

The Church Unleashed

Acts 2:42-47

Nate Heitzig

September 10, 2017

connect
groups

PATH

We live in a day when our society is becoming more disjointed and divided. Rather than celebrating what we have in common, we emphasize what separates us. But in the midst of this, people are looking for a place to belong, a community where they feel safe, and a family they can trust and love. This is what the church is for: to be a home where people can find love and the Beloved—Jesus Christ. In this teaching, Pastor Nate looked at the church unleashed. His path through the text was as follows:

I. Imitate (v. 42)

II. Involved (vv. 44-46)

III. Imparting (v. 47)

POINTS

Imitate:

- The church, purchased with Jesus' blood, is the only organization He ever started (see Acts 20:28).
- As members of Christ's church, Christians have a purpose according to God's plan: to have an impact on culture and be an unleashed church making a difference for Christ.
- Part of God's purpose and plan for the church is to imitate Jesus. The way we live "should be to the praise of His glory" (Ephesians 1:12).
- The apostle Paul said his own goal was not merely to evangelize, but to "present everyone mature in Christ" (Colossians 1:28, ESV). That is, Christians are to equip believers to do His work and build up the church.
- But sadly, many people in the church would rather be consumers instead of communers, wanting gimmicks rather than the gospel.
- **Probe:** Read Acts 2:42-47. The word *imitate* means to take or follow as a model. Discuss how the church is to imitate Christ today. Describe some characteristics of imitating Christ. Why is it important to use Acts 2 as the model?

Involved:

- The early church looked out for one another; there was true *koinónia*—

fellowship and partnership among believers, people taking care of people.

- God has called each member of His church (the body of Christ) to be functioning, vital organs (see Ephesians 4:15-16).
- It is not an option for Christians to have community in the church; it's a command (see Hebrews 10:25).
- As an organization, the Lord has a unique plan for His church in the world. And as God's *ekklesia* (a called-out gathering), the church is called together to worship and pray, study Scripture, fellowship, give, and share the gospel.
- At Calvary Albuquerque, our Connect Groups serve the purpose of more intimate fellowship, ensuring our group is a gathering of growing together in Christ.
- **Probe:** Discuss your individual spiritual gifts (see Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4). What has God gifted you to do? How are you using those gifts in the church? How are you involved with God's plan and purpose for His community of called-out ones?

Imparting:

- As members in a living community, everybody has a part to play, a job to do. Our goal should be to worship, learn, change, help, and use the gifts God has given us.

- Ernest Southcott said it best: "The holiest moment of the church service is...when God's people...go out of the church door into the world to be the church."
- This is the church unleashed: We grow together. We live life together. We work together. We are community and unity at its best.
- As the church, we are not to emphasize one of these principles at the expense of another; they are all important and must be balanced.
- At our core, the church is called to build up the saints and to evangelize.
- The strength of the church throughout history has always been a work of the Spirit: it began in the Spirit, was maintained by the power of the Spirit, and is upheld by the principles of the Spirit.
- A.W. Tozer said, "If the Holy Spirit were taken away from the New Testament church, 90 percent of what they did would come to a halt. But if the Holy Spirit were taken away from today's church, only 10 percent of what it does would cease."
- **Probe:** To impart something means to make information known, to communicate and bestow something to someone. Share how you communicated Christian information to someone recently (for example: through prayer, sharing a verse, encouragement, love, etc.) What was the response of the recipient?

PRACTICE

Connect Up: As Pastor Nate pointed out, the person and work of the Holy Spirit is vital in building an unleashed church. As the third person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit will guide the church to the truth (see John 16:13). Concerning this, Michael Houdmann reminded us that the Holy Spirit "reveals to our minds the whole counsel of God as it relates to worship, doctrine, and Christian living. He is the ultimate guide, going before, leading the way, removing obstructions, opening the understanding, and making all things plain and clear. He leads in the way we should go in all spiritual things. Without

such a guide, we would be apt to fall into error." Discuss the role of the Holy Spirit in revitalizing an unleashed church. Name some of the specific roles the Holy Spirit plays in preparing Christians for God's purposes and plans.

Connect In: Following Paul's comparison of the church to the human body (see 1 Corinthians 12:12-26), talk about the differing roles within the church, relating them to the body. For example, who would represent the mouth, or the hand, or maybe the feet in the body of Christ?

Connect Out: As Pastor Nate reminded us, evangelism is crucial to the community of Christ. Discuss your particular gift in the body of Christ (see the Probe section under *Involved*). How can your spiritual gift enable you to be a better verbal witness for Christ in the world?