

“The Early Church in Action”
Acts 1:12–26; August 26, 2007

1. 1:12–14 The Activity and the Atmosphere of the Early Church

a. They were gathered together

- i. 1:13–14, The apostles are each listed by name; The woman who were believers were also with them; later when Peter addressed the believers, 120 were assembled
- ii. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. Heb 10:24-25 (ESV)
- iii. Trying to participate in a local church, by watching T.V. is like trying to play basketball over the phone. You can talk about the game. You can exchange helpful hints about how to play. But you can't actually play basketball without at least two people coming onto one court at one time.
- iv. So it is with the church, we have to assemble together in order to be able to minister to one another and to carry out God's purposes for His church.

b. They were in unity

- i. 1:14, “All these with one accord...”
- ii. Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity! Psalms 133:1 (ESV)
- iii. ¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, Eph 4:11-13 (ESV)
- iv. When a football team walks onto a field, each player has a different job to do, each player has different skills and strengths, and each player may have their own ideas about which plays should be called and what the coaches should do. But in the midst of all of this diversity, they all share one thing in common: they all want to win. It is this shared passion to win that causes them to work together.
- v. One preacher outlined his sermon like this: let nothing in this world sidetrack me, ...attract me, ...distract me

- vi. If we share a passion to be witnesses in the world and to make disciples of all people, then we too will be united by a single passion.

c. They were devoted to prayer

- i. 1:14, "All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer"
- ii. Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 1 Thess. 5:16-18 (ESV)
- iii. A.C. Dixon declared, "When we rely upon organization, we get what organization can do; when we rely upon education, we get what education can do; when we rely upon eloquence, we get what eloquence can do...but when we rely upon prayer, we get what God can do."
- iv. We need to give every area of our life over to God in prayer.

2. 1:15–20 **The Attitude of the Early Church Toward Scripture and the Providence of God**

a. They recognized the providence of God, 1:16

- i. Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled..., Acts 1:16
- ii. ¹¹ In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, Eph 1:11
- iii. The providence of God is something that people often struggle with. Most of the problems with this teaching of scripture arise when people take it to extremes. Anything taken to an extreme is bad. Water is one of the best things you can drink. In fact, your body has to have water to survive, but if you drink too much at time it will kill you.
- iv. –I see two extremes today, both of which I believe are insufficient to account for the entire teaching of scripture. First, there are those who say that everything is predestined and we are just puppets going through predetermined motions. The second extreme views humanity in complete control. I believe the truth lies between these two extremes.
- v. Man people struggle with the passage in Exodus where the Bible says that God hardened Pharaoh's heart...I don't believe that God ever hardened anything that didn't want to be hardened.
- vi. Romans 1...God gave them over
- vii. Remember the King and Mordecai? The king had freedom to make his own choices, but God kept him awake one night until finally he chose to have the annals read to him. The king's servant opened the scroll, but God made it open to the passage about Mordecai. After hearing the

passage about Mordecai, the king chose to honor Mordecai, which was of course God's plan all along.

viii. We need a healthy, biblical understanding of God's providence today.

b. They recognized the inspiration of the Old Testament Scriptures, 1:16

- i. ¹⁶ "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, Acts 1:16
- ii. ²¹ For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 1:21
- iii. ¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work. 2 Tim 3:16-17
- iv. If you don't have a conviction about the inspiration of scripture, you'll never experience the full joy of the Christian life. You can't have the assurance of forgiveness or the hope of eternity without knowing that what you read in the Bible is true.
- v. Adrian Rogers once said: "There was a time when preachers would stand in the pulpit, hold up the Word of God, and say, "The Bible Says." Then they started saying, "The church says." Now they just scratch their heads and say, "Well, it seems to me."
- vi. May God help us at Dorsett Shoals Baptist Church if we can't be a witness in this community to boldly proclaim: "The Bible says."
- vii. If you are a born again believer and you have not settled the issue of the inspiration of scripture, you need to go home today and from now till however long it takes you, you need to make this issue the focus of all of your quiet time and all of your prayer time. Because until you get this settled, until you get to the point that you can believe in your heart with all conviction and confidence that God's Word is true, you will be robbed of some of the greatest blessings of the Christian life.

c. They recognized the consequences of rejecting God's will, 1:17-20

- i. Judas was allotted his share with the other apostle's, but he rejected it to go his own way.
- ii. There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death. Prov 16:25 (ESV)
- iii. Many people have destroyed their lives, because they believed they knew a better way to live.
- iv. Seek God's plan for your life and follow it.

3. 1:21–26 The Acceptance of God’s will in the Early Church

a. They followed guidelines, 1:21–22

- i. Guidelines- Must have been with Jesus from the baptism on; must have been a witness of the resurrection
- ii. Notice that they eliminated several options through this process before they went to God in prayer.
- iii. You don’t have to pray about something that is explicit in scripture.
- iv. You don’t have to pray about whether to have an affair or not; witness, tithe
- v. We can use the guidelines of scripture to help us to understand God’s will for our lives.

b. They prayed to seek the Lord’s will, 1:24–25

- i. ²⁴ And they prayed Acts 1:24 (ESV)
- ii. ⁷ "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Matt 7:7-8 (ESV)
- iii. Many times we don’t know God’s will, because we don’t seek God’s will in prayer.
- iv. When we have followed all of the direction that scripture gives us, then we must turn to prayer to receive further insight into God’s will for our lives.

c. They accepted the Lord’s will, 1:26

- i. When the lot fell to Matthias, they made him the 12th apostle. We don’t read of any disagreement or discussion. They accepted the Lord’s will.
- ii. Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Prov 3:5-6 (ESV)
- iii. I believe that sometimes we don’t seek to know the will of God, because we don’t want to know the will of God.
- iv. The youth wear these bracelets that say, “Pray until something happens.” If some adults were honest they’d were a bracelet that says, “Pray until you get the answer you want.” That’s some people’s definition of persistence in prayer.
- v. When the Lord reveals His will to you, you need to be willing to accept it.