

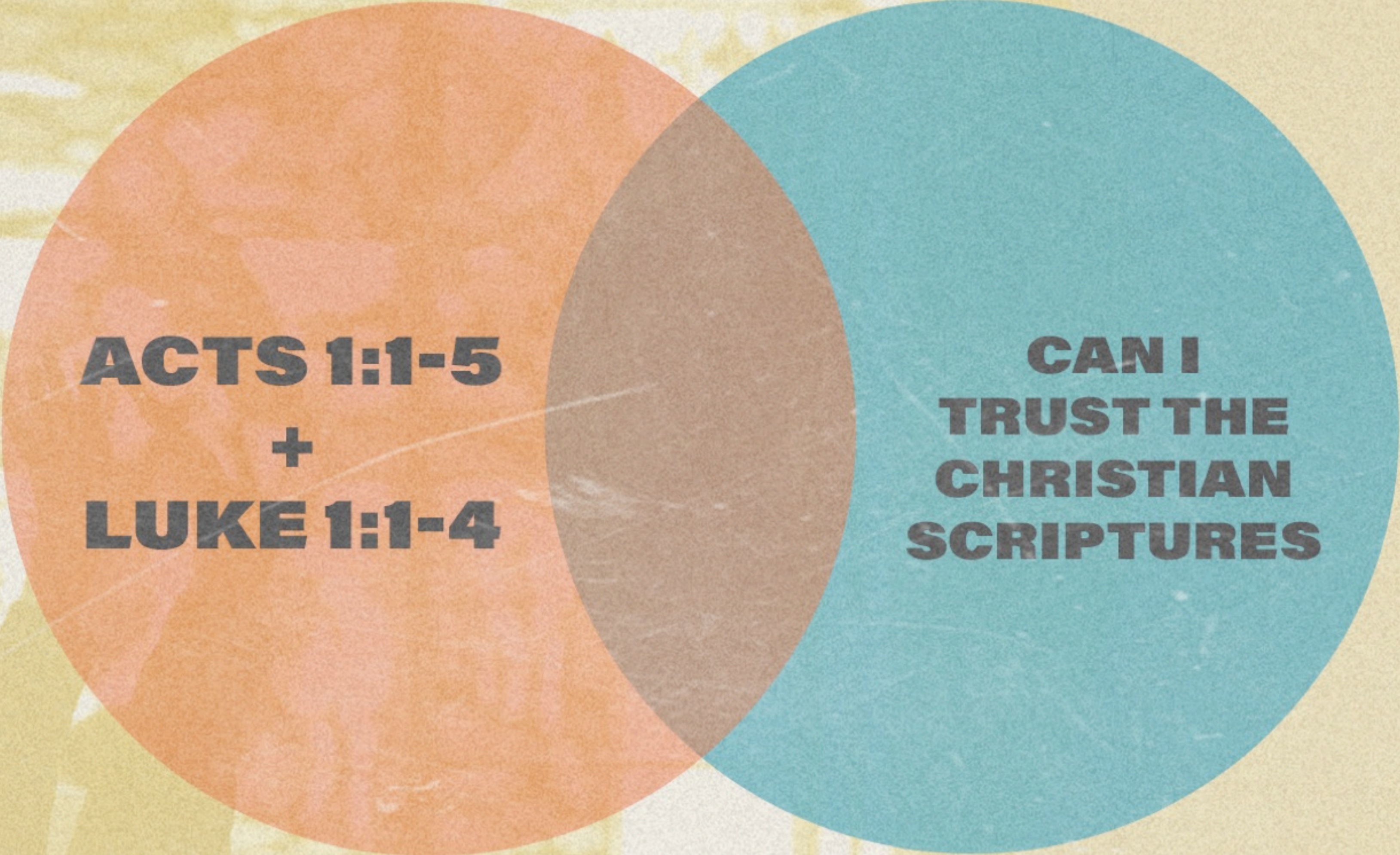
acts

— **VERSE BY VERSE**



**ANCIENT
CHURCH**

**MODERN
ISSUES**



**ACTS 1:1-5
+
LUKE 1:1-4**

**CAN I
TRUST THE
CHRISTIAN
SCRIPTURES**



ACTS 1:6-11

**IS
"DIVERSITY"
CHRISTIAN?**



ACTS 1:6-9

**WHY IS THE
CHURCH
FACING A
CREDIBILITY
CRISIS?**

Acts 1:6~9

So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking Him, “Lord, has the time come for You to free Israel and restore our kingdom?” He replied, “The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be My witnesses, telling people about Me **everywhere**—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” After saying this, He was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see Him.

Historic Evangelicalism

1. **Conversionism:** transforming lives through “born again” experience and lifelong process of following Jesus.
2. **Activism:** expressing the gospel in evangelism and social reform efforts.
3. **Biblicism:** viewing Scripture as the ultimate authority.
4. **Crucicentrism:** elevating Jesus and the cross as the means of salvation and method for life.



“I like your Christ. I do not like your Christians.
Your Christians are so unlike your Christ.”



"Noah was a conspiracy theorist...
until it started to rain."

Acts 2:46~47

They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity—all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.

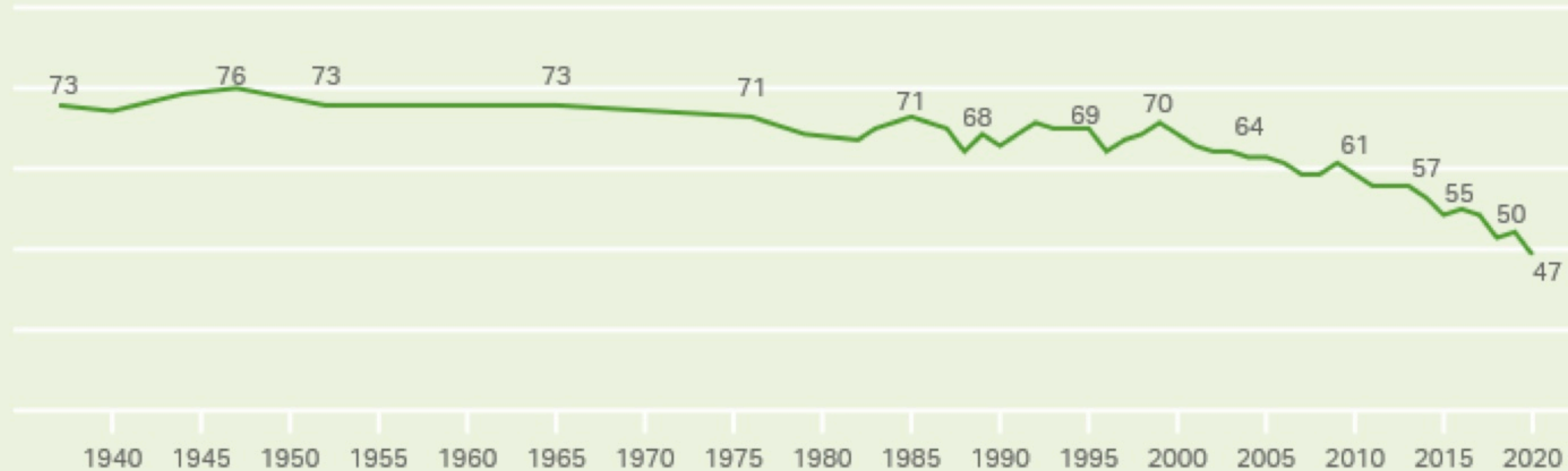
Gallup Study

- In 2020, 47% of U.S. adults belonged to a church, synagogue or mosque.
- That's down from 50% in 2018 and 70% in 1999.
- This is the first time in eight-decades it's dropped below 50%.
- Younger people are far more likely to claim no religious preference.

Church Membership Among U.S. Adults Now Below 50%

Do you happen to be a member of a church, synagogue or mosque?

— % Yes, member



Based on annual aggregated data, usually based on two surveys

GALLUP



Acts 1:8~9

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you;
and you will be My **witnesses** in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria,
and to the ends of the earth.

Witness

- μάρτυς (martys) – One who affirms or testifies to anything.
- This and 6 related terms used 39x in Acts.
- Used often in legal contexts. (Think of calling a witness in court.)
- Used eventually for those who witness at the cost of their life.
- Acts is the story of what the “witness” of the early church looked like.

Rodney Stark, The Rise of Christianity

1. They faced death & persecution with courage.
2. They defied class hierarchy.
3. They practiced radical compassion.
4. They elevated the status of women.
5. They successfully converted their fellow Jews.
6. They successfully infiltrated cities.
7. They built a community of deep & exclusive devotion.

I. They faced death & persecution with courage.

Acts 3-4 – Peter and John Imprisoned.

Acts 5 – Apostles beaten and rejoice!

Acts 7 – Stephen martyred.

Acts 8:1-3 – Persecution of Saul.

Acts 9 – Attempt to assassinate Saul.

Acts 12 – James killed. Peter escapes.

Acts 13-28 – Continual persecution and suffering of Paul.

Acts 5:40~42

They called in the apostles and had them flogged. Then they ordered them never again to speak in the name of Jesus, and they let them go. The apostles left the high council **rejoicing** that God had counted them worthy to suffer disgrace for the name of Jesus. **And every day, in the Temple and from house to house, they continued to teach and preach the message: “Jesus is the Messiah.”**

Acts 7:58~8:1

Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named **Saul**. While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, “**Lord, do not hold this sin against them.**” When he had said this, he died. And **Saul** approved of their killing him.

I. They faced death & persecution with courage.

- witness - μάρτυς (martyrs)
- Eventually used for martyrs of the faith.
- English word martyr is a transliteration.
- Why? Witnessing may end in martyrdom.
- 11 of 12 disciples martyred.



Do we face cultural pressure and cultural scorn
with courage?

Cancel Culture

-It's not new.

-Perhaps it feels new because we're on the receiving end.

-Often it is accountability.

-Persecution is a guaranteed and blessed part of the Christian experience according to Jesus.

Luke 6:23,26

“Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man...
Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way.”

2. They defied class hierarchy.

3. They practiced radical compassion.

Acts 4:32-35 – All the believers were united in heart and mind.

And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had. The apostles testified powerfully to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God's great blessing was upon them all. There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them and bring the money to the apostles to give to those in need.

4. They elevated the status of women.

Acts 1:14 – Mary (mother of Jesus) and others, founding disciples

Acts 2:17-18 – Promise of female prophets

Acts 9:36 – Tabitha, a woman of compassion

Acts 12:12 – Mary (mother of John Mark), house church leader

Acts 16:40 – Lydia, house church leader

Acts 18:26 – Priscilla, teacher of theology

Acts 21:9 – Philip's Four Daughters, prophetesses



Are we building communities known for our commitment to compassionate love?

“We know everything about what we can actually do almost nothing about. And nothing about what we can do everything about. I can tell you about COVID rates in Wuhan. Tell you about cell phone tracking, the global economy. I can tell you what the British prime minister is doing. But do I know my actual neighbor’s names? I’m giving my attention to that which I have no investment in. Instead I should try to give attention to that which I have investment in...”

“It’s paying attention to those who are around me because that’s actually how you repair the world. Very few people will be given actual cultural influence and power to actually shape history, but all of us have unlimited ability to shape the world around us.”

- Jon Tyson

Consumer Church

- Uplifting-non-controversial-brief-self-help-Ted-Talk
- “Music I like!”
- “Help finding my calling.”
- Advice developing a personal relationship with God.
- “Ministry menu that meets my current needs.”
- Expectations/Options that fit my busy schedule.
- No hard feelings when I get bored, offended or find some where better and leave.

5. Successfully converted their fellow Jews.

Acts 2:41 - Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all.

Acts 4:4 - But many of the people who heard their message believed it, so the number of men who believed now totaled about 5,000.

Acts 5:14 - Yet more and more people believed and were brought to the Lord—crowds of both men and women.

6. Successfully infiltrated cities.

Acts 19:8-10 - Paul entered the synagogue and for three months spoke out boldly, and argued persuasively about the kingdom of God. When some stubbornly refused to believe and spoke evil of the Way before the congregation, he left them, taking the disciples with him, and argued daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord.



Are we telling our neighbors, friends, and family
about Jesus? ...like with actual words?



When is the last time you...

- invited someone to church?

- shared how Jesus has changed your life?

- encouraged a lost or hurting friend to turn God?

- baptized someone?

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7. They built a community of deep & exclusive devotion.

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Acts 2:42-47 – All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer. A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need...



3. They built a community of deep & exclusive devotion.

...They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity— all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.

Acts 2:42

All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer.

A Prayer of St. Patrick

Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me,
Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me,

Christ on my right, Christ on my left,

Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down,

Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,

Christ in the mouth of every man who speaks of me,

Christ in the eye that sees me, Christ in the ear that hears me.