



Congregational Vitality

Encouraging Healthy Missional Momentum

10 Healthy Missional Markers - Small Group Study

Compelling Christian Community (Acts 2:42-47)

- ❖ When was a time you felt ostracized or left out from a group of people?
- ❖ Somebody once said that the world would be a better place if it wasn't for people. We get what this means, but, the truth is that people make the world a wonderful place too. The answer isn't in getting rid of people, but in getting rid of bad ways people relate to each other. Jesus wanted this and he called it the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God, to Jesus, is a society/community of people who relate to each other according to the King's principles, the King's will. The book of Acts paints a picture of what this looks like in chapter 2:42-47. This picture of the very first believers relating to each other is a beautiful picture of community and it compels us to seek how we can create this kind of community for the Church today. Let's look at the passage and see how it teaches us to be a community that best reflects God's kingdom.
- ❖ Read Acts 2:42-47
 - What were the things that the first believers did together?
 - How did the believers distribute material items?
 - Who were the leaders of this group?
 - How did God respond to this?
- ❖ Interpretation
 - What are similarities and differences between what you read and what you see in the Church today?
 - Why do you think there are differences and are some of these differences good or bad?
 - Sharing possessions and financial resources with each other is an incredible way to operate as a community. Why is this a significant signature of the first believers and not so much for the western church today?
 - Why is leadership so important for community?
 - This picture in Acts 2 depicts people relating together in a way that is very compelling and attractive to almost any person. Would you say this is true of the church today? Why or why not?
- ❖ Application
 - Individual
 - How have you most felt community from the church?
 - How have you offered community to others?
 - What is the biggest problem that causes you to not build close relationships or invest in the lives of others?
 - Your Church
 - Is Your Church a place that offers compelling community? Why or why not?
 - How can Your Church do a better job of creating community for people?

Notes:

Centrality of the Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16)

- ❖ What was a time when you were lost and how did you find your way back (i.e. driving, walking, in a large store, in a forest, etc.)?
- ❖ We use things like maps, flashlights, signs, and guides to find our way around our spatial reality. The sailors of old, used the stars to know where they were going. Now, professionals in the transportation industry use GPS. Understanding where we are and where we want to go is a fundamental component of our everyday life. It is also a fundamental component of our spiritual life. Knowing where we are and where we are headed spiritually is more critical for us than spatially even. In today's study, we are going to look at a key component for guiding our lives spiritually, God's word. Timothy was a young man who knew and valued God's word. Paul encouraged him to never let this go. The following reading and questions let us in on why Paul encourages Timothy to keep embracing God's word.
- ❖ Read 2 Timothy 3:10-4:5
 - After reading this passage, what do you think is the main point that Paul is trying to convey to Timothy?
 - What are some of the challenges that Paul brings up in this passage?
 - How does Paul think that Scriptures/Jewish *torah* (God's word) will address these challenges for Timothy?
- ❖ Interpretation
 - Why does Paul turn to God's word as the answer?
 - Why would the Church have turned to wrong doctrine, myths, and general deception during that time?
 - What do you think it means that Scripture is God-breathed?
- ❖ Application
 - Individual
 - What is your view of God's word? Why?
 - Do you feel like you know God's word and do you feel equipped to study it on your own? Why or why not?
 - When was a time that God's word helped navigate your life during some challenges? How does it navigate your life right now?
 - Your Church
 - How well is Your Church teaching God's word and making it relevant to our current reality?
 - How well is Your Church equipping and training people to study and apply God's word?

Notes:

Life Transforming Walk with Jesus (John 3:3,30; Phil. 1:6)

- ❖ Have you ever run into a friend you hadn't seen in years? What were the first impressions of seeing them and getting reacquainted?
- ❖ When you run into old friends typically it is an experience of getting used to how they have changed and vice versa. Most of the time it's a change for the better. Once rebellious and impetuous, now they seem to show more maturity and wisdom. Yet, this is not always the case; people can digress too. Always, their physical appearance has changed: lines set a little deeper in the face, a bit of sag around the belly, or that classic hair recession that crowns many a male. Someone once said that one thing that never changes is change. Although change is not always fun, it is something that Jesus wants his followers to embrace especially in regards to our character and behavior. In our study today, we are going to look at Jesus' emphasis on change and how that change takes place in our lives.
- ❖ Read John 3:1-21
 - What change is Jesus describing that needs to happen for someone to enter the kingdom of God?
 - How does Jesus explain what being born again means?
 - How does someone become reborn of the Spirit?
- ❖ Interpretation
 - Who is this Spirit and why does the Spirit cause someone to be reborn?
 - Why do you think Nicodemus struggled to understand this?
 - What does it mean to believe in Jesus?
 - If Jesus is the key to rebirth and eternal life, why don't more people follow him?
 - Is rebirth something that happens all at once or gradually?
- ❖ Application
 - Individual
 - What practices do you implement to strengthen your belief, trust, and obedience in Jesus?
 - When do you find spiritual change/transformation to happen most?
 - If we are to change to look more like Jesus, what areas in your life do you find most challenging to change?
 - Your Church
 - Does Your Church reflect a community of people whose lives are transforming? Why or why not?
 - How is Your Church helping your process of change/transformation?
 - Do you feel Your Church offers enough resources, experiences, and settings to equip people for change/transformation? Why or why not?

Notes:

Global Perspective and Engagement (Acts 1:8)

- ❖ Globalization is the new buzz word of the 21st century. How do you understand this concept? What are some of the ways you feel globalization impacts your life?
- ❖ Interestingly, Jesus was about the globalization of his movement, meaning, that it would go global. He commanded his disciples to go to the ends of the earth to bring testimony about him. With today's modern conventions of travel and communication, the effort to globalize Jesus has more potential than ever. Often, though, ethnocentricity and narrow minded world views challenge the Church from embracing a global effort for the gospel. Certainly, the disciples struggled with these issues as they tried to obey Jesus' commands to witness to the world. To go into their arch rival's region, Samaria, and bring the news of Jesus would have been a very disconcerting idea. How were they able to face such a challenge? Let's look at today's lesson and see what helped them carry out their witness of Jesus to the world.
- ❖ Read Acts 1:1-11
 - To whom does Luke write Acts?
 - Luke describes Jesus behavior after his resurrection. What did Jesus do?
 - Who does Jesus promise he will send to the disciples?
 - What are the disciples concerned about?
- ❖ Interpretation
 - How might Luke be carrying out the globalization of Jesus?
 - Jesus appeared to the disciples not once, but many times over a period of 40 days. Why?
 - Why is the Holy Spirit so important in this endeavor to globalize Jesus' movement?
 - What does the disciples' question regarding Israel tell you about their world view?
- ❖ Application
 - Individual
 - Do you think you have a global world view? Why or why not?
 - What prejudices or ethnocentric behavior do you exhibit?
 - What was a cross-cultural experience that shaped you?
 - Your Church
 - How do you feel about Your Church's efforts to globalize the gospel?
 - What things could Your Church do better to keep in touch with global issues and address them?

Notes:

Intentional Evangelism (Matthew 28:18-20)

- ❖ When was the last time you found out something that made you feel so good you had to tell others about it? What was it that compelled you to tell others?
- ❖ “We’re having a baby!”, “They hired me!”, “I made the team!” There are so many scenarios that come together when something good happens to us and we have to tell people. It’s a normal way of being for us humans. We are social, so we want others to share in our experience. In today’s lesson, we will be looking at Jesus’ Great Commission to the disciples. The disciples had experienced something beyond belief in Jesus’ resurrection, let alone the three years they followed him during his ministry. Simply put, Jesus had been an incredible experience. Now, Jesus wanted them to share with others about this incredible experience, but, not just share about him, invite people to experience him themselves.
- ❖ Read Matthew 28:16-20
 - What was the reaction of the disciples when they saw Jesus?
 - How much authority does Jesus receive from the Father?
 - What does Jesus tell the disciples to do?
- ❖ Interpretation
 - Why do you think some of the disciples doubted? Does this reflect how people generally respond to his resurrection?
 - Why do you think Jesus tells the disciples he has been given all authority in heaven and earth?
 - Why do you think Jesus wants them to baptize?
 - What are some teachings of Jesus that the disciples would have had to teach to future disciples?
 - Why would the above teachings been good news?
- ❖ Application
 - Individual
 - How have you been taught to follow Jesus? Does this match-up with how Jesus taught his disciples to follow him? Why or why not?
 - How have you lived out Jesus command to go make disciples?
 - Do you feel compelled to make disciples? Why or why not?
 - Your Church
 - How is Your Church doing at making disciples?
 - Do you sense that Your Church has a burden for disciple-making? Why or Why not?
 - How is Your Church doing at equipping people to make disciples?

Notes:

Transforming Communities through Active Compassion, Mercy, and Justice Ministries (Micah 6:8)

- ❖ When was a time that you felt helpless and God used someone to deliver you from your situation?
- ❖ The artist Sting sings a song called "Fragile." The song recognizes that we humans tend to use physical force or violence to secure ourselves or get our way. When this happens, however, what results may be one group's survival, but another group's destruction. Sting is challenging people to see all human life as fragile, meaning, to see it as something with which to take extreme care. This really lines up with the way God sees human life. God knows that humans are fragile and he shows throughout the Bible a behavior of trying to take care of humans, especially his people. He also likes to use his people to take care of others. We get a sense of God's priority for human life in Micah ch. 6 as he holds Israel accountable to better value and take care of other humans. Let's look at how God speaks to Israel to help them get this.
- ❖ Read Micah 6:1-8
 - Who is speaking in this passage?
 - What dose the Lord say to Israel?
 - What does Micah say?
- ❖ Interpretation
 - How would you sum up the Lord's charge against Israel?
 - To whom would Israel have opportunity to show compassion, mercy, and justice?
 - Why do you think that compassion, mercy, and justice are more important to God than religious sacrifices are?
- ❖ Application
 - Individual
 - How does your life reflect God regarding compassion, mercy, and justice?
 - Are compassion, mercy, and justice hard to live out? Why or why not?
 - Where do you see compassion, mercy, and justice issues in your community or neighborhood or the world? Have you had any thoughts about how to address these issues? If so, what are they?
 - Your Church
 - How is Your Church doing in regards to compassion, mercy, and justice?
 - Does Your Church identify clear ways in which people can participate in compassion, mercy, and justice?
 - Is Your Church helping people understand what compassion, mercy, and justice mean for Your City, State, and the World?

Notes:

Heartfelt Worship (Psalm 138)

- ❖ When was the last time you gave credit or recognition to someone else? What caused you to make this recognition? What did you say?
- ❖ In a way, worship recognizes God, to His face. No one in the Bible was better at doing this than King David. What made David so exemplary in his worship of God? The Bible says that David was a man after God's own heart and his Psalms certainly reflect this. David's psalms are full of words that show a man sincerely loving God and wrestling with God too. This sincerity of heart speaks more to God than any fluffy words or lines of music. God does not want anybody falsely giving him glory. Yet, when the heart is in line with God, there is no better experience than worshiping Him. Recognizing God to his face is good for the human heart because humans were created to worship God. Psalm 138 offers a great sample of David recognizing and praising God with heartfelt worship. Let's look at this passage.
- ❖ Read Psalm 138
 - What are some reasons that David gives for his praise?
 - What are the "gods" that David speaks of?
 - What things happened in David's life that showed him God protects and helps him in the face of his foes?
 - What thing in David's life told him that God had a purpose for him?
- ❖ Interpretation
 - What might be some things that would be going on in David's life and world that would make him praise God the way he does?
 - Why would David mention that before the "gods" he praises the Lord?
 - Why would David pray that other kings praise Yahweh?
 - What purpose (v.8) do you think David may have understood for his life?
- ❖ Application
 - Individual
 - How do you define worship?
 - Do you see a difference in David's purpose and your purpose? Why or Why not?
 - What false gods do you struggle not to worship?
 - Your Church
 - How is Your Church helping people to understand worship?
 - How is Your Church's worship ministry impacting your life?

Notes:

Culture of Godly Leadership (Hebrews 13:7)

- ❖ Who is someone who has influenced your life greatly and why?
- ❖ Leaders are supposed to influence people and in the church, specifically, they are to influence people to look more like Christ. Leaders cannot influence people to be Christ-like if they themselves are not living Christ in their own life. One of the biggest criticisms of culture against the Church is that it is a hypocrite. A big reason for this is because the Church has not been great about doing its best to strengthen and maintain integrity in its leaders. Look at the litany of Church leaders in America over the past twenty years who have been found to live secret lives of immorality or disobedience. This is not to say leaders must be perfect, but they must consistently attend to some very fundamental areas in their lives for them to hold leadership in God's community. Leadership is something very critical to the health of God's people. The author of Hebrews lines out a few of the areas to which leaders must attend, so that the health of God's Church is not deteriorated by their influence. Let's look at a few of those areas
- ❖ Read Hebrews 13:1-8
 - The author of Hebrews wants his readers to imitate Godly leaders. According to this passage what things might be important for a leader to do and model?
 - The author of Hebrews tells the reader to remember those leaders who spoke the word of God to them. What are they to evaluate about these leaders?
 - Who is the leader that most exemplified Godly leadership and what is the author emphasizing about this leader?
- ❖ Interpretation
 - Why do you think the author of Hebrews focused on the areas he did to emphasize what is Godly?
 - How do these areas compare and contrast to Titus 1:6-9 and 1Tim. 3:1-12?
 - Out of these areas of godliness, what is the easiest for a leader to hide?
 - What would be some ways to strengthen leaders against sexual immorality?
 - Why do you think the author of Hebrews tells the readers to look at the outcome of a leader's life and their faith?
 - The author ends up on Jesus as the ultimate leader to imitate. How can we keep him as our foremost leader to follow and imitate?
 - Why is Godly leadership so important for a community of believers, the Church?
- ❖ Application
 - Individual
 - How do you line up with the areas of godliness in our passage? Where could you do better?
 - How much do you think about Jesus and try to really imitate his life?
 - Your Church
 - What sort of trust level do you have in Your Church's leadership? Why?
 - How well is Your Church training up Godly, competent leaders for ministry?

Notes:

Fruitful Organizational Structures (Exodus 18:13-26, Acts 6:1-7)

- ❖ Split the group up into two or three teams. Using playing cards see who can build the biggest tower with the cards in a specific amount of time. When you finish, discuss what it was about the structure of the winning group's tower that made it successful?
- ❖ To have large buildings, a strong framework must be in place to support the weight and pressure. Just like buildings, organizations or communities of people need appropriate framework/structure in order for them to carry out their purpose. The early church, as we read through the book of Acts, increases in number daily. This means that after only a few weeks or months, they had become a very big community. After this short while, pressure was being put on the way the first apostles were trying to minister to the Church and the Jewish community. Their modes or structures of ministry would begin to break down under the demand of the people's needs spiritually and physically. We see a very vivid example of this in Acts 6:1-7. Yet, the apostles make an adjustment to create a better structure that supports the community. Let's look at what they did and how it can relate to the Church today.
- ❖ Read Acts 6:1-7
 - What church problem is being described in this passage?
 - What did the apostles do to first address the issue?
 - What did the apostles have the people do to solve the problem?
 - What kind of leaders were they to be?
 - What was the result of this structural adjustment in the church?
- ❖ Interpretation
 - Why did the Grecian Jews get overlooked?
 - How is it that prejudice crept into the behavior of the church?
 - What was it about the apostles' actions to deal with the issue that made it productive and yet, everybody was on board?
 - Why would being full of wisdom and the Spirit be helpful in the role of distributing bread?
 - Why would more people have become disciples because of this structural adjustment?
- ❖ Application
 - Individual
 - In your life, what responsibilities could you let go of that keep you from doing what you are supposed to do? (This could be at work, home, church, community organizations, etc.).
 - How can you begin to let go of these things? (communicate with those involved, figure out the best solution for everyone, let others be involved in the solution)
 - Your Church
 - How is Your Church doing in carrying out its ministries?
 - Where could Your Church adjust to make things more productive?
 - How is Your Church doing to communicate and solve its current challenges?

Notes:

Sacrificial and Generous Living and Giving (Romans 12:1-8)

- ❖ Do you have any stuff/material items that lay in storage and you wonder why you are hanging on to them? What keeps you from giving these items to someone else to use?
- ❖ As Americans it is very hard to absorb the biblical idea of stewardship. We operate in a proprietary culture, where we idealize private ownership and fervently guard its institution. However, when we look at our stuff through the lens of the Bible, we see the theme that God is the real owner of everything and he makes us stewards over his stuff. And, this doesn't just mean material things, but also relationships, responsibilities, and our very own lives with their respective talents, skills, and knowledge. When we see everything through the stewardship lens, it causes us to take very seriously God's desires that we share and contribute his stuff to the greater good. Paul is really trying to help the Roman church get this in ch. 12:1-8. Let's take a look at how he presents his concept of stewardship.
- ❖ Read Romans 12:1-8
 - According to Paul, how should we respond to God's mercy shown to us through Jesus?
 - According to Paul, how can we know God's will?
 - How does Paul want us to think about ourselves?
 - What is the image that Paul is using for the church and how does each person work within this image?
- ❖ Interpretation
 - What do you think it means to be a living sacrifice?
 - What does it mean to renew your mind, so you can know God's will?
 - Why is it critical that church people don't over-perceive their importance?
 - If the body is the church, what role does Christ play?
 - Are there times when the Head and Body are in conflict? If so how? How can the church get in line with the Head?
- ❖ Application
 - Individual
 - What is the hardest area in your life to sacrifice over to God? Why?
 - What spiritual gifts, abilities, and resources do you possess and how have they defined your role in the church body? Are you currently using those gifts and abilities for God? Why or why not?
 - Your Church
 - How is Your Church doing to help people understand generous giving/stewardship of God's stuff?
 - Is Your Church a generous church? Why or why not?
 - How could Your Church better equip people to manage God's stuff?

Notes: