

A summary of Acts 2:37-47

- 1. Do we ask questions? (Acts 2:37).** After Peter's first message, the people were cut to the heart, or convicted or touched. They did not just hear, but they were affected by what they heard. Then they responded in a practical way by asking a question: "Brothers, what shall we do?" They took steps to carry out what they had heard. According to the data that we have, very few people ask questions in the church life. Many of us may come Sunday morning and listen to some speaking, or even read the Bible verses or the summary of the skype fellowship during the meeting, yet we may not ask questions. If we do not ask questions, it may be difficult for us to take the next step. Without questions, it will be difficult for us to grow. Paul the apostle, right at the outset when the Lord appeared to him, asked two crucial questions: "Who are You, Lord?" (Acts 22:8) and "What shall I do?" (Acts 22:10). Do we have any curiosity concerning the church life, the church, the Bible, and the Christian life? When we listen to the servants of the Lord and are touched by the words spoken by them, do we go to them and ask them questions? We need to ask the older brothers and sisters questions. This is one sign of the Spirit moving in us. If we have no questions, it probably means that we heard something but nothing really impressed us. We may continue week after week like this, listening to "good" messages, and yet have no concrete response. On the other hand, the older brothers and sisters, or serving ones, need to exercise to ask the brothers and sisters if they have questions. They also need to live among them, to interact with them, to know their needs, and to ask them if they have any questions they would like to ask. This is a reciprocal asking. On the one hand, we all should ask questions. One frustration or obstacle to asking questions is that we may not have spiritual children or companions, and therefore not much subjective experience of Christ. Without living the church life in such a way, even if we read the Bible or hear the word of God spoken by others, it may be hard for us to have any question or take the next step. On the other hand, the servants of the Lord should know the saints and fellowship with them, and ask them if they have any questions. They need to continue to be with the needy saints, to exhort them with many words (Acts 2:40). A brother in Montreal receives quite a few emails from saints who have a question either concerning their studies, work, immigration and family life, or concerning the Bible. He usually spends an hour and a half to respond in detail to such questions, through email. This is a good example of fellowship based on a question. Eventually, the result of fellowship should be that saints are brought to the Lord and to His words, and that they have a repentance or a turning to God and a turning away from the world or this crooked generation (Acts 2:38). In every question and fellowship in response to the question, a proper result is another step to knowing the Lord and turning our heart towards Him in the form of a practical step (e.g. repentance, denying the soul life to preach the gospel, to partake of the financial grace offering, to praise the Lord in the church gatherings, to join the corporate prayers, to read the Bible, to visit saints, to attend a conference or training to listen to the word of God spoken by the servants of the Lord).
- 2. What is a healthy church life? (Acts 2:42).** In a healthy church life, we will pay attention and devote ourselves to A. the teaching and fellowship of the servants of the Lord. Do we treasure the servants of the Lord and their portion? Are we eager to receive from them, to know the Lord through their words and their person? If we are, we will pay a price to attend their conferences and trainings. This means we may have to deny ourselves. For example, there are two conferences coming up in December/January, one Chinese speaking in Mississauga, Ontario, the other English speaking in the Ohio region of the US. These are two opportunities or graces that we can participate in, to abide in and devote ourselves to the teaching and fellowship of the Lord's servants. B. The bread breaking meeting on Sunday morning. We should be those who run to the bread breaking

meeting every Sunday, to remember the Lord by offering many praises and thanksgivings. Do we have such a heart? Do we attend the bread breaking meeting every week? If we attend once a month, can we take another step to attend twice a month? If we come, can we open our mouth to praise the Lord, even to utter one sentence? C. Corporate prayers. We will participate in the corporate prayers of the church. By praying with the other brothers and sisters, we will know the church and the saints, and we will bring in the blessing of the Lord upon the church. The Lord's blessing does not lie in how much we serve Him or do for Him, but whether we pray corporately or not. D. We will fear God. To fear God is not to be afraid of God or of His judgment and run away from Him. Cain in the Old Testament ended up in such a fear after killing his brother Abel (Genesis 4:13-14). Proper fear of God is to fear that He may not be present with us in our daily life, that we do not know His word or His leading in our living, and that we do not know the servants of God nor treasure them. We must remember that the New Testament was written mainly by the apostles. Therefore, it behooves us to know the servants of God and to pay attention to their speaking. Such a fear of God is not a guilty fear that leads to our running away from God, but rather an honoring of God that will lead to our knowing of Him and our glorifying of Him in our living.

3.How do we know the Spirit is moving in us? (Acts 2:44-47). We may say that we are in Spirit, or that when we spoke something for the Lord, we were in Spirit. What are some of the signs that the Spirit is moving in us? Firstly, the disciples cared for the needs of the saints and the church through their financial grace offering (2:44-45). This was not a law that was laid down by the apostles, but a purely voluntary action, actuated by their love for the Lord and the saints. Our financial grace offering should be in the same principle. Do we say we are in Spirit? If so, do we offer to the Lord? Again, this is not a law but a sign. If we do not offer, are we really in Spirit? We may like to think that we are, but perhaps we are only dreaming. Living in the Spirit will be manifested in tangible signs. Secondly, the disciples were together and did not depart from one another or the church life (2:44). They lived and interacted with each other. Thirdly, the disciples paid attention to the breaking of bread (the Lord's Table gathering, 2:46). They offered their praises and thanksgivings, thus demonstrating their love for the Lord and for the saints. Fourthly, the Lord blessed the church by adding those who were being saved. These are at least four signs of the moving of the Spirit in the disciples, and should be a barometer for the moving of the Spirit in us. Many say they are in Spirit, but they do not preach the gospel. Many say they are in Spirit, but they remain silent week after week during the Lord's Table gathering, not offering any praises. Many say they are in Spirit, but they do not participate in the corporate prayers. Many say they are in Spirit, but they do not participate in the financial grace offering. Is the Spirit moving in us corporately? If so, the Lord will bless the church by adding saints.

4.The salvation and baptism of people is not by our efforts or zealously, but the Lord Himself (Acts 2:47). About three thousand people were added to the church, not because of Peter, but because of the moving of the Spirit in the hearts of so many who were present in the crowd. The church of God in Montreal may be used as an example. This year (2019), the Lord has blessed the church in Montreal. For example, so far this year, twenty-three brothers and sisters have been baptized, of which four have returned to their native country. Not a single one has been lost. There is no pressure on anyone to be baptized. Just as the people asked Peter what they should do, we wait for the brothers and sisters to take the first step to express interest or a desire in being baptized, usually through written email. We encourage the saints themselves to take the initiative through the Lord's speaking to them, and through their response to the Lord, and then to fellowship with us their desire to be baptized. We continue to look to the Lord for His mercy to continue to bless the church in such a way.