



**Sermon Series:** All Signs Point to Jesus

**To be used with Session 3:** The Sign of His Authority

**Sermon Title:** Exceeding Expectations

**Scripture:** Acts 2:42-47

**Connection with Unit Theme:** To complement the Bible study “The Sign of His Authority,” this sermon builds upon today’s Bible study by expounding upon the nature and character of the first church and how this group of new Christians far exceeded expectations through the power of Christ.

**Introduction:** If we go to a restaurant and it exceeds expectations, we are apt to let others know about our experience. If we receive great customer service from an online shopping experience, we may comment about it on social media or leave a five-star review. When something exceeds expectations, we become a public service announcement. Today’s sermon is looking at when the first church was formed and how this group of new believers far exceeded expectations, so much so that they could not help but share their experiences with others. The encouraging thing is that since it was true of the first church, it can be true of today’s church as well.

**Context:** To grasp and understand the text for today’s sermon, we must understand the context. Jesus had given the disciples the Great Commission and had ascended to glory. The Holy Spirit had descended upon the apostles, and they begin to speak in other languages. Peter used this opportunity to deliver a sermon in which “about three thousand people were added” to the church (Acts. 2:41). As the group grew, their expectations were exceeded in at least three ways.

### **1. The first church exceeded expectations in signs and wonders (v. 42-43).**

One of the first things to point out in this text is that everything is written in plural pronouns. This fact points back to the three thousand who were saved and baptized as the church was being formed. This is important in our current context in that expectations were exceeded by the entire congregation and not just a few so-called spiritual elites.

The text states that they were “filled with awe, and many wonders and signs were being performed.” To be filled with awe means to have an overwhelming sense of gratitude towards someone. We see once again that this was experienced by all who were present. How might this be manifested today? I am glad you asked. It is awe inspiring when we see a child or grandchild place their faith in Jesus. It is truly wonderful when someone we have been praying for turn from their sins, place their faith in Jesus and follow through in believer’s baptism. We too should be filled with awe over His great work.

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## 2. The first church exceeded expectations in unity (v. 44-45).

Context will once again help us understand the amazing event that took place. The feast of Pentecost was taking place, and this meant that many people from a multitude of backgrounds were in the region. This is evident by the fact that when the disciples began speaking in various languages, those present were able to “hear them in their native language” (v. 8). Yet, as the church was formed, “all the believers were together and held all things in common” (v. 44). We do not see the church divided in any way. Instead, the members of the church sold their possessions so that needs of the church members were being met.

Jesus said in Mark 3:24-25, “If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand.” How many churches over the years have closed their doors due to discord within the church? We may be shocked at the answer to this question. The first church was united, even though it was diverse. It was not united on personal preferences, but rather on the truth that Jesus died for the sins of the world and those who call upon His name will be saved (v. 21).

## 3. The first church exceeded expectations in devotion (v. 46-47).

When we devote ourselves to something or someone, we are making a personal choice. If we are devoted to having a beautiful yard, then we are choosing to invest time and money to make it look good. If a young person is devoted to making good grades, that young person must choose to set aside other things while remaining focused on the pursuit of the goal.

The passage indicates that the first church had devoted themselves to meeting together, breaking bread and praising God on a daily basis. While they may not have had an executive meeting downtown, we can assume that they had other things going on in their lives. Yet, they did not allow those other things to exceed their devotion to Jesus and each other. One amazing result of this, according to the passage, is that they were enjoying the favor of all people. Their devotion impacted them and others around them. Since this was true back then, it can also be true of us today as well.

**Conclusion:** What might have been the cause of the first church exceeding expectations? One possible answer to this question can be found in verse 42. It says, “they devoted themselves to the apostle teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer.” Their actions did not center around self nearly as much as they focused on the truth of who Jesus is and seeking to grow in their relationship with Him.

What might be the result in today’s church if we chose to focus on similar things? Might His church today far exceed expectations if we devoted ourselves to similar things? Let us as a congregation choose today to devote ourselves to these truths and ask God to add to our number daily those who are being saved.

**Author Bio** - *Tod Tanner has degrees from Texas A&M University, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has pastored churches in Texas and Tennessee. He and his family reside in Wartrace, TN and he is serving as the Executive Vice President of the Tennessee Baptist Foundation.*

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