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THE CHURCH HAS LEFT THE BUILDING

Overview:

The early church in the book of Acts was a powerful force that changed the world. In this series we'll examine six essentials that serve as a gut-check for modern churches to make sure we're biblically functioning communities.

Lessons:

1. The Essential Message of the Church
2. The Essential Mission of The Church
3. The Essential Foundation of the Church
4. The Essential Power of the Church
5. Essential Connections in the Church
6. Essential Service in the Church



THE ESSENTIAL MESSAGE OF THE CHURCH

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TALKING POINTS

The book of Acts chronicles the birth of the Christian church and the essential message of Jesus.

- The Essential Message is that Jesus came to _____ you. Jesus is Lord as demonstrated through his _____, _____, and _____ from the dead. **Acts 2:23-24**
- The first wrong response is _____. This is _____, which says I have to live a good life in order to be saved.
- The second wrong response is _____. This is believing that since I'm saved, it doesn't matter how I _____.
- The right response to the essential message is _____. It's more than just knowing the facts. It's putting your total _____ in Jesus and his work on the _____. **Acts 2:38**

DISCUSSION

1. *Share your faith journey. Who was instrumental in that journey?*
2. *Read Acts 2:23-24. Why did Jesus have to suffer and die for us? How does our sin get in the way of a relationship with God?*
3. *How have you seen religion derail people from pursuing God? What does a legalistic attitude look like and why is it unappealing to a seeker?*
4. *How do you see relativism among your friends and family? How do you think God feels about that attitude?*
5. *Read Acts 2:37-38. What must we do in response to this essential message? Why is the Holy Spirit important to our growth and maturity?*

THE ESSENTIAL MISSION OF THE CHURCH

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TALKING POINTS

The apostles followed Jesus for three years, watching him perform miracles and announce the Kingdom of Heaven. But after his resurrection, they almost got sidelined from their true mission.

- Many Christians get sidelined by _____-they don't know their mission. But Jesus gave a clear commandment: go make _____.
Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 1:8
- Other Christians get sidelined by _____. They seek deeper Bible knowledge yet never share the simple _____ they already know.
Acts 1:6-7
- Most Christians get sidelined by _____. In the early church, it took _____ for Christians to leave their homes and make _____.
Acts 8:1

DISCUSSION

1. *Have you ever been sidelined for some reason in your life? (career, sports, ministry) How did that impact you?*
2. *Read Matthew 28:19-20 and Acts 1:8. How do you think most Christians view these passages? Why do you think many Christians miss the call to action in these verses?*
3. *In your own words, define what it means to be a mature Christian. How can just seeking information get in the way of the mission? How should it help the mission?*
4. *Read Acts 1:6-7. What are some other issues where Christians tend to get in the weeds, distracting them from the more important things?*
5. *Read Acts 8:1. Our world is full of turmoil right now. How will you step out boldly for Jesus and fulfill the mission he's given us?*

THE ESSENTIAL FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH

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TALKING POINTS

As the powerful, life-changing word of God, the Bible has always been the church's foundation. We make it our foundation by shaping our ideas and choices around its wisdom.

- _____ was essential to the early church. The apostles anchored their _____ and _____ in Scripture. This defined what was most important to them. **Acts 2:42, Acts 15:35**
- The first Christians knew that the Scriptures are the word of _____, and thus have _____ to change people's lives. **Acts 4:24-25, Hebrews 4:12**
- Christians today must be committed to the same _____. We must let God's word define what we _____ and dictate how we _____. **Acts 17:11-12, 2 Timothy 3:16**

DISCUSSION

1. *Share a time you tried to build something without viewing the instructions. How did that project turn out?*
2. *Read Acts 15:35. Why would Paul and Barnabas describe the Scriptures as the word of the Lord. What are the implications of that phrase?*
3. *How would you describe people's view of the Bible in our culture today? How about in the Church?*
4. *What would you say currently dictates how you think and feel about life?*
5. *Read Hebrews 4:12. Identify all that this verse says about God's word. How do you need to let God's word penetrate your heart and mind more?*
6. *Share a time you read God's word and felt great conviction over something. How did that insight impact your life?*
7. *Read Acts 17:11-12. Describe the attitude of the Bereans. What can be learned from the way they approached their pursuit of God?*

THE ESSENTIAL POWER OF THE CHURCH

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TALKING POINTS

The Holy Spirit is the essential power given to all who believe in Jesus Christ. It gives us the ability to make disciples and to align our lifestyles with God's commands.

- The mission of the church is impossible without the power of the _____. The Spirit gives us the ability to _____ and others the ability to _____.

Acts 1:8, Acts 2:1-4

- The essential power isn't just for some, it's for all who _____. The Holy Spirit is the promised "_____". **Genesis 12:2-3,**

Acts 2:5-6

- The Holy Spirit is _____ for every part of our lives today. He's the reason Christians can actually be _____ to God. **Ezekiel 36:26-27,**

John 14:23, Galatians 5:24-25

DISCUSSION

1. *Have you ever felt faced with an impossible task? Explain. How did it turn out?*
2. *Read Acts 2:1-4. If you were there that day, how do you think you would've responded to what you were seeing? What do you think the wind, fire and different languages being spoken demonstrated for the people?*
3. *Read Acts 2:14. Peter was a guy who had denied Jesus and had experienced doubt. How do you see boldness in Peter from this verse? Have you ever had to stand up for Jesus publicly? Explain.*
4. *Share about your salvation story. How did God show himself to you and who helped you on your journey?*
5. *Read Galatians 5:24-25. In your own words, what does it mean to crucify your fleshly desires? How has the Holy Spirit empowered you to have victory in your life?*

ESSENTIAL CONNECTIONS IN THE CHURCH

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TALKING POINTS

In a healthy church the Christian life is shared with others. Use this 5-point checklist to see how your community life stacks up against the early church from the second chapter of Acts.

Are you learning God's _____ with others?

- Commit to a _____ relationship and/or a small group where you can _____ to God's word together. **Acts 2:42**

Are you growing closer to God and others

- through _____? When you pray in a group you don't just connect with _____; you get closer to _____. **Acts 2:42**

Are you _____ to those around you?

- The early church intentionally decreased their standard of _____ for the sake of the common _____. **Acts 2:45**

Do you _____ with others? Time

- is a precious _____, and where we spend it shows who is _____ to us. **Acts 2:46**

Are you _____ to others? Breaking

- bread is an act of worship and a powerful symbol of _____ with Christ. **Acts 2:46**

LESSON #5 OF 6

DISCUSSION

1. Describe your experience with church growing up. What were some positives and negatives of those experiences?
2. Share about meaningful community in your life. Where have you found it and why were you drawn to it? How have people made you feel like you belong?
3. Read Hebrews 10:25. How have you viewed your church attendance/involvement up to now? How does this verse challenge you?
4. Read Acts 2:42. Describe what devoted means to you. Would you say you have a devotion to Bible study and prayer? How can you grow in this area?
5. Read Acts 2:45. Share about a person who has been generous to you. How did that impact your life? Share a time you were generous to someone. How did that impact their life?
6. Read Acts 2:46. How can you be more hospitable? What is a practical step you can take this month to grow in this area?
7. How do small groups/mentoring help us to grow in our relationship with God? In your opinion, why is there value in sharing your faith with others?

ESSENTIAL SERVICE IN THE CHURCH

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TALKING POINTS

The Church is called to serve the poor and powerless in Jesus' name. This demonstrates God's love and opens peoples' hearts to hear the gospel.

- The early church was committed to helping the _____ and _____ because Jesus was. They were willing to address the underlying conditions of people's _____.
Acts 10:38, Acts 3:4-6
- Christians carried on this love for _____ people throughout history. _____ - _____ Christians led the way in abolishing slavery, protecting exploited women and children, developing hospitals and more. **1 John 3:17-18**
- When we _____ others, it paves the way for the message of Jesus. The strongest proof of our message is not a rational argument but our _____ for people.
Matthew 5:14-16

DISCUSSION

1. How have you served others that didn't involve finances? How has someone helped you in your life that had nothing to do with money?
2. What interactions have you had with people in need in your community? How have those experiences impacted you?
3. Read Acts 3:3-6. Describe how Peter and John viewed their interaction with the beggar. How did a physical healing impact that man's life more than any amount of money he could've been given?
4. Read 1 John 3:17-18. How do these verses challenge you? How will you challenge yourself to do more in your community?
5. Read Matthew 5:14-16. Why do actions speak louder than words? How can meeting a physical need open the door to faith conversations in the future?

