I began my college career at Purdue University studying to be a Mechanical Engineer. My plan for my life was to get my engineering degree, land a good internship along the way, and be all set to provide for myself and my family for the rest of my life.

Then God shook up my world. It was about February of my second semester, freshman year, I was reading the book *Wild at Heart*, and in it, the author talks about something God has put inside each man that makes his heart come alive. I knew as soon as I read those words that engineering was not it for me. In that moment, I knew my life would never be the same again, and God sent me down the path to where I am today.

That’s what happened with the people who saw and heard what happened on the day of Pentecost. They were devout Jews from all over the world, and they had come to Jerusalem probably to celebrate the Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost that was going on that day. That’s when they heard the disciples speaking publicly about Jesus in languages they couldn’t have known. From that point forward, life would never be the same for them again.

The disciples told about the Gospel story in languages that people from all around the world could understand, and it was all because of the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. It was the Holy Spirit that enabled them to do everything they did that day. They had a huge impact because they let the Holy Spirit lead. Peter stood up to let everyone know who this Lord was that he had talked about. That’s when he said this in:

**Acts 2:36** **ESV — 36** Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

These people had never heard anything like that before. They were used to calling God Lord, they knew it meant that he was in control of everything. They also knew when Peter talked about the Christ, he was talking about the Messiah, the one the Jews had hoped for for centuries. But now Peter was calling Jesus both Lord and Christ, and that was new for them.

But instead of accusing Peter of blasphemy, instead of dragging him before the Jewish leaders and demanding that he be punished, these devout Jewish men believed everything that Peter said.

**Acts 2:37** **ESV — 37** 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?”

The word that Luke uses there when he says they were ‘cut to the heart’ means to be pierced, or stabbed. It was used to speak of a sharp pain that a person feels when they are remorseful, or anxious. When Peter told them who Jesus really was, they believed him, and realized their need for a Savior.

Nothing in their Jewish heritage gave them any idea what to do next, this was completely new territory for them. Peter, on the other hand, didn’t hesitate for a moment.

**Acts 2:38 ESV — 38** And Peter said to them, “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.

We’re probably pretty familiar with that passage, we hear it all the time. But what I want to do today is dig into what Peter meant here, and see what that means for us today.

The first thing Peter told them to do was to repent. Often times when people hear the word repent, they think of being sorry for something, feeling remorse for something. That’s a part of this idea, but it’s only a part. If we leave it at just saying you’re sorry, we will completely miss what Peter actually told these men to do here in Acts 2.

The Greek word that Peter used here is μετανοέω (meta-no-eh-o). This is a word that means to change your mind, to change your attitude, to change your whole life. While we focus mostly on the sorrow or contrition that we feel when we have done something wrong, this word speaks of so much more.

This word speaks of a total change in a person’s life, both in their actions, and in the way they think about things. It means actually affecting the way that you behave and the way you think.

Whenever our kids do something for which they have a consequence, the words ‘I’m sorry’ come quickly to their tongues. They are quick to apologize, quick to say the right words, but not so quick to change the way they act. They will apologize, sometimes in spite of how they really feel, and then, just a short while later, they are back to doing the very thing that got them in trouble to begin with.

I am constantly telling them that to say you’re sorry means you change your behavior, and don’t do it again. The words of an apology don’t mean much if you don’t also change your behavior.

If we are honest with ourselves, we will find that we are often like that as well, and not just in our relationships with other people, but especially in our relationship with God. We pray for forgiveness, and then struggle with the very same thing the next day, or the next week.

Repentance does not mean that we are perfect from the time we ask for forgiveness on. It means that we allow God to be not only the one who washes away our sin and guilt, but also be the one who molds our lives like a potter molds his clay.[[1]](#footnote-1)

That’s what Peter was urging these men to do, to recognize where they had gone wrong, to recognize the sin in their life, and to turn away from it. To change the way they lived, and the way they thought, to change their very lives in light of the Gospel.

Peter also told them to be baptized. Peter didn’t pull any punches here, this is an imperative verb here, this is a command. Peter could give that command, because he was commanded to do the same thing from Jesus himself in the Great Commission. Jesus told his disciples to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The word that is used here is the word βαπτίζω (baptize) which means to plunge, dip, or immerse in water. The Jews practiced baptism long before Jesus was around. The Jewish people went through ceremonial cleansings as a part of their worship of God.

They had these pits carved out of the stone with stairs leading down to them that were called mikveh where people would dip or immerse themselves to make themselves ceremonially clean. In order for that to be the case, the water had to be put into the mikveh by living water, or by rain or a stream, not by human hands.

John the Baptist was baptizing people before Jesus came as well. John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance, so he incorporated a lot of the same ideas that Peter talks about here in Acts.

The difference is that none of those ceremonial cleansings or even a baptism for repentance had the power to save a person. They were just steps along the way. Jesus made a distinction between what John did and what Peter was telling people to do back in **Acts 1:5 ESV — 5** for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

There is a big difference here, not in what the person does physically, but in what happens to them spiritually. John’s baptism was a public statement of what had happened in that person’s heart. The baptism that Peter was talking about was the beginning of a new life with Jesus as Lord and Christ in a person’s life. Paul says this:

**Romans 6:3–8 ESV — 3** Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? **4** We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. **5** For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. **6** We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. **7** For one who has died has been set free from sin. **8** Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

See there is so much more to baptism than just getting wet. The action of being baptized is not what saves us, it is only the grace of Jesus that does that. But the act of baptism connects us to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus in a deep and intimate way.

When we are plunged under the water, our old selves die with Christ so that we can rise out of the water to a new life with Christ, as a new creation. Paul says in **2 Corinthians 5:17 ESV — 17** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

That not only gives us hope for living a new kind of life right here and now, but Paul also tells us that it gives us an assurance that we will also one day be united with him in a resurrection like his. We get a new life now, but we also get life for all eternity. That is why it is so important for all those who are believers in Jesus to also be baptized.

Peter tells every one of the people listening to him to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Now he could have assumed that the people there that day were all Jews, but he couldn’t have known for sure. This is the first glimpse we see of the apostles making the Gospel available to all people, Jews and Gentiles. This is how all people are to enter into this new life in Christ, regardless of their background.

By telling them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, Peter is doing a couple of things. First, he is differentiating this baptism from any others that people may have experienced before. This is not just a baptism of repentance, or a ceremonial cleansing. This baptism is much more than that.

He is also making it clear that when you do this, you are declaring publicly what he already said in his sermon, that Jesus is the Christ, that he is the Messiah, and you are submitting to his Lordship. You are publicly declaring that you will make Jesus Lord and Christ in your life from that point forward. This is not something to be taken lightly, this is a lifelong decision to follow after Christ. Peter makes that very clear here.

He goes on to say that this baptism is **Acts 2:38 ESV — 38** …for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

I was reading C.S. Lewis’s book *The Weight of Glory* recently. Lewis’s contention is that we don’t often actually want forgiveness. What we really want is to be able to keep on doing what we have always done.

He tells the story of an Irishwoman who met her greatest enemy on the steps of the church as she was coming out. He says her enemy let fly a torrent of abuse. Then the woman replied, “Isn’t it a shame for you to be talking to me like that, you coward, and me in a state of Grace the way I can’t answer you? But you wait. I won’t be in a state of Grace long.”

Isn’t that so true? We come to God for forgiveness, but that’s often not what we really want. Lewis said what we really want is to be excused. Excusing someone means that they couldn’t help what they did, or they didn’t mean to, or they weren’t really to blame for what happened. But to forgive someone means that they have willfully and consciously done something against you, but you choose not to hold it against them.

When we ask God for forgiveness, is not God excusing us. We have to realize that we have willfully and consciously disobeyed God. We have chosen to do something against God that created a rift in our relationship with him, and nothing we can do will fix that. The only thing that will help is forgiveness from God. God choosing not to hold our sin against us, even though we willfully chose it.

God goes even further than that. He washes our sins away, he makes us clean, he justifies us through the Grace of Jesus. He clothes us with the righteousness of Jesus, so that when he looks at us, instead of seeing our sinfulness, he sees the righteousness of Jesus instead. That is what happens the moment we accept Jesus as our Savior and make him both Lord and Christ in our lives.

Something else happens as well. When we take the plunge, so to speak, of baptism, we also receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The very Spirit that allowed the disciples to speak in other languages, that gave them the boldness to speak in public about Jesus for the first time, he takes up residence in each one of us when we accept Jesus Christ.

That means that every person who is a Christian has the Holy Spirit to help them and guide them. Every believer has gifts that have been given to them by the Holy Spirit to use for the good of God’s Kingdom. This is a gift from God that we overlook far too often. He is here within us, just waiting for us to get to work.

Incredible things happen when we follow the leading of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The opposite is also true. When we don’t follow the Holy Spirit, and we rely on our power, or just don’t do anything at all, don’t expect incredible things to happen.

But the disciples were following the Spirit’s leading that day, Peter was following his leading, and incredible things happened.

**Acts 2:39–41 ESV — 39** 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.” **40** And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.” **41** So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

Again, Peter tells us that this promise of salvation is for everyone, not just the Jews, not just the Gentiles, but for everyone. The people listening to Peter that day got it. They heard the Gospel message, they believed it, and they responded to it. 3,000 people were saved that day because they received Peter’s word and made Jesus their Lord and Christ. That is what can happen when we let the Holy Spirit work in us and through us.

So, what does it look like when people live that out? What does it look like when people live as followers of Christ, and they let the Holy Spirit lead and guide them? Luke gives us a glimpse of exactly that when he tells us what the early church was like in

**Acts 2:42–45 ESV — 42** And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. **43** And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. **44** And all who believed were together and had all things in common. **45** And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.

The very first thing that we see is not what life was like for these new believers, but what they did. Life did not just automatically change for them because they were believers now. They couldn’t go back to the same things they had always done before and expect that life would somehow be different. The first thing we see is a change in attitudes, a change in priorities.

These believers devoted themselves to four different things, because now that they knew the truth of the Gospel, their hearts had changed. The first thing they devoted themselves to was the apostles’ teaching. They were committed to learning about Jesus from the men who had walked with Jesus for three years and learned everything they could from him.

They were committed to fellowship with one another, spending time with one another, not just tolerating each other’s presence at church. This is the word κοινωνία (koinonia), which you may recognize. It is a word that means to have mutual interests, and close relationships with one another.

They were committed to the breaking of bread together, which is probably Luke’s way of saying that they celebrated the Lord’s Supper together often. They regularly remembered what Jesus had done for them as a group.

They were also committed to prayer. That was nothing new for the Jewish people, because they had regular, daily times of prayer. But I would venture a guess that their prayer life changed a little bit from this point forward.

In the midst of all of that, the Holy Spirit was still clearly at work, with the apostles doing signs and wonders. We’ll see next week, and a few times throughout Acts, that this was not limited to just their group, but the apostles were doing things like healing people and casting out demons out in public, where people could clearly see that God’s power was on display through these men.

And then we see that incredible spirit of generosity and care for each other. The wording that Luke uses here makes it clear that the first Christians were unified as one, harmonious body. Unfortunately, that is not something that can be said of all churches, but it is so very important for a church to be a unified body in harmony with one another.

What Luke says here does not mean that no one had private property, or everyone lived together in a communal sort of life. What it means is that when someone had a need, their fellow brothers and sisters in Christ took care of them, no matter what it took. They had private property, but none of their possessions were off limits for their fellow believers when they had a need.

Most people will never see that kind of generosity in action, because there aren’t many people willing to part with their things like this anymore. But let me tell you, if you have a need, and you let the people of this congregation know about it, you will see this kind of love and generosity put into practice in a heartbeat. Every one of us is blessed to belong to a church like this one.

**Acts 2:46–47 ESV — 46** And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, **47** praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

First, Luke told us what it was like to be a part of this church, to belong to that group of believers. He painted this beautiful picture of harmony and generosity. But that was just what it was like to belong there. This is what God was doing in that church, this is where God was moving.

This wasn’t just a fun place to go to church, or a nice place to belong where everyone knows your name. This was a place where God was moving in big ways because of what these people committed themselves to.

That’s an important distinction to make, between what things are like at a church, and whether or not God is actually moving and doing things through that church. A lot of churches become social clubs, where it’s great to be there, people get along great. But if they aren’t following God’s leading, if God isn’t moving and working through those people, then they are just a social club.

The mark of a church that is following hard after God is not only that you enjoy being there, and people care for one another, but that you can see the work that God is accomplishing through the work of the church. People will be learning to be more devoted disciples of Jesus, and God will be adding to their number every day those who are being saved.

Our churches today will never look exactly like the church in Acts, but that’s not the point. The point is that we end up at the same endpoint. If we want to see God moving in LaPorte, IN, if we want to see God moving and working among us, and through us, then we have to make sure that we are committed to the same things the early church was.

We have to be committed to learning from Scripture, to having fellowship with one another, celebrating the death and resurrection of Jesus together, and we have to be committed to prayer. When we are doing those things, and letting the Holy Spirit lead us, we will truly be a church that God can use to move in mighty ways in the world around us, and He will add to our number day by day those who are being saved.

We’re going to have the worship team come back up now

1 If you need to accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior

2 If you are believer who has not been baptized

3 If you are looking for a church home to belong to

1. Another good point here, but probably won’t make it into the sermon is CS Lewis’s idea in *Weight of Glory,* pg 186, in *A Slip of the Tongue* that we don’t want to repent too much, or take things too far, because we are trying to hold onto the temporal things rather than the eternal. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)