

Subject: *Marks of a Normal Christian Life – Part 3*

Scripture: *Acts 2:37-47*

When will things get back to normal? Is this the new normal? What are the marks of a normal Christian life? By God's definition this is what a normal Christian life looks like.

1st Mark of a Normal Christian Life is a *Serious Commitment to Scripture*

The phrase "Sola Scriptura" (Scripture Alone) has been used since the 1500s, and it means that Scripture is completely inspired by God, it is the final authority for what we believe and how we live, and it is sufficient.

2nd Mark of a Normal Christian Life is a *Serious Commitment to Christ*

The disciples were first called Christians first in Antioch (Acts 11:26). Jesus told us to make disciples of all nations (Mt. 28). A disciple is a committed learner and follower. A disciple learns who Christ is and what He commands. A disciple is someone who answers Christ's call in Mt. 16:24, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself (self-denial), take up his cross (self-sacrifice), and follow me (obedience)."

3rd Mark of a Normal Christian Life is a *Serious Commitment to the Church*

This is what we are going to consider now. It is remarkable that we find all three marks of a normal Christian life in our text (Acts 2). Peter preached from the Old Testament Scriptures. His sermon proved that Christ fulfilled everything that was predicted of Him. Many people were saved that day and the Lord established the church.

This is the third time in the NT where the church is mentioned (Mt. 16, "I will build my church" and Mt. 18, in connection with church discipline). We must never forget how important the church is.

Acts 20:28 *Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.*

Ephesians 5:25-27 ²⁵ *Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;* ²⁶ *That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,* ²⁷ *That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*

Christ is the Good Shepherd and the church is His flock.

Christ is the bridegroom and the church is His bride.

Christ is the foundation and the church is His temple.

Christ is the head and the church is His body.

Most of the Paul's letters in the NT were written to local churches (Romans, etc.). The book of Revelation begins with seven messages to the seven churches in Asia Minor (chapters 2-3). Paul wrote two letters to Timothy and one to Titus, both of them served as pastors. This is the reason Paul wrote to Timothy:

1 Timothy 3:15 *But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*

Let's dig in and look at the elements of a New Testament church. These are the things that every church ought to be focused on and every believer should be committed to.

1. Christ-centered preaching (vs. 22-36)

The Book of Acts contains 10 major sermons (3 by Peter, 1 by Stephen, and 6 by Paul). On this occasion Peter was the preacher. One thing stands out in this sermon and in all 10 of the sermons in Acts. Each message was an exposition of the Scripture. Exposition means to expose the text, to read and explain it, and then apply it. Peter's message was all about Jesus showing from the OT Scripture that Jesus was the Christ.

- Christ was crucified (vs. 23) – fulfillment of Isa. 53
- Christ was raised from the dead (vs. 24-32) – fulfillment of Ps. 16
- Christ was exalted to God's right hand (vs. 33-35) – fulfillment of Ps. 110
- Christ sent the Holy Spirit (vs. 33) – fulfillment of Joel 2
- God has made Jesus both Lord and Christ (vs. 36) – the grand conclusion

The people were confronted with the uncomfortable truth that they had crucified the Son of God.

2. Converted membership (vs. 37-41)

This first church already had about 120 members (Acts 1:15, called "disciples" or followers of Christ). On this day after Peter preached they had 3,000 new members, and all of them were new converts. As Peter closed his sermon three things took place:

- Conviction (vs. 37) – They knew they were guilty of sin, especially the sin of rejecting Christ. The greatest sin is unbelief. The greatest sin is the sin of omission, failure to honor Christ and submit to Him as Lord.
- Conversion (vs. 38) – Repent (a change of heart, will, and action) – Peter made it clear that God promised to save them if they would come on His terms. This was God's sovereign call to salvation (vs. 39). Peter exhorted them to repent (vs. 40), but he stopped short of manipulation.
- Confession (vs. 41) – Baptism is an outward confession of their faith in Christ.

3. Continuing discipleship (vs. 42)

They continued steadfastly after their conversion. Salvation is not like crossing the finish line, but like leaving the starting line. They were consistently learning and obeying, sharing fellowship, observing the Lord's Supper, and praying. Continuing as a disciple is a sign of genuine salvation and part of the Great Commission.

***Matthew 28:20** Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

4. Committed stewardship (vs. 44-45)

The church ought to be known for its giving. Christian people should be the most generous people. The Bible teaches us that we are all stewards (managers) of our time, our talents, and our treasure. The Bible teaches two financial principles for the church: tithes and offerings. The tithe is required giving and offerings are sacrificial giving over and above our tithes.

5. Close fellowship (vs. 46)

These believers met daily "with one accord." This is what Christ prayed for His church.

***John 17:20-21**²⁰ Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;²¹ That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.*

***John 13:34-35**³⁴ A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.³⁵ By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*

6. Consistent growth (vs. 47)

In verse 47, the Lord continues daily in saving the lost. The Lord builds His church. He is the only one who can change the heart and enable us to repent and believe. He saves the lost and then they are added to the church.

Knowing what the Bible teaches about a normal Christian, are these things true of you? If someone were to ask three people who know you best, would they testify that...

You are seriously committed to Scripture?

You are seriously committed to Christ?

You are seriously committed to the church?