

Daily Devotional, December 27, 2020

'Four Marks of a Healthy Church', (Acts 2:42)

“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” (Acts 2:42, NKJV)

As we Christians follow the biblical mandates to evangelize and disciple in the context of the church which Jesus Christ Himself ordained, we look to the example of the early church as a guide. Our text is perhaps the most concise statement in Scripture as to how to go about our God-given mission. The four marks of a healthy church are given here in order: biblical doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer. Biblical doctrine is the most important thing. What the Bible teaches, the church must also teach. It is not up to the church or the pastor to decide what the truth is. Rather, it is their responsibility to preach and teach the truth as it has been revealed in the Holy Scriptures. God’s Word is the authority, not the teachings of men. Line everything up against God’s Word, searching the Scriptures for yourself (**Acts 17:11**). The local church should have both a clear definition of the salvation gospel and an expanded Statement of Faith complete with Scripture references. If it doesn’t, we are left to wonder why not. What is being hidden from the people? A Bible based sermon derived from the Bible is a must, as that is where the power of the Christian message is (**Hebrews 4:12**). Fellowship includes regular corporate meetings (Sunday Service) as well as other times where Christians gather together (Bible Study) and communicate (getting together as friends, communicating by phone, getting together for prayer). Fellowship is necessary for us to stay connected and build up one another (**Hebrews 10:24-25**). It is hard to see how online church can be an acceptable substitute for in-person assembly. The third mark of a healthy church is breaking of bread. This is Communion. The Bible does not specify how often it needs to be done, but it was the custom of the early church to have Communion weekly (**Acts 20:7**). Breaking of Bread should be a solemn time of remembrance, restoration, and prayer within the Sunday service. Prayer is necessary as the church and its members need the power of God to do anything of any eternal spiritual value (**John 15:5**). If one of these four is missing, the local church is probably failing in its mission. Examine your local church in light of this verse, and see if it measures up. You have the right to do that and respectfully ask questions. If your church has the four marks of a healthy church, then rejoice, and pray for it and be a part of its mission. May the Lord strengthen and guide His local churches and the church universal. AMEN.