

# Characteristics Of A Great Church

Intro: The greatness of a church is not determined by her size, financial status, or activities. Instead it is determined by the spirit that motivates and holds her together. While there are numerous avenues to consider in discussing a great church, consider a few from the New Testament church.

## I. THE SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE

### A. The early church turned the world upside down.

1. Acts 17:6 “<sup>6</sup> And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also;”
2. It is no wonder considering the early church.

### B. Daily sacrifice testified to their commitment to Christ.

1. Sharing by the saints in Jerusalem:
  - a. Acts 2:44-45 “<sup>44</sup> And all that believed were together, and had all things common; <sup>45</sup> And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all *men*, as every man had need.”
  - b. Acts 4:32 “<sup>32</sup> And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any *of them* that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.”
2. The example of the Macedonians; 2 Cor. 8:1-5 “<sup>1</sup> Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; <sup>2</sup> How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. <sup>3</sup> For to *their* power, I bear record, yea, and beyond *their* power *they were* willing of themselves; <sup>4</sup> Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and *take upon us* the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. <sup>5</sup> And *this they did*, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.”
3. Burning their books: Acts 19:18-19 “<sup>18</sup> And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. <sup>19</sup> Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all *men*: and they counted the price of them, and found *it* fifty thousand *pieces* of silver.”

### C. Both wrong:

1. Sound in doctrine without compassion.
2. Compassion without soundness of doctrine.

## II. SPIRIT OF SERVICE

### A. They early Christians put life into their Christianity and Christianity into their life.

### B. They presented to the world a pure, living religion.

1. Jam. 1:27 “<sup>27</sup> Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep himself unspotted from the world.”
2. We are to be doing good to our fellowman.
3. Judgment based upon our service to others; Mat. 25:31-46.

### C. Evangelism

1. The great commission
2. Acts 8:4 “<sup>4</sup> Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.”

### D. The edification of those who are saved.

### III. THE SPIRIT OF UNITY

#### A. The early church was together

1. Acts 2:44 <sup>44</sup> “And all that believed were together, and had all things common;”
2. Acts 4:32 <sup>32</sup> “And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of *them* that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.”

#### B. Likewise, we can be of the same mind

1. 1 Cor. 1:10 <sup>10</sup> “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”
2. Phi. 1:27 <sup>27</sup> “Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;”
3. 2 Cor. 13:11 <sup>11</sup> “Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.”
4. 1 Pet. 3:8 <sup>8</sup> “Finally, *be ye* all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, *be* pitiful, *be* courteous;”

#### C. When united, the devil has difficulty penetrating them.

### IV. A SPIRIT OF OPTIMISM

#### A. They knew:

1. Obedience to the Gospel would save them from their sins.
  - a. Mark 16:16 <sup>16</sup> “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”
  - b. Acts 2:38 <sup>38</sup> “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”
2. The Gospel had that power to change their life.
  - a. Rom. 1:16 <sup>16</sup> “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”
  - b. Rom. 12:1-2 <sup>1</sup> “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. <sup>2</sup> And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”
3. Living the Christian life is the best life one can live.

#### B. They lived in hope.

1. 1 Cor. 15:58 <sup>58</sup> “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”
2. Tit. 1:2 <sup>2</sup> “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;”
3. Heb. 6:18-20 <sup>18</sup> “That by two immutable things, in which *it was* impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: <sup>19</sup> Which *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; <sup>20</sup> Whither the forerunner is for us entered, *even* Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”

#### C. All things are possible through Christ; Phi. 4:13 <sup>13</sup> “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

Conclusion: There are certainly other factors that make a great church, but these are some that are needed. Let’s make sure we possess these characteristics.