

The Church – Part 9 The Book of Acts

In our study today we want to continue with the subject, the local church, and today, let's look at the subject and expand that just a little, the practical local church, putting things in order. I wonder if you are excited about attending your local church. Can you say as the psalmist said in Psalm 122:1, *I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD?*

No, I don't believe we need to enter our church dancing down the aisles, and on the other hand, I don't believe that we need to enter the church looking like death warmed over. We need to be excited about our privilege of being able to join our hearts together for Bible study, fellowship, and prayer.

As the children of God, we are to do things decently and in order. Not only as the people of God are we to do things decently and in order, we're also to do things decently and in order as those who are members of God's local New Testament church. In I Corinthians 14:40, it says, *Let all things be done decently and in order.*

The word "practical" – and this is our subject for today – the practical local church. The word "practical" does not mean to be ordinary. It means to be concerned with matters of fact, not something that is made up, but matters of fact to be useful. That term in I Corinthians 14:40 talks about being decent or *decently and in order* – in other words, according to priorities, to do things that are appropriate in a way that conforms to accepted standards of moral behavior or appearance according to the Bible. Do things decently and in order – all things.

Order – this is an arrangement, the way in which things are arranged as an indication of their relative importance. Then we understand that the people of God, those who are saved, are to do these things decently and in order. Romans 5:8 says, *But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* And Romans 10:13: *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

In Acts 16:31, a person asked, "What must I do to be saved?" And Paul and Silas said, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.* So we see that the people of God are to be practical; they are to set priorities; they are to do things that are needful. It's to be done in an arranged way; it's not haphazard. These are the saved people of God, and members of God's church – these are the saved people – are then baptized. After you get saved, you get baptized, immersed in water. This is the practical local church, immersed in water.

Remember, salvation comes before baptism. This means that, when a person is baptized, these are people joining physically God's local New Testament church. In Acts 2:41, it says, *Then they that gladly received his word were baptized.* And notice, they received his word before they got baptized. In other words, they got saved before they were baptized.

Notice what took place. *And the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.* Who is this? Who are these people? Acts 2:47: *Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*

Now, this, in Acts 2:47, is the first mention of the word “church,” and in Acts the context indicates that the reference is to the visible body of believers in the Jerusalem church functioning as described in Acts 2:44-47, a local New Testament, Bible-believing, local church in Jerusalem.

Notice things about our subject today of putting things in order, the practical local church. I believe there’s an order that needs to be in practice in our lives as saved people. Number one – God. Before all things, God was. Notice in Psalm 90:2, it says, *Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.* Colossians 1:17: *And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.* This means that Christ, God, was before the local church. We need to put God first in our lives.

Then we see something else about God in Genesis 1:1, the beginning. *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.* John 1:1: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

Now, to the skeptical question as to who made God – maybe you’ve been asked that question and someone tries to make an argument out of that, Who made God? Well, the only answer that satisfies all the facts of both science and human reason is that God is from everlasting. He is the Creator of time, as well as space and all things that exist in time and space.

Now, this is beyond our mental comprehension, but there is no other rational explanation for our existence, and it is surely compatible with the intuitions of our spiritual comprehension. God satisfies the heart regardless of difficulties conjured in the mind. You maybe have heard that old song, “We’ll Understand It Better By and By.” We can’t

understand everything that God has placed here for us to read in the Word of God. We can’t understand everything as a human being, but one day, we’re going to understand things better by and by. And you can understand things better by and by today by getting into His Word.

Number one is God. He is before all things. He’s the beginning. He created all things, and that the next point I want you to understand is He is the Creator of everything. Genesis 1:1 again says He created the heaven and the earth, and in Colossians 1:16, it says, *For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him.*

He’s everything. Revelation 21:6 says, *And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.* And then once again in I Corinthians 8:4: *As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.*

In passages such as John 1:1-3 and Colossians 1:16-17, it’s revealed that God, the Creator, is identical with Jesus Christ. Jesus is God incarnate, according to John 1:14. We’ll read that in just a moment, but I want you to know that all things were both created by Jesus Christ and made by Jesus Christ, according to John 1:3. That is, these things were called into being out of nothing and then organized into complex complete forms of being, each perfect for its particular purpose.

In Colossians 1:16-17 it says: ¹⁶*For by him were all things created, that are in heaven,*

and that are in earth.... Then it goes on in verse 17, *And he is before all things.* That's Jesus Christ. That's God. He's God.

And John 1:14: *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.* Go back to John 1:1 and it says the Word was God, and verse 14 says the Word was made flesh... none other than Jesus Christ. God is before all. We need to place Him first. He's the beginning. He's the Creator. He's everything.

And then we see that He is love. But, you know, there's something that goes even further than that. He's love, but notice what Mark 12:30 says: *And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.*

God is love, but the Bible teaches us that we are to love Him, and Mark here adds the phrase "and with all thy strength." We're to give it all we've got. We're to love God with every ounce of being. With everything, with every fiber of our being, we're to love God because He first loved us. And to really love God, He must be number one in our lives, in your life.

Exodus 20:3: *Thou shalt have no other gods before me.* Joshua 24:14: *Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in truth and put away the gods which your fathers served... (This would be tradition...) on the other side of the flood and in Egypt... (a symbol of the world...) and serve ye the Lord.*

Let me ask you a question. Is God number one in your life?

Now, number two is the home. First is God. Then we see the home, and there is an order in

the home. We see man, Genesis 1:27, *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him....*

Then we see the woman, and it tells us there in Genesis 2:22, *And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.*

So we see there that God created man; we see the woman; and then we see children. In Genesis 4:1-2. ¹*And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD.* ²*And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.*

So, we see man, we see woman, and we see children. And God said in Genesis 1:28, *And God blessed them... (Adam and Eve...), and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply.*

We also see it broken down even further in the New Testament. Colossians 3:19 and Ephesians 5:25 speak of husbands. Colossians 3:21 and Ephesians 6:4 speak of fathers. Genesis 3:16 and Titus 2:3-5 speak of women and wives. And then Proverbs 22:6 talks about husbands and wives. This would be fathers and mothers to train up their children in the way they should go, and then we also see children in Colossians 3:20: *Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.*

As we look further, we see the order. We see number three, the local church, His local church. Matthew 16:18 says: *And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

Christ is the Head of the local church, and His local church was a mystery until now, according to Ephesians 3:9.

The order: God, the home, and then comes the local church.

In what order today is your life? Do you know Christ as your Savior? If not, you need to ask Him to come into your heart right now. "Lord, forgive me of my sin. Save me so I can go to Heaven."

Thank you, Father, today for this lesson that we've looked at, and I pray, Lord, that You would bless those who hear it. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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Until next time, this is Doug Anderson reminding you it's a good life living for the Lord. May the Lord bless you richly is our prayer.