Acts **Dan Hamel**
Week 10—God Moves in Power through the Church: Acts 2 and 4 **September 20, 2026**

Over the last ten weeks we've been studying the book of Acts together. We've talked about how God moves in power through prayer and through the gospel. Today we begin our conversation about how God moves in power through the church. I've personally never seen God move in power through the church in my own life like he has the last few weeks. I had a sermon written for today, but by God's grace, I get to preach a much different, and hopefully much better, message because of what I've seen from the church in my life!

What do you look for in a healthy church? How do you know if a church is the type of church God wants? If you moved to a new town and had to find a new church, what kind of church would you look for? If a friend asked you why they should consider joining your church, what would you say? It's common for people to evaluate the preaching, worship, children's ministry, community outreach, proximity to their home. Those are all good things to look for in a church.

But let me ask you: What do you think God is looking for in a church? What does God want his church to look like? As we continue our study of the book of Acts together, we get a look at the first church—not the downstream, potentially polluted or compromised church, but the first expression of the church in all her beauty. We are going to see that this is not only what God is looking for in a church; this is what we're looking for in a church, as well!

> They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42-47)
>
> All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need. (Acts 4:32-35)

What a picture of the church! That's not only the kind of church God is looking for; that's the kind of church people are looking for, too. I want to highlight four marks of a healthy, thriving church, four marks of the type of church God is looking for, and the type of church we want to be a part of, too.

Devotion

"They devoted themselves…." The believers in the early church were not casual attenders. These people were committed! In our day, church attendance fluctuates a lot based on weather and sports and vacations. Not the early church. They weren't just about church on Christmas and Easter. They didn't leave church ten minutes early to avoid traffic. They were devoted! And it wasn't just the 20% carrying 80% of the weight. Everyone was all in!

What were they devoted to?

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching…"

They were devoted to biblical, theological truth. They wanted God's word. They were hungry for it. There is a huge difference between being devoted to God's Word or simply dabbling in God's Word!

Dabbling in the Word	Devotion to the Word
Wanting entertaining sermons	Wanting biblical sermons
Casually listening to sermons	Deeply engaging with sermons
Reading Scripture when you have time	Making time to read Scripture
Owning a copy of God's Word	Being owned by God's Word

The early church was devoted to the Apostles teachings. They didn't go to their culture to discover the truth; they went to God's Word to discover the truth. Beyond that, they went to submit their lives to the truth; they obeyed the truth. They said, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light unto my path." They wanted to know what Jesus said, and whatever Jesus said was the ultimate answer.

"…and to fellowship,…"

They were devoted to the Apostles teaching and to fellowship, to the community, to relationships with other believers. This is something I've seen so beautifully in my life the last few weeks. Two weeks ago, I was told by my triple oncologist, triple board-certified doctor who looked at all my labs and reports, "You have a very serious, stage four cancer. You have to start chemo in about a week." Before I shared that with you as my church family, I shared it with my friends. I've come to learn that after hearing that news, several of my friends stopped eating. They started fasting the moment they heard, and instead of eating they took all that time and all that focus for three straight days and started praying non-stop. That's fellowship. That's love. The night we got the unexpected but incredible news that the lymphoma diagnosis was not correct, that I have something else that is compromising my immune system but doesn't require chemo and is not supposed to be life threatening, people from my life group started going to each other's houses and dancing on their front porches! They sent me this video. [View the online sermon to see the video.] The Bible says that we are not just supposed to carry one another's burdens, but that God's people are supposed to mourn with those who mourn and rejoice with those who rejoice. That's part of having true fellowship!

All the cards, the prayers, the watching our kids during appointments, the medical professionals all lending their expertise and their advocacy—I felt like I had thousands of family members who loved me like a brother or a son. That family-type connection comes not from sitting in a pew an hour a week and observing a service; it comes from devoting yourself to fellowship and deepening meaningful relationships with others over the course of months and years.

"…to the breaking of bread…"

They also devoted themselves to breaking bread. This means that not only did they come together on Sundays to share communion, a meal to remember Christ, but they also came together throughout the week and shared meals in each other's homes. The early church didn't just share a faith. They shared a table. That's how their relationships got so deep and meaningful—they shared meals together constantly! You can attend a service without really knowing anybody. But when you sit around someone's table, you talk. You laugh. You hear people's stories. You see their kids. You discover what they're walking through. We aren't perfect at this, but since joining The Creek ten years ago, we've had over 2,000 people over to our house for meals. We still have a lot more people to have over, and we still have a lot more houses to

visit, but because we want deeper relationships, and we know deeper relationships tend to form around meals, we connect with people around a table.

Who are you inviting into your home? Who are you inviting out to dinner? Who are you sharing a meal with so that you are better equipped to share life together?

"…and to prayer."

Finally, the early church was devoted to prayer: They prayed in homes and they prayed in public. They prayed and witnessed miracles. They prayed when their leaders were arrested. They prayed at 9, 12, and 3 on an almost daily basis, and often when they did, God spoke in unmistakable ways. They prayed in the middle of the night when arrested and beaten and awaiting condemnation. No matter what life threw their way, you would always find them on their knees in prayer. Prayer is not just our time to bring our needs to God; it's our time to be with God, to bring our hearts of worship, to bring our praise, to enjoy his presence, to feel his love and joy. They were devoted to being in God's presence, asking God to move.

Unity

Another hallmark characteristic, another pillar they steadfastly built their lives around, was unity. The writer of Acts highlights this:

- "All the believers were together and had everything in common" (Acts 2:44).
- "All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had" (Acts 4:32).

Look at those phrases: "Everything in common." "One in heart and mind." "They shared everything they had." Isn't that an incredible picture of a united community? Our world today is familiar with division. Everything is polarizing, isn't it? Political divisions and hostility. Racial divisions and hostility. Generational divisions and hostility. Cultural divisions and hostility. The world around us is divided and filled with vitriol. As we see in Acts, the unity of the church is supposed to stand out in stark contrast to that!

Unity isn't uniformity

I'm a coach on a soccer team. Our team is pretty good. One of the qualities that makes our team good is that we don't have clones on the field. All the players don't have identical skill sets. Some are great at defense, some at offense. It's the various and complementary skills that make the team come together so well when they work in unity.

The same is true of the church. I love how people in our church are always honoring certain parts of our body. Our older people love to honor and celebrate our younger people. We celebrate when young families come on stage and dedicate their newborn children. We celebrate every summer when we send nearly 1,000 students to camp and we take a weekend to highlight how God is working in the next generation. I'd love to take a moment right now and celebrate our older generation, the faithful saints who love God, pray, give, serve, and have helped to dig the wells so many of us get to drink from. I have three children down in Creek Kids. [View the online sermon to see photos from Creek Kids.] They have a Sunday School classroom to meet in right now because you built that room and paid for it. There is someone in that room teaching them because some of our faithful older saints have been serving there nearly every Sunday for the last 30 years. Thank you. We honor you. We respect you. The church shines its brightest when we all come together, focusing on our common commitment to Jesus.

Unity isn't communism

Because the church was so united in heart, they shared all they had with one another. But to be clear, unity isn't communism. This wasn't forced. It wasn't coerced. It wasn't a government program. It was love. Christian unity occurs when we are filled with so much warmth and affection for one another, we spontaneously and joyfully share what God has given us. Someone at The Creek told me that a few weeks ago, after a Sunday service, several Creek families were out to lunch at the same restaurant. They waved and said hello to one another. The first family that left bought not only their meal, but also the meal of another family. When that family found out, they paid it forward and bought another family's meal. When that family found out, they saw a family they didn't recognize from The Creek who had a special needs child and bought their meal as a blessing. Nobody was coordinating this. Nobody was keeping score. Nobody was saying, "I guess I have to do this." Love kept moving from one person to the next. We are in this together. We love one another and bless one another. No pride. No selfishness. No prejudice. Just humility, joy, kindness—that's what unity is about. Jesus said when we are one then the world will know that he was truly sent from the Father.

Generosity

Unity and sharing set the state for the third characteristic, generosity. This wasn't convenient generosity. It wasn't "I'm going to give the minimum amount required" generosity." It was outrageous generosity. It was sacrificial generosity.

- "They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need" (Acts 2:45).
- "For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need" (Acts 4:34-35).

This was not, "Here's $20 in the offering plate." Or, "Here's my weekly tithe, 10% of my income." Some people sold their land to help people in need. Some people sold their homes, taking the proceeds, bringing the money to the church, and saying, "Whoever needs it most, wherever there is the greatest need—use it there." They weren't pulling from their bank accounts to give, even though that would have been wonderful. No, they were liquidating assets to be as generous as they possibly could! Nothing they owned mattered more to them than the needs of their brothers and sisters.

When I was told two weeks ago I had lymphoma and I looked at the multi-year survivability rates of that cancer, I got sober-minded. I had real thoughts about not getting to watch my kids grow up, not seeing my little girl get married, not helping my sons grow into men of character. There were some emotionally grueling moments. After we got good news and I shared it, I had three women tell me that their husbands told them, "If the worst-case scenario plays out, we are paying for his kids' college." How do you even respond to that kind of love? It also explains why they were so happy when they found out I didn't have lymphoma!

God is an outrageously generous, sacrificial God. God so loved the world that he did what? He gave his one and only Son. Jesus gave his life; he shed his blood for us. Because the church worships a generous God, the church is filled with generous people! We see the same thing today. About a year ago a person in our church came to me and said, "I have a car. It runs. It's in great shape. It's not very old. But I don't have a need for it any longer. I could easily sell it, but I was wondering if there was anyone in the church who could use it? I'd rather give it as a gift to someone in our church in need." That gift made a transformative impact on a family in our community.

I was talking to a good friend this week who told me about a conversation he had with a middle school student in his church. He asked him a simple question: "What's your favorite restaurant?" Easy: Chick-fil-A. Then he asked him, "How often does your family eat there?" The student responded, "We used to go about once a week. But since we've upped our commitment to the church to help with the new mission project, we've not eaten out at all this year." That is sacrificial generosity happening today. Real people in a real church, who would happily give up eating out for an entire year, so that they can bring a gift to their church and help their church reach more people for Jesus. My friend asked this kid if he minded the change. "No, our family is happier than we've ever been." Generosity brings deep joy.

Supernatural Grace

I want to highlight one more character trait from the early church. They were marked not only by devotion, unity, and generosity, but also by supernatural grace. The truth is God was among them, and that is what made that early church so undeniable, so irresistible, so unstoppable. It wasn't just that they were disciplined and kind and generous; it's that God was moving in their minds in life-changing ways.

- "Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles" (Acts 2:45).
- "God's grace was so powerfully at work in them" (Acts 4:33).
- "The Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47).

This was not simply a church filled with good people doing good things; this was a church where God was in their midst! Yes, there were supernatural miracles, there were times when sick people were healed, when lame people were able to walk, when prayers literally opened prison doors. But God's supernatural grace was present in so many ways. Every time a selfish person becomes generous, that's God's supernatural grace. Every time an addiction is broken in Jesus' name, that's God's supernatural grace. Every time a broken marriage is restored, that's God's supernatural grace. Every time a hardened heart is touched by forgiveness, that's God's supernatural grace. Every time a sinner turns from the error of their ways, kneels at the cross, and says, "I surrender all. I believe in you. I trust you. I will follow you," that's God's supernatural grace.

That's still happening today. A few weeks ago, 44 people came forward and made that very decision. Since the start of the year, over 200 people have made that decision here. Supernatural grace.

That's the kind of church I want to be a part of. It doesn't really matter if the preacher is funny or not, if the coffee is premium or not, if the parking lot is busy or not. What makes a church worth attending is whether you feel God's supernatural grace in that place. When you show up, you know there are people devoted to the right things. They love one another, they are sacrificially laying their lives down for one another and for the kingdom, and God's presence is undeniable. That's the church of Acts 2, and by God's grace, that's the church we get to be a part of today, too. The last few weeks have been the craziest of my entire life. This church loved me and my family in ways I will never forget and that I will always thank God for. There is nothing in all the world quite like the gift of a healthy church.