Filled To The Brim With The *Fullness* Of God

Acknowledging, Analyzing, & Applying God's Power For The Church

This *"Could Be/Should Be/Will Be/Was"*

The Start Of Something BIG!!!!

Acts 1–2 with other supporting passages

A Supplement To **Encourage** Additional Study
& **Enrich** Our Understanding Of God's Word

Some Relevant Statement & Quotations About "The Church"

"A good church is a Bible-centered church. Nothing is as important as this--not a large congregation, a witty pastor, or tangible experiences of the Holy Spirit." **—Alistair Begg**

"It's extremely important that we remember what Jesus said when He introduced the idea of the Church: 'I will build My Church!' Therefore, God's revealed TRUTH always outweighs our personal perspectives about what the Church should be. Thru–out history, but especially in recent years, one of the greatest concerns the Church has faced is knowing how to avoid being manipulated by our secular culture." **—GAD**

As I look around on Sunday morning at the people populating the pews, I see the risk that God has assumed. For whatever reason, God now reveals Himself in the world not through a pillar of smoke and fire, not even through the physical body of His Son in Galilee, but through the mongrel collection that comprises my local church and every other such gathering in God's name." **Philip Yancey**

"A local church will only be as great as its opinion of God." **—A. W. Tozer**

"Many churches of all persuasions are hiring research agencies to poll neighborhoods, asking what kind of church they prefer. Then the local churches design themselves to fit the desires of the people. True faith in God that demands selflessness is being replaced by trendy religion that serves the selfish." **—Billy Graham**

"Every believer is commanded to be plugged in to a local church." **—David Jeremiah**

"Just as you must eat, drink, and breathe to live, you must read the Bible, pray, and be involved in a church to stay spiritually alive and vital. You never will outgrow these things." **—Greg Laurie**

"The evangelical church seemed to have become like a child with a new toy. When churches and pastors began to expect more clever gadgetry from the marketing wizards, they became increasingly creative until their methods eventually buried the central message in obscurity. They highlighted that which worked above all and defined success in worldly and short-sighted terms."

--Bill Hull, *former* EFCA director of church ministries & discipleship

Please use this devotional as a tool to gain greater understanding & to retain/remember what we're learning from this study!

—Some Additional Thoughts to Help Introduce This Week's Study:

Who would argue with the dictionary? On page 263 of ***Webster's New World College Dictionary, Fourth Edition***, I found the following entry:

church 1. a building set apart or consecrated for public worship;
2. a religious service or public worship, esp among Christians;
3. all Christians when considered as a single body;
4. the ecclesiastical government of a particular religious group or its power, as opposed to secular government;
5. the profession of the clergy;
6. a group or worshippers or a congregation

Based on what the Bible teaches us about the actual meaning of church, the only portion of this dictionary definition that is authentically accurate would be the last one given. I must admit that over the years, words & language adapt to the way people use them. Most all of us call the place where we meet (our building facility) "the church." However, we should also understand that "the church" is comprised of people, not buildings!

The objective of our study this week is to research & review what the Bible teaches us about the beginning of ***The Church***. There are several important truths for us to consider & understand. Thru–out history there have been several times when God's intentions for ***The Church*** have been misunderstood, leading to confusion, conflicts, & controversies that have resulted in the need for faithful followers of the Lord to dig deeper into God's Word for guidance & greater clarification. A powerful illiustration or example for this would be the Reformation in the 1500's.

In preparation for this devotional study, please carefully read Acts 1–2 & each of the Bible passages included with the questions. The sermon notes will also be a helpful resource.

—1— One of the controversies that has led to some incorrect ideas about the Church suggests that God has shut Israel out of His eternal plans by turning His attention to the Gentiles. The Church was never mentioned in the Old Testament in a clear or specific way & Ephesians 3:1–13 explains that the Church was a mystery because it was difficult for Jewish followers of Christ to understand how Gentiles could be included in the promise made to Abraham. However, God's promise to him clearly included the idea that **Abraham's family would be a blessing to all the families in the world**. (See Genesis 12:1–3) **Why is it important for us to understand that Jesus died for the sins of the world?** We're living in what many faithful Bible scholars identify as the "Church Age." Based on Acts 1:4–6, this time frame is established by God & when God sends Jesus to take us to Heaven at the Rapture of the Church, the Church Age will end. **Why is it important for us to understand that the Church started with the events that took place in Acts 1–2?** Please notice what Jesus said in Acts 1:4–8, especially in verse 8 about being "My witnesses." **Where was Jesus telling His followers to go as missionaries? In a practical way, how does this relate to us?**

—2— Let's begin to look more carefully at the practical applications provided in this study. **The ingredients of fruitful ministry include:**

—obedient submission to our risen Lord & Savior;

—power & ability provided by the Holy Spirit;

—the clear presentation of God's message;

—trust & dependence on God's timing rather than ours.

Jesus instructed His faithful followers to wait in Jerusalem for what the Father had promised. He pointed out that He had also told them about this. Considering the practical aspect of this specific instruction, we should always rely on the Spirit's power when we share God's message with others, but we also might need to use persuasion. **Where's the balance between trusting the Lord to assist us & trying to convince someone that they need to trust in Christ? Can we make a mistake by using too much persuasion? Or by not explaining the Gospel clearly enough? What thoughts do you have about this?**

Regarding the need to provide a clear presentation of God's message, **how important is it that we tell others that Jesus is both Lord & Savior? Why is this an important distinction for us to explain?**

—3— Continuing with our focus on the ingredients of fruitful ministry & the idea that being obedient & submissive to the Lord's instructions & making a clear presentation of God's Gospel message are two of the beneficial ingredients for fruitful ministry! **Do you believe that every faithful follower of Christ is supposed to be an evangelist, or only those who are specifically gifted in that area? What is the difference between giftedness and responsibility? How does this relate to being obedient to the Lord?**

There are many people who seem to struggle with the fact that Jesus arose from the dead. In Acts 1:3, we read that Jesus provided many convincing proofs that He was resurrected. **How can we use the fact of Jesus' resurrection as a part of what we present to someone who needs to trust in the Lord for salvation? Why is the resurrection of Jesus central to the Christian faith? What difference would it make if it were proven false?**

—4— Deuteronomy 29:29 says, "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law." The Church was a secret that God kept thru–out the Old Testament. After Jesus arose from the dead & ascended into Heaven, God started & established the Church. In Genesis 12, God called Abraham & promised Him that his family would be a blessing to the entire world & Jesus was born to be the Jewish Messiah & the eventual King of Israel, a promise that will be fulfilled in the future. In all this, we learn that **God's timing is revealed on a need–to–know basis**. **What practical lessons do we find in this? How does this influence our faith? How should this influence our prayer lives?**

—5— The biblical word for Church means "those who are called out" by God to be His faithful followers. Our final application for this study is: **The Church is people who are called out by God to exhibit His Glory & express His message to the world. How can a faithful follower of the Lord develop a passion for God's glory? What steps could we take to become more comfortable with the role of being an ambassador for Christ?**