

The State of the Church January 1, 2012

Acts 2:37-47

- V. 38-39 – New Testament Christianity

³⁷ Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?”

³⁸ Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”

⁴⁰ And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation.” ⁴¹ Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them

- V. 41-47 – led to a New Testament Church

⁴² And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. ⁴³ Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, ⁴⁵ and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.

⁴⁶ So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

Positive and Negative Trends in 2011

Two Negative Trends Threatening the Church Today

- Acts 2:40 - Then Peter continued preaching for a long time, strongly urging all his listeners, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation!” (NLT)
- There’s something wrong with preaching that never mentions this. (see also Acts 20:25-31)
- “protect” – the role of family and church
- American Family – starting next week; protection is needed

(1) Consumerism

- The “filter bubble” on the internet
 - Our tastes are ‘filtering’ what we think is relevant from what may be important or uncomfortable.
 - The illusion of control
- We have a culture today where people are taught to feel good instead of be good.
 - This has infiltrated the church. Many ‘believers’ will just take their marbles and go somewhere else or just stay home if they’re challenged in any significant area of their life.

- The Word of God is meant to change our life.
- Heb. 4::1-13 - ¹¹ *Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.* ¹² *For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.* ¹³ *And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.*
- Notice the penetrating aspect of scripture.

(2) *The idolatry of the individual*

- Matt. 6:33 - *But seek first **the kingdom of God** and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*
- No King without Kingdom – idolatry
- We need to be **protected** and to **protect** people.
- God's answer to a 'crooked' generation – I Pet. 2:9,10!
- ⁹ *But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;* ¹⁰ *who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.*
- The question to ask is, "Where has God put me"?
 - I Cor. 12:18 - *But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.*

Positive things we saw last year at NCC

- 2011 decisions
 - Almost 300 (283) decisions – almost 1 per day!
- Over 450 total decisions
- One of our goals in 2012 is to have the equivalent of 1 decision per day!
- Acts 2:47 - *praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.*

Bill Hybels at Harvard Business School

We believe that the church is the only God-anointed agency in society that stewards the transforming message of the love of Christ. We believe that the church addresses every human being's deepest need. We believe that the church can lead people into a whole new way of living and loving and serving, and can thereby transform society.

You also need to realize that some of us ... live daily with the realization that the eternal destinies of people in our communities hang in the balance. We believe that the success or failure of our churches directly affects people's lives here today and for eternity."

Are there any changes that "seeking first the Kingdom of God" will mean for you in 2012?