

- I. Opening the doors to let Jesus in the Church - Revelation 3:14-22
 - A. no memory, only Bible, what would you expect church to be like?
- II. Early church life
 - A. Everyone came to Jesus at the same time - First love!
 - 1. cf Rev 2:4-5 - return to First Love
 - a) (How do we even do that??) — “God in you, to will and to work.” (Phil 2:13)
 - b) get the coals together and blow on it
 - B. Everyone lived in walking distance, newly saved, so always together
 - 1. Acts 2:42-48 teaching, fellowship, prayer, Lord’s Supper (evangelism)
 - C. many signs and wonders - mostly in evangelistic settings
 - 1. missions — see much more (evangelistic)
 - 2. Jesus didn’t rebuke the church with “little power” (Rev 3:8)
 - a) makes sense — only what the Father is doing, could do little in hometown
 - D. Sold everything, held all in common
 - 1. this is *so far* from American church that I can’t even comprehend it, but it points toward radical generosity and faith in God’s provision for us
 - E. End Times urgency — even 2000 years later, every day is the “end time” for another 150,000 souls. The urgency sustained the Early Church and ought to encourage us to keep going for it.
 - F. The early church would have been mostly brown skinned and at least somewhat diverse, especially after Peter and Cornelius and Paul’s call to the gentiles (Pentecost, the birth of the church, was an event aimed at the “many tribes and many tongues” that heaven will be filled with.)
 - 1. MLK day on Monday — MLK came around 100 years after the end of slavery— 100 years of systemic, legal oppression of “free” people. His approval rating was bad and got worse as time went by. Death threats, vitriol, hatred, and violence— such strength of character to retain his dignity in the midst of all that.
 - a) Irony that in our town MLK Dr marks the worst division of black/white in our town.
 - b) second starkest division is University— right where BE is located. I hope and pray— and hope that we all hope and pray— that we can be a part of the ongoing work of healing racial division in our country
 - c) Hard to swallow that the church is still the most segregated slice of society.
- III. Lukewarm Laodicea — movements become routinized — each of us have examples in our own lives
 - A. we look to the church — programs — to do the things that used to be done by individuals, forgetting that churches exist only because individuals decided to do something
 - B. we try to drum up interest for people to go to church; you couldn’t keep the early church away!
 - C. Church is not just an institution- movement of individuals united in and led by Christ
 - 1. relying on programs or institutions for discipleship is an error
 - 2. God is working in you, both to will and to work, for his good pleasure.
- IV. Culture of numbers quantifiers (money, numbers, data, techniques - cf resumes)
 - A. no numbers in Revelation “you know you have God’s blessing because there are a lot of you!” - instead criticism for the rich, rebuke! (lukewarm!), and that the poor are rich (2:9)
 - B. Bigger is better; more money is “blessing,” more numbers are God’s endorsement
 - 1. keep adding more - American spirituality, American church
 - 2. if Jesus blesses, I don’t need to criticize — but God’s blessing isn’t a sign of his endorsement of everything you do.

- C. Prominent pastors who justify sin by the numbers being reached (elephant in the room video with Dever, Driscoll, McDonald.)
- D. Christian celebrity defense “done more for the gospel than any of you” — we really don’t know what success even is!
- E. From Revelation letter to the churches — success is retaining First Love, patiently enduring, being steadfast, being faithful, resisting evil.