

The Ministries of the Church

Acts 2:42-47

Andrew Sullivan of Newsweek wrote an Easter article entitled “*Forget the Church, Follow Jesus.*” Sullivan found some serious errors in modern day religion such as child molestation in the RCC, liberalism in mainline protestant denominations, and self-centeredness of the prosperity gospel. But he went on to condemn evangelicals for believing in the supernatural death and resurrection of Jesus, the inerrant Word of God, and belief in the major doctrines of Scriptures.

He believes Christianity is in a crisis. Instead on majoring on doctrine, such as, the supernatural resurrection of Jesus, Sullivan believes we should just read His words.

Sullivan quotes St. Francis of Assisi “Preach the gospel always, use words if necessary.”

You can’t Forget the church and just Follow Jesus. Someone appropriately responded with another article entitled, Forget Anderson and Follow the Church.

Jesus loved the church and gave Himself for it (Ephesians 5:25). The Church is God’s institution as well as human government and the home. Because these three institutions are not perfect we do not abandon them. None of these three institutions is perfect. We don’t abandon human government or we will have anarchy. We don’t abandon marriage or we will have adultery.

The first church in Acts was a model church but not a perfect church as the rest of Acts clearly shows. You have the first known sin in Acts 5 when Ananias and Sapphira selfishly did not give all they said had given.

We can focus on the imperfections or our perceived imperfections of the church or we should focus on the blessings of the church. This is what Luke does in Acts 2:42-47.

Luke describes five ministries that all churches should be practicing:

1. Teaching God’s Word
2. Fellowshiping with God’s People
3. Worshipping God
4. Serving in God’s Work
5. Evangelizing the Unsaved

Each of these ministries are related to the nature of God and the more Godlike or Godly we become the more our church will reflect Him in these ministries. These are God centered ministries not man centered.

1. Our church should emphasize ***teaching God’s Word*** because God the Father is truth (John 3:33 “God is true”; 7:28; 8:26) and God the Son is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6) and God the Spirit is “the Spirit of truth (John 14:17, 26). Therefore, the

church is “the pillar and foundation of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15). The more godly we become as a church the more we will teach the truth of God from His Word.

2. Our church should emphasize ***fellowshipping with God’s people*** because the three persons of the Trinity eternally have and are in fellowship with each other. We are made in their image as social creatures. We are “the people of God” not the individuals of God and the more united we are in fellowship the more we will reflect the fellowship of the Trinity. The more godly we will be.

3. Our church should emphasize ***worshipping God*** because the essence of worship is giving and God has sacrificially given His Son for our salvation. The more we give and reflect Him the more godly we are.

4. Our church should emphasize ***servicing in God’s work*** because Christ came not to be served but to serve and give His life a ransom for our redemption. The more we serve in God’s work the more godlike we are.

5. Our church should emphasize ***evangelizing the lost*** because God sent His Son to die on the cross not as a good example as Andrew Sullivan says, but as a substitute for our sins that “whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” The more godlike we become the more we will evangelize.

Evangelism in the early church was not a program but a way of life. Let Vickie or Chad tell how Michael was saved at home.

1. The Teaching of God’s Word (2:42) “And they continued stedfastly in the apostle’s doctrine.

Luke ***first*** gives the immediate results of Peter’s preaching when people went to church for the first time:

1. Conviction
2. Salvation
3. Baptism
4. Church membership (None of these are options in the Christian life for spiritual growth)

Next, Luke gives the continued results of Peter’s preaching which are the five ongoing ministries. What happened after the first day people went to church?

1. Teaching God’s Word
2. Fellowshiping with God’s People
3. Worshipping of God
4. Servicing in God’s Work
5. Evangelizing the Unsaved

Acts 2:42 first says that these new converts “*continued steadfastly*” that is they were continually devote to these ministries. Luke uses the word again in Acts 6:4. They did not start and stop. There were no Nine Day Wonders in the early church which only proves they were never saved. Listen to some strong words by John:

“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us but went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us” (1 John 2:19).

John MacArthur observed, “Many churches today are made up of largely of unsaved individuals. Amazingly some even try to design a church where non-Christians can feel comfortable. This can’t be the good of a church that is devoted to holiness and righteousness in all areas of life, such a church will be unpopular with sinners. In this first fellowship all the professors were possessors” (Acts, page 80).

Now Luke gives the first ministry that model church was continually devoted to:
Teaching God’s Word

Teaching is listed first because all of the other ministries are built on the foundation of teaching God’s Word.

Erwin Lutzer said that prayer is more important than preaching in the life of the church. Scripture does not teach that. In the Pastoral Epistles teaching is mentioned more than 30 times. If a church properly teaches God’s Word prayer will not be neglected but be more effectively practiced (1 Tim 4:6, 11-16; 6:2-3).

A. Jesus was a Teacher of God’s Word (Jesus is called teacher 45 times in the Gospels and rabbi 14 times).

Andrew Sullivan cited Thomas Jefferson action of cutting all miracles of Jesus out of the Gospels and just leaving His words as the example we should follow. In other words, Jefferson, like Sullivan rejected the supernatural. The problem is that Jesus did not reject the supernatural. In His own words He said He would rise from the dead. It is interesting that the model early church continued steadfastly in “the apostles’ doctrine” not Jesus words. I guess Jefferson cut that part out also.

Jesus’ follower were and are called “disciples” or learners. As Peter later wrote, believers are like “newborn babes” who “desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:2).

Jesus commissioned His Church to make disciples or learners of God’s Word by winning people to Christ, baptizing them, and teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have taught you (Matthew 28:19-20).

B. Pastors are teachers of God's Word. Pastors according to 1 Timothy 3:2 "are apt or able to teach." Pastors are called "pastor/teachers" in Ephesians 4:11. The entire organization of the early church was totally reorganized so the pastors could devote themselves to the study of God's Word in order to teach and preach.

C. All believers are to be teachers of God's Word. Paul in Colossians 3:16 commanded all believers to "let the Word of God dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another."

1. Through Sunday School
2. Women's and Men's Bible Study
3. AWANA
4. Power Zone
5. Through our regular services
6. Through your conversions with people (Acts 8:4)
7. Through daily taking in God's Word like the Bereans in Acts 17:11 who "searched the scriptures daily." Study at home with commentaries. Go to bible.org.

Wiersbe, "Their Christian faith was a day-to-day reality, not a once-a-week routine."

MacArthur said, "A believer should count it a wasted day when he doesn't learn something new from, or is not more deeply enriched, by the truth of God's Word" (Acts page 83).