

**The Blueprint**  
**Part II**  
**Acts 2:36-47**  
**August 19, 2007**  
**FBC Waynesboro**

One of my most special childhood memories is young couples coming to our house to meet with my father about building their dream home. They would ordinarily bring a picture of that home and my father could look at the picture and tell them about how much that home would cost. It was then that the happy faces turned to horrified glances as the couple saw their dream home collapsing right in front of them. It was about that time that my father would say, “let me take your picture and develop a blueprint for you. I will design a floor plan based on what you have here, and then we will work together to get what you want for the price you can afford.” The smiles returned. He would always somewhere near the end of the conversation tell every young couple the same thing; I can hear him even today: You need to know two things before we even begin. First, you have to build at least three houses before you ever you get what you are looking for and second, you need to understand that the day I give you the key to your new house, you will walk in that day and find something that you would have changed if you had to do it all over again. You could see they doubted him, but he was never wrong about that basic building truth. They would leave; he would always begin immediately to work on the blueprint.

We have before us here in the Book of Acts the blueprint for the church in every age. We do not have to read the writings of modern experts to discover what a true church looks like. It is right here for us in the Book of Acts. The characteristics of a New Testament Church are as unchanging as the characteristics of our unchanging God. Here before us in plain view for all time are the four core essentials of every New Testament Church. A New Testament Church has Gospel Leadership, a regenerate Church Membership, practices intentional discipleship, and enjoys a caring fellowship. In fact, this text not only gives us the core essentials of New Testament Church but shows us the inevitable results when this kind of church exists. One reality about which you and I need to be very clear is that God gives us these characteristics because He knows that not every church is or will be a New Testament church. Pagan cultures are always populated by religious institutions, but New Testament Churches are few and far between.

We looked at the first characteristic last week. It all begins with leadership. The New Testament Church has Gospel Leadership: a Gospel Preacher who is called by God standing under the anointing of the Holy Ghost and the authority of Holy Scripture to preach the Word of God the center of which is the Gospel of Jesus. This kind of preaching and teaching provides the context for church membership that is genuinely biblical and is the second characteristic of the New Testament Church: A REGENERATE CHURCH MEMBERSHIP, 40-41. Let me be very clear about two realities here: The extent to which any church takes seriously membership in the Body of Christ will be the extent to which we experience both the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit at work in and through the life of the church. When we make church membership meaningless then God makes the ministry of the church meaningless. When we cheapen the grace of God by proclaiming a false gospel that produces counterfeit conversions where someone can profess to be saved while producing no evidence of salvation and not actively participating in the body of Christ with the leadership saying and doing nothing about it, then God withdraws His presence and His power from such a place. This church is the body of Christ and to the extent that we pervert the purity of the body, to that extent we lose the presence and power of the Holy Spirit at work in the Body. This leads me to the second reality: we have a situation in most Baptist churches about which we often boast when in fact we ought to hang our heads in shame because we are defacing the Holy Name by which we are called, making a mockery of the majesty of God, and defaming the beautiful body of Christ. I asked for and received this week a print out of the membership statistics of Baptist churches in our area. Here is one that lists 215 members with an average attendance of 67; Here is another that lists 719 members with an average attendance of 190 or yet another that lists 348 members with an average of 175. What do these statistics say? Either that we have a lot of sick people who are confined to hospitals and homes or that we don't take membership in the body of Christ seriously? And how many of those hundreds who are not in regular, active attendance do you think would say that they are saved?

Peter understood the truth of God. Listen to verse 40. Why did Peter use many other words? Had he not said enough? He knew what we have forgotten: not everyone who hears the word will heed the Word and not everyone who responds the Word has truly received the Word. Some come not because they are called but because they are in a crisis. Some come not

because they are being confronted with the Gospel but because they are being confronted by people who may in fact really care for them. Some come not to repent but to receive what they believe they need to get them into heaven later and get them a better life here and now. Peter used many other words because he wanted people to understand fully and faithfully what it really means to be saved. Maybe he knew even then that there is no greater malignancy on the body of Christ than men and women who profess to be members but by their absence from the body prove that they neither belong to Christ or to His church. Oh, we must be careful here that we not misunderstand that this does not include people who for reasons of health or advancing years cannot gather with the body; I am speaking here of those who are more than able as evidenced by where they go and what they do otherwise but for months and years do not participate with the people of God in the praise of God while professing to belong to Him. Jesus says about people like this, “their final state will be far worse than their first state.” Their first state is that they are under the wrath of God as sinners; their final state is far worse because of what they professed to be that they were not.

So Peter made plain the path of salvation and the text makes it clear that he used everything from biblical logic to intense exhortation. He wants them to know first that we are saved by God from His wrath. “Save yourselves” is a passive. It is not something we do. It is that to which we submit and surrender because of the compelling conviction we are under due to the call of God. Be saved from God’s wrath. Paul puts it this way in Romans 5:9-11. Not only are we saved from the wrath of God, but also we are saved out of this wicked world. There is no place for the people of God who have been purchased by the blood of Jesus to compromise our commitment to Jesus with a culture that is corrupt. We are saved out of the world to go back into the world as His witnesses. As believers our reason for being in the world is simple and singular: it is to serve and honor God by bearing witness to Him in whatever context or circumstance He has placed us. Not only are we saved from the wrath of God and out of this world, we are saved for the glory of God. They were baptized. Again the emphasis is on the change that has come and the commitment that is made. The waters of baptism witness to the death and resurrection. Death to who we were and how we lived; resurrection to whose we are and for whom we live. Soli Deo Gloria! And we are saved to serve God. Three thousand people were added that day. To what? For what? To the church for the purpose of beginning the work of witnessing to the gospel in the world. In just a short time we see this church go from 3,000 to 5,000 to what some say could have been close

to 25,000 by the time we get to Acts 6. How did they get that far that fast? Because those who were baptized knew what they were supposed to do. They knew their reason for being and breathing.

Do we? One of the most important ministries of our church is FAITH evangelism. It is through FAITH that we deliberately share the Gospel with this community. We don't save people. God does that. We share. We do what He has called us to do. There is nothing I believe more than this: if you are going to go overseas to share the Gospel and don't do it here, then you really don't need to go overseas. We are going to have our first meeting for our new semester for FAITH next Monday at 6:45 in the New Fellowship Hall. I want to see every Sunday School Class have at least one or two representatives at that meeting. Gospel leadership announces the Gospel; God brings His people into the body of Christ and the people go with the Gospel because they know that God does not save us for ourselves; He saves us for His glory and we give Him the greatest glory when we proclaim His Name in the world.