

A Pattern for Doing Good

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Date: 06 March 2022

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[0 : 00] If you have your Bibles, look with me to Acts chapter 2, and we're going to look at verses 41 through 47 this morning. And I want to preach this morning and next Sunday on the same subject, same seven verses, about a pattern for doing church.

Can you imagine when Jesus died and arose and then He left? What those disciples were thinking about, where do we go from here?

I mean, what path do we take? What should we do next? Jesus gave them some instructions, and thankfully, they followed those instructions to the letter.

And as a result, the church began to develop in a fashion just as we would hope that it would. So this morning, we're going to think about a pattern for doing church.

And to understand what they did at a particular point in time, you have to understand what happened between His death and resurrection and what we're going to look at this morning.

[1 : 00] So I'm going to paraphrase the first two chapters. I'm going to just give you a running quick version of what occurs in chapter 1 and chapter 2 of the book of Acts. And then we're going to pick up in Acts chapter 2 and verse 41 through 47, and we'll look at four points today and then five points next Sunday.

I started to preach all of them at one time. Aren't you glad I decided not to do that? We'd have been out around 1 o'clock, so I don't know. No, I just decided it would be better if we just broke it up over two weeks, so we're going to do that this morning.

So let's go back, and here's what's happened. Jesus has died on the cross. These last few weeks prior to His death, He's done everything He can to prepare His disciples for His coming death.

One of the chief things He's done in telling them He's going to die is that He's not going to leave them alone because these are guys who they've been so dependent on Him. You can imagine that and picture that in your mind, right?

These are fishermen and tax collectors and just come from all different walks. There's nobody here who's theologically educated. They don't know about where Jesus is going with His church at this point in time.

[2 : 05] So He tells them, don't worry. I'm not going to leave you comfortless. I'm going to send the Spirit who now lives in me to come live in you, okay?

He talks about the Holy Spirit, the Holy Ghost. He's going to come, the Comforter, the Advocate. He's going to dwell in you. You stay when I die and I leave you in Jerusalem because that's where He's going to come.

You stay put in Jerusalem. He tells them that toward the end, okay? So then He dies. Three days later, He arises from the dead. He begins to make a lot of appearances.

A lot of different people witness the resurrected living Christ. Forty days pass since His resurrection and Jesus now ascends into the heavens.

And just before He ascends into the heavens, He makes it perfectly clear. Matthew puts it one way. Luke puts it another in Acts 1, verse 8. But they're essentially saying the same thing. I want you to take the gospel to the ends of the earth, all the people groups of the earth.

[3 : 11] Bill Oates would tell us today when he made that description, he wasn't talking about geographical lines that we think of as nations because those come and go and change constantly. He's thinking about people and people groups.

And what he's saying is, I want you to take the gospel, the good news, to all the people groups of the earth. The Holy Spirit is going to empower you to do that ministry.

When they come to Christ, you baptize them. That's going to be the mark of those who are part of the church, who are part of the kingdom of God going forward.

They're going to be people who've been baptized. They'll make a public display of their faith in me, right? And so then, according to Acts 1, verse 9, immediately he begins to rise up. Now, we've never seen anybody do that, right? We think about levitation, that kind of thing. Magicians do it. This was no trick. Jesus suddenly begins to rise up. I can see all these disciples would have done exactly as you and I would do, standing there looking like a deer in headlights, right?

[4 : 14] Mouth, open a gate. And they're watching as Jesus begins to ascend. And suddenly, he's enveloped in a cloud, according to Acts 1, and he's whisked away into there.

They're still standing there gawking. Well, two men in white apparel appear. And these two men in white apparel say, Ye Galileans, why stand ye gazing into the heavens? This same Jesus whom you've seen leave is doubtless going to come again.

Boy, that's comforting, isn't it? That tells me one day King Jesus is coming back for all of us and for all the believers who have ever died in Christ. He's coming again.

So they witness this. But now here's the million-dollar question. Where to from here? His basic instruction has been, stay in Jerusalem.

After the resurrection, they've gone down to Galilee. He's brought them back to Judea. They're in Jerusalem. Stay here. So you know what they do? The next few verses in Acts 1 says they obey him.

[5 : 15] They go back to that upper room where, in all likelihood, they've observed the Passover 40 days earlier. And the Bible says they begin to pray. They met day after day after day.

They elect a new apostle in the place of Judas, who is now gone. And they meet now with 120 believers. This band of disciples now numbers about 120 believers.

And they meet day after day after day after day for 10 days. They meet and they pray. And the result is God has brought them to a place of complete, perfect unity and harmony.

They are in one accord, right? Their minds are right. Their hearts are right. They're looking for what God's going to do next. On the 50th day, the day of Pentecost, a Jewish celebration that started long before, suddenly God puts new meaning in the word Pentecost.

He comes to invade this earth to dwell in human beings who are believers, just like all of us in this room. And here's how it occurs.

[6 : 28] They're in that upper room. And as they're praying, suddenly there is the sound of a rushing mighty wind. I would imagine it would be the sound of something like a tornado.

I don't know if any of you have ever lived through an actual tornado coming through your neighborhood. My wife and I did that in the 80s, a terrible, frightening thing. Sounds just like a train coming through your house.

Took out 10 huge trees in our yard. Never touched our home. God just put his hand on us and blessed us and saved us. It was amazing. But the noise is absolutely unforgettable.

As long as I live, I'll never forget that noise. In all I could, in my mind, it was probably something like that, the noise of a tornado. And suddenly, tongue of fire appears, a huge tongue of fire.

And then this giant tongue of fire begins to divide into 120 parts and rest upon the heads of all those in the room who are believers.

[7 : 29] Well, you can imagine they leave that upper room. Some believe they went to the Temple Mount. Some believe maybe the Mount of Olives. But they're now outside. And a crowd begins to gather.

Everyone's leaving their homes wondering, what is that wild sound we've heard? And when they encounter the 120, these 120 believers, they're doing something that you have never witnessed in your life.

These are people who are obviously Galileans, but they're speaking in a variety of different languages. I mean, to some, it just looked like mass confusion, no doubt.

A lot of different languages are being spoken. But here's the reason why it's the plan of God. He has brought people from the ends of the earth to come and to celebrate Passover and now the Jewish festival of Pentecost.

And when they hear this rushing, mighty noise, they go out to investigate. And when they come, they witness these people speaking in all types of language. And some who recognize that's that group of believers, those disciples of Jesus, they begin to scoff and say, they're drunk with wine.

[8 : 40] And guess what? Guess who emerges? The guy who is impetuous? The guy who only removes one foot from his mouth to insert the other? Peter steps forward and says, these guys are not drinking.

These guys are not drunk. It's early in the morning. Be sensible. No, this is the prophet Joel, what he spoke of. Now, let me just ask you. Would you ever guess that Peter knew the book of Joel? Peter says, this is what Joel talked about in his prophecy. That the Holy Spirit would come. God would do some dramatic, unbelievable things.

And that men and women who are believers would prophesy in his name. And that's what's happening right now. Peter then launches into his first sermon.

And he preaches. He goes back to the Psalms. He quotes David. And he ties all the Old Testament together to prove that Jesus is the Christ. And that they, I can see him pointing his finger in their face, have put him to death.

[9 : 45] That they are responsible for the death of the Savior that God sent the Savior. But they have rejected their own Messiah. And those people, when they hear that message of Peter, not all of them.

Some of them were skeptics. Some of them were scoffers. But listen, a huge number of those people who had gathered in this outdoor scene, they are pricked to their heart.

Have you ever been so convicted by the Spirit of God that you just, you thought you were going to die unless you could get relief. And that's what happened to these men. They rushed forward to Peter.

I can see them almost put their hands on them and say, Peter, Peter, tell us, what must we do to be made right with God? Peter looks at them and says, here's what you must do.

You must repent of your sin, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and be baptized. Every one of you in this crowd who have genuinely repented and believed on Jesus, you need to come and be baptized.

[10 : 45] Now watch. 3,000, you're going to read in just a minute, responded in that fashion. 3,000 came and said, we want to be baptized.

We have repented of our sin. Here's the million-dollar question. You're one of those 120, right? Instead of Jerusalem, suppose it was right here in Picken, South Carolina.

It was a very real place, just like Picken is a real place. It could have happened here as easily as anywhere if God had ordained that. What would you do if you were living at that time, you're 120 in number, and 3,000 suddenly responded.

Have you ever seen 3,000 people respond? I've never in my life seen that. 3,000 people responded to the gospel, and now where do you go from there? Well, the next two weeks, I'm going to tell you nine things you ought to do.

And I want to tell you something. If it was good for these folk to do in Jerusalem, guess what? You know where I'm going, don't you? It's good for you to do in pickings. Yes, you can't get a better pathway than the one they took.

[11 : 52] I, in the end of my ministry, when I was pastor, would go to some conferences, and I would hear a lot of even denominational folk talk about casting a vision. And they would say, man, what we need is for our pastor to come in here and pastor all over the country to get a vision of where God is going to take.

And I want to tell you, I used to always rebel against that kind of thinking. You know why? You don't need a pastor to give you a vision. King Jesus has already given you the vision. We just need to do what he's already told us to do in Scripture, right?

And guess what? That's what these folk did. They simply obeyed Jesus. I want you to notice this morning four things they did. First of all, they baptized those who were saved.

That's the beginning place. That's what he told them to do. Go make disciples and baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Look at verse 41 of chapter 2. So those who accepted his message were baptized.

And that day about 3,000 people were added to them. So they did exactly what Jesus told them to do.

[13 : 01] Now, let me tell you why that's so important. Baptism then wasn't anything like it is now. The mode of baptism, I think we Baptists have got it right.

I wouldn't be a Baptist if I didn't believe that. We Baptists believe they ought to be baptized by immersion, and that's the kind of baptism that we practice. But I want to tell you something. The similarity between our baptism and their baptism ends right there.

Let me tell you why. When we baptize people, we take them into the sanctuary, we call it. You know what a sanctuary is, right?

It's a protected environment. I used to get in trouble with the Mount Pleasant police when I was a little boy for shooting birds in Mount Pleasant. It was a bird sanctuary, right? You can't do that. It's illegal. So a sanctuary is where you go to be protected.

So we take these young believers and say, you're safe here. We promise there won't be any lost people laughing at you, making fun of you. We'll get your families and your friends, and we'll all gather together safely at First Baptist Church Pickens or at Brushy Creek or whatever church, and we'll baptize you, and everybody will give you a big round of applause, and they'll make you feel really, and somebody may even carry you out to lunch.

[14:17] It'll be great. I've even heard of churches lately in order to get people baptized. Hey, if you've never been baptized and you like to be baptized, just come on down and we'll baptize.

We've got the swimming pool from Brother So-and-So, and we're going to baptize 100 this afternoon. You be one of that 100, okay? And we hope that sometime after that, maybe if they get associated with the church, they'll come to know Jesus. Not how it was then.

Let me tell you, when you were baptized in that day and time, you were a marked man or woman. Man, you had to give a long, serious thought to being baptized because here's what was happening.

You were dying to everything you'd ever held to previous to that moment in time. You were dying to your sins. You were dying to your old religion. You were dying to your way of life. You were dying to your family.

A lot of those believers knew, I'm going to be cut off going forward. My own wife, my own husband, my own children, my own parents, they won't have anything to do with me going forward because they just don't believe this.

[15:20] They think this is nonsense. They've not embraced the message of the cross. And so they knew, boy, I'm marked. In the Old Testament, the mark was circumcision.

In the New Testament, the mark is baptism. And it meant something to be baptized. And rather than a baptismal pool in church, you know where they took them? To the local lake or river.

Folks would be washing their clothes and gathering water and bathing and recreating and doing everything that people do at lakes and rivers. And they would say, wait a second, that's that band of Christians.

That's a small band of Christians. And here comes 3,000 people behind them. And they're baptizing them. Boy, what a state. Look at that so-and-so. He's the local banker.

I mean, look, that's a real estate agent, right? He's being baptized. That's the local merchant. Man, that's the guy who was a Pharisee. He's being baptized.

[16:18] Man, it was earth-shaking. So the first thing to do is they say to these folk who have received Christ, come and take your stand with the Lord Jesus Christ. If you mean business, come and be baptized.

I want you to notice one thing before we leave this first point. And that day about 3,000 people were added to them. You know what I think a lot of Baptists think about that?

They read that and they say, hmm, I wonder who the church clerk was. They were busy that day, you know? I mean, if you have it in mind that somebody said, we've got to get a ream of paper because this is a lot of folk we're going to add.

We've got 120 names right now, but we're going to add 3,000 more names. Boy, you're thinking it's just way, way, way off. I am absolutely confident as I stand here. I don't have any proof of this, but I'm absolutely confident when I read the New Testament that that concept was completely foreign to their thinking.

They didn't think people were coming to join an institution. They thought people are being adopted into our family. A close-knit family of 120 people who have had one objective in life, and that is to follow Jesus.

[17:26] It has now expanded to 3,120 people. And by the way, it's going to grow daily. It's going to grow daily. But they didn't think about put a name on a sheet of paper.

Why would you put a name on a sheet of paper? You know how we put people's names on a sheet of paper? So we can brag about them. Or so we can boast that we've got so many members. Or so we won't forget them. So that they won't be lost somewhere.

But I'm going to tell you, they couldn't imagine that. These people have come to Christ. They're not going to walk away from us. They're bound to us. I mean, we're family. That's why they call them. You know what they call them? You do know. You may not think you know. That's a trick question. I'm not going to answer. You know what it is. Brothers and sisters in Christ. And that's why later on the world kind of made fun of them.

They said, well, those folk are guilty of incest. You've got husbands and wives who call each other brothers and sisters. It was not about anything like that. These people were in such close relationship.

[18:24] When you read the epistles of Paul, you see it. Man, they felt for each other. They had a close, close time. When Paul in his letters writes back to those churches he's formed, He loves these people and they love him.

There's a close-knit bond, right? So the first thing they did, they went and baptized those who had just been saved. Second thing they did, those who had been believers for a while began discipling those who were new to the faith.

What a concept. Look at verse 42. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching. If you're using the King James Version this morning, the King James Version puts it this way.

They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine. The apostles' doctrine, even the word teaching, is off just a little bit.

It was teaching. But if you're thinking of something, you know, like the Apostles' Creed where they got all the bases covered and say, You need to know this.

[19:33] It's not that. You know what they did? They sat down. I'll just come down here to illustrate what I'm talking about. They'd get in a room, I believe with all my heart, and they'd just sit down on something like this, pull up a chair, so to speak, and they'd say, Let's just talk about Jesus.

Let's just talk about Jesus. Peter, tell them what you know about Jesus. And Peter would begin to tell them stories and places Jesus had been and things he had done and probably even the times he had rebuked him.

He'd say, You know, one time I got my thinking all messed up, and Jesus had to create me. And, boy, he slapped my hand and said, Can't think that way, Peter. And then there were times that James and John, those two over there, that everybody admires, Hey, you know what?

They got divine about who would be the big shot in the kingdom. And Jesus had to set them straight. And they just listened to story after story after story about Jesus. All the stories you can tell by my preaching since I've been here, I love to preach about Jesus.

I love just the stories of Jesus. I just stay there all the time, right? And so they just tell these stories, and they just love Jesus. And they hear about the teaching of Jesus and the Sermon on the Mount and what Jesus did.

[20:46] And all that involved a number of aspects. It involved teaching, but it also involved coaching. And can I tell you something? It's exactly what Jesus did.

For three and a half years, that's all he did. He just picked 12 guys, and then some others came alongside. We don't read much about those others. But there were 120 and all who pretty much followed Jesus from place to place to place to place.

They just enveloped themselves around Jesus. And Jesus let them hang out with him. And they became his life. And he taught them along the way. And he coached them along the way.

And he corrected them along the way. And I'm going to tell you something. That's what discipleship looks like. Discipleship, we Baptists, we want to do everything in 13 weeks, right? If we can fit it into a quarter, that's what we're going to do.

We're going to make you a disciple in 13 weeks. Uh-uh, you're not either. Making disciples takes time. And it requires doing life with people. It means I come along beside you, and I'm going to disciple you.

[21:46] And it means I have to invest in you and be willing to discipline you and pray over you and set an example for you. But it also means you have to have a teachable spirit, and you have to be willing to allow me to have input into your life.

And you've got to stay by my side, right? Or it won't work. And I'm going to tell you about Southern Baptists. I don't want to be critical of Southern Baptists, but I've got to be honest with you. We've done a pretty good job for a long time.

Not so much in these last days, but back in the 40s and 50s and 60s and 70s, we did a fair job at evangelism. We got pretty bold about going out and telling people about Jesus and sending missionaries and all that.

But I'm going to tell you something. We've done a pretty lousy job from the get-go of making disciples. Because making disciples is work in the trenches.

Making disciples is not glorious. Making disciples won't win you awards. I'm telling you, that's why the church is in such a mess today. Because we've got a lot of folk in the church.

[22 : 45] We've got people by the thousands on our rolls. Who are about nine miles wide and a quarter of an inch deep. You understand that? And I don't mean to hurt anyone's feelings in this auditorium this morning.

But there are some of you probably in that category. You don't want to be there. You didn't intend to be there. But nobody ever came along your side. They were satisfied when you came and you were baptized to just let you go your way.

He'll make it. And if not, he'll go somewhere else. They didn't have that idea in the New Testament. I'm going to tell you, that kind of thing is foreign to the New Testament. When they came to the park, they thought, man, you're a part of us.

You've joined our family. Can you imagine a dinner table? Your daughter turns to you and says, I don't want to be a part of this family anymore. I'm going to go join so-and-so's family. That's just unthinkable. And so they disciplined these people who came to Christ.

Thirdly, don't you see this? They created fellowship with each other. Look at verse 42. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread. Now, fellowship, it wasn't the way we think about fellowship.

[23 : 52] When we think about fellowship, we think, all right, we're going to get some Coke and cookies, right? Somebody's going to bring some chicken. We're going to have fellowship together. Now, fellowship, the word in the Greek is the word koinonia, and it simply means partnership.

Partnership. How many of you in this room have a partnership in some aspect of your life? Anybody here? A lot of you have partnerships. You don't even know it.

You know it? Can I tell you something? I hope you think of your membership at First Baptist Pickens as a partnership. I sure hope you think of your marriage as a partnership.

That's exactly what Paul is talking about in 2 Corinthians 6 when he says this. Don't be unequally yoked together with unbelievers for what? There's that word.

Fellowship. Partnership. Does life have with darkness? You can't have light and dark being partners. They just won't work, right? It's either light or it's darkness, but it can't be accommodated.

[25 : 00] They have different values. They do different things. So when he's talking about a partnership, he means they're joined at the hip. And that's how it ought to be in the church.

When you read, as I said a few minutes ago, the epistles of Paul, it's obvious Paul talks about the body that everybody has different gifts and everybody's important and everybody plays a different role.

And you know what he goes on to say? When one part of the body hurts, the whole body hurts. You ever got up in the night to go to the bathroom and you stub your toe on the bedpost?

Ooh, does that hurt? Right? Am I the only one that's ever done that? Goodness gracious. I mean, it'll just bring you to your knees, right?

It's just a toe. And you ever just say, man, it's a shake-off. It's just a toe. It's not my heart. I'm okay. No, you hurt, man. And I'm going to tell you something.

[25 : 56] That's how it is in the body of Christ. When one part of the body hurts, everybody ought to be so connected. You can't artificially produce this. You either are that connected or you're not.

But let me show you how it works. If my daughter, I can't say it. If my daughter goes to Mar and finds out she's got cancer, she don't have to tell me to hurt.

She don't have to say, well, you ought to be concerned about me. Because I'm going to tell you, right now, just say, doctor, find a way to give it to me and take it away from her.

And that's what any of you would do. Because you love them, man. You're tied to them. And that's what it is to have fellowship. It's to be partners.

Now, does it involve eating meals, too? Yeah, it does. That's how you begin to develop that partnership. I want to read you a verse of Scripture about that. Look, if you will, at what he says in verse 46.

[27 : 03] Is that fellowship?

No, but it's an indication of the creation of fellowship. That's how you create this partnership. You've got to get to know one another. If the only time you ever see each other is once a week on Sunday morning, you don't have fellowship.

When I pastored at Brushy Creek Baptist Church, years and years ago, in the early going, we had a lot of folk coming and joining those early years. And we started a thing where we would have a new member fellowship once a quarter.

And our staff would come, and we'd invite folk to come. We'd serve a real good meal. And at the end, after fellowshiping with them and talking with them and all that, I'd stand up, and I'd give about a two-minute talk. And I always keep it real short.

Here's basically what I'd say. I'll give you the two-minute talk. I'll do it in 30 seconds. I'd say if you can't think of somebody after you've been here, remember, six, seven, eight, ten months, that you would call in the middle of the night.

[28 : 09] If somebody in your family suddenly got sick and you need somebody to come and stay with the kids. If you couldn't think of somebody to go pick up your kids because something happened, you had an accident, you got held over at work, to go pick up your kids in your place.

If you can't think of somebody like that in the next six, eight, ten months that you're here, we won't see you in all likelihood two or three years from now because you'll go somewhere else. You know what I'm talking about?

There's some of you right now, if that were to happen to you, you don't have a clue who you'd call. And it's because you don't have that trust relationship with anybody that you don't impose on them. You wouldn't dare do that to them because I just barely know them.

But I'm going to tell you something. I do that with people with whom I'm a church member because I love them and because they love me and I love them.

And it's a mutual understanding. I can call on you any time I need you. You understand what I'm saying? And that fellowship often begins around a dinner table. I seldom recommend books.

[29 : 09] You know that. I've only recommended two since I've been there. Actually, I've only one. But I want to tell you another one. Go get this book. It's a book by a lady by the name of Rosara Butterfield.

Rosara Butterfield. My wife and I read it probably a year or so ago. And here's the title of it. The Gospel Comes with a House Key.

The Gospel Comes with a House Key. It'll be one of the most eye-opening. The most eye-opening. Convicting. And extraordinary books you've ever read. And here's what it's about.

This lady is from New England. She's not like probably anybody in this room. She's a northerner. She's a northerner. Super, super well-educated.

Taught literature in English in Ivy League school. Was a lesbian. Came from a super ultra-liberal background. And somebody invited her to come to their house and have a meal.

[30 : 16] And she began to do that. And little by little, without anybody being pushy or forcey with her, they loved this woman. Not led her, but loved her to Jesus. And she abandoned her ways.

Gave her heart and life to Christ. Today she's a pastor's wife in Durham, North Carolina. Can you believe that? And you know what she does? Everybody she meets, she invites them to come to her house.

So that not just on Sundays, but Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, they never know who's going to show up at their house. Typically, they'll have a crowd. And she just wins them to Christ over dinner, where they don't even talk much about Jesus.

But she just gets to know them, and they get to trust her. And then she shares her faith with them. And they see that she genuinely loves them. And ultimately, they come to Christ.

People of all walks that you cannot, you need to get that book and read it. That's what real fellowship looks like. If you want a path going forward, what should we do at First Baptist Pickens?

[31 : 24] Let me tell you something. Get out the gospel. I'll talk more about that next week. Baptize those who come to know Christ. Let it be meaningful. Let it be a testimony. Disciple those who come to Christ in the faith.

See them grow up strong in Christ. And create a fellowship that won't quit. I'm in a fellowship where people say, these people are family to me. I mean, I don't just like some of them.

I love them all. We're all different. But we're all a part of a family. Here's the last thing, and I close.

They prayed now, at this point, in their Christian walk more than ever before.

Look at Acts 2, 42 and 43. And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and get this, and to prayers.

End of sentence. New verse. Then, after the devoting themselves to these things, and especially prayer, then fear came over everyone.

[32 : 28] Then fear came over everyone. Look at the rest of it. And many wonders and signs were being performed through the apostles.

That verb came upon, in the Greek, is in the imperfect tense. In English, we don't look at tense the way they did then.

Imperfect tense, for them, was this. They didn't have just past, present, and future. They had this imperfect tense. And imperfect tense indicated something had begun in the past, but it was ongoing.

It didn't stop. It kept going. So, the picture he paints is this. These people were gathering daily, and they're praying. They're pouring their hearts out to God. And they kept doing that, over and over and over.

And then this happened. Look at the middle of verse 43. And many wonders and signs were being performed through the apostles. God answered their prayers by doing all kinds of unbelievable things.

[33 : 40] I don't mean just little things. Here at Pentecost, 3,000 are saved. A few days later, thousands of others are going to be saved.

They're doing incredible things. One time, Peter and John are on their way to the temple to pray.

And as they're going to pray, they pass this man who is on the street.

He's lame, and he's bad. He wants some money. And he says, can I have some alms? And they look at him and say, we don't have any money to give you. But such as we have, we give unto you. In the name of Jesus, take up your bed and walk. Now, can you imagine a Baptist preacher saying that in Picks and South Carolina? And the guy picks up his cot, and he walks off.

You reckon anybody would talk about that? You know they would. And so here's what happened.

They're praying, and they kept on praying, kept on praying, kept on praying.

[34 : 42] And God began to do things. And as God did things, they stood in awe. It's like, whoa. Wow. Can you believe that? It's not this fear and trembling with, oh, what's going to happen next?

It's this fear of, how great is God? Wow. How great is God? And when they stood in fear, and they were awed of God, here's what happened.

It led them to pray more. It's a cycle. And the more they prayed, the more God did. The more God did, the more they stood in awe. The more they stood in awe, the more they prayed. Do you see that? It just caught fire.

So now you didn't have to beg people to pray. Man, they wanted to pray. What's God going to do next? One time he said amen with an earthquake. I mean, it was just incredible things God was doing.

And so, boy, people got excited, and they were praying like they never prayed before. Now, a lot of Baptist churches think what we need to do is get the slickest preacher we can get, the best staff we can get, the most powerful music program, and then we'll be ready to rock.

[35 : 49] And we need this program or that program. So-and-so is doing that program. If we just had that program, we could make it go, man. You know what you need more than anything? To be awed by God.

I mean that. To stand absolutely in awe of God, because I've got to be honest with you, we like to talk about that, but we just seldom are. I've been preaching 50 years, and there have only been a few times that I've really been in a worship service awed by God.

I've been spoken to by God. But I remember I saw God do what we call the miraculous. Have you noticed in the days and times we're so hungry for God to do something? We'll call anything a miracle.

Like if we get 300 here, I want you to know something. That is not a miracle. If we have 500 here, that won't be a miracle. It'd be a good thing. We'll praise God and we'll thank you for his help in it.

I'm not saying God won't be a part of that. That's not a miracle. Here's a miracle. This arm is this long and this arm is this long, and suddenly it's that long. That's a miracle. You understand?

[36 : 54] I'm crippled and I get up and I walk, and that's a miracle. 3,000 folk hear the gospel, and they all go rushing forward and say, tell me, how can I be saved? That is a miracle.

You understand? We have lost our sense of awe of God. But if we've ever had an opportunity to get it back, and I mean this, if I've ever made anything in my life, I've never talked about it any time as much.

I do, but I just want to be honest with you. I think we have the most incredible opportunity right now we've had in Ralph Carter's lifetime. And I want to tell you why.

And I don't know any more than anybody else in this room knows, but I just want to tell you something. I haven't for 40 years. My dad was in the military. I've never really believed we could come under a nuclear attack. I just thought powers that be are smarter than that.

They're not going to do that. You're looking at somebody who doesn't feel that way today. This guy in Russia, I believe, is a dangerous guy. I believe Putin is a dangerous, dangerous, dangerous man.

[37 : 57] He doesn't seem to me to have people close to him. When you don't have people close to you, you're in a place where you don't have anything to lose. You just want to make history. And so you can go for broke.

When he threatens nuclear war, he scares me like no other Russian or Chinese leader has ever scared me before. If that were to happen, I'm not saying the planet wouldn't survive.

I don't know. I'm not wise enough, smart enough to know. I hear the things that you hear. And I know this. It will never be the same on this planet in mine, your, in your children and grandchildren's lifetime if that were to occur.

It will never be the same. And here's the opportunity we have. We have the opportunity to fall on our face and say, oh, God, Biden's not going to save him.

I don't say that detrimentally to Biden. He couldn't save him if he wanted to. Politics is not going to save him. And those people, as much courage as they've mustered, and I'm so, so proud of, they can't withstand the Russians on their own.

[39 : 01] You know that, and I know that. So I'm going to tell you something. The only way they're going to be saved is if somehow God divinely intervenes. We need a solution, not somebody to assassinate him.

We need a solution where God intervenes and God deals with this. And I'm not suggesting how he does it because I don't know. But for God to do something where the world would say, wow, I didn't see that coming.

I wonder what that was that happened. And people will begin to say, that was the hand of God.

That's the hand of God. There have been so many times I prayed and said, God, we just need folk to see you because they don't leave us anymore when we tell them how real you are.

God, would you show up and do something just so incredible that nobody could get credit for? Because everybody out there wants to take credit for everything, whether they did it or God did it. But do something, God, that only you can do. Wouldn't that be amazing? If you want to be the church that God wants you to be going forward, do those four things this morning.

[40 : 06] Baptize those who you lead to Christ. Disciple them in the faith. Create a strong fellowship. And pray to you, get a sense of the awe of God. Let's stand and we'll have our hymn of invitation.

If you're here today and God has spoken to your heart and said to you, man, this is a place you ought to plant your family and your heart and make this your home and these people be brothers and sisters in Christ, you come right now as we sing this hymn of invitation.

We aren't McMaster. I want to keep and pray together. Wait. Sorry, my name is Michael Farrak. We'll be right. I want to pray for you. I want to pray for you sometimes you're ready to start your children.

And listen. I want to go again. Are youpo■? I want to pray for you. And my Social Securityorar will find something special. What do you pray for all your children? Are you ready? You are ready?