

# Essentials of a Local New Testament Church

by Greg Locke

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*The sermon emphasizes the essential elements of a local New Testament church, focusing on fearless preaching, faithful attendance, and community engagement.*

**Duration:** 38:49

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Acts 2:42, Acts 2:46, 2 Timothy 4:7-8

**Topics:** "Church Worship", "Financial Stewardship"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of reverent worship and the preaching of the Word of God. He contrasts the dedication of the people in the Old Testament, who stood for hours listening to the reading of the Scriptures, with the lack of reverence and attention in modern churches. The preacher laments the decline in the preaching of hard truths and the lack of conviction and revival in churches today. He also emphasizes the importance of financial sacrifice and giving in the ministry of the church, citing Luke 6:38 as a reminder that God blesses those who give generously.

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## Transcript

The Bible says, Now when they heard this, they were fricked in their heart and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you and to your children and to all that are of all, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

Then they that gladly received his word were baptized. And the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers.

And fear came upon every soul and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together and had all things common and sold their possessions and goods and parted them to all men as every man had a need. And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people.

And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." This morning in Sunday School we deal with a simple subject, essentials of a real New Testament church. Let's pray and ask the Lord to bless our time together, shall we? Lord, thank You so much for Your Word and for what it means to us. And Lord, You've left it here so that we may learn much about You and about how we should live.

So I pray that You'd help us this morning to have a very profitable time in Sunday School. Thank You for the good number of folks who have come out today to worship the Lord. And I pray, Lord, that we would do exactly that here in Sunday School and in the preaching time to follow and the music and everything that takes place.

We just want to honor and magnify the lovely Lord Jesus Christ. We pray that You would bless. We'll thank You for everything that You'll say and do for us in Jesus' name that we ask You to embrace.

Amen. The book of the Acts is probably one of my favorite New Testament books out of the 27 that we do have, 28 short chapters. And basically, you can take the book of the Acts and you can divide it into three segments.

You can divide it, number one, by the start of the church. You can then have the second division of the spirit of the church. And then most of the book of the Acts is what we consider to be the service of the church.

Now, last night, Ike and I were flipping through the television and came across one of my favorite preachers on TV. His name is Robert Shuler. I know he's not one of my favorite preachers, but we came across him.

And he said that he was fixing to be having a pastor's leadership conference. It was the 32nd annual leadership conference for pastors. And he said, I'm the first preacher in America to ever have an actual pastor's conference that teaches people suggestions on how to run their church and blah, blah, blah.

And he went on and he told all these people that went through his program and all these people that have been helped. And he showed all these pictures of all these bigwig liberal preachers who are now out in their churches because they came to his pastoral program. And I remember one thing he said.

He said, what we're going to give you is some concrete suggestions for your local church. Well, I don't want to do that this morning. I want to give you some concrete essentials for a local church because I believe the Bible is a book of absolutes.

I don't believe it's necessarily written to suggest things to us. I believe God gives us some essentials and he tells us that these things need to be there. So, we call this Temple-Bounded Church.

This is a local, New Testament, fundamental Bible-believing Baptist church. So, therefore, what are its essentials? What is it that God said in his word, not that we should have in a local church, but that we must have in a local church? Well, I believe every principle that we're going to deal with is very simply stated right here in this little short portion of Scripture that we dealt with. Look in your Bibles, if you would, please, at verse number 37 again.

Well, again, just a moment ago, I have several things I want to share with you to get it in in the time that we have a lot. In Acts chapter 2, obviously, you know the day of Pentecost. The Apostle Peter preaches and 3,000 people are saved just on the very first day from the very first altar call.

And we know the promise of the Spirit was in Acts chapter 1 and the fulfillment of that promise came in Acts chapter number 2. Notice what happens here in verse 37. Here, Peter had just preached a scathing, scolding message. I mean, he preached, Thus saith the Lord.

It says in verse 37, Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Now notice what Peter tells them. Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you and to your children and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward." Kind of a word for wicked, for this untoward generation. What is the first essential of a real New Testament local church? Well, I believe these principles are not only fulfilled here in Acts chapter 2, but I believe for the entire 28 chapters, if we look at the early church, we will see that all of these principles are instituted. I want to write a few things down, at least remember some things.

Number one, the first essential, not suggestion, but the first essential of a New Testament church is what I call fearless preaching. The fearless preaching of the Word of God is something that accompanied all of the early New Testament churches, every single one of them. The church at Galatia, the church at Thessalonica, the Corinthian church, the church at Ephesus, all of the churches that were founded by the apostle Paul and the other men of God throughout the New Testament were founded and were built and were established on the preaching of the Word of God.

And so what is taking place in Acts chapter 2 is they're not having a discussion plan. He's not getting up there and saying, Well, let's just raise hands and we'll just kind of vote around the round table here, and I'll let you think what you want, you can live like you want. No, he just opened his heart, opened his mouth, opened his Bible like the front door of his house.

He got up in the pulpit and those fellas said, Men and brethren, what are we supposed to do? He said, I'll tell you what you're supposed to do. He said, You're supposed to repent and get right with God. And from right there, he began to preach the straightforward, unadulterated message of the Word of God and 3,000 people were saved by the grace of God.

Now, we don't always see 3,000 people saved by the grace of God. As a matter of fact, it's very rare that we would. But you know what? Preaching still gets the job done.

It is still God's avenue whereby revival comes to God's people, whereby people are saved because nowhere in the Bible does it say by the foolishness of church attendance will God save them that belief. It doesn't say by the foolishness of singing, by the foolishness of potluck dinners, by the foolishness of fellowship. It says by the foolishness of preaching, God chooses to save them that belief.

And I believe that the fearless preaching of the Word of God still gets the job done. It still works. Now, it's a sad day in which we're living because nowadays churches are built on principles.

Nowadays churches are built on psychology. They're built on all of these little things. But very rarely do you find churches that have been built and that continue to build the people through the preaching of the Word of God.

But at one time, in our movement, if you will, as fundamentalists, that is what our movement was known for. It was known for straightforward preaching. Now, please understand, when I talk about fearless preaching, I'm not just talking about screaming and yelling and just calling people by name.

I'm not talking about that. There's different styles of preaching. And so, when I deal with the subject of preaching, a lot of people take one little mindset and one little framework of mine, and they lump everybody into the same way.

And they say, well, if they don't preach that way, then that's not fearless preaching. No, no. We're not talking about the way a person preaches.

We're talking about the content and the subject whereby a person preaches. And I believe in the day and age in which we live, we should call sin, sin and holiness, holiness. We should call up, up and right, right and down, down and wrong, wrong.

And the Apostle Peter and the Apostle Paul and all the other New Testament disciples, and then you got Jesus and you got John the Baptist, all of these men were characterized in their ministry by one thing. They were not worried about crowds. They were not worried about what people thought.

They could have cared less about the black and white tabloids and the paper on Monday morning. They didn't care about that. They cared about one thing, preaching the Word of God as in truth it is the Word of God.

The Apostle Paul wrote to young Timothy in 2 Timothy 4, verse 1. He said, I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ who shall judge both the quick and the dead in His appearing and His coming. Notice verse 2, preach the Word. Because Jesus Christ is going to judge us, Paul tells Timothy, because people do need to be saved, he says, therefore, preach the Word.

The instant in season and out of season. You see, according to the Bible, there's only two times that a God-fearing, Bible-believing preacher ought to ever preach the Word of God. There's only two times according to the Bible, in season and out of season, all the time.

And so he says, you preach the Word in season, out of season, rebuke and exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. Why? For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine. But he to themselves teachers having itching ears and shall turn their hearts away from the truth and shall be turning to fables.

He said, but watch on all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. He said, for I am now ready to be offered. And the time of my departure is at hand.

I've fought a good fight, I've kept the faith, I've finished the course. Verse 8, henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day, and not unto me only, but also to them that love is appearing. What is Paul saying? The whole focus, the whole mindset of the ministry of the apostle Paul was preach the blessed Word of God.

Preach the blessed Word of God. And there was a day when churches were built on the preaching of the Word of God. But nowadays, we've got sermon ants, the Christian ants, who smoke cigarettes in the dinette, and nobody wants to hear hard preaching anymore.

And we wonder why the standards are the way they are in churches. And we wonder why convictions are lax. And we wonder why there's no revival.

And we wonder why there's no real Holy Spirit power. I'll be honest, because Holy Spirit power has always been hand in hand with the straightforward, fearless preaching of the Word of God. Now, you study revival.

There's two things that have taken place in all revivals on the history of God's green earth. They always had prayer, and they always had preaching. Because preaching is something that not only begins that stirring in your heart, but it's something that keeps us stirred, and preaching is something that works in the hearts and lives of people.

It still builds churches. I still believe in preaching. You say, well, the only reason you believe in preaching is because you're evangelist.

No, I believed in preaching before I was an evangelist, because I got saved in the preaching. I got right with God in the preaching. I got called to the ministry in the preaching.

I got called to Bible college in the preaching. And everything I have, I owe to the preaching of the Word of God. And I believe, I don't care if it's a two-year-old kid or a 200-year-old man, I believe if we preach to people, I believe God will work in their heart and give them what they need.

And I think we've got some cheap and shallow anti-biblical preaching in the day and age in which we live. And I believe we need some men of God who will stand in the pulpit, and they will have some backbone, and they will have some courage, and they will open the Bible. And Jeremiah said, Be not afraid of their faces.

And you know why that's in the Bible? I'll tell you why. Because I meet a lot of spooky faces in evangelism, alright? I mean sad faces, mad faces, happy faces, ugly faces, pretty faces. I mean all kind of faces.

But you know what? I'm not worried about your faces. I'm worried about your heart. And that's why I believe the Bible needs to be preached.

It needs to be preached practically. It doesn't need to be preached over people's heads, but we need to open the Word of God and say, Listen folks, this is what God says, this is what we're supposed to do, because preaching still works. It always has, and it always will.

You remember the book of Jonah? Jonah preached an eight-worded sermon, and 175,000 people got saved by the grace of God. Just a simple eight-worded sermon. The first great awakening, the second great awakening, all the revivals of the past.

Those men simply preached the Word of God. They didn't get up and say, Let me tell you what I think about life. They didn't get up and say, Well, here's my philosophy, or you know, the power of positive thinking, and the rest of that stuff in the day and age in which we live.

No, they just opened up the Bible, and they let the Bible say what it said. They said, This is what God said. If we don't like it, then it's God that's not going to change.

We're going to have to change. We're going to have to conform to what the Word of God says. You know what Peter did? He stood up.

Those fellows said, What are we supposed to do? He said, You're supposed to repent. You're supposed to get right with God. He fearlessly preached the Bible, and you know what? He got the job done.

It is what founded that church. It is what propagated that church. And that church went on in great glory and great power because preacher after preacher after preacher after preacher simply preached the Word of God.

And I believe that still works, and it still gets the job done. And so you ought to thank God that you have a preacher who's willing to preach the Bible. You'd be surprised how many preachers in America have given in to the peer pressure of popularity and the peer pressure of their people.

And there's a whole lot of churches whose pulpit is filled with a puppet, not with a preacher. Their pulpit is filled with a puppet, not with a prophet. And what we need in the day and age in which we live are some men of God to sound forth a gospel trumpet and not preach, Thus saith the Bible college.

Not preach, Thus saith my little pet peeve. Not preach, Thus saith the story of the Lord. Or, Thus saith the revival fires.

But, Thus saith the God of the Bible. Because that's what's going to get the job done. And so it's founded, number one, by fearless preaching.

Look in verse 42, would you? And obviously, much more can be said about all of these, and you can develop an outline any way you want to, but notice what it says in verse 42. And they, that's the people who were just saved and added to that local church. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Verse 46 now, please. And they, same group of people. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singled them apart.

Number one, first essential, fearless preaching. Second essential is there has to be faithful people. If you're going to have a local New Testament church, you're going to have to have people who are faithful to that local New Testament church.

Now, we live in a day when church membership, for most people, was just kind of a suggestion. That, for most people, church membership is kind of a social status. It's just kind of a gathering.

Just kind of comes together. I know this independent Baptist preacher. I'll not give his name.

He was in evangelism for about ten years. And when I was in Bible college, Dr. Comfort said, I want all you fellas to watch that guy because it won't be about two or three more years he's going to be out in left field somewhere. And sure enough, this past year, he went to Gatlinburg, Tennessee, and he quit the ministry as far as evangelism was concerned.

He quit wearing ties and changed his Bible and dropped all his standards and got some mop head to beat around on some drums and things like that. They filled up this big place. They rented out the governor's palace, the big coliseum that they have over there.

They rented it out. They only have Sunday morning services. No Sunday evening, no revival meetings, no mission conference, no Wednesday night, no prayer meetings, no visitation.

And they got a big sign out there called The Gathering. And that's about what most churches are nowadays. It's just a gathering place.

And I'll tell you, if this church is going to be everything it needs to be for the glory of God, it's going to have to have some faithful people who love God, who love preaching, who love the Bible, who love God's people, who love to worship the Lord, and they will be faithful. I'd like to remind you, Hebrews 10.25 is still in your Bible. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is.

He said, you don't do it, but there's some dirty crooks that are. He said, you don't be faithless or unfaithful. He said, but there's many of them that are being.

So he says, I want you to be faithful. And he said, so much the more as you see the day approaching. And obviously, he's speaking of the day of Christ.

And we're a whole lot closer to that day than Paul was in Hebrews 10.25. And so he says, the more we should be gathering together to worship the Lord and be faithful to the New Testament local church. You know, I'm convinced if we gave our bosses the same excuses for not coming to work as we gave God and the preacher for not coming to church, most of us would be out of a job. And we come up with some pretty silly excuses for why we don't go to church.

Here's my favorite one. Well, I was providentially hindered. You ever thought about that? You actually think providence is going to hinder you from doing something that providence commanded you to do to begin with? Which, oh, God hindered me from coming to the house of God.

I don't believe that for a minute. I mean, sure, this little pulpit here is black. I don't believe that God is going to hinder His people from doing something that He commanded His people to do.

You may have a flat tire. That's fine. You may get sick.

That's fine. You may have to work. That's fine.

But I'm telling you, we can do what we want to do, and we will do what we want to do. And if you want to be faithful to a local New Testament church, you can be faithful to a local New Testament church. And these people continue not weekly, and they didn't come Sunday morning and Wednesday night.

Guess when they came? And daily. I mean, we're talking about every day, friends. Now, we're just asking you, you know, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, to come and be faithful.

But I mean, these people went to church every single day. And they didn't bellyache when the man preaching along. They didn't bellyache when the singers sang a little bit.

They didn't bellyache when it seemed like the Spirit of God was working and people were getting saved and people were getting right. Man, they'd stay there all day long. Hey, you remember the Old Testament? Nehemiah opened the Bible one day.

The Bible says that he got up in the pulpit, and he read for a fourth part of the day. And the Bible says all the people stood with their faces to the crowd. I mean, he read for a fourth part of the day, and everybody, I mean, the men, the women, the boys, the girls, the teenagers, everybody stood up and out of reverence bowed their head with their faces toward the ground for a fourth part of the day.

And nowadays, you know, if some man preaches over 20 minutes, we think that's awful. And, you know, you preach 25 minutes, and everybody's sitting down with their heads bowed down to the ground. You know, they're about to fall asleep.

And so, I mean, in the Old Testament and the New Testament, there was reverence when people came to the house of God. They wasn't there because it was a glorified entertainment center. They wasn't there because it was a movie theater or a bowling alley or a social gatherer.

Man, they were there to worship God. And real New Testament local churches are filled with faithful people, people who want to be used by God. And we don't just come to fill a spot.

We come to worship the Lord and to serve and to help here in this local church. And so that's what these people did. And certainly, again, more could be said about that.

But look in your Bibles now, if you would, at verse 43. Verse number 43 of Acts chapter 2. We see the third essential. Notice what it says, "...and fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles." Before I give you the point, I want to explain that little part there at the end.

Words in the Bible mean something. You understand that? That's why they're there. It does not say, "...many signs and wonders were done by the people." You notice that? It does not say, "...many signs and wonders were done by the church members." No, no.

It says, "...many signs and wonders were done by the apostles." Why does it say that? Because the apostles had apostolic power given them in Mark chapter number 16. God told these men, "...you will have certain powers." Why does it not say that the people did signs and wonders and miracles? Because the people, if you will, did not have that power. The apostles did.

Therefore, when the apostles died, apostolic power died with them. We don't need apostolic power. You know why your preacher doesn't get up and handle snakes? Because he's not crazy for one thing, but because he don't have apostolic power.

You know why he doesn't get up and do all kinds of miracles and signs and wonders? Because he's not an apostle. You see these birds on TV, this is apostle so-and-so. No, it's not apostle so-and-so because the apostles are dead.

And to be an apostle, you had to see the Lord Jesus Christ face-to-face. And I don't believe there's one soul in here that's seen Him face-to-face. I know what the Bible says.

I know by faith He resides in my very body, but I've never seen Him face-to-face, and I'm not an apostle. And so it doesn't say the people performed miracles. It said the apostles did, and when they died, that power died with them, and all we need now is the sufficient power of the Word of God.

But here's a third essential that I want to give you. Not only was it fearless preaching, faithful people, but also I want you to see and understand the terminology, fearful people. These people were full of fear.

You say, well, Uncle Locke, I've heard you preach before. The Bible says that you're not supposed to fear. No, it's not that type of a fear.

They had a fear of God. They had a reverence and a respect for God's holiness that scared them to death to get involved in sin. I believe the word fear, if I remember correctly, is used 17 times in these 28

chapters.

And every single time it keeps saying, and fear fell on the people. Remember Acts chapter 5, God smote in and out, and Sapphira dead just right there on the floor, and fear came upon the people. And fear came upon the people.

And fear over and over again. It talks about the fear coming upon the people. And I thought to myself, what is this fear business? So I started that little phrase fear.

Now, I'm not a Greek scholar. I'm not a Hebrew scholar. I do well to preach in English, but I'm going to tell you something.

You know what that word fear is in the Greek language? It is the word phobos. It is the same word that we derive phobia from. For example, I have arachnophobia.

I hate spiders. I mean, I have a phobia about spiders. I was preaching at the Berean Baptist Church in Brooklyn Park, Minnesota, and I said that one morning in a Sunday evening service, and the Sunday night service, I got in the pulpit, they had a great big old hairy rubber spider sitting up in the pulpit.

I just about came that close to cancel that meeting, buddy. I can't stand them. I don't like a little spider.

I don't like a big spider. I don't like any spider. And so I've got a phobia when it comes to spiders.

There are some people that have a phobia when it comes to darkness. There are some people that have a phobia when it comes to other things, maybe a phobia of height. My mother is claustrophobic.

I mean, buddy, you can't put her in a tight area. We was in Gatlinburg, Tennessee about four or five years ago, and we went in one of these caves, and that cave was as big as this room, and I thought my mama's head would just pop off. I mean, she got ready to be, and then all of a sudden she went from red to pale as a ghost, and I'm telling you, she just felt like the walls was closing on her.

Some people that have a phobia about certain things. You know, these people had a phobia. These people had something that scared them to death.

You know what it was? Displeasing their God. The Bible says that fear came on these people. They had a phobia of displeasing God.

They were scared to death to have sin in their life. You know what our churches need? Our churches need some people who are not only faithful, but some people who fear God. You know what the fear of God will do? It will cause me to love righteousness and hate iniquity.

You see, the Bible says in Proverbs chapter 17, ye that love the Lord hate evil. Now, you know, I'm not real smart, but please understand, if God says you love the Lord and you hate evil, obviously that means if you love evil, then by process of elimination, apparently you don't love the Lord too much. Because the Bible says if you love me, you'll keep my command.

And you know what? That's not something that Greg Locke made up. That's not something that Greg Locke wrote. It's right there in the Bible.

Ye that love the Lord hate evil. These people did that. They loved their God, they hated evil, and they had a phobia of sin.

It scared them to death that they were going to displease their Savior. I tell you, our churches need to be filled with people who reverence God and who love God, have a respect for God, and they don't come to the house of God and don't sit on the back row and kick their feet up and chew their bubble gum and teenagers come in with their hats on backwards and their baggy breeches in their pockets hanging all the way down, and they come in here and they say, well, give me a little dose of that salvation. Preach to me for 25 minutes so I can go home.

No, we need some people who come to the house of God and they have a reverence for God. They come to the house of God and they don't worship the building, but they worship the God of the building that this building represents, and some people who have a fear in their life of displeasing God. That's what we need.

The reason America is in the mess that she's in is because we fear everything but God. You see, you watch all these folks go by these teenagers and say, no fear. They're exactly right.

They have no fear at all. No fear of God, no fear of sin, no fear of anything whatsoever. If there's anything we need as God's people, as Bible believers, as a real local New Testament church, it is to fear God and have a phobia of sin.

Be scared to death of sin so that we want to worship and praise and honor our Lord Jesus Christ. But go back in your Bibles if you would, please, and we'll show you something else. Now, I know we're dealing with a lot this morning, but for time's sake, we can just go through these and you can study them a little bit later.

Look at verse 45, would you? Verse number 45. It says, "...and sold their possessions and goods and parted them to all men as every man." Some people are thinking, well, I knew he was going to get on money sometime before he got through with that. That's what all them banks are so good for.

But I'm going to be honest with you. Do you know there's an essential of a local church? Do you know what it is? Financial sacrifice. You know, it takes money to run a local church.

It takes money to run the work of God. It's not that we beg people for money, but it does take money to do God's work. And that's the way that God has set it up.

Do you know what these people did? They sacrificed for the ministry and for the work of the local church so that that work could continue. Now, God doesn't need our money. He doesn't need one single dime.

And by the way, contrary to popular belief, He doesn't just owe 10% of your money. He owns all of your money. He just so happens to ask that you to the local church would tithe your money.

By the way, you don't tithe to some television evangelist. You don't tithe to a mission board. You don't tithe to missionaries.

You don't tithe to a Bible college. You tithe to your local church. And by the way, if you're not a tither, if I found out about it, I don't believe I'd let somebody that wouldn't tithe their local church, I don't believe I'd let them in my trailer.

Say why? Because if you're robbed from God, you're robbing anybody. If you're steal from God, you'll steal from me, I guarantee you. And if you're not a tither, guess what? You're a God robber.

If you do not give faithfully to your local church according to the Bible, I didn't make it up. It's not popular, but it's right. You are a God robber if you are not a faithful tither.

God does not just own that \$1 on \$10 and \$10 on \$100 and \$100 on \$1,000. He doesn't just own that. He owns every single bit of it.

But He entrusts you that you will give Him what according to the Bible is a simple chance. And then of course, over and beyond that, our tithes and our offerings. You know what these people did? They took care of the people in the local church.

They didn't know anything in the New Testament Bible in Acts chapter 2. They did not know anything about a welfare program. They knew about a local church welfare program. The local church took care of their own.

The state didn't have to. Then if there was some widow in that local church, buddy, let's buy her some groceries and let's buy her some pinot beans and let's buy her everything she needed. And if there was a person in there, man, they had some difficulty with a vehicle or something like that, let's do their best.

Let's ride her together. The Bible says they sold their possessions. Then they sold their boats and they sold their cars.

Then the kids sold their bicycles and then they took sacrificial offerings and they supported one another in the local church. And I'll tell you, that's a foreign idea, but you know what? It's a scriptural idea. Because we should support one another.

We should love one another. We should reach out and take care of one another. And it takes financial sacrifice to run the ministry of a local New Testament church.

Luke 6, 38, one of my favorite verses in all the Bible. Give and it shall be given. You've heard it a thousand times.

You cannot out-give God. Guess what? I've heard it a thousand times. You cannot out-give God.

Give and it shall be given. Good measure, shaken down, pressed together, running over, shall men give unto your bosom. For with what measure ye meet, it shall be measured unto you again.

What's God saying? You will reap what you sow. You put a little bit in the ground, you sow sparingly, you'll reap sparingly. But if you sow abundantly, you will reap abundantly.

And I'm not one of these Creflo Dollars and one of these highfalutin fellas on TV that say that you're always going to be a rich fat cat and you're always going to be healthy. That's not true. You won't always be loaded up in the bank.

And you won't always be healthy because I believe those men tore the book of Job right out of their Bible. Because he was a faithless man in the land, but yet he had financial troubles and he had flesh troubles and he had family troubles. He had friendly troubles.

I believe he had just about every trouble you can imagine. But I do want to remind you, he stayed faithful to God and at the end, God doubly blessed him. And so I don't believe in this health and wealth type of a gospel, but I do believe if we give, God will honor us.

I do believe if we support and help and love people and tithe and give to our local church and financial sacrifice and not even necessarily out of our abundance, but sometimes it is a sacrifice and it comes out of our poverty. And I mean it comes down deep in that pocket. And you think to yourself, is God ever going to be able to take care of me? David said, I've been young and now I'm old and I've not seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread.

Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you. This morning I went over to Biscuitville. I like Biscuitville.

That's a nice place. Whenever people ask me where I'll be preaching when I'm over here in Collinsville, I tell them the Biscuitville Baptist Church. It's right up behind Biscuitville is where we have a meeting, amen.

And this morning I went over to Biscuitville and I was sitting there and I saw some folks here from the church and they didn't recognize me with my new weird haircut. And I walked in there and I was getting a cup of coffee and this man was standing in line in front of me and she rang him up. He asked her a question or so and she's going to give him back the change.

And I don't know what it was and what he gave her or whatever. And she said, your change will be \$6.33. And I seen it come up there, boom, in red, \$6.33. And I thought to myself, I'm going to get something like that and just made it jump out. And I'm going to tell you something, God will honor those that seek Him first.

And so they had financial sacrifice. But notice something else if you would please, verse 42. Back up in verse 42.

Now this is something that's just named here quickly and it's just mentioned, but this is basically the whole theme of the book of the Acts when it came to the New Testament church. They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, that was their teaching, their preaching of the day, and fellowship. And in breaking of bread, notice, and in prayer.

You know, one of the marks of the early New Testament church was what I call fervent prayer. They knew what it meant to pray to God. They knew what it meant there in Acts chapter 1 to fall on their face and be in one accord, in one mind, in one spirit.

No schisms, no divisions, no bitterness, no strife, no ill will, no contentions, anything like that. And you know what happened as they prayed? Like a great, mighty locomotive, the Spirit of God moved through that room, filled them with the Holy Ghost, and the Bible says that great things began right there. And from that moment, not only was the church burnt in prayer, but it continued in prayer all the way through the book of the Acts.

And by the way, when you get to Acts chapter 28, if you get to the end of that chapter, you will notice that the Holy Spirit of God almost stops in mid-sentence. There is no conclusion to the book of the Acts. There is no stop in the book of the Acts.

You know, a lot of them say, you know, even so come Lord Jesus, amen. Some of them say, greet the brethren with a holy kiss, and you know, bye-bye, and God bless you, and see you later, and I'm coming to visit you. The book of the Acts doesn't do that.

It just ends right in mid-sentence. You know why? The reason the book of the Acts never ended is because the book of the Acts is still being lived out in local New Testament Bible-believing churches today. And so therefore, we should institute the same principle that they used in the 28 chapters of the book of the Acts, and the whole chapter is filled with people who pray.

They prayed, prayed, and prayed. Boy, last night it was a joy. I came in late, but it was the Overt Youth Rally, and I tell you, the Lord blessed.

We had about 100 teenagers show up, and maybe 20 or 30 workers, and we had five guys and girls saved, and I tell you, it was a real blessing. I hated to be in late, but I slipped in and got over here beside Brother Doyle here by the piano bench, and we were praying, and all the men were praying, and the pastor was praying. Now I'm telling you, now's just a sweet time to get together with God's people and just pray.

You say, why would you do that? Because I tell you, we want God to do something great this week. You know, we don't just pull a couple of trailers in here and open up the door, and so I tell Brother Doyle, I say, go over and open that church door. So he opens the church door and I open up my trailer door, and I say, okay, the spirit of revival is going to jump from this door to this door right here, and it's just going to fill up this room this week.

So we open it up, and the power of God comes flying in, and so we bring in our briefcases. He brings in his little trumpet case, and we set up our pianos and set up all the little things, and so we open everything up, and all of a sudden, the glory of God starts pouring out. It doesn't work that way, friends.

There's not an evangelist on the face of God's earth that can bring you revival. Not a one. And if He says He can, then you need to go ahead and cancel that verse anyhow.

Because no preacher can bring you revival. There's only one person that can bring you revival, and that's God, the sovereign God of heaven, and there's one thing that gets God's attention, and that's the prayer of the disciples. And I'll tell you, they didn't just pray and just kind of say, Lord, we want You to bless us.

But they were fervent. I mean, they sweat. They stayed up at night.

I mean, they fasted. They prayed to the God of heaven, and God came down in a miraculous way. And certainly many verses could be quoted and given along these lines, but I want to show you the last thing, and I believe it's in verse number 47.

Would you look there? Acts 2, verse number 47. It says, they were praising God, and notice, having favor with all the people, and the Lord, not the preachers, and the Lord added to the church daily, such as should be said. Now, when it says that they had favor with all of the people, what you must understand is that that is not a reference to just all of the people in the church.

They had favor with all the people in the community. And here's the reason I believe that, because lastly, an essential of a New Testament local church is that they take a firm stand. There is nothing wrong, ladies and gentlemen, with letting the community know that you want to be right.

There is nothing wrong with letting America know that there's things we are for and that there's things that we're against. And by the way, just by process of elimination, if there are certain things that you are for, then there must be certain things that you are against. And there's nothing wrong with letting Martinsville and Collinsville and the rest of this people around here, there's nothing wrong with letting them know that just up on the hill behind Biscuitville, there's a church that loves God.

There's a church that has some standards. There's a church that has some convictions. There's nothing wrong with taking a firm stand.

Now, people say, well, I tell you, you're just some old hard-hearted warmongers. All you like to do is fight everybody. There's some things worth fighting about, by the way.

There's some things worth getting in the good old-fashioned fight about. Hey, I'll fight about the virgin birth. I'll fight about the inspiration of the Scriptures.

I'll fight about the fact that Jesus Christ is coming again and His substitutionary death and His bodily resurrection. There's some things worth fighting about. Now, there's some things not worth fighting about.

There's some things I'm not going to be foolish over. There's some things I'm not going to argue with you about. People come to you in meetings and they want to argue about everything in the world.

I'm not going to argue with you. It's what the Bible says. God's not going to change.

You're not going to persuade me. I'm not going to persuade you. Get your nose out of the newspaper, put it in the Bible, see what God says about it.

But I'm going to tell you, I don't have any problem letting people in America know that I want to take a firm stand. I want to be on God's side. And I don't want the lion, by the way, to be way over here so people have to wonder whose side I'm on.

I want it to be way over there so they don't have to wonder at all whose side I'm on. I want them to know I'm on God's side. I want them to know that I'm on a Gideon 300, if you will.

I've got the sword of the Lord and I'll slay the devil and I want to slay the very imps and minions and demons of hell. I don't want people to think that I'm on the liberal side. I don't want them to think I'm on the New Evangelical side.

I don't want them to think I'm on the moderate side. I want them to know that I'm on God's side. And these people took a firm stand.

You know what? I believe the people in the community respected that. See, we've swallowed the lie of the devil and put it behind our thinkers that if we take a firm stand, nobody's going to like us. I don't believe that.

I don't believe that for a minute. Now there'll be some liberals that don't like us. You know, the ACLU's not going to like us if we take a firm stand.

But I'm going to tell you something. You know people respect people that take a firm stand? Nobody's ever liked a wishy-washy Christian. Nobody has ever liked somebody that just falls all to pieces when everything goes bad.

No, they want somebody to take a firm stand. They want to know that there are people that believe in absolute and we believe in absolute. There's some things socially that we do not accept.

There's things spiritually that we do not accept. There's things economically and politically that we do not accept. And you know what? There is nothing wrong with letting people know, hey, we're not going to be hard-nosed.

We're not going to be mean. We're not going to cram it down your throat. But this is what we believe and we are going to stand on the principles of the Word of God.

And I believe that is what gives us favor in the eyes of those who are not in the local New Testament church. And sometimes it even spurs their imagination to come and visit because people will respect those who have backbone, have courage, and who will take a stand. I'll give you a simple illustration and we'll be done.

I was in the Good Shepherd Baptist Church of Mooresville, Indiana about a year and a half ago, maybe almost two years ago. And I was preaching and a newspaper reporter came one night. And that doesn't happen a whole lot.

And usually when it does, you get a little nervous. And she came and, you know, you can see she's just writing. I mean, just a 90 miles or nothing.

And it was a liberal newspaper that she was writing so I knew that. And the preacher told me just kind of beware. I'm telling you, she was just writing while I was preaching.

And if you're going to get down what I'm saying, you better write real fast while I'm preaching. And so, I mean, she was just writing and writing and writing. So the next day, I guess it was maybe about two days, the preacher said, come here, I want to show you something.

And I went to a visitation and he opened it up, you know, and had this big old full page and had a little old picture up here in the corner of the church, you know, and the pastor and things like that. Had my name kind of in bold letters right there across the top and I thought, oh boy, my first exploit here in the newspaper if he's going to say something crazy about me. I'm some hair-raising fundamental scare tactic evangelist.

And so I got to reading down through that thing and I'm telling you, it was one of the nicest articles I'd ever read in my life about a preacher. I couldn't believe it. I thought, she's talking about the same person.

And she just wrote, she just wrote three or four paragraphs. It was a long article. I cut it out, I got it in my trailer.

And down close to the bottom, it says, one of the things I respected about evangelist law is simply that when you left the building, you knew exactly, and I believe we ought to just make it clear. I believe we ought to just make it just right down the line. And be straight and be holy and not mince words and take a firm stand on the Word of God.

And so, Schumer can have his New Testament suggestions. I want the book of the Acts and have my New Testament. Thank you, Lord, for Sunday School, for what you taught us.

Lord, much more can be said. I pray that we would be as the Bereans of Acts 13. We would search the Scriptures daily to see whether those things are so.

And God, give us a heart, we pray, for our local church. Oh, Lord, may we love the church. May we support the preacher.

May we love Your Word. May we be holy and faithful and enjoy the preaching of the Word of God. May we be sacrificial.

May we be fervent in our prayer. Lord, may we, in this wicked world, take a firm stand upon the principles and the fundamentals of the Word of God. Help us, we pray, in Jesus' name, Amen.

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