

When the Lord Added More

Adding More in 2024

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Our theme for this year is Adding More in 2024. Last month we introduced this theme by considering Peter's instruction for us to add to our faith (2 Pet. 1:5). This concept, however, is broader than personal growth. Adding more is also noticed regarding the expansion of the Church.

As Christians, we have been entrusted with the Church. Christ wants us to work with Him to add to His Church. The Church is first documented in the second chapter of Acts. After an eventful day, readers are told, "And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47).

This began a time of tremendous progress for the Church. The apostles and new believers in Jesus contributed to the rapid increase in the number of believers. By the time we get to chapter four, there are roughly 8,000 people who obeyed the Gospel (Acts 4:4). In chapter five, the text says, "And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women" (Acts 5:14).

We are often amazed by the fast pace of growth in the early days of the Church. While this was a special time, there are some helpful lessons we can learn from these disciples. In this article, we will notice four lessons from Acts chapter two about when the Lord Adds More to the Church.

The Lord Adds More to the Church When...

1). Believers follow the Spirit. The events of Acts chapter two were prophesied hundreds of years earlier by Joel (Joel 2). He said the Spirit of the Lord would be poured on all flesh. This is exactly what happened to the apostles. Just as Jesus had said, the Spirit arrived and guided the apostles in the message they preached. They promised that the people could receive the gift of the Spirit.

The Spirit had an important role in the events of the beginning of the Church. He revealed the message the apostles preached. The Spirit gave the gift of new life to those who obeyed the Gospel. Today, the Spirit has a similar role. As Christians, we are to follow the lead of the Spirit. We are to teach the same message He revealed to the apostles. We must keep in step with the Spirit in doing the work of evangelism (Gal. 5:25). The Spirit still offers new life to anyone who obeys the Gospel.

2). The Gospel is preached. The Spirit guided the apostles in preaching the good news of God. This news was about events surrounding Jesus of Nazareth. The apostle Peter reminded the people about Jesus and His ministry. He had been approved by God. Yet, the people crucified Him. Then, God raised Jesus from death (Acts 2:22-35).

The good news of Jesus' resurrection was that the people could be saved from the penalty of their sins. This is what the good news means today. The Lord will add more to His Church when Christians share the good news of Jesus with those who have not heard.

3). Listeners take responsibility for their sins. The apostle Peter boldly charged the people with the murder of Jesus. He said, "Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36). At the realization of what they had done, panic ensued: "Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37).

The Lord cannot add anyone to His Church until they accept responsibility for their sins. We share in making His death necessary. The apostle John would later write, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (1 John 1:8-10). Before there can be cleansing, there must be confession.

4). Sinners repent and are baptized. When the people asked, "Brothers, what shall we do?", they may not have expected an answer. How could there be any hope for them after they killed the great hope of Israel? Yet, the Gospel is good news. There was hope for them. Peter answered, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:38-41).

Conclusion

If we want the Lord to add more to the Church today, we must follow in the example of the apostles. We must follow the Spirit and teach the Gospel. This is our primary role as Christians. We are to share the news and sow the seed. We must be bold and uncompromising, as Peter was in his preaching. We must do the work.

Then, the people we teach must respond. They must take responsibility for their sins. They must repent and be baptized. If they want the Lord to add them to His Church, they must obey the Gospel.

As we think about Adding More in 2024, we must not become discouraged in teaching the Gospel. The Gospel remains powerful. News of the self-giving love of the Savior can still pierce the hearts of sinners. The Spirit's gift of new life can still compel sinners to hope. The Lord can add many, many more to His Church. Will you let Him add you?