

Dear Friends in Christ,

This month I am looking forward to two new things. First, I will begin preaching a series of sermons based on the Book of Acts. Acts is the account of what the Holy Spirit did through the followers of Jesus after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. It tells about the exciting and explosive beginnings of the Church.

I think everybody today has noticed that the American Church is in trouble. The Church is shrinking both in size and influence. Churches today spend a lot of time and money trying to figure out how to grow or at least how to stop the decline. There are all kinds of books and seminars and programs promising new ways to grow the Church.

Recently I have read some articles arguing that the Church needs to stop chasing after the latest ministry fads or mission gimmicks and just focus on the basics. The Church needs to focus on simply being the Church. The Simple Church movement proclaims that if we focus on the basics of being the Church, the Holy Spirit will grow the Church.

I've always found it interesting that in reading the New Testament, there is so little advice on how to reach out to others with the gospel. The New Testament Church seemed to have very little mission strategy. They didn't go door to door. They didn't have ad campaigns. Instead they focused on trying to be authentic Jesus followers. And people were attracted to that. I hope the book of Acts will help us to be Simple Church.

Secondly, the Sunday morning Adult Bible Class will begin a study on the last book of the New Testament: the Revelation. Some people are afraid of the Revelation because it has been so misunderstood and abused. But the Revelation is a powerful book that speaks to the conflict between good and evil raging in our world today. I am confident that we will find our study enlightening, entertaining, and educational.

Yours in Christ, Phil Nielsen

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