

21 Concurrent Activities that Ensure Continual Church Growth from Acts 2:37-47

Galen Currah, May 2020

Despite persecution from hostile authorities, the apostolic church at Jerusalem enjoyed astonishing growth, as “the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47). In early 2020, similar growth is occurring in about 1000 movements across several nations, especially where other faiths dominate. Leaders and observers of those movements generally concur that the apostolic actions described in Acts 2:37-47 largely explain their success. Wherever Christians find ways in which to implement these activities, bathed in unceasing prayer, they begin and continue to grow, even if they are not aiming to do so.

Jesus had promised to his apostles, “If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you” (John 14:15-16). The following chart, lists out 21 apostolic activities from Acts 2:37-47, each of which corresponds to a specific command that Jesus gave, along with comments from a church-multiplication trainer-coach who has experience in twenty countries in the Americas, Africa, and North, South, Central and East Asia. He recommends that you ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in finding culturally-appropriate ways in which to obey the Lord Jesus Christ.

These 21 activities may be presented in three sets of seven. Acts 37-41 deals with evangelism, 42-43 with disciple-making, and 44-47 with life in the believing community.

Seven Activities Dealing with Evangelism

	Acts 2 (NIV)	Jesus’ Command
1	When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” <i>Acts 2:37</i>	“Whoever has ears, let them hear .” <i>Matthew 11:15</i>
	Comment: Train and coach Christians in winsome ways to speak about the Lord Jesus within their cultural and religious contexts. Let the gospel flow primarily through existing family and friendship networks. Recount the Gospel that Jesus and his apostles taught (Luke 24:46-47).	
2	Peter replied, “ Repent! ” <i>Acts 2:38</i>	“ Repent and believe the good news!” <i>Mark 1:15</i>
	Comment: Conversion to Christ requires that one change their belief about him, his death and his resurrection, along with a desire to change their conduct in ways that the Holy Spirit makes clear to them (John 16:8).	

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- 3 “And be **baptized**, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ.” *Acts 2:38* “Go and make disciples of all nations, **baptizing** them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit!” *Matthew 28:19*
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Comment: By baptism, the church affirms believers’ repentance and faith, receiving them into the church. Only delay baptism long enough to bring their family members to faith, so that you can baptism them together. Most folk who are soon baptized will remain faithful to Christ.

- 4 “For the **forgiveness** of your sins.” *Acts 2:38* “If you **forgive** anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven.” *John 20:23*
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Comment: Promise seekers that God will forgive everything they have done, said and thought. Assure Christians often that God has forgiven all their past sins, and forgives all new sins that they confess to him (1 John 1:9). It is guilt or shame that drives folk away from Christ.

- 5 “And you will **receive** the gift of the Holy Spirit.” *Acts 2:38* “**Receive** the Holy Spirit.” *John 20:22*
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Comment: Teach believers, who share the gospel, to expect that the Holy Spirit will convince others that God has accepted them (1 Thessalonians 1:4-6). Make the promised Holy Spirit a part of their gospel message.

- 6 With many other words he warned [Greek: **witnessed** to] them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” *Acts 2:40* “You will be my **witnesses** in Jerusalem.” *Acts 1:8*
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Comment: The authority of your message comes from Jesus and his apostles. We also bear witness of what Christ has done in us, individually. Train new believers to share their story and Jesus’ story, for it is they who prove the most willing and convincing evangelists (Acts 8:4).

- 7 Those who accepted his **message** [Greek: word] were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. *Acts 2:41* If they obeyed my **teaching** [Greek: word], they will obey yours also. *John 15:20*
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Comment: Make it clear from the start that, upon baptism, one becomes a follower of Jesus, receives the Holy Spirit, and immediately becomes a member of your faith community. Welcome new believers without requiring a study course or a long testing period.

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Seven Activities Dealing with Disciple-Making

Acts 2 (NIV)	Jesus' Command
8 "They devoted themselves." <i>Acts 2:42</i>	"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples." <i>John 8:31</i>
Comment: Arrange immediately for new believers to have group opportunities that fit their culture and educational level, that are simple enough to become a regular practice. Make Bibles and easy materials available at affordable prices (Luke 11:28).	
9 The apostles' teaching . <i>Acts 2:42</i>	" Teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." <i>Matthew 28:20</i>
Comment: The apostles' teaching centered on the person, deeds, teaching and promises that they learned from Jesus, not on 17 th century, abstract theology. The first teaching for new believers concerns Jesus. First practices should be Jesus' basic commands (John 14:15).	
10 And to fellowship . <i>Acts 2:42</i>	"A new command I give you: Love one another." <i>John 13:34</i>
Comment: Fellowship mean sharing. New believers participate actively in meeting urgent needs: counsel, insights and lessons, as well as acts of love, meeting urgent material needs. (Acts 4:32). Allow even the poorest of believers to share the little that they have.	
11 To the breaking of bread . <i>Acts 2:42</i>	He took bread , gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." <i>Luke 22:19</i>
Comment: In new households and cells, no one is prepared to preach sermons, so make the Lord's Table the center of worship. Take time for folk to repent of sins, to sense the Lord's presence, to weep, to express their gratitude (Luke 24:30-32).	
12 And to prayer . <i>Acts 2:42</i>	"Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete." <i>John 16:24</i>
Comment: From the start, churches and cells offer up prayers in behalf of all who come, teaching to pray to the Father, invoking Jesus' Name, with help of the Holy Spirit. They pray for miracles amongst the unsaved, and for peace in their city (1 Timothy 2:1-2).	

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| 13 | Everyone was filled with awe . <i>Acts 2:43</i> | “Tell them how much the lord has done for you.” ... And all the people were amazed .
<i>Mark 5:19-20</i> |
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Comment: In non-Western cultures, folk are taken with displays of power, whereas in the West they track with logical arguments. Wherever evil spirits deceive folk with magic, expect the Lord Jesus to bind those spirit and to loosen folk from their grasp (Acts 19:17-20).

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| 14 | “At the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. <i>Acts 2:43</i> | “ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons.” <i>Matthew 10:8</i> |
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Comment: Although you do not have apostolic authority, the Lord invites you to pray about desperate needs, and he will often perform miracles, especially among the unsaved. Learn to persevere in prayer together until you get God’s answer (Matthew 18:19-20).

Seven Activities Dealing with Body Life

	Acts 2 (NIV)	Jesus’ Command
15	All the believers . <i>Acts 2:44</i>	“You believe in God; believe also in me.” <i>John 14:1</i>
	Comment: Discuss bible passages together. Preach the lordship of Jesus Christ. Teach the great doctrines of the Christian faith. Exhort to trust God for timely help (Hebrews 4:16).	
16	Were together and had everything in common. <i>Acts 2:44</i>	“Where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.” <i>Matthew 18:20</i>
	Comment: Most non-Western cultures are already communal in practice, so do not introduce rugged individualism. Create opportunities and events for folk to come together, to share their knowledge and skills. Set up a free repair service for those in need (Hebrews 13:16).	
17	They sold property and possessions. <i>Acts 2:45</i>	“ Sell your possessions and give to the poor.” <i>Matthew 19:21</i>
	Comment: Undertake to support pioneer church planters, and to donate to trustworthy charities. However, it remains against the law of God to sell your family home or farm.	

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Wait on God to prosper members to give before incurring debt (Romans 13:8).

- 18** To **give** to anyone who had need. *Acts 2:45* “**Give**, and it will be given to you.”
Luke 6:38
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Comment: In new churches, give first to meet urgent needs. Let new church leaders remain self-supporting. Never let outsiders donate to a church’s budget. Let adult children support their elderly parents (1 Timothy 5:8).

- 19** Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their **homes**. *Acts 2:46* “Whatever **house** you enter, stay there until you leave that town.” *Luke 9:4*
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Comment: Count every home group a little church within a big church. Let home groups celebrate the Lord’s table, baptize new believers, and obey all the basic commands of Jesus. One task of congregational elders is to coach small-group shepherds (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

- 20** And ate together with **glad** and sincere hearts. *Acts 2:46* “Rejoice and be **glad**, because great is your reward in heaven.” *Matthew 5:12*
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Comment: Seek to foster emotional well-being as much as sound doctrine. Strengthen marriages, families and ministry teams. Common meals remain a good way in which to foster fellowship. Hold up hospitality as an important Christian duty to be done gladly (1 Peter 4:9).

- 21** **Praising God** and enjoying the favor of all the people. *Acts 2:47* “**Love** the Lord your **God** with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.”
Mark 12:30
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Comment: Experiment with culturally-meaningful ways in which to worship. Invite believers to express praise to God. Welcome outsiders who want to learn (1 Corinthians 14:24-25).

GJC, 24 May 2020

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