

## Church on Purpose, Part 3: The PROCESS of the Church

03/18/18

Acts 2:42-47

### **Main Point: We do “church on purpose” by PARTICIPATING in the PROCESS of the church.**

- I. Quick Intro of myself:
  - a. Elder, help play violin during worship sometimes, Connect Group director and leader
  - b. Teaching is my paying gig; 8th grade Science
- II. **Week 3 of Church on Purpose; Let's Review Weeks 1 & 2:**
  - a. Week 1: The PURPOSE of the Church
    - i. **Math: WHY of church + WHAT of church = PURPOSE of church.**
      1. WHY: Jesus transformed us who are Christians (and continues to do so). He offers to transform not-yet-Christians, too, if that's you here today!
      2. WHAT: Jesus reconciles people to God; We who are Christians get to facilitate this and participate in it through our relationships with others as we represent God.
      3. PURPOSE: We who are Christians ARE God's ambassadors to the world; we represent Jesus in words and actions to the world. We live like Jesus would live, go where he would go, and do what he would do.
  - b. Week 2: The POWER of the Church
    - i. **God gave us Christians the power of the Holy Spirit so we can fulfill our purpose... to be witnesses.**
      1. The Holy Spirit gives us who are Christians the ability to be like Jesus and empowers us to be his witnesses, to share with others what He has done for us.
      2. STOP and RELY on the Holy Spirit in our daily lives.
- III. **ME** So as I'm working on the message this week on the PROCESS of the church, I'm reading Acts, and trying to figure out what to say tonight, and I realize that God wants me to answer some questions, myself. This is what happens as a teacher, and preacher, too, I guess, in that you have to figure out what the lesson is for yourself and answer God before you

can share it with others, so here it goes... it's actually 5 questions that I had to work through personally before I could do anything else with this message:

- A. **What am I devoted to?** (Devoted meaning what am I loyal to, attached to, affectionate towards); what am I devoted to?
  - a. My wife, my children and dog (most of the time), my job, my connect group, friends, church; to a growing extent my neighbors.
  - b. Generally, I'm devoted to the art of perfectionism, this manifests itself in all areas of my life from work to play. Currently my big “devotional” project is transforming my house into a mid-century modern living museum. This includes interior decorations, furniture, light fixtures, silverware, lowball drinking glasses, landscaping (right at the front end of this one since my backyard is currently a mix of pits from ground-out stumps and piles of stump grindings around them), removing perfectly fine stone from the front of my house because I don't believe it is original and it doesn't fit the MCM (mid-century modern) aesthetic. As Pastor Jon nicely summed it up for me when he was over recently, “Some people like to restore cars, you are restoring your house”.
- B. **What do I do with my “stuff”?**
  - a. I know it's not actually mine but don't always act that way. If I already know you, I'll share my time and things with you in limited amounts (friend, co-worker, neighbor). I don't really share often with people I don't know. Often times I'm really selfish.
  - b. I give of some of my time and treasure to God and the church, but I could always give more.
- C. **What is my routine? What do I do with my time?** All of this actually happened during this past week, and I thought you might get a kick out of this, so I wrote it down: Get up, pet my dog, pray and read the Bible for a short time and wonder what God has for me today and in my future (just small things, right?), go to work, start teaching my 8th graders, stop because they are talking, tell them to listen

when the teacher is talking, try to hand out band-aids but realize I ran out again, try and remember I'm out of kleenex, too, because some students like to keep their shoes clean by wetting kleenex instead of using the paper towels that are right next to the kleenex, remind them I'm concerned about them individually and collectively, send them to the office for ice packs because their heads hurt probably because they haven't had any water to drink during the day, remind them to drink water each day and eat meals of real food because human people can't subsist only on Takis and candy and no liquids, implore them to get off Snapchat and Fortnite and turn off their phones before 2 am so they can get more than just a couple of hours of sleep each night, tell them to stop talking again because it's not respectful to talk when someone else is talking, remind them to do their work including their homework because it's their job, wait somewhat patiently for them to stop talking again, give out pencils until I run out, use the end of my meter stick to dislodge a couple of them (pencils, not students) from my ceiling because someone threw them up there presumably to see if they could get them to stick which they succeeded wildly at, try and get them to focus on their State Science test, come home, think about exercising, take a nap, eat dinner with my family and talk about our days, pet my dog again, relax for a bit, and finally go to bed at 8 pm. Repeat. I'm exhausted just reading that. No WONDER I've been tired this past week.

- D. What is my attitude towards God? How do I feel towards Him?
- a. I feel mainly amazement towards God with a healthy dose of wonder thrown in because God loves me and wants a relationship with me. He wants what's best for me but not necessarily what I want for myself or what I think I want. He is my power source. He is everything good about me. He sent His perfect Son to die for me. His Holy Spirit lives inside me and empowers me to act like Jesus, someone I would otherwise not resemble in the slightest. He gave me everything I have: food on my table, a wonderful

new house, friends and a community I don't deserve, and especially a wife and children I didn't think in my young adulthood I would ever have.

- b. However, I was talking with my wife yesterday about how I feel towards God; my attitude towards Him. Work has been tough and exhausting lately. Am I mad at God that I have to work so hard? Am I ungrateful that He gave me a job that provides so well for my family? Where is my heart truly at with him right now?
- E. What do others see? This one's interesting, too. Basically, people who I recognize as being smarter and more gifted and generous than myself see me as a decent person and think positively about me. This despite my many faults and failures. Interestingly, the negative things I see in myself don't seem to interest or bother them nearly as much as they do me...

**IV. WE: So, since I'm up here and you are with me so far and haven't walked out or turned me off yet, I'd like to ask the same questions of us as a group. Some of these might be tough, but hopefully you will allow me to get somewhat personal:**

1. What are WE devoted to?
  - a. What or who are we loyal to? Our sports teams or our neighbors? Who do we feel affection for? Only people that love us? Our enemies? Neither?
2. What do WE do with our "stuff"?
  - a. Do we see stuff as "mine for me" or "mine for we" (kind of a grammatical stretch, sorry)? Is our stuff just for us? What if we work hard for it? Don't we need to provide for ourselves and our families if we are parents? How can we be expected to give it away?
3. What is our routine? What do WE do with our time?
  - a. How busy are we? So busy that we can't help someone out who needs help? Too busy to get to know or help a neighbor in need? Too busy to help a friend, even? Too busy for God?

4. What is our attitude towards God? How do WE feel towards Him?
  - a. Do we feel cheated since we don't have what others have? Do we blame God for the bad or hard things in our life? Are we upset with him for current circumstances? Is there an unresolved issue between us and God?
5. What do others see?
  - a. Are we well-thought of by others or just tolerated? Do others see us as helpful? Are we good students? Parents? Co-workers? Do others see us as genuine? Do they see in us that God loves them or not?

**V. GOD** Now I want to back, way back almost 2,000 years to the first church and ask these same 5 questions, if that's ok. People are people, so we would expect to see some of the same human struggles in the past. Maybe if we understand how God worked in the first church and its overall process, it might help us all understand how he can work in ours and how we can work with Him, as well...

**A. Acts 2:42-47** Let me read to you a bit about this church... Acts 2:42-47. Open your Bible if you have one; if you don't have one, you can follow along on the screen... First, a bit of background: Luke, the physician and historian, is writing about what happened after Jesus' resurrection. The whole book of Acts is about the Acts of the disciples and the Holy Spirit and the initial spread of Jesus' message. Luke is writing this to Theophilus, maybe a Roman official or at least a wealthy, influential person and possibly the patron of Luke's work. Last week Jon told us we don't know a lot about Theophilus but we do know he was ugly, "the awefullust" (Theophilus) looking person around. I would like to add that we also know for sure he wasn't a super practical guy, The-o-philus, "the ol' phiolos-ophical so-and-so"... never mind. Knew I shouldn't try that joke. Back to my main question: How did the FIRST CHURCH do "church on purpose"? What was their PROCESS of doing church?

**B. They devoted themselves to work and to their busy schedules, to worrying about things outside their control and to attempting to maintain hundreds of relationships. Everyone was filled with exhaustion and no events of any real importance were done by the apostles (church leaders). All the believers were divided over theological and social issues and had little in common. Hoarding their possessions and goods, they acted like needy people were someone else's problem. Every day they continued to disagree with each other about petty things. They sheltered themselves in their homes and ate alone with hardened hearts, praising people they already agreed with and being thought of as narrow-minded by all the people [around them in the community]. And the Lord looked at their number and said, in shock, "THIS is the group of people in charge of my mission of hope, restoration, and transformation?!? No WONDER some people don't want to be a part of a church!!!"**

**C.** Ok, that's not what Luke really writes about the early church. Unfortunately, some of these things are true of some churches today or at least they are how many people see churches today. Sadly, this is probably why some people don't want anything to do with church. Maybe you can relate to some or all of this. That's why we started Crosscreek, so maybe they or you would like giving church another or a first chance and could experience it the way we think it was meant to be. Let me try again, what was the first church like; how did they do "church on purpose" and what was their process?

**D. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles (church leaders). All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God**

**and enjoying the favor of all the people [around them in the community]. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.**

**E.** Wow! Peter gives one message and a church of 120 grows 3000 people and keeps growing from there! Don't miss the fact that people from extremely diverse backgrounds are individually transformed and also collectively united into 1 loving church family. There's no other word for that but "miraculous"! It seems like this passage is about how people became God's ambassadors (the PURPOSE of the church from Week 1) empowered by the Holy Spirit (the POWER of the movement from Week 2) through the PROCESS of church (this week). Let's look into how their church worked; what their process was...

### 1. What were they devoted to?

**a. They (the early church) devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer.**

#### b. Devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching

i. Apostles= Jesus' appointed spokespeople and first church leaders. They taught who Jesus was and what Jesus taught since they had lived with him for 3 years. They applied (or tried to apply) what Jesus taught to their everyday lives.

#### c. Devoted themselves to fellowship

i. They intentionally gathered together and worshipped. Still kinda "churchy" for you? They got together and sang songs. Simple enough, right?

#### d. Devoted themselves to the breaking of bread

i. They ate communion together. Too "churchy" again? They intentionally remembered who Jesus is, that He died for them and is alive again, and that He made some awesome promises that have yet to come true that they were super looking forward to that stuff coming true.

#### e. Devoted themselves to prayer

i. They prayed as a habit and it was something they thought was important. Jon's going to talk about this more next week, but they prayed privately AND publicly. Totally guessing here, but they probably prayed for each other, how to get along with each other, health, jobs, peace and understanding in hard circumstances, how they should/could help each other; stuff like that.

### 2. What did they do with their stuff?

**a. They had everything in common and sold belongings to give to the needy.**

a. They saw people around them that had needs and did what they could to meet these by using their own personal resources as communal resources. Some folks did this well and some not so well, as you can read about later in Acts 4:36 - 5:9. There's some wild stuff in there; you should really read it! The point is they tried to help each other out if they could and didn't view their stuff as just theirs, but instead God's resources to share with those who needed them.

### 3. What was their routine? What did they do with their time?

**a. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together.**

i. They went to the temple complex, where there were many meeting rooms and open courts where they could gather together. When they were there, they heard Jesus' teachings. Back in their houses, they also shared food together, they had each over for meals and enjoyed time with one another.

### 4. What was their attitude towards God? How did they feel towards Him?

**a. Everyone was filled with awe; they had glad and sincere hearts, praising God.**

- i. They couldn't believe what God was doing amongst themselves and couldn't help but talk about it! They saw that something was happening that they couldn't explain by their own actions and abilities but only through the power of the Holy Spirit. They were also thankful about what was happening towards each other and God.

**5. What did others see?**

**a. [They] enjoy[ed] the favor of all the people.**

- i. People in the surrounding community recognized that something incredible was happening with these people in the early church and approved of what was going on. They probably saw needs in their communities being met by these early Jesus-followers and were thankful for and appreciative about that. They likely noticed that these people were different and that they "practiced what they preached".

**6. What did God do when people in the first church participated in the process and became the church on purpose?**

**a. The Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.**

- i. Incredible! The people of the church did their part AND GOD added to their number! They were so good at working with God in His process that He just kept adding more, and more, and more people! That's how well their process worked!!!

**7. And that brings us to the main point, if you are off daydreaming about March Madness or online listening to me but watching an exciting game or highlights, or sitting in front of me in the seats right now watching games on your phone, focus back in for a second, because here's the MAIN POINT of**

**today's message: We do "church on purpose" by PARTICIPATING in the PROCESS of the church.**

**VI. YOU: So what can you do? How can you PARTICIPATE in the PROCESS of being the "church on purpose"?**

- A. **Simple: join the process!** Our process here at Crosscreek is joining in what we believe God wants to do; PARTICIPATING in His PROCESS of "church on purpose".
- B. On your program, you have a blank process puzzle. We're gonna fill that in with what we saw the early church doing to see how it fits with our process at Crosscreek.

**C. Our PROCESS looks like this:**

- a. Discovering God's love here at our 4:30 pm Sunday service.
  - i. Like the early church, devote yourself to Jesus' teaching, fellowship, communion, and prayer together.
  - ii. If you're here... you're already on the right track! If you are checking us out online, great! Come on in and spend a Sunday afternoon with us in person! Read the Bible on your own, too, and find out more about God and the relationship He wants with you through Jesus! Jon suggested last week starting in Acts or even Luke. It reads like a story and Luke was a great historian, so he will keep the story moving and keep you interested like me watching a good documentary.
- b. Connecting to God's family by joining a small group where you can know and be known.
  - i. Like the early church,
    1. help those who are needy with your "stuff"
    2. eat (and live life) together
    3. devote yourselves to Jesus' teaching, fellowship, and prayer.
  - ii. Join a Connect Group if you haven't already! This will help give you community and a

- place to love and grow with God and others further.
- c. Contributing to God's mission by joining a service team and practicing consistent percentage giving.
    - i. Like the early church, give belongings to the needy.
    - ii. Help out, give to, and serve in the church! There are lots of ways to do this, after this message head out to the lobby and find out how you can contribute your time, talents, and treasure.
  - d. Sharing God's love by becoming equipped and active in telling others about the love of Jesus.
    - i. Like the early church,
      - 1. devote yourself to Jesus' teachings by obeying his command to tell others about Him.
      - 2. share what God has done in your life with others
      - 3. give Him the credit
      - 4. be thankful
    - ii. Share what God is doing here at Crosscreek and in your life with others! If you're not sure how to share, get trained. Pray for your neighbors and be involved in life together with them and others who don't go to church. YET!

**VII. WE:** Finally, what **SHOULD** we be; what **COULD** we be as a church? Imagine how our neighborhood and community would look if we **PARTICIPATED WITH** God in His **PROCESS** of building the "church on purpose"! Think for a moment about what if we:

- a. Devoted ourselves more deeply to God and one another?
- b. Used our "stuff" to help those in need around us somehow?
- c. Saw our daily ("mundane" as Jon put it) routine as a way to share our lives with others while working alongside God?

- d. Had a thankful attitude towards God, living in awe of what He's doing and crediting Him for the good we see around us?
- e. Acted in such a way as to be indispensable to our neighborhoods and community such that IF we were gone, they would miss us terribly, instead of admitting "Oh, I didn't even notice they were gone!"?

A. Jump in, PARTICIPATE in the PROCESS of being the "church on purpose" and bring others along with you!

B. Next Week: The PRAYER. God wants you to be "effectively dangerous" and Jon will tell you why and how.

<http://en.webfail.com/a1f6c3f236a>