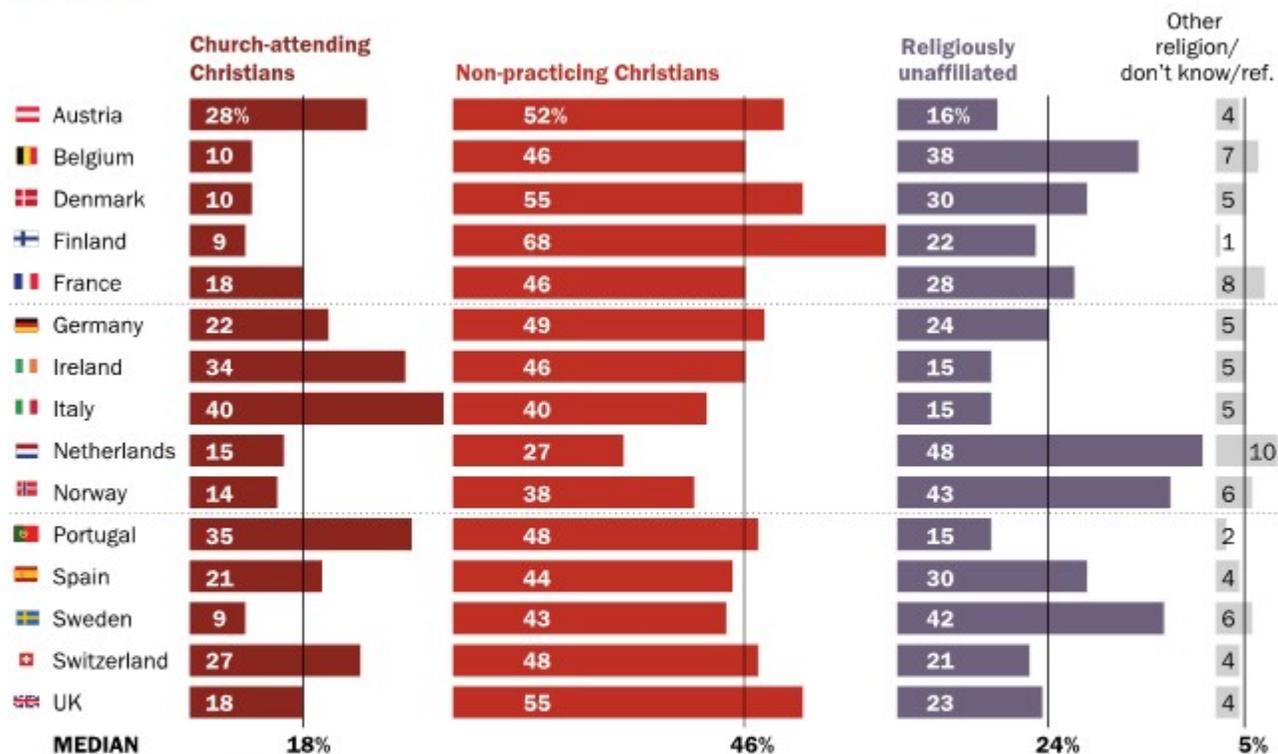
The good reputation apparently impacts their witness (ECNT, 154). .

Illustrations

The idea that among your still-professing Christians the vast majority are non-practicing reveals this is the last generation of any significant cohort of professing Christians. **A non-practicing Christian is surely the final step before not professing any allegiance at all.** And in most Western European countries, non-practicing Christians are the largest group.

In most Western European countries, non-practicing Christians are largest group

% who are ...



Note: Church-attending Christians are defined as those who say they attend church at least monthly. Non-practicing Christians are defined as those who attend less often. Other religion/don't know/ref. are mostly Muslim respondents. General population surveys in Western Europe may not fully capture the size of minority populations, such as Muslims. Therefore, these figures may differ from previously published demographic estimates. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Survey conducted April-August 2017 in 15 countries. See Methodology for details.

"Being Christian in Western Europe"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

In her memoirs, Ilyasah Shabazz, the third daughter of Malcolm X and Betty Shabazz, talks about the effect of attending church as a little girl:

Betty Shabazz took the girls to the mosque every Sunday, and when they were visiting their grandparents in Philadelphia, they went to Friendship Baptist, a church Ilyasah says she loved, especially the praying and testifying and the singing of gospel music. "I loved the singing that went on," she writes. "I wanted to feel

whatever powerful force was causing all of these people to sing and clap so heartily. I never did catch the spirit, but I always kept the hope."

God does not want Christians to be nomads, hermits, or recluses. ... In the light of this truth it might be good if we gave up singing one of the old spirituals:

On the Jerico Road,

There's room for just two,

No more and no less,

Just Jesus and You.

Think about it. If that song is right, we had better get "off" the Jericho Road. That is not the highway to glory because, as the New Testament repeatedly discloses, the glory highway is broad enough to allow all of God's people to march along together. Side by side.

A May 2005 survey produced the following answers to the question, "How often do we entertain guests for dinner?"

Once a week—6 percent

Once a month—21 percent

More than once a month—12 percent

A few times a year—37 percent

Rarely or never—24 percent

Wife Donates Kidney, Saves Marriage

Sam McKee, Sunnyvale, California; source: Associated Press, "Kidney Saves Marriage," www.foxnews.com (5-6-07)

Average Rating: Not rated [\[see ratings/reviews\]](#)

After ten years of marriage, Cindy and Chip Altemos were in the long process of getting a divorce. The proverbial baggage they brought from previous marriages seemed too great to overcome, so they separated and even agreed to date other people.

Five years into the painful separation, Chip was in the hospital with kidney failure. With his health deteriorating rapidly, his soon-to-be ex-wife came to his aid—in spite of Chip's being in another relationship

at the time. "He was still my husband. There was no way I could walk around with two kidneys, and he had none," Cindy told the press. "It was the right thing to do." She agreed to donate a kidney, telling Chip there were no strings attached—no written agreement concerning a better share in divorce court.

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Application
