

ACTS: ALIGNING WITH GOD'S SOVEREIGN WORK OF DISCIPLING

V. The Spiritual Effects Of True Discipling

(Acts 2:42-47)

I. Introduction

- A. The book of Acts explains "the orderly and sovereignly directed progress of the kingdom message from Jews to Gentiles, and from Jerusalem to Rome," Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament, p. 351.
- B. Accordingly, we can learn much about aligning our ministry efforts with God's sovereign work from studying the Early Church era as presented in the book of Acts.
- C. Acts 2:42-47 records how the giving of the Holy Spirit not only led to true discipling, but to wonderful effects on the Early Church. We thus view the passage for our insight, application, and edification:

II. The Spiritual Effects Of True Discipling, Acts 2:42-47.

- A. Following the coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:1-41 at Pentecost to form the Body of Christ, the Church, a series of effects under the Spirit's empowering and the Risen Lord's sovereign oversight (Hebrews 13:20) literally flowed out from the Church.
- B. Those effects are listed in Acts 2:42-47, and we view them as evidences of the Holy Spirit's production for evaluating local church ministries today to discern if the Holy Spirit is ministering in them (as follows):
 - a. First, the Church was "persisting in or continuing in" (*proskarterountes*) two key functions, Acts 2:42; Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 360) as follows:
 - i. It continued in the apostles' teaching, what today constitutes the ministry of God's Word, v. 42a.
 - ii. It continued in fellowship, defined as the breaking of bread and of prayer due to the omission of the word "and" between "fellowship" and "to the breaking of bread and to prayer," Ibid.; Acts 2:42b. The Church observed the Lord's Table and prayed in formal worship with the ministry of the Word.
 - b. Second, the Church saw the Lord work miracles in the apostles that validated their ministries of the Word, what produced a sense of awe in the body as a whole, Acts 2:43; Ibid.
 - c. Third, the Church was solidly unified, being all together in one place, Acts 2:44a.
 - d. Fourth, the Church cared for the needy who were in its midst, Acts 2:44b-45:
 - i. Though some claim that the Early Church practiced communism by the pooling of its material resources, individual believers in the **Church willingly shared** their material resources for the needy in their midst **opposite communism** where material resources are **forcibly redistributed!**
 - ii. This practice was not continued in later churches, for Paul directed heads of household to work to earn their own livelihoods (2 Thessalonians 3:6-16; 1 Timothy 5:8). The Acts 2:44b-45 sharing was likely "necessitated by the many pilgrims" who came for Pentecost and "lingered in Jerusalem to learn more of their new Christian faith," Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Acts 2:44.
 - e. Fifth, the Church's body life was marked by the ministry of the word and worship at the temple spilling over into hospitality in homes along with expressions of joy, unity, and praise to God, Acts 2:46-47a.
 - f. Sixth, the Church had a good testimony before the world, being viewed favorably by unbelievers, v. 47b.
 - g. Seventh, the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved, Acts 2:48.

Lesson: *When the Holy Spirit came and not only indwelt, but filled the believers in the Early Church, they persisted in the preaching and teaching of God's Word, they practiced formal worship, the Lord gave authenticating signals of the apostles' credibility as God's servants before the whole congregation, producing a sense of awe in them, the Church was unified, it worshiped in one place, it cared for the needy in its midst, its formal worship affected daily lives to where believers were hospitable, joyful, unified and praising God, the Church had a good testimony before the world and God added to the Church daily those who were being saved.*

Application: (1) *We can discern that a local church is spiritually healthy today if (a) its leaders and its people persist in the ministry of God's Word, (b) if it practices formal worship, (c) if the Lord authenticates the ministry of its leaders by clear experiential evidences in accord with Scripture, (d) if the congregation acknowledges these divine authentications, (e) if the church is unified, worshiping in one place, (f) if it cares for the needy in its midst, (g) if its formal worship affects everyday lives to produce hospitality, joy, unity and praise to God, (h) if the church has a good testimony before the world and (i) if God is adding those who are being saved to the body. (2) On the other hand, a clear LACK in one or more of these realms signals a need for spiritual improvement, and the causes of such a lack are EITHER a failure for leaders to expound the Word OR for the people to heed and apply it.*