

# The Purpose and Plan for the Church

## Acts 2:42-47

According to the World Health Organization WHO **more than 70 million** people have been infected with the HIV virus and about **35 million people have died** of HIV.

The **human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)** is one of the most serious, deadly diseases in human history. HIV causes a condition called **acquired immunodeficiency syndrome** – better known as **AIDS**.

### How Does HIV Affect the Body?

A healthy body has CD4 helper lymphocyte cells (CD4 cells). These cells help the immune system function normally and fight off certain kinds of infections. They do this by acting as messengers to other types of immune system cells, telling them to become active and fight against an invading germ.

**HIV attaches to these CD4 cells.** The virus then infects the cells and uses them as a place to multiply. In doing so, **the virus destroys the ability of the infected cells to do their job in the immune system.** The body then loses the ability to fight many infections.

When a person with HIV has an extremely low number of CD4 cells, doctors call this stage of disease AIDS. People

who have AIDS are unable to fight off many infections because their immune systems are weakened. They are more likely to get infections like tuberculosis and some rare infections of the lungs (such as certain types of pneumonia), infections of the surface covering of the brain (meningitis), or the brain itself (encephalitis). People who have AIDS tend to keep getting sicker, especially if they are not taking antiviral medications properly

### **there are 3 stages to HIV**

HIV infection follows three basic stages. Usually developing within two to four weeks,

1. the first stage is known as **acute HIV infection**. The infected person can experience symptoms similar to the flu, including rashes, fevers and headaches. At this point, the virus is multiplying quickly throughout the body. It's during this stage that the infected person is the most contagious.

2. The second stage is called **chronic HIV infection** or **asymptomatic HIV infection** or **clinical latency**. The virus's rate of multiplying reduces to a low level, and symptoms often disappear. Untreated chronic HIV infection usually develops into AIDS within 10 to 12 years.

**3.** The third and final stage of HIV infection is AIDS itself, but no one dies from AIDS specifically. Instead, an AIDS-infected person dies from infections because the immune system has been dismantled. If left untreated, people with AIDS could die from the **common cold** as easily as from **cancer**.

How long it takes for symptoms of HIV/AIDS to appear varies from person to person. Some people may feel and look healthy for years while they are infected with HIV. **It is still possible to infect others with HIV, even if the person with the virus has absolutely no symptoms.** You cannot tell simply by looking at someone whether he or she is infected.

The Church has been suffering from spiritual AIDS for some time now and could easily die the death of a 1000 heresies

Its immune system is entirely deficient and has been systematically dismantled

The Church after being resurrected from Spiritual Death of the Dark Ages was renewed and given life thru the Reformation. The sola's filled the blood stream of the church with a strong and vibrant immune system.

The Great Awakening grew the church with powerful preaching of the Sole authority of the Word of God

But then the church was attacked, virus came in by attacking the sufficiency and reliability of the Bible, thru Pentecostalism and Liberalism. Many of the the pastors and leaders were infected with this virus. **This is the first stage of Spiritual HIV**

Over time the battle seemed to be slowing and not so intense. Although all along the false doctrines and attacks on the Sufficiency of the Bible and it integrity seemed to continue in the Background

Slowly gaining ground thru media driven ministries, and existential theology....men who were infected with secular ideology propagated there false teachings in the church and were praised as the new innovators, the success stories. All the time the systematic theology and classical historic orthodox christianity was being leveled cell by cell, infection by infection. **This is the Second and most dangerous stage of Spiritual HIV**

**And now we have reached the last stage of HIV, or full blown Spiritual AIDS** where you can practically introduce any strange, bazaar absurd, and biblically errant teaching you desire and it is hailed as a revelation from God.

The largest issue facing the church is a lack of biblical knowledge and discernment

R C Sproul said that the number one issue is that the church does not know the God of the Bible

We have nothing to fight off the false teaching and lies that are being propagated by in some cases well intentioned Pastors and media driven “prophets”  
The very men that should be at the Gate stopping the infiltration of false doctrine are the very ones that are opening the gates and letting it in.

*“I believe in the power of the Holy Spirit. I believe He’s real and I believe He’s talking to us all the time. I really do. If you say the only way God can speak to you is through the Bible, you have missed it.” Steve Gaines*

J.D. Greear is the pastor of The Summit Church, in Raleigh-Durham, NC. Under J.D.’s leadership, the Summit has grown from a plateaued church of 300 to one of nearly 10,000, making it one of Outreach magazine’s “top 25 fastest-growing churches in America” for many years running.

J.D. has also led the Summit to further the kingdom of God by pursuing a bold vision to plant one thousand new churches by the year 2050. In the last ten years, the church has sent out more than 650 people to live on church planting teams, both domestically and internationally. J.D.

completed his Ph.D. in Theology at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary where he is also a faculty member, writing on the correlations between early church presentations of the gospel and Islamic theology. Having lived and served with the SBC's International Mission Board among Muslims, he has a burden to see them, as well as every nation on earth, come to know and love the salvation of God in Christ.

So, the whole tongues-private prayer language thing that took place in spring and early summer 2015 within the IMB isn't all that surprising. While the subsequent battle for the SBC presidency was publicly framed with the soteriological distinctions between Gaines and Greear, the underlying passion for and acceptance of extra-biblical revelation and Biblically-unsupportable tongues by them was ignored. The two candidates have much common ground on those issues

On his December 9th Radio Show, Glenn Beck let loose a few interesting revelations- primarily that a big name in evangelical circles who was being lined up to appear on his show made his appearance conditional on the

provision that he would be able to draw some clear lines in the sand separating and contrasting his beliefs [Christianity] with Beck's beliefs [Not Christianity] . This drew the ire of Glenn who revealed that he almost hung up the phone at that point, sent some murderous thoughts towards his caller, and then went on a subsequent rant which demonstrated how right and true this "big evangelical" was to insist on being able to draw a clear delineation between a religion of works and one of grace.

*"I had a conversation off-air with a big evangelical recently. And he said "you know, if I'm going to come on your show, it's important for me to point out the differences between our religions. " And quite honestly I almost hung up the phone. I was like.... but I didn't. And the reason why I almost hung up the phone was because I thought "Are you really this small? Are you really this small? Do you see what's happening to us right now?" Nobody cares what my religion is. Nobody really cares what your religion is. What they want are 'are you putting your principles in action right now? What demonstrates me- don't talk to me. Don't preach to me, demonstrate to me. Who are you? What do you believe? What are you doing about it right now? Do you know why 20-something's don't go to church anymore? Because church doesn't do anything. You gonna sit here and talk about it, are you gonna talk about the things that change lives, or you gonna do the things that changes lives. Don't talk to me about theology. Talk to*

*me about God in practice. How can I be a better man. How can I survive today?"*

We see the problems here, obviously. Ours is not a religion of works. Beliefs do matter. Not everyone gets to heaven (another difference between our two religions) and the entrance is made by faith in a particular belief in a particular Person. And so, it's not about what you do, but about what a God-Man once did.

**I. Christ is Lord of His Church**

**II. Christ Builds His Church**

**III. Christ Plans His Church**



## IV. Christ Gives Purpose to His Church

### Mt 16:16–19

- 16** Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”
- 17** Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven.
- 18** And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.
- 19** And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

### I. Christ is Lord of His Church

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### II. Christ Builds His Church

**18** And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

Ac 2:40–47

- 40** And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation.”
- 41** Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.
- 42** And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.
- 43** Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.
- 44** Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common,
- 45** and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.
- 46** So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,
- 47** praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

## **1. They had a Transcendent Message**

1 Pe 1:23

**23** having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever,

Ro 10:17

**17** So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

So we have this singular message which then by definition must be a transcendent message.

What is plain is that the message of the early church transcended all languages, all nations, all cultures, all societal norms, all contexts, all levels of education, all notions about status. It transcended everything. And remember this, please, there was no global village. You understand that national identity was fixed and unmixed in many, many cases. They didn't have media to wash away all the differences in the sort of universal mentality that we're used to in our exposed culture. There are hard lines drawn between people groups and languages and societal norms and behaviors and forms of entertainment, etc. There was no mass media creating world norms. There were deep-seated distinct, cherished, ingrained, cultural perspectives all over the globe and they had no effect on the message...no effect.

**1. They had a Transcendent Message**

**2. They had a Saved Congregation**

To call an assembly of non-believers a church is preposterous, outrageous. The Lord only adds believers to the church. There's a serious defect in a so-called minister content to be proud of assembling non-believers and calling them a church. Something deeply wrong there. Modern evangelicalism seems to exhaust every imaginable and unimaginable means to attract and collect non-Christians into a building and then call it a church and call it church growth.

Maybe there's a better way to identify these places, let's just call them non-churches. Maybe it's just an evangelistic event.

Acts 2:41

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### 3. They had a Valiant Perseverance

But alongside that general awe or that general esteem, or that general respect, and we've all experienced that at the hands of some of the most non-Christian people, they respect us because they see virtue and manifest character, etc., etc., but alongside that while they respect us for the evident power in our lives or the evident difference in our lives, they resent us for the message. They resent us for the message. The resentment comes at the point of the truth preached and proclaimed.

So, in the modern strategy you go big with the number one idea that they like us because we're nice, and if you just pull back the message, they'll keep liking us. But if you're honest enough to give the message, the message is a damning and judgmental message. And so it was in the book of Acts. Verse 36 of chapter 2, "Therefore, let all the house of Israel, says Peter, know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus, whom you crucified." When they said, "What shall we do?" Peter said in verse 38, "Repent and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." And then in verse 40 he

goes on solemnly testifying and exhorting, "Be saved from this perverse generation." Don't go to hell with everybody else.

Acts 3:17 .....Peter again, “Now, brethren, I know you acted in ignorance just as your rulers did also, but the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets that His Christ should suffer, He has thus fulfilled. Repent therefore and return that your sins may be wiped away in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord and He may send Jesus the Christ appointed for you.” Again the message clearly is repentance. And it's the same again in chapter 4, “Let it be known to you...verse 10...and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ, the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by this name this man stands here before you in good health.” Again there is this continual tone of indictment.

We can't back away from the idea of sin, righteousness, judgment, calling for repentance, forgiveness, escape from hell, not perishing with the perverse generation. This is an offensive, narrow, exclusive, condemning message. It puts all those, listen, all those **who** do not believe the gospel into the category of being damned forever. And all people **who** propagate any other kind of religious idea except the true gospel are hypocritical, liars, **who** are damned themselves. There's no way around it. We are called to alarm the sinner...to alarm the sinner.

And what's that going to do? That's going to create persecution, hostility. Jesus said, you're going to have to take up your cross if you want to follow Me, you're going to have to hate your father, your mother, your sister, your brother, those of your own household, even your own life. This message is very hostile. And the early church felt it big.

Ac 4:1–5

**4:1** Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them,

- . **2** being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.
  
- . **3** And they laid hands on them, and put *them* in custody until the next day, for it was already evening.
  
- . **4** However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

The church has a valiant endurance. It has a valiant perseverance in the face of persecution, the gates of Hades cannot stop it. The gates of Hades is a euphemism for death.

Even the threat of death cannot stop the church. We don't need to mitigate the cost of becoming a Christian.

**1. They had a Transcendent Message**

**2. They had a Saved Congregation**

**3. They had a Valiant Perseverance**

**4. They had an Evident Purity**

And let me tell you what the danger in the early church was. You want to know what the really big danger was? The big threat to the early church, this will surprise you, it wasn't persecution, we just read that. They arrested them and the church grew. They arrested them and the multiplied. That wasn't it. The biggest threat to the church was this, there were so many signs and wonders, there were so many miracles attracting people that unbelievers might come to church for the wrong reasons. That's the deadly danger.

There are a lot of sick people, lots of people who were infirm, diseased, disabled. Miracles were going on in there. Signs



and wonders were going on in there. Listen, this is beyond a light show. This is beyond a rock band. This is beyond a skit or a drama. This is the real deal and the fear in the church was that unbelievers would come in and they already knew that the Lord said that the devil would sow tares. The church was in danger of being leavened by the world. So the wonder of it all had to be mitigated with fear. In fact, the fear had to be so powerful and so great that it stopped non-Christians outside the door. This is absolutely upside down from modern church growth strategy. They could really draw a crowd if they chose to. But there had to become such a deadly dread and fear that unbelievers wouldn't dare go in to the church.

### **Acts 5, God Himself provides the horror.**

#### **Acts 5:1**

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession.

- . **2** And he kept back *part* of the proceeds, his wife also being aware *of it*, and brought a certain part and laid *it* at the apostles' feet.
- 3** But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back *part* of the price of the land for yourself?"

**4** While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.”

**5** Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things.

**6** And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried *him* out, and buried *him*.

**7** Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.

**8** And Peter answered her, “Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?”

She said, “Yes, for so much.”

**9** Then Peter said to her, “How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband *are* at the door, and they will carry you out.”

**10** Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying *her* out, buried *her* by her husband.

**11** So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.

**12** And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch.

**13** Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly.

**14** And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women,

You know, you have to be so careful in the church. The first instruction in the church is Matthew 18 and it says, "You would be better off drowned with a millstone around your neck than ever to lead another believer into sin." That's what Jesus said. The first instruction to the church is don't cause one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble. You as a pastor, you as a church member never want to be responsible, directly or indirectly, for leading another believer into sin. Even the holy angels watch the face of the Father who shows His concern for His little ones and they're dispatched to their aid because He doesn't want any of His little ones to be devastated. As a pastor, I want to have joy with my people. But church is not about being a jokester, it's

not about funny, clever pop jargon, it's certainly not about coarse, gross dirty talk.

It's so interesting to me to watch the flow of church growth. It starts out with sort of meeting people at their social level. They need associations, friends, singles need to meet singles, let's have restaurants for them, let's have recreation. That's the first wave that connects with them socially.

The second wave goes a little deeper and says, "No, they've got all these felt needs, you've got to have 45 Twelve-Step Programs, so let's connect psychologically." So the new wave of church growth says, "Let's connect psychologically." And now we're in the third wave which says, "Let's connect sensually. Let's connect them at their visceral gut level, the level of their over-exposure to immorality. Let's laugh at crudeness and rudeness. Let's tell dirty jokes and let's say explicit things on the pretense of identification, having planted evil thoughts in their minds, then trying to recover them."

The new church-growth plan seems to be to identify people with people at the level of sensual lust, explicit speech that panders to the flesh followed by a transition to the truth.

1. They had a Transcendent Message

2. They had a Saved Congregation
3. They had a Valiant Perseverance
4. They had an Evident Purity
- 5. They had qualified Leadership**

## Acts 6

Now in those days, when *the number of* the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.

- . **2** Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables.  
**3** Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of *good* reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business;  
**4** but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

**5** And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch,

**6** whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.

**7** Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

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- 5. They had qualified Leadership**

In many respects, the contemporary church in America looks more like a large corporation than like anything described in the New Testament. Even church leaders sometimes bear a closer resemblance to CEOs and corporate executives than to humble, tender shepherds. Sadly, the good news — that a sinner can find forgiveness for sins before a holy God by placing his trust in and committing his whole life to Jesus Christ—is often eclipsed by “success”-oriented programs and an interest in the bottom line. As a result, many churches have become nothing more than entertainment centers, employing tactics that effectively draw

people into the church, but are incapable of truly ministering to them once they come. GTY

### **Re 3:14–22**

“And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write,

‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True

Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:

**15** “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.

**16** So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.

**17** Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—

**18** I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.

**19** As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore

be zealous and repent.

**20** Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

**21** To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

**22** “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

III. Christ Plans His Church

IV. Christ Gives Purpose to His Church