

## The Church in Acts – How to be a Berean

Luke, who served as a ministry partner to Paul, wrote the book of Acts. In essence, the book of Acts details the development of the early Christian Church in the 30 or so years following the resurrection of Christ.

Everyone should understand the book of Acts. It is particularly beneficial to ministry leaders in the post-rapture world. You are restarting the Church they started. I AM A WATCHMAN leaders believe the Tribulation era Church will operate much like the first Church profiled in the book of Acts.

The book of Acts provides a template for how ministries should operate. These ten key components of a strong, God-honoring church are based on the entire book of Acts and, in particular, the Church at Berea, which Paul commended in Acts 17.

### Components of a strong, God-honoring ministry

- **Reliance on the Spirit**

Acts 1:7-8 notes that the ‘power’ to accomplish God’s work will come by the Holy Spirit. Zech. 4:6 states it well: *“not by [your] might, nor by your power, but by the Spirit will you succeed.”*

- **Many share in the work**

Acts 1:15-16 and 6:1-7 give examples where new ministry leaders were chosen to support the goal of including many in ministry work. The precedent for this many-servant-leader ministry model is found in Exodus 18 and Numbers 11:16-17.

- **Courage and boldness**

Acts 2:14-39, 3:11-4:22, note how Peter, who just months before denied Christ three times in one night, was anointed and empowered by the Spirit and preached the Gospel message with boldness. Special note: Peter was preaching in Jerusalem, where Jesus was crucified, in the presence of the Pharisees, who Satan used to coordinate Jesus’ crucifixion shortly prior.

- **Togetherness**

Acts 2:41-47, 4:33-37 notes that believers in the early church studied, ate, fellowshiped, prayed, worshipped, and served together. Further, they gave money to a common fund, which supported *“any who had need.”* Believers in the early Church found strength and support in living out the Christian faith *together*. The Church – together – is the Body of Christ.

- **The unlikely one saved and used by God**

Acts 8:26-40, 9, 10 notes God's desire for believers to reach out to the unlovable and the unlikely. The referenced verses indicate God's love for Saul, the persecutor of the church, Cornelius the Roman Centurion, and an Ethiopian eunuch. In truth, we are all unlikely recipients of God's grace. Believers should freely give God's grace, just as believers have freely received God's grace.

- **Martyrdom**

Acts 7, 12:1-4 are two of many references to brave Christians giving their lives for the cause of Christ. Paul and Peter, the principal figures in the book of Acts, also died as martyrs. God calls his people to live for Him, and sometimes, die for Him. Paul said, *"To live is Christ. To die is gain."* Be faithful to the end.

- **A burden to reach the lost**

Acts 8, 13-14, 15-18, 19-21 records the first attempts to take the Gospel beyond the borders of Israel. Paul's missionary journeys should inspire believers to reach beyond their current sphere of influence and outside their comfort zone.

- **Generous giving**

Acts 4:33-37, 11:27-30 details sacrificial giving to support believers with special needs. Spiritually mature believers are quick to give and quick to serve.

- **Dispute resolution**

Acts 15:1-30, 16:3-41 states that believers will not always agree but should always disagree agreeably. For the sake of our witness (John 17:20-21), believers who do not see eye to eye should still strive to walk arm in arm. 2 Timothy 4:11 records how Paul resolved the conflict with John Mark (mentioned in Acts 16:34-41), referring to him as being *"very useful to me."*

- **Sensitive to the Spirit's leading**

Following the leading of the Holy Spirit will lead to a blessing. Being faithful to God's leading is the definition of being a "spiritual success." Acts 16:6-10 explains how God's plans must always supersede our plans.

## **SPOTLIGHT ON THE CHURCH AT BEREIA**

Paul commended the Church at Berea (Acts 17) above all the churches that are mentioned in the book of Acts. The church exhibited five qualities all believers should emulate.

- 1) Those who listened to Paul were Jews. The radical truth that Paul presented was difficult to hear as obedience to it required many lifestyle changes and sacrifices. Still, they listened.
- 2) Those who listened were "*in the synagogue*" seeking truth: They desired to please God. God is pleased when our heart yearns for Him. Jeremiah 29:12 encourages us, "*when we seek Him, we will find Him, if we seek Him with all our heart.*"
- 3) Those who listened were "fair-minded (NKJV). Some translations read, "noble-minded." The hearers set aside preconceived ideas and listened with an open mind and heart. They were willing to consider Paul's message even though it represented a radical shift from everything they had learned in orthodox Judaism.
- 4) The listeners "received the Word." They did not simply recognize Paul as a gifted speaker with an interesting message – they embraced the message. For many of these new believers, becoming a Christ-follower meant they would lose their home, social standing, businesses, land, and more. Yet, in receiving the Word, they entered into a relationship with Jesus Christ – which is priceless.
- 5) Those who listened took matters of faith seriously and tested Paul's message against what we now call *Old Testament Scriptures*. Acts 17 notes that they diligently studied the Word "*every day.*" Further, after finding that the Old Testament prophecies did indeed point to Jesus Christ, they rightly responded to God's invitation to believe. Scripture notes that "*many believed in Christ.*" Their lives, and that synagogue, would never be the same.

Acts presents a model for how Christians should live and what to expect as a follower of Christ. By the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, the Gospel message had been preached to the vast Roman Empire and beyond. The Church in Acts is a story of great blessing and great sacrifice. Those who learn from and embrace the positive characteristics of that church will receive a great reward. We should all be Bereans.