

Chapter Two:



Monday

Back to the Basics: *Understanding the 1st Century Church and Why It Matters*

Devotionals and Prayers

Encountering Jesus

The Book of Acts depicts the beginning days of the early church. In the opening chapters we see the disciples struggling to form a community of early believers. Amazingly, the author (believed to be Luke), details both the glory of God and the frustrations of human struggles. We see them stumble, soar, gather, argue, and grow. Ultimately, we see that community and relationships become a primary aspect of being the Body of Christ. However, for Luke, the beginning of documenting the early church must start with encountering the risen Messiah. We learn of Jesus coming to the disciples and they were in awe and wonder, even though He had told them what would happen. The initial time, the disciple Thomas wasn't with them and when he heard about it he replied that he would need to see Jesus for himself. A week after stating that, Jesus came to him. We also learn about the Pharisee Saul, who was one of great authority. He ordered the arrest and stoning of early believers of Jesus. Then on a long and dusty road to Damascus the Pharisee Saul encountered the risen Messiah and became the Apostle Paul. He went on to become one of the most devout believers in Jesus Christ. In fact, 13 books in the New Testament are written by Paul. What we learn from this is that each of us encounter Jesus in different ways, at different times, and for different reason...yet all of us have something important to contribute to the Body of Christ. Think back to when you first encountered Jesus. Not theoretically, but a deep, personal, and intimate encounter. Perhaps you had known about Jesus, but after this encounter you KNEW about Jesus. It changed your faith, your entire life, and the purpose that guides you. These are the encounters we should be striving to help people experience, and most of the time that doesn't happen during Sunday morning worship. It happens when life is falling apart, when life is coming together, when life is beginning, and when life is ending. This is why community and relationships are vital for evangelism and church growth. Just as it was a vital aspect for Jesus and the disciples, it must be a vital aspect for the church. Look at your church programming, committees, and worship experiences. Do we encourage people into deeper relationship with Jesus? Do we invite everyone to participate and contribute? Do we help people see themselves through the eyes of Christ? If not, then we are merely doing things that we like instead of doing things to make disciples.

Prayer:

Jesus, My High Priest and King,

We live everyday to encounter You and to help others encounter You. Place this passion deep into our identity as a local expression of the Body of Christ. Help us to strive for creating opportunities for personal and intimate encounters with You for all people that You call us to interact with. Foster in us the ability to be patient with each other, understanding that our spiritual walk with You is a journey, a process. We are all at different places along this journey and we all require patience and grace. Show us how we need to work harder at inviting people to participate in being the Body of Christ. Transform our worship experiences into personal connections with You. Alter our hearts so that we can connect with You in deeper and more meaningful ways.

Amen

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Personal Reflection
Who Is Jesus to You?

Biblical Names of Jesus:

Advocate (1 John 2:1) Amen (Rev. 3:14)
Alpha & Omega (Rev. 1:8; 22:13)

Author of Salvation (Heb. 2:10) Almighty (Rev. 1:8; Matt. 28:18) Bridegroom (Matt. 9:15)
Bread of God (John 6:33) Author of Life (Acts 3:15) Apostle of our Profession (Heb. 3:1)

Chief Cornerstone (Eph. 2:20) **Atoning Sacrifice for our Sins (1 John 2:2)** Gate (John 10:9)

Lamb (Rev. 13:8) Living One (Rev. 1:18) Author and Perfector of our Faith (Heb. 12:2)

Power of God (1 Cor. 1:24) Deliverer (Rom. 11:26) **Capstone (Acts 4:11; 2 Peter 2:7)**

Eternal Life (1 John 1:2; 5:20) Horn of Salvation (Luke 1:69) Faithful and True (Rev. 19:11)

Hope (1 Tim. 1:1) Good Shepherd (John 10:11,14) King of the Jews (Matt. 27:11)

Firstborn over all creation (Col. 1:15) Prophet (Acts 3:22) **First born from the dead (Rev. 1:5)**

King of Israel (John 1:49) **Christ (1 John 2:22)** Lamb of God (John 1:29)
King of the Ages (Rev. 15:3) Life (John 14:6; Col. 3:4)

Holy One (Acts 3:14) **Living Stone (1 Peter 2:4)**

High Priest (Heb. 2:17) Judge of the Living and the Dead (Acts 10:42) **Rabbi (Matt. 26:25)**

Light of the World (John 8:12) **Immanuel (Matt. 1:23)** Rock (1 Cor. 10:4)

Lord (2 Peter 2:20) **King of Kings (1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 19:16)** Our Protection (2 Thess. 3:3)

Word (John 1:1) Lord of Lords (Rev. 19:16) Son of David (Luke 18:39) Lion of the Tribe of Judah (Rev. 5:5)

Mediator of the New Covenant (Heb. 9:15) **Truth (John 1:14; 14:6)** Lord of All (Acts 10:36)

Way (John 14:6) Only Begotten Son of God (John 1:18; 1 John 4:9) True Bread (John 6:32)

Our Redemption (1 Cor. 1:30) True Light (John 1:9) Our Righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30)

Resurrection and Life (John 11:25) Ruler of God's Creation (Rev. 3:14)

Root of David (Rev. 5:5; 22:16) Son of Man (Matt. 8:20) Creator (John 1:3)

Savior (Eph. 5:23; Titus 1:4; 3:6; 2 Peter 2:20)

Son of the Most High God (Luke 1:32) Wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24) Son of God (John 1:49; Heb. 4:14)

True Vine (John 15:1) **Word of God (Rev. 19:13)** Passover Lamb (1 Cor. 5:7)

Ruler of the Kings of the Earth (Rev. 3:14) The Stone the builders rejected (Acts 4:11) Heir of all things (Heb. 1:2)

Faithful Witness (Rev. 3:14) **Head of the Church (Eph. 1:22;4:15;5:23)** Our Holiness (1 Cor. 1:30)

God (John 1:1; 20:28; Heb. 1:8; Rom. 9:5; 2 Peter 1:1; John 5:20)

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**Personal Reflection
Who Is Jesus to You?**

From the list of biblical names for Jesus on the prior page, which ones speak to you and why?



*Sewaswe Birhan St. Paul Church
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*



*Hill of Crosses * Lithuania*



Palencia, Spain



Rawalpindi, Pakistan



Swiebodzin, Poland



Historic cross in Bavaria



Black Jesus Statue: Detroit, MI

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Back to the Basics: *Understanding the 1st Century Church and Why It Matters*

Devotionals and Prayers

What Does It Mean To Be Part of The Church and The Community?

At the beginning of the Book of Acts, Jesus ascends up to Heaven and the disciples are forced to face a daunting new landscape; building the Body of Christ without Jesus physically present. One of the first realizations that they begin to understand is that all disciples are called to be active in the development of church life. This would have been very new for them because they would have been used to being students instead of teachers. It can be so intimidating to step into a leadership role, especially when one has little experience. Throughout the New Testament we see these disciples grow, develop, and mature as spiritual leaders. It wasn't something that happened overnight, or without difficulties. We see them argue, make mistakes, stumble, and fail. However, we also see them unify, overcome disagreements, develop new leaders, and grow the church. One word that would summarize this phase of development could be "risk-taking". These twelve men had to become comfortable with taking risks, and stepping outside of their comfort zone. If they hadn't, then we might not have our church today. Being a Jew with an opinion was a risk. Being a Jewish follower of Jesus was larger risk. Being a Jewish follower of Jesus that reached out in love to accept and include Gentiles was beyond risky. Today, in modern Christianity, we have lost our ability to take risks. We focus so much on numbers. Numbers of people who attend church, numbers of people who are happy verses complaining, and the dollar amount that makes it to the offering plate. When this is the primary focus, a risk taking attitude becomes the enemy. What would it be like if we began to take more risks? Not meaning place the standing of the church in jeopardy, but what if we evangelized to people who needed Jesus without focusing on their potential tithing percentage? What if we looked at our community to assess where the need is, instead of where the money is? What if we did something radical, such as for every dollar we kept in house for us, we would match that dollar to be spent in being the hands and feet of Jesus throughout our community? Meaning, for every dollar that God blessed us with, we would also dedicate a dollar for mission and outreach within our community. These are things to ponder. To explore radical ways that God can raise us up and use us to impact the community around us. This is how the early church functioned and how the Holy Spirit began to build the Body of Christ in the book of Acts. How can it speak to us today?

Prayer:

My Beloved Jesus,

You sacrificed everything for me, and for Your church. I have never truly felt "vital" in this world and I am humbled that I am vital to You. So much, that without me, it is an incomplete expression of what the Body of Christ is. Plant in my heart a passion for contributing to my church. For helping it to grow and flourish, knowing that means making and growing disciples. That it means impacting our community in radical and new ways so that they will be blessed through us. Make my church family important to me. Help me to see them and value them. Help me to love and accept them. Where they are, not where I wish them to be. I seek to make them vital to me, because they are vital to You.

Teach me how to be part of the Body of Christ and how to be in community with others.

Amen

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Book of Acts Timeline of Events

Event	Date	Scriptural Reference
The Ascension of Christ	30 AD	Acts 1
Matthias chosen by lot	30 AD	Acts 1:12
The Holy Spirit comes at Pentecost (<i>birth of church</i>)	30 AD	Acts 2
Peter Heals and Preaches	30 AD	Acts 3
Peter and John arrested and released	30 AD	Acts 4
Believers share all	30 AD	Acts 4:32
Deaths of Ananias and Sapphira	30 AD	Acts 5
Apostles Preach and Heal	30 AD	Acts 5:1
Stephen's Speech, Stoning and death	31 AD	Acts 6,7
Saul Persecutes the Church	31 AD	Acts 8
Philip in Samaria	31 AD	Acts 8:3
Simon the Sorcerer	31 AD	Acts 8:9
Philip and the Ethiopian	31 AD	Acts 8:26
Saul's conversion, name change to Paul	34 AD	Acts 9
Peter preaches to the Gentiles	37 AD	Acts 10, 11
Barnabas sent to Antioch	42 AD	Acts 11:22
Peter led from prison by the angel	42 AD	Acts 12
Herod Agrippa dies	44 AD	Acts 12:20
Paul's 1st missionary journey	48 AD	Acts 13
Paul preaches in Pisidian Antioch (<i>modern Syria</i>)	48 AD	Acts 13:14
Paul and Barnabas in Iconium (<i>modern Turkey</i>)	48 AD	Acts 14
Paul and Barnabas in Lystra and Derbe (<i>modern Turkey</i>)	48 AD	Acts 14:8
Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch (<i>modern Syria</i>)	48 AD	Acts 14:21
Paul and Barnabas return again to Antioch (<i>modern Syria</i>)	48 AD	Acts 14:24
The Council at Jerusalem	48 AD	Acts 15
Paul's 2nd Missionary Journey	49 AD	Acts 15:36
Paul in Philippi (<i>modern day Greece</i>)	49 AD	Acts 16
Paul in Thessalonica, Berea, Athens (<i>modern day Greece</i>)	49 AD	Acts 17
Paul in Corinth (<i>modern day Greece</i>)	51 AD	Acts 18
Paul in Ephesus (<i>modern day Turkey</i>)	54 AD	Acts 19
Paul in Macedonia and Greece (<i>modern day Albania</i>)	57 AD	Acts 20
Paul returns to Jerusalem	59 AD	Acts 21-23
Paul imprisoned in Caesarea	60 AD	Acts 24
Paul before Festus	62 AD	Acts 25
Paul before Agrippa	62 AD	Acts 26
Paul sails for Rome	62 AD	Acts 27
The shipwreck	62 AD	Acts 27:13
Paul ashore at Malta	62 AD	Acts 28
Paul preaches at Rome	62 AD	Acts 28:11

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How does it make you feel to hear that you are “vital” to Jesus?

Circle each area of church life that interest you:

Choir	Praise Team	Bell Choir	
Sign Language Choir		Media Team	
Sunday School Teacher		Nursery Team	
Elders	Deacons	Council	Prayer Team
Mission Team		Evangelism Team	
Fellowship Team		Discipleship Committee	
Worship Committee		Property Committee	
Children’s Ministry		Youth Ministry	
Drippings of Grace projects		Outreach Team	
Living Nativity		Habitat for Humanity	
Cody Elementary Partnership		Regional Ministry	

Personal Reflection

What Is A Disciple of Jesus Christ?

A disciple is someone who believes that Jesus is the son of God, that He died on the cross for our sins, and rose from the dead three days later - as prophesized in the Old Testament scriptures of the Holy Bible.

A disciple is someone who is committed to learning and following the teachings of Jesus Christ as detailed in the New Testament of the Holy Bible.

A disciple is someone who is committed to submitting to the transforming ministry of the Holy Spirit in order to look, think, act, love, and forgive like Jesus Christ.

A disciple is someone who intentionally desires to become the hands and feet of Jesus Christ throughout the community around them.

A disciple is someone who understands that we are all sinners and fall short of the glory of God and that the church is a hospital for sinners.

A disciple is someone who is committed to the life of the church, understanding that it is the collective Body of Christ.

A disciple is someone who is committed to the Great Commission

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Devotionals and Prayers

Wednesday

When The Holy Spirit Moves

In Acts, chapter 2, Pentecost arrives and all Jewish men were required to be physically in Jerusalem for the observance of Pentecost. While people are gathered Peter begins to speak about Jesus. The Holy Spirit enters and the power of God is reflected through the display of wind, fire, and multiple languages being heard. Historians record that roughly 3,000 people converted to being followers of Jesus on that day. This was the birth of the church (the Body of Christ). Throughout the rest of the book of Acts we see the disciples gather their courage and follow the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of God moves throughout the region powerfully. With just a broad glance at the timeline of the book of Acts we can learn several things: 1) The Holy Spirit was moving and working continuously, 2) the disciples were required to be active participants, 3) at times the Holy Spirit brought people to the disciples, 4) but most of the time, the Holy Spirit took the disciples to the people. Many modern American churches do not “go to the people”. Many of us rely on our websites and google to direct people to our doors. What does it mean to “go to the people”? We see from scripture that the disciples came to a place and lived in the community that there were attempting to evangelize. We see this clearly with the three missionary journeys of Paul. He lived among them, worked alongside them, ate with them, grieved with them, suffered with them, and celebrated with them. He didn’t just arrive for an afternoon and set up a massive event, then sign some autographs and dart off to the next location. He became part of the community. Ultimately, what we see is that much time was spent on forming relationships. There is a saying, “people don’t care what you know, until they know that you care”. Everything about Christianity is understanding relationships. The relationship between God and Jesus, the relationship between Jesus and the Holy Spirit, and our relationship with each of them and each other. We can not impact the community around us unless we are willing to invest in forming relationship with them. The days of relying on the website and the google search engine to bring people to our doors has past. This new landscape will require us to roll up our sleeves and get involved. Our community is suffering now, how can we walk alongside them during this time?

Prayer:

Holy Spirit, my comforter, my advocate, and my spiritual might....

The community around me is suffering and filled with anxiety. Many people feel invisible, insignificant, and left behind. You have called me to this church, and this church, to this community of Omaha. There is work to be done, work that I fail to even see. Thank you for forging a path before me and this church. Light up Your path with blazing lights so that we might see where to place our steps. When a person has been placed before me, let me remember that I am a disciple of Jesus first, and a flawed person second. Help me to see them through Your eyes, and accept them with the love of Christ. Make me see, not what might be standing before me, but the possibilities of what You can accomplish within the life of the person for the glory of God. Help me to set aside my sinful nature, my selfishness, and my pride, in order to be Your hands and feet.

Amen

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Personal Reflection

A community is made up different people groups. However, there are people groups that have the largest unchurched percentages throughout the United States:

1. The Disability Community
2. The LGBTQ+ Community
3. The People of Color Community
4. The Impoverished Community
5. The Prison Community

*If all people are created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27),
and all people are fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139),
and Jesus died as a sacrifice for all (2 Corinthians 5:15),
and Christians profess to be disciples of Jesus Christ,
who acknowledge the mandate for the Great Commission
(Matt. 28)*

...

*then why are there large sections of people groups that remain
unchurched throughout our communities?*

If we, as a church, practiced radical hospitality what could that look like?

Read this article: Radical Hospitality: The First Practice of Fruitful Congregations

featured in the Opening the Door (Nov/Dec/Jan 2008-2009 issue of Circuit Rider (November 1st 2008)

Link:

http://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/518/radical-hospitality-the-first-practice-of-fruitful-congregations?utm_campaign=shareaholic&utm_medium=email_this&utm_source=email

What are your thoughts?

Chapter Two:



Thursday

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Devotionals and Prayers

Who Do You Mentor?

One of the events detailed in the book of Acts is the interaction between Philip and the Ethiopian (Acts 8:26-40). Philip came across an Ethiopian dignitary who was sitting in his chariot reading from the prophet Isaiah. The Holy Spirit prompted Philip to approach the Ethiopian and ask him if he understood what he was reading. To this, the Ethiopian responded, “how can I understand it unless I have a mentor?” There are two ways to grow a church: 1) attract other Christians that have not found a church home, and 2) new believers. For too long, the modern American Church has relied upon attracting Christians that have not found a church home. This is so much easier than making new believers! They already understand our church language, our holy days, and our typical approach towards worship. However, we are now entering a new era for evangelism in the United States. For the first time we are experiencing generations of people that have never heard of Jesus. This means that if we are going to stand on the Great Commission (Matt. 28) and make disciples of Jesus Christ, then we must be prepared that these new believers will need mentors. Just like the Ethiopian, how will they be able to understand if someone doesn’t help them? This is a vital aspect of making disciples. This understanding that it is a commitment and a journey, not a simple salvation prayer. We are mandated to invest in each other to help create an environment where spiritual growth can occur. This means that these new believers are just attempting to shed their old life. It won’t be easy, clean, or simple. They will stumble, fall, backslide, and grow...just as we all do. There will be times our feelings get hurt, when it feels as if we are underappreciated, or even rejected. However, these are times when the Holy Spirit needs us to reflect more of the light of Christ instead of less. The temptation is to push people away during these times and to distance ourselves, yet the Spirit wants us to draw closer. It is difficult to establish the balance between healthy boundaries and being a mentor. The important thing to remember is that you are never called to be someone’s savior. Jesus is. Our role is to walk alongside each other as the Holy Spirit renews, transforms, and develops. Discipleship is a process, not a salvation prayer. Are we dedicated to the long-term commitment required for building disciples of Jesus?

Prayer:

Holy Spirit, the presence of God living in me,

I have never thought of myself as a spiritual mentor. I struggle in my faith and am afraid that if others saw this reality then they would never want me to mentor others. Help me to see my faith through Your eyes. Help me to understand that whatever I am lacking, You provide. That You fill the holes and gaps wherever they may be. Show me that it is through my imperfections that You can do Your best work. I understand that as a disciple of Jesus, I am mandated to become a mentor to those around me. Grant me the courage and the ability to begin to see this possibility. Give me the gifts of patience, endurance, perseverance, and extending grace to all You place around me.

Amen

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Devotionals and Prayers

The Council At Jerusalem

One of the important events documented in the book of Acts is the Council at Jerusalem. This is when all of the Apostles and leaders of the early church gathered and decreed that Gentile followers of Jesus did not have to observe the Mosaic Law (regarding circumcision). This is important to note for several reasons. The first is that it showed that the Apostles were able to compromise on some issues in order to maintain peace. Secondly, it was an understanding that part of the Jewish tradition and culture didn't need to be placed upon non-Jewish new members. By being able to strike this balance it demonstrates that the primary focus of the early church leaders were to make disciples of Jesus Christ. This means that every decision that they made went through this lens. Think about this, prior to Pentecost, Jews and Gentiles did not mix. They lived in separate areas in the community and did not socially mingle. Suddenly, the early church was creating a new community of believers (Jews and Gentiles) that were living together, learning together, and helping each other. Today, a majority of churches are not known for being flexible or change. In fact, the worship wars during the 90's demonstrated for us how easy congregations can fall apart over the use of electric guitars and drums during weekly worship services. What are some of the things that we struggle to modify or change when new voices speak up? We might have no problem with guitars and drums, but might there be something else that we resist altering? A stark reality about church growth is that as new people enter into the Body of Christ, the dynamics will begin to change. Worship preferences will begin to change, and technology will be utilized more. We can already begin to see these shifts happening because COVID has affected how we do in-person gatherings and events. If we choose to practice radical hospitality while seeking to expand the Kingdom of God, what are some things that we might need to be willing to change? How important is it for us to be able to approach and process change?

Prayer:

Holy Spirit, who makes everything new,

It is difficult to set aside personal preferences, traditions, and rituals. They speak to us, and enable us to recall memories of past times. It is hard for us to realize that how we connect with You might not be how everyone around us connects with You. Please call new people to our church and give us the courage to embrace the shift in dynamics that will result. Help us to be like the Apostles and recognize the things that are important, and the things that are secondary. Show us how to become an inclusive family that practices radical hospitality, but does not compromise our faith. Spirit of God, majestic Creator, create in me a thirst for exploring creative new ways to worship You, connect with You, grow with You, and share You!

Amen

Chapter Two:



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Legalism is to seek to achieve forgiveness from God and acceptance by God through my obedience to God.

When you are a legalist, you spend a lot of time evaluating others, making sure they measure up.

In Romans & Galatians, Legalism is seen as 1. the act of putting law above gospel by establishing requirements for salvation beyond faith in Christ ...and 2. by making the law of Moses the "rule" of the believers life, such as putting the believer under the 10 commandments.

a self righteous tendency
 a mis-used term
Legalism
 an overused term
 a greatly misunderstood term

The pursuit of godliness is not legalism. Having standards is not legalism in itself. A preacher that touches on my liberties is not necessarily legalistic, though can be - could be I'm rebellious or licentious.
 misused to justify carnality

Legalism is seeking to EARN God's favor to be saved, or even His favor regarding my walk. SCRIPTURALLY, legalism is putting myself under the law of Moses.

RELIGION	GOSPEL
"I obey, therefore, I'm accepted."	"I'm accepted, therefore, I obey."
Motivation is based on fear & insecurity	Motivation is based on grateful joy.
I obey God in order to get things from God	I obey God to get God and enjoy Him.
When things go wrong I am angry at God or myself, since I believe that anyone who is good deserves a comfortable life.	When things go wrong, I struggle, but I know all my punishment fell on Jesus and that God will care for me as a Father in my trial.
When I am criticized, I am furious or devastated because it is critical that I think of myself as a "good person." Threats to that self-image must be destroyed at all costs.	When I am criticized, I struggle, but it is not essential for me to think of myself as a "good person." My identity is not built on my record or performance but on Christ's.

Back to the Basics: Understanding the 1st Century Church and Why It Matters

Personal Reflection

There are 3 types of legalism in Christianity that we need to guard ourselves from:

◆ **Placing the laws of God above the Gospel of Jesus (salvation and grace)**

This is when the focus is more on the Old Testament and the laws of God instead of the New Testament and the grace and salvation rendered through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

◆ **Separating the letter of the law from the spirit of the law**

An example of this is when the Pharisees confronted Jesus about healing on the Sabbath (Matt. 12:9-14). They cared more about people not conducting any form of labor that they deemed as work, instead of celebrating the wonder of the healing of an individual and the impact it made on that person's life. All that mattered to them was the protocol of how they worshiped, instead of the intent behind the worship.

◆ **Adding our own rules to God's law and treating them as divine**

Jesus rebuked the Pharisees by saying, "You teach human traditions as if they were the word of God."

What type of legalism is the most tempting to cause you to stumble, and why?

Has legalism been used against you? How did that impact your spiritual life, or your desire to be part of a local church?

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Devotionals and Prayers

Saturday

Missions verse Evangelism

For those of us that have grown up in church settings, when we hear the words “missions” and “evangelism” we have specific thoughts that come to mind. For the most part, we think of missions as the work of missionaries in third world countries who seek to teach native citizens about Jesus and impart God’s love upon them. When we think of evangelism we think of knocking on doors and asking people if they know Jesus. This is the old model that many American churches have embraced throughout past generations. These methods have been changing for awhile, and now after the pandemic, it is even more important to understand these changes. Just like during the Great Depression, we are experiencing a religious depression throughout our communities. This is a normal response to nationwide and global trauma. We have seen it both historically (the Great Depression), and biblically (in the wilderness after the Exodus). It is becoming more and more obvious that the old thoughts regarding missions and evangelism will not work in this new landscape. Today, missionaries move to communities and become part of the community. They learn the languages, understand the problems, and learn the culture. An example to support this is that in the past when missionaries traveled to new areas they built churches that looked like western civilization churches, disregarding the style of the culture they were trying to reach. Now, when missionaries build churches they seek the input for designing the building from the native people that live in the community. Missionaries are not called to go into a community and take over. They are called to enter into communities and show them the love of God and Christ. Evangelism has also changed. The approach now is more of a missionary approach. It is going into the community and building relationships with people. Learning the language, understanding the problems, and valuing them. It isn’t about going into a community and taking over. It is about being visible throughout the community and for community members to understand that we want to be a valued part of the community. What would it be like to have a church in the community that isn’t seeking to judge people or tell them how wrong they are? To just live among them, walk alongside them, care about them, and help them. Building these relationships just in order to display God’s love, or to be the hands and feet of Christ. This is the new model of Evangelism, are we willing to do it?

Prayer:

Holy Divine Spirit of God,

It is Your work to convict and convert the hearts of people for Jesus. We sometimes confuse that with our role, then we become arrogant with seizing the authority of who is worthy and who isn’t to have Your love and grace. This is not our role. Our role is to love people. All people. Whoever You place before us, at any given time. Sometimes we also become confused about what it means to love someone. It doesn’t mean that we always agree with their lifestyle, their choices, or their beliefs. It means that we value them as human beings and consistently work towards the environment where they live a life with human dignity, safety, the ability to prosper, and experience justice and freedom. Help us to understand this and create environments that allow You to do Your work!

Amen

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Personal Reflection

If you're not a full-time missionary with a missionary badge pinned on your coat, now is the time to paint one on your heart.
-Elder Neil Anderson

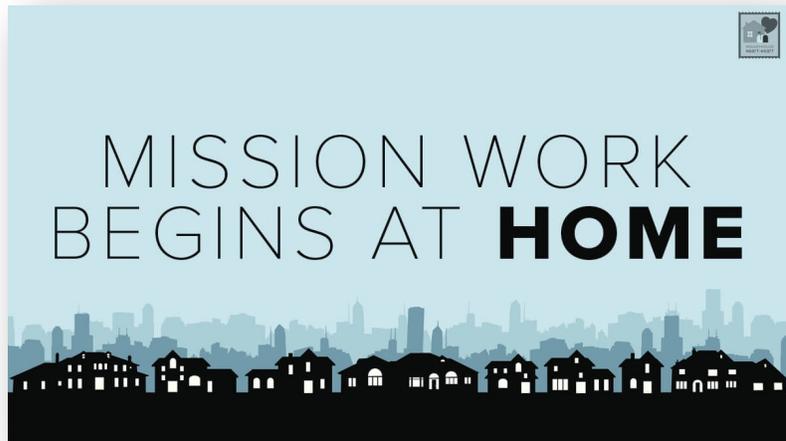


When the Apostle Paul went to an area to plant a church, he would continue to live in that community for at least 1-3 years. Before he would move on he would develop leaders o continue the community work once he was gone. We tend to think of missionaries as special people that are called to travel far and sacrifice personal comforts. However, we see with Paul that the key to being a missionary is investing in the community and building relationships in the community.

How are you already involved in the community?

How can you deepen these relationships?

How might this display the love of Christ?



If our church suddenly ceased to be at 2201 S. 132nd Street in Omaha, would we be missed within the community?

If the answer is no, then we might have a problem....

Chapter Two:



Back to the Basics: *Understanding the 1st Century Church and Why It Matters*

Devotionals and Prayers

Sunday

What is Missional Theology?

A new phrase that is becoming popular today in Christian circles is “Missional Theology”. This generation, Millennials, are radically different from other generations and has been difficult for the church to connect with. Missional Theology, for the most part, is the response to addressing the needs voiced by Christian Millennials. While it might seem like a gimmick, missional theology is scriptural and strives to help foster a more authentic faith worship and life experience. There are five elements that help define what missional theology is:

- **Missional Theology is Historically Christian.** This is the understanding that it never seeks to compromise the gospel. This is the understanding that Jesus will always transform the culture. Therefore, Christians need to be present within all aspects of the community. No longer are Christians called to enter into the mission field, but it is the understanding that Christians are called to reside in the mission field.
- **Missional Theology is a project of the local church.** Missionaries need the support of the local church. It becomes the source for developing workers to send out into the mission field.
- **Missional Theology is Contextual.** This means that there is an effort to understand the truths of Christianity within the new cultural context, language, or people group. The primary question for the local church is; “how can we communicate the gospel to every tribe, tongue, and nation in a way that makes sense to those tribes, tongues, and nations, yet without compromising the truth of the gospel?”
- **Missional Theology is evangelistic.** At the very heart of missional theology is the primary function of making disciples for Jesus Christ. Every other aspect is secondary.
- **Missional Theology imitates Christ.** Luke 4:18 is the foundation for missional theology; “The Spirit of the Lord is on me...He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

How important is Missional Theology to the modern day church?

Prayer:

Spirit of the Living God,

Help Your church to understand that we are all called to be missionaries, and that the mission field is all around us. While we ask that You call people to our church and that we experience growth and depth in building disciples for You, we also ask that You help develop people to send out to do Your work throughout the community. Creating this beautiful image of You pouring into us, as we are pouring into the community around us. Help us to identify new ways to connect with this generation and have an open heart when hearing how they seek to connect with You. Show us how to speak to the suffering being experienced and respond with compassion and mercy. Grant us Your voice for justice as we seek to display Your love throughout this land.

Amen

