

Life in the Church Acts 2:37-47

How do you join this community we call "church," and what does life look like once you've joined? We'll find out as we discuss how faith, repentance, and baptism relate to salvation.

Turn to Acts 2

Students: so many organizations to choose from – 1025 recognized student organizations at TAMU!

When it comes to choosing an organization to belong to, ask them 2 questions:

- **What does your organization actually do?**
- **How do I join – what do I have to do to get in?**

Here are a few of the more interesting student organizations out there:

- **Squirrel Club - University of Michigan**
 - o meet every week to feed peanuts to campus squirrels
 - o easy to join – just bring a bag of peanuts!
- **Happiness Club – Northwestern University**
 - o give out free lemonade and hugs
 - o I'm all for the lemonade... but a little suspicious about guys hugging random coeds
- **Even shadier: People Watching Club – Boston University**
 - o attend other clubs' events to watch people – then meet to discuss what you saw
 - o club motto: "We're not creepy, we're just interested"
 - o tip: if you have to tell people you are not creepy, then you are creepy!
 - o anyone can join as long as you have a high creepiness factor
- **Moustache Club – Carleton College**
 - o open to men and women both
 - o you just have to have a mustache or a love of mustaches
- **Harvard Tiddlywinks Society – Harvard University**
 - o they meet to play tiddlywinks, a child's game
 - o all that's required to join is that you're not embarrassed to be in a club called the "Tiddlywinks Society"
- **Students Against Hippies in Trees, UC Berkeley**
 - o because, well, that's Berkeley – not a big surprise!
 - o to be part of the group, you just gotta hate hippies!
- **Students for an Orwellian Society – Columbia University**
 - o their goal is to foster a totalitarian state as described in Orwell's book *1984*
 - o to join you just have to be a fascist – that's all
- **Shire of Grey Gargoyles, Society for Creative Anachronism – Univ of Chicago**
 - o all you need is a love of medieval dancing, sword fighting, cooking, metalworking, costuming, and beer brewing

So what about us? What about this organization, the church?

How do you become part of this group – the church?

And what is it that we actually do when we gather together?

Acts chapter 2 will answer those questions for us this morning

We'll pick up where we left off last week to discover, first...

How do you join the church... v36-41

read v36 - Review

- Last week we studied Peter's speech – he presented the Gospel in 4 parts...
 - o Jesus lived, died for sins, rose from the dead, rules from heaven
- That's good news for us... but BAD NEWS for Peter's audience
 - o They crucified their Savior and King!

They realize that now, and it terrifies them... read v37

- "pierced to the heart" = intense emotional distress = each person wounded deep inside
 - o wounded by realization that he participated in the murder of his king
- = **conviction** = feeling you get deep inside when you realize you've done very wrong
- **So they ask reasonable question: "What do we do?"**
- **A question that rings with desperation!**
 - o They did something horrible to the King of Kings – they are rightly afraid!
 - o **Like when one of my kids is acting up**, disobeying – I warn them but they ignore
 - finally I say, "You and I are going to have a 'talk' in your room right now."
 - they know what that means – eyes get big, take in deep breath
 - they finally realize they are in big trouble
 - so they ask "Dad, please what can I do so we don't have to go to my room?!"
- **That's where Peter's audience was:**
 - o overcome by fear... knot in their stomach... heart racing
 - o finally realize that they're in big trouble and desperately need help

So what can they do to escape the punishment they deserve?

Let's read Peter's answer – read v38

Peter tells them to do 2 things... and neither of them are what we expect!

- **What do you expect Peter to say? BELIEVE in Jesus!**
 - o That's what we preach every Sunday – that's what kids are learning in SS right now
 - o That's what John 3:16 tells us:
 - "whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life."
- **So why doesn't Peter say "believe"?**
- **Because belief has already begun!**

Step 1: Believe the facts about Jesus

- It has already happened in v37... they are afraid because they believe that Jesus rose & rules!!
- Belief has already begun... but now it needs to be completed – that's step 2...

Step 2: Repent

- **Common question I get as a pastor: Do you have to repent to be saved?**
- **Answer: Depends on how you define the word repent!**
- That leads us to Rule #1 to understanding your Bible: define your words carefully
- **Basic meaning = "to turn" – you turn from one thing to its opposite**
- In the Bible: turn from something bad to something good to escape punishment from God
- Examples:
 - o **Matthew 3** – John the Baptist warned Jews who were living under the Mosaic Law
 - they must turn away from disobedience and return to obeying the Law
 - or they would be judged when the Messiah arrived

- **Acts 17** – unbelievers must turn from idols and instead trust God for salvation
- **Revelation 3** – believers in Laodicea must turn from pride and worldliness
 - turn to Jesus in humility to avoid His discipline
 - that warning was given to the church as a whole
- **So repentance can be... for individuals, churches, nations... for believers or unbelievers.**
 - ...about turning from sin or pride or false belief
 - very broad word - you must study context to decide what it means in a passage
- **So what does repent mean in Acts 2? What bad thing must the turn from?**
- **Many people assume the answer is “sin”**
 - either “stop sinning” or “commit not to give in to that sin anymore”
 - **Here’s how two very popular authors interpret this call to repentance...**
 - won’t mention names – don’t want to stir controversy – both great men
 - **If that’s what’s required to be saved, then I’m not saved, and neither are you!!**
 - I often sin, and so do you!
 - That can’t be part of salvation or none of us are saved
 - **What authors missed: repenting of sin is something we must do every day!**
 - we keep sinning so we’ll need to keep repenting of sin over and over
 - that’s not how you get saved or how you stay saved
 - it’s just part of daily life for all of us who’ve trusted in Jesus
- **That’s not the kind of repentance Peter is talking about**
 - We know that because Peter never talks about sin in general in Acts 2
 - Never calls them out for immorality, greed, selfishness, lying
- **He only mentions one sin: they rejected Jesus**
 - that’s what they must turn from to be saved
 - they don’t need to clean up their lives... turn from every sin they struggle with
 - the only thing they must repent about: they said “NO” to Jesus – that must change!
- **In Acts 2 repent = turn from rejecting Jesus to accepting Jesus as Savior**
- **So is repentance required for salvation? YES, IF you mean that!**
 - **You must turn from your prideful rejection of Jesus**
 - the Jews in Acts 2 crucified Jesus because they thought they didn’t need a Savior
 - abandon prideful belief that you’re good enough to deserve heaven
 - abandon your attempts to save yourself through good deeds and hard work
 - **You must humble yourself before Jesus by asking Him to save you**
 - admit you are a sinner in need of a Savior – ask Him to save you

So when I walk a person through the gospel I include these 2 steps:

1) Present the facts about Jesus: He lived, died, rose, rules

- BUT it’s not enough to just know the facts – this isn’t a history lesson!
- to be saved you must act on those facts – that’s where repentance comes in

2) Invite them to say:

- **“God, I want your gift of salvation that Jesus earned for me...”**
- **“I am a sinner, I cannot save myself, please save me, God!”**
- that’s what Peter means by “repent” – a desperate cry to God to save us from sin
- you must humble yourself by acknowledging your sin and your desperate need
- you must humbly take hold of what Jesus did as your only hope for salvation

So how do you know if you’ve repented?

- If you died this afternoon and stood before God and He asked, ‘Why should I let you in...’
- **If your answer includes anything good that you’ve done...**
 - any good deeds, church attendance, charitable giving, morality...
 - anything that you think makes you worthy to enter heaven...

- **...you haven't yet repented**
 - o you're still clinging to your self-righteousness to save you
- You must humble yourself: admit that you're a sinner in desperate need of salvation
 - o a sinner who cannot earn heaven no matter what good things you do
 - o you must set aside all your good deeds and simply ask God to save you thru Jesus
- That's the gospel: belief the facts about Jesus AND repent: humbly turn to Jesus to save

But Peter doesn't stop with believe and repent. He adds a 3rd step...

Step 3: Be Baptized

- Common question we get: **Is baptism required for salvation?**
 - o Many Christians believe that to be the case because of this verse
 - o Sure sounds like Peter's saying you must be baptized "for the forgiveness of sins"
- **2nd rule for understanding your Bible: don't force a passage to answer questions it wasn't meant to answer**
- **Key to solving this debate: recognize in Peter's day no one was asking this question!**
 - o Never crossed Peter's mind to ask if water baptism was necessary for salvation
 - o **Because they didn't think of salvation and baptism as separate steps**
 - o **read v41:** all 3000 who believed were immediately baptized
 - o ch8: Phillip leads Ethiopian to faith, sees water, stops chariot, baptizes him
- **Baptism always followed salvation within minutes**
- **Result: there were no unbaptized believers!**
 - o No one asking if baptism was required for salvation because no one was unbaptized!
 - o There was no controversy over baptism – no theological debates
- **Therefore: to talk about salvation you could simply point to baptism**
 - o because baptism and salvation ALWAYS went hand-in-hand
- **It's a lot like wedding rings in our culture**
 - o If you want to know if I'm married all you have to do is look at my ring
 - o Does that mean the ring makes me married? If I lose it do I lose my marriage? NO
 - o **Jimmy Fallon** – host of The Tonight Show – fell – **ring occlusion**
 - emergency surgery – used veins in his foot to reconstruct finger – 10 days!
 - o Sounded like a 1 in a million accident – so I looked it up on the internet
 - Mistake! Unpleasant pictures
 - Turns out it happens often especially for guys who work on cars
 - o So... I got a little paranoid – ditched my ring
 - Ordered one of these – silicone safety rings
 - o **During the 2 weeks while I waited for it to arrive... was I no longer married?**
 - o **No! Because it's not the ring that makes me married – it's my vows!**
 - the ring is just a symbol of my commitment to Julie
 - o But because the symbol is so closely associated with the reality of marriage...
 - you can just look at the ring to know I'm married
 - why we tell guys in love, "put a ring on her finger!"
- **We can refer to the reality of marriage by referring to the symbol of the ring**
- **That's what Peter was doing with baptism**
 - o since everyone got baptized... Peter could refer to salvation by pointing at symbol
- Baptism isn't what saves you – it's just the visible symbol of the salvation you have
- **How do I know that? Turn to Acts 10... read 10:43-47**
 - o Holy Spirit comes in v44 – that's proof that they are saved at that moment
 - o Water baptism doesn't happen till v48
 - o So salvation comes *before* baptism
- **Baptism is not required for salvation just like a ring isn't required for marriage**

- **But why would you go without it?!**
 - o **A believer who hasn't been baptized is like a groom in a wedding...**
 - "Oh, hey, hold on... I don't really want anyone to know we're married."
 - "Can't we just keep this between us?"
 - Who would do that! Such a jerk thing!
 - o **Like a person who trusts in Jesus but then refuses to get baptized**
 - "No thanks, Jesus. I don't want anyone to know that I believe in you"
- **So have you been baptized? If not, why?**
 - o **Scared: Good news – doesn't have to be up here – do it with your small group**
 - o **Baptized as a baby: Excellent! Now let's finish what your parents started!**
 - that was a sign of *their* faith in Jesus, not yours
 - now it's time to complete what they began – honor them by being baptized
 - o **Talk to me after service or email us and we'll help you get baptized**

We join the church by believing, repenting, and getting baptized.
But once we're in the church, what do we do?

What we do as a church

Aggie Outdoor club

- o loved to climb and hike – so I went to a few meetings
 - realized they didn't actually *do* anything other than complain about living in a town with no mountains to climb but lots of humidity and mosquitoes
- o club motto was "Get the you-know-what out of College Station"
- o all they did was complain... I didn't stay in it – pointless, waste of time

That's how a lot of people feel about the church

- assume all we do is sing boring music, talk about how righteous we are and how unrighteous everyone else is
- it that's what church is about... then this would be a complete waste of time

But it's not – here's what we do as a church when we gather: read v42-47

1) We Learn together

- Dedicated to "the apostles teaching" = **the Bible**
- **When we gather we meet around this book – read, study, meditate, apply**
- **Because we believe... that this isn't just a book**
 - o God's very Word breathed out into words and sentences
 - o As true as God is true; as powerful as God is powerful
 - o Commands our attention and shapes our behavior
 - o This is where we go to learn what is true and how we should live
- **So everything here at Grace is structured around learning the Word of God**
 - o Sunday morning services, children's Sunday School, small groups and home groups
- **Challenge: If you are not yet CONNECTED with a small group... let's change that**
 - o we all need to be with other believers learning from God's Word
 - o we have lots of options
 - o take a card... or find all the options on our website

2) Worship together

- **Worship = praise or declare the greatness of God**
- We do that in **song**

- We do that in **communion** = “breaking bread” in v46
 - o They took communion as often as they gathered – multiple times per week
 - o No command about how often you must take it – some every week; us monthly
 - o Reason we only do it once a month: protect the sacredness of it
 - o But we may make it more frequent or even weekly in the future
- What matters: not how often you celebrate it but **that when you do you mean it**
 - o Not a ritual to you – a chance to praise and celebrate Jesus
- We worship God in song and in communion

3) Pray together

- We believe that prayer changes things – we don’t know how – we just know it does!!
- We pray for one another, our families, church, neighbors, town, country, world
- We pray believing that God hears and acts on our prayers to bring about good
- So prayer is not just a time filler or transition – one of the most important things we do

4) Share together

- We sacrificially share our money and possessions with those in need
- **In Acts 2 – sold their property and gave all the proceeds to those in need!**
 - o Not a command, just a record of what they did
 - o Makes sense when you understand what was going on
 - church just went from 120 to 3120 – most not from Jerusalem
 - time to go home but they weren’t ready – needed to be taught
 - so a church of 120 needed to house and feed 3000!!
 - required LOTS of resources
- **So it was a unique situation – God is not necessarily calling you to sell everything**
- **But He is calling you to share with those in need – that’s the general principle**
 - o **Share first with those who are near:** family, neighbors, coworkers, church
 - o **If you have something left: share with those further away**
- **Brings us back to what Guff talked about: helping refugees from Syria and Iraq**
 - o Another tragedy... it is easy to become apathetic
 - We can’t fix it, so why try? So we don’t do anything
 - o It is true that we can’t fix it – only God can fix something that big
 - o But that doesn’t mean we can’t help
 - o **We can’t do everything, but we can do something – that’s what God wants**
- **So if you have the ability to give... here’s the email address**
 - o organizations helping refugees in the name of Jesus
 - o you can give \$10 or \$10k
- **share what you can with those in need... because that’s what the church does**

5) Witness together

- The only reason God has left us here on earth – we’ll do all the others better in heaven
- Pray for **your 3** and look for opportunities to tell them about Jesus!