



New Vision
A Place for You- Connect
Acts 2:41-47
8/12/2018

Main Point

God's plan for making disciples involves a community of believers who desire to grow together and are willing to count the cost together.

Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Have you ever noticed how the TV shows of Alone, Survivor, and other survival shows become a mental exercise more than physical? A part of the problem that people face is that they have a fear of being alone.

If you were stranded on a desert island, would you prefer to be alone or with a small group of friends? Why?

What are some reasons people might avoid coming to a group like this?

Last week we discussed how the “first base”; of our discipleship process at New Vision is worship. This week we look at how the “second base” or next step is for us to understand what it means to **connect in community**. Whether it is through social media or networks, clubs or organizations, we value connections. What is important to see is that in today's culture, the church is unique in its connection as it revolves around the redemption and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We also recognize the cost that it took for the formation of the church from Jesus' work on the cross to the early church father's spreading the gospel, to today's emphasis upon sharing the gospel in all circumstances. The question of today is if you have considered the cost for community?

Understanding: Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

1. The Cost of Consistency

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 2:41-42.

The people began immediately to experience the transformation of Christ in their lives. The fruit of this transformation came in the display of how consistent they were to live for Christ and share His love with others.

Imagine our church had a 3,000 member increase in one day. What would some of the logistical and relational challenges be?

Why was belonging to a community of believers so important to these first Christians? What made these believers want to get together? What four purposes of the church are found here? Why is each one vital? Would you describe these as individualistic or corporate in nature? Explain.

Thom Rainer explains it this way: “We cannot grow effectively as a believer in isolation.” The cost of consistency relates to our gathering as the body of Christ consistently (Hebrews 10:25). It also means that there is a consistency in our priority to gather in groups together. Some of the most powerful teaching moments come as we interact with others and study Scripture together. Relationships deepen and ministry occurs when we fellowship together. We uphold the cross of Christ as the center of our focus when we share in the Lord’s Supper together. We find encouragement and experience the power of the Holy Spirit when we pray together. Every believer should be committed to being a part of a smaller group in his or her church.

Not only is there the cost of consistency that occurs but also notice how there is a call for us to be transparent among each other.

2. The Cost of Vulnerability

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 2:43.

The fear and awe that is mentioned means that people realized that God was doing something greater in their lives and through the church that they could not explain except for God. These acts caused the people to look beyond themselves and to be vulnerable with one another.

Thom Rainer states, “Church members who became involved in some type of group in the churches were five times more likely to be active in the church five years later compared to the worship-only attendees.” We look at our lives and often we have a fear of accountability because we want to present our lives as being better than what they are so to not look weak or different. The value of groups is that it provides a safe place for us to truly be vulnerable and experience breakthroughs with one another!

The call for vulnerability and accountability comes in Proverbs 27:17. Have a volunteer to read this verse.

Assuming the iron sharpening iron principle to be true, what does the statistic above tell you about the spiritual growth of those who do not become involved in a small group?

We need to participate in larger worship settings, yet we also need to be connected in smaller groups within the church. In small groups, we grow and help others grow. We give, and we receive. The health of the church and the health of the individuals who make it up is directly tied to the health of groups in the church.

Why should you as a church member be committed to being a part of a small group in your church?

3. The Cost of Generosity

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 2:44-45.

The early church was a growing church. They first had a reverent fear for God that guided them in their daily living (see v. 43). The early church made loving others as themselves a priority for their fellowship, even to the point of selling private property in order to provide for members in need (vv. 44-45). The people were willing to share their lives with one another.

What are some of the unique challenges we face as we practice biblical community?

In what ways is our church currently impacting our community?

Would people outside of our church say we model the characteristics of the Acts 2 church? Where do we excel, and where might there be room for improvement? What can our group do to help?

4. The Cost of Unity

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 2:46-47.

The unity of the church was a testimony to God's presence, and "every day the Lord added to them those who were being saved" (v. 47). As God's people joined together, it brought about unity and interdependence on each other. It also brought about the expansion of the church.

Consider this statement, "Care is contagious." How does that work within the context of this passage and what was happening in the body of believers?

What impact do you think the early church's community had on its rapid growth (v. 47)? What does the world learn about God through healthy Christian community?

Application

- In what ways have you been challenged to be consistent in a group or in the church; what lesson have you learned that could help someone else to remain consistent?
- Being in a group is not just about being in the same room together, but it's about accountability. What is one action that your group can do to be accountable to each other this week?
- How do you define interdependence? How does it look like in the church? In your personal life?

Pray

Thank God for the unique brand of community that is found among believers and for the opportunities you have to grow with others. Invite God to show you how your group can better live out the principles of Acts 2 together. Ask Him to show you people you can invite to grow with you in the days ahead.

Commentary

Acts 2:41-47

2:41 The Jerusalem church experienced tremendous numerical growth in those early days. Jesus' followers numbered about 120 in Acts 1:15, but about three thousand souls were added after Peter's sermon. The new Christians had accepted Peter's word and were baptized.

2:42 Luke reported four distinctive practices or activities in the Jerusalem church. First, they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching. Eventually, the church experienced persecution, and some church leaders left Jerusalem. The original apostles, however, continued to minister in this church (8:1). Reviewing the sermons and teaching reported in the opening chapters of Acts reveals the major doctrinal themes important to the early church. The apostles could report their own experiences with Jesus during his earthly ministry as well as explaining Jesus' fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Biblically-based preaching and teaching are still fundamental to church life. Second, the church experienced fellowship. Fellowship translates the Greek word *koinonia*, and means "participation" or "sharing." Third, they shared the breaking of bread. Although some Bible students think this could be sharing a common meal, many scholars believe this is Luke's way of referring to the Lord's Supper. The disciples had celebrated a meal with Jesus in the upper room in Jerusalem. Fourth, the church devoted themselves to prayers. The early Christian movement was bathed in prayer. Jesus' disciples had asked Him to teach them how to pray (Luke 11:1). Jesus had established Himself as a consistent prayer, so His followers should pray as well.

2:44-45 One of the most amazing characteristics of the Jerusalem church was its sharing its material possessions with the needy. The Christians voluntarily shared with anyone who needed help. As part of their fellowship, the early church practiced a community of goods for a short time. Distribution to members of the faith community took place according to individual need. This practice did not last long, likely because it was logistically difficult and fraught with potential abuse (see ch. 4-6).

Later, Luke noted that these church members were "of one heart and soul" (4:32). No one remained needy for long because the church responded quickly and generously to need. The money was brought to the apostles, who were in charge of the distribution (4:34-35). Luke highlighted the role of Barnabas in this generosity (4:36-37), but he also noted the hypocrisy of Ananias and Sapphira, who lied about their actions (5:1-10).

2:46 Although these believers understood Jesus to be the fulfillment of the Jewish hope for the Messiah (2:36), the members of the Jerusalem church were primarily Jewish in background. They still went to the temple complex. They would not participate in the sacrificial system any longer, since Jesus was the perfect sacrifice for their sins. They may have wanted to demonstrate the continuity between their Jewish heritage and their new faith in Christ. Also, they may have found opportunities to witness to their Jewish friends and relatives.

Besides gathering together in the temple complex, these Christians broke bread from house to house. Quite likely this means they gathered regularly in houses for worship and the Lord's Supper. Christians did not typically build church buildings in the early centuries, so they met in homes. When they gathered in homes, these disciples expressed gratitude for their shared meals. These gatherings were marked by a simplicity or "sincerity" of heart. They did not need to put on airs; they genuinely worshiped God.

2:47 One result of the early church's worship and witness was having favor with all the people. In these early days the people of Jerusalem were generally open to the Christians. Later on, the Jewish leaders tried to restrict their public preaching (4:1-22).

The early church was an evangelizing church. Luke recounted that every day the Lord added to those who were being saved. He did not say how this took place, but it appears that evangelism took place primarily through the gathering of Christians in the temple and in individual houses. The crucifixion and resurrection of Christ were at the heart of early Christian preaching, which called for immediate response from anyone who listened. Such enormous numerical growth eventually attracted the attention of the Jewish leaders.

Proverbs 27:17

27:17 Verse 17 explains that people must not shy away from interaction with their peers since it is an education in itself. The "sharpening" can occur in any area in which people are engaged, be it business, intellectual, or physical competition.