

INTRODUCTION 引言

A New Year is a new beginning. You may have some new plans, perhaps to eat healthier, exercise more or do better in school or at work. Those are all excellent goals. Let me suggest another plan for you to consider: to become more active in church. The book of Acts teaches us many things about church life. Back then, church was a new concept. Jesus completed the salvation plan. He died on the cross for our sins, but He rose from the dead. Before He went back to heaven, He gave final commands to His disciples. In Acts chapter 1, Jesus told them to wait in Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit. He will live inside every believer and give them power to live a Christian life and give them courage to share the gospel. Subsequently, the Holy Spirit arrived at Pentecost, ten days after Jesus returned to heaven. At that time, a lot of Jewish men came to the temple to observe the festival. Some believers began to speak in tongues when the Holy Spirit descended onto them. The crowd was surprised to hear local peers speak foreign languages they had never learned. Apostle Peter seized the opportunity and preached about Jesus. He said speaking in tongues was a fulfillment of a prophecy about the coming of the Holy Spirit. Peter also told them that Jesus was the Messiah they had been waiting for. As a result, 3,000 people accepted Jesus and they were baptized on the spot. The first Christian church was thus founded. Immediately, the leaders had to deal with a few issues. First, how to sustain the spiritual growth of so many new believers? Second, how to entertain their physical needs? A majority of them were visitors to Jerusalem. Third, how to maintain the impact of Christian faith to non-believers? In other words, how to spread the gospel. The way the first church handled those matters serves as a model for modern churches. Though we live in different times, peoples' needs are basically the same. A church should be a spiritual hub for believers. Those who long to be with believers have a sense of belonging in the church.

EXPLANATION 解釋

1. Spend Time with God 分別時間給神

How did the first church sustain people's spiritual growth? The leaders taught them to spend time with God. The passage says they met together daily! At that time there was no church building. It was possible that they met in small groups. They did three things at their gatherings. First, they practiced the truths. Verse 42 says: **And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.** People submitted themselves to their teachers. Their instruction materials could be the Old Testament plus Jesus' words. They understood the Scriptures through the lens of Christ. Jesus fulfilled what those passages talk about. Moreover, they also broke bread. Nowadays, we call it the communion. It is to remember Jesus' sacrifice. Besides practicing the truths, they also prayed together. Their prayer was unlike before. Jesus became the middle-man who connected them to the Father. When Jesus died on the cross, the curtain that separated the

most holy place in the temple was split into halves. The symbolic meaning was that Jesus had removed the barrier between God and people. Through Jesus, believers can present their prayers directly to God. Other than practicing the truths and praying together, the third thing they did was to praise God. We call that worship today. We can imagine that the Scripture, songs and prayer should be the basic elements in their worship. In summary, they spent time with God together. Today, we stress too much on personal tastes. You can listen to Christian songs and sermons on the internet any time. But those resources cannot replace your church. You need to come here and spend time with God together with believers. Allow me to give you some challenges. Do not just join the Sunday service, but also attend Friday fellowship and Sunday school. Study the Bible with brothers and sisters. Here is another challenge: join prayer meetings. We pray on Wednesdays and Saturdays. We also pray before every Sunday service. Come as often as you can. You can start those new habits even this week!

2. Share Needs among Believers 分擔信徒需要

Not only did the early Christians spend time with God, they also shared their needs among believers. Look again at verses 44-45: **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.** They virtually shared everything. Some of them traveled a long way to Jerusalem. Opening homes to host people and providing meals are tangible ways of caring. Some members even donated everything to the church voluntarily. In order for this effort to work, there must be a high degree of trust. People trusted that the leaders would distribute the goods wisely and equally. Their actions showed that love must be sacrificial. Jesus gave up everything to save us. We should imitate His love. Today, most of us have a stable income and a home. But there are many unfortunate people in society. You can donate food or clothes to charitable organizations. While most church members may not be lacking in those items, they have other needs. Some elderly folks and chronic patients are too weak to come to church. You can call them up, mail them a card or cook some food for them. Besides physical needs, there can be emotional needs. Some people feel lonely or they are burdened in their hearts. They may come to church with a smile. But deep down inside they are hurting. More than likely, people will not talk about their struggles unless they trust you. Ask God to give you a caring heart. When eating meals, you can ask people how they are doing and how you can pray for them. Beyond physical and emotional needs, there are also spiritual needs. Are you aware that someone is absent in church meetings? Do not assume that they are busy or traveling. Perhaps they walked away from their faith due to certain reasons. Send them a text or message. Encourage them to come back. Everything I just mentioned does not require a large sum of money. All it takes are awareness and actions. Caring is a two-way street. You care for someone today. In the future, others will care for your needs. That is how God's family should operate.

3. Show Faith to Outsiders 與人分享信仰

The early church was a thriving body. Members spent time with God together, and they shared needs among themselves. Thirdly, they also showed their faith to outsiders. Look at

verse 43 again: **And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.** In addition to speaking in tongues, miracles are another evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit. The next chapter records Peter healing a crippled man. People saw that God's power was with those leaders. God's mighty works are proof of His eternal Word. As a result of their testimonies, verse 47 says: **...And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.** People outside of the church saw how those believers conducted their life. They did not only talk the talk, but they also walked the walk. Many people in Jerusalem saw the death of Jesus on the cross and heard about His resurrection. The persecution of this "Founder" did not scare followers away. Quite the contrary! A big crowd just converted to this "new religion." There were obvious changes in them. They did not only gather at the temple on the Sabbath. They had daily meetings. They expressed genuine love to each other by sharing their resources. They did so with joy. Unlike most Jewish teachers, those believers did not just look religious. They demonstrated faith through actions. Some bystanders reacted: "I want what they have!" Today, we do not perform miracles. But every Christian is a result of a miracle. Jesus forgives your sins and makes you into a new creation. In the past, we only mind our own business. Now we should be eager to share our faith. We have newcomers every now and then. Will you spend time to get to know them? Ask about their life stories and listen without interruption. Do not just welcome them once or twice, help them connect with others too. People feel warm if you remember their names and background. They may keep coming when you treat them as friends. We should accept people regardless of their background. We show kindness without asking for anything in return. When people can see God's love from us, then they will realize that our faith is real.

CONCLUSION 結論

A church should be a spiritual hub for believers. Those who long to be with believers have a sense of belonging in the church. How can you become more active in the church this year? The example of the first Christian church tells us that we have to strengthen our upward, inward and outward relationships. Pointing upward means to enhance our worship to God. Going inward, we must foster a closer fellowship with believers. Reaching outward, we build friendships with gospel friends by witnessing our faith. We should put an emphasis on all three aspects. Each of us is equally important to this church. Your participation can build a stronger and better church. Let this place be filled with people who love God, love one another and love visitors. We can grow in numbers only if we grow in relationships. We can bless others only if we are willing to be used by God. We can achieve new goals only if we stop being complacent about the past. We can improve only if we allow God to change us. It all begins with LGTC – let us go to church on a weekly basis.

INTRODUCTION 引言

新的一年是一個新的開始。你也許定了一些新的計劃，例如吃得更健康、多運動，或是在學校或工作上表現得更好。這些都是非常好的目標。讓我再建議你一個可以考慮的計劃：更積極地參與教會生活。使徒行傳教導我們許多關於教會生活的事。在當時，教會是一個全新的概念。耶穌完成了救恩的計劃，祂為我們的罪被釘死在十字架上，但又從死裡復活。在祂回到天上之前，祂給了門徒一些最後的吩咐。在使徒行傳第一章中，耶穌告訴他們要在耶路撒冷等候聖靈的降臨。聖靈將住在每一位信徒裡面，賜給他們力量去過基督徒的生活，並給他們勇氣去傳揚福音。隨後，在耶穌回到天上十天之後的五旬節，聖靈降臨了。那時，有許多猶太男子來到聖殿守節。當聖靈降在一些信徒身上時，他們便說起方言來。群眾非常驚訝，因為他們聽見一些本地人說出從未學過的外邦語言。使徒彼得把握這個機會，向眾人宣講有關耶穌的事。他說，說方言正是聖靈降臨之預言的應驗。彼得也告訴他們，耶穌就是他們一直在等候的彌賽亞。結果，有三千人接受了耶穌，並當場接受浸禮。第一所基督教會就這樣成立了。很快地，教會領袖必須解決幾個問題。第一，如何培育這麼多新信徒的屬靈成長？第二，如何照顧他們的生活需要？其中大多數人是到耶路撒冷的訪客。第三，如何維持基督信仰對非信徒的影響力？換句話說，如何傳揚福音。早期教會處理這些問題的方式，成為現代教會的榜樣。雖然我們生活在不同的時代，但人的需要基本上是相同的。教會必須成為信徒信仰生活的中心。那些渴望與信徒相聚的人，自然會在教會中找到歸屬感。

EXPLANATION 解釋

1. Spend Time with God 分別時間給神

初代教會是如何培育人們的屬靈成長呢？領袖們教導信徒要分別時間給神。經文記載，他們天天一起聚會！當時並沒有教堂建築，他們很可能是以小組的方式聚會。在他們的聚集中，他們做了三件事。第一，他們實踐真理。第 42 節說：**都恆心遵守使徒的教訓，彼此交接，擘餅，祈禱。**人們順服他們的老師。他們的教材可能包括舊約聖經以及耶穌的話語。他們透過基督的角度來理解聖經，明白耶穌成就了經文中所預表的一切。此外，他們也一同擘餅。今天，我們稱這為聖餐，這個儀式是為了記念耶穌的犧牲。除了實踐真理之外，他們也一同禱告。他們的禱告與從前不同，因為耶穌成了連結他們與天父的中保。當耶穌在十字架上受死時，聖殿中把至聖所隔開的幔子從中裂為兩半。這象徵著耶穌已經除去了神與人之間的隔閡。藉著耶穌，信徒可以直接向神禱告。除了實踐真理和一同禱告之外，他們所做的第三件

事就是讚美神。今天我們稱之為崇拜。我們可以想像，聖經、詩歌和禱告應該是他們崇拜中的基本元素。總而言之，他們分別時間給神。今天，我們往往過度強調個人的喜好。你隨時都可以在網路上聽基督徒的音樂和講道，但這些資源無法取代你的教會。你需要來到這裡，與眾信徒一同分別時間給神。讓我給你一些挑戰：不要只參加主日崇拜，也要參加週五團契和主日學，與弟兄姐妹一起查考聖經。還有另一個挑戰：參加禱告會。我們在週三和週六都有禱告會，每次主日崇拜前也有禱告。只要時間許可，歡迎你常常來參加。你甚至可以從這個星期就開始培養這些新的屬靈習慣！

2. Share Needs among Believers 分擔信徒需要

初代基督徒不僅分別時間給神，他們也分擔信徒的需要。讓我們再看第 44 節和 45 節：**44 信的人都在一處，凡物公用；45 並且賣了田產，家業，照各人所需用的分給各人。**他們幾乎分享了一切。有些人是長途跋涉來到耶路撒冷。因此開放家庭接待人、提供食物，都是實際關懷的方式。有些成員甚至自願把一切奉獻給教會。若要這樣的做法行得通，必須有高度的信任。人們相信教會領袖會有智慧且公平地分配資源。他們的行為證明，愛必須是帶著犧牲的。耶穌為了拯救我們捨棄了一切，我們也應當效法祂的愛。今天，我們大多數人都有穩定的收入和住處，但社會中仍有許多不幸的人。你可以把食物或衣物捐贈給慈善機構。雖然大部分教會成員也許不缺這些物資，但他們仍然有其他的需要。有些年長者或長期病患者身體軟弱，無法來到教會。你可以打電話關心他們、寄張卡片，或為他們準備一些食物。除了身體上的需要，還有情感上的需要。有些人感到孤單，或心裡背負重擔。他們也許帶著笑容走進教會，但內心深處卻在受傷。多半情況下，若不是信任你，人們不會主動談起自己的掙扎。求神賜給你一顆關懷的心。在吃飯時，你可以關心對方的近況，並問問是否有代禱的需要。除了身體與情感的需要，還有屬靈的需要。你是否注意到有人缺席聚會？不要假設他們只是忙碌或出門。也許他們因為某些緣故離開了信仰。你可以發訊息關心他們，鼓勵他們回來。我剛才提到的這一切，都不需要大量的金錢，你只需要敏銳別人的需要並採取實際行動。關懷是雙向的：你今天關心別人，將來你也會需要別人的關心。彼此相顧，正是神家中應有的運作方式。

3. Show Faith to Outsiders 與人分享信仰

初代教會是一個充滿生命力的群體。信徒們分別時間給神，他們也分擔信徒的需要。第三，他們與教會以外的人分享信仰。請再看第 43 節：**眾人都懼怕；使徒又行了許多奇事神蹟。**除了說方言之外，神蹟也是聖靈同在的另一個證據。下一章記載彼得醫治了一位瘸腿的人，人們親眼看見神的能力與這些領袖同在。神大能的作為，證實了祂永恆的話語。因著這些見證，第 47 節說：**...主將得救的人天天加給他們。**教會外的人看見這些信徒如何生活。他們不只是口裡說說，而是真正活出

來。耶路撒冷的許多人親眼目睹耶穌被釘十字架，也聽聞祂復活的消息。這位「教主」受迫害，但是並沒有嚇退祂的跟隨者。反而恰恰相反——一大群人歸信了這個「新宗教」。這些人身上出現了明顯的改變。他們不只是安息日到聖殿聚集，而是天天聚會；他們藉著分享資源，彼此表達真誠的愛，而且是歡歡喜喜地去做。與大多數猶太教師不同，這些信徒不只是外表虔誠，他們用行動來活出信心。旁觀者中有人不禁說：「我也想要得到他們所擁有的！」今天，我們不一定行神蹟，但每一位基督徒本身就是神蹟。耶穌赦免了你的罪，使你成為新造的人。過去，我們只顧自己的事；如今，我們應當渴望與人分享信仰。教會不時都有新朋友來到，你是否願意花時間去認識他們？聽聽他們的故事，並且專心聆聽，不要打斷。不要只是歡迎他們一、兩次，也要幫助他們與其他人建立友誼。當你記得他們的名字和背景時，人心會感到溫暖；當你把它們當朋友對待，他們就更願意繼續來到教會。無論他們的背景是如何，我們都應當接納每一個人。我們真心付出善意，不求回報。當人們從我們身上看見神的愛之時，他們就會明白：我們的信仰是真實的。

CONCLUSION 結論

教會必須成為信徒信仰生活的中心。那些渴望與信徒相聚的人，自然會在教會中找到歸屬感。你如何在今年在教會中更加積極參與呢？初代基督教會的榜樣告訴我們，我們必須同時加強向上、向內與向外的關係。向上，代表我們要提升對神的敬拜；向內，我們必須與信徒建立更親密的團契關係；向外，則是藉著見證信仰，與福音朋友建立友誼。我們都需要在三方面都努力。我們每一個人在教會中都同樣重要。你的參與，能夠建立一個更堅固、更美好的教會。願這個地方充滿愛神、彼此相愛、也愛新朋友的人。唯有在關係上成長，我們才能在人數上增長；唯有願意被神使用，我們才能祝福別人；唯有不再滿足於過去，我們才能達到新的目標；唯有讓神改變我們，我們才能真正進步。一切都從 LGTC 開始——讓我們養成每週固定來教會的習慣。