

Into Existence

Jeremy Peters

The Book of Acts is all about 'Going and Being the Church.'

Do you believe that the vitality of this city and your experience of it, is directly proportionate to the vitality and people's experience of the Church in St. Albert?

The Church is the place where Jesus _____ himself most clearly.

What if a community today, committed themselves to take seriously Jesus' invitation to experience the good news that the Kingdom of God had been made available and then extended that invitation to the friends, family, neighbours, co-workers and community around them?

Go & Be (Missional & Incarnational)

"I will build my Church" – Jesus (Matthew 16:18)

Matthew 28:19-20 NIV: *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*

CALLED OUT

a journey through the book of ACTS

February 1
2015

Missional means '_____.'

Incarnational means '_____ in the flesh.'
(i.e. any person serving as the embodiment of a quality or concept)

"In North America, people don't have any sense of the true Christian message any more because the face of that message looks so unlike the founder. Christianity is now almost impossible to explain, not because the concepts aren't intelligible, but because the living, moving, speaking examples of our faith don't line up with the message." ~ Hugh Halter & Matt Smay

When people look at our community life... does it make Christianity seem more plausible? Or less plausible? In other words, does our community life validate our claims?

Holy Spirit-Empowered

Acts 1:8 *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*

Ekklesia (the Greek word for church) literally means _____.

The message is clear: The world isn't looking at our tracts and billboards and programs and services and study manuals. It is looking at us and how we behave and how we get along with one another. And when the world sees Jesus in us; when it sees the miraculous unity we experience despite how radically different we are, it begins to validate that Jesus is indeed the Son of the living God.

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

Into Existence

- 1a. How would people in your workplace, sports teams, circles of friends etc., describe the church - both those who are “inside” the church and those who are currently “outside” the church?
- 1b. How do these descriptions interact with the following quote from Chuck Colson?

“When Peter made his confession, Jesus did not say, ‘Good, Peter. You are now saved and will have an abundant life. Be at peace.’ Instead, he announced the church and established a divinely ordained pattern. When we confess Christ, God’s response is to bring us into his church; we become part of his called-out people. When we become followers of Christ, we become members of his church—and our commitment to the church is indistinguishable from our commitment to him... according to the Scripture, Christianity is corporate. This is why we speak of the body with its different parts, the community of the redeemed, the holy nation and royal priesthood... The church is no civic centre, no social club or encounter group, no Sunday morning meeting place. It is a new society, created for the salvation of a lost world, pointing to the kingdom to come. Important enough to Jesus that he shed his own blood for it.”
2. Where do you find yourself on the journey between being someone who "goes to church" and someone who sees themselves as "being the church"? What do you understand the difference to be?
3. In Matthew 16:18 Jesus unequivocally declares: "I will build my church." In the time you’ve been at SAAC, how have you seen evidence that Jesus is building his church at SAAC?
4. Leaf through the book of Acts and pick out a few stories. Read through the story and then discuss how you see the early church being *missional* (“going”) and *incarnational* (“being”).
5. Hugh Halter & Matt Smay write: *“In North America, people don’t have any sense of the true Christian message any more because the face of that message looks so unlike the founder. Christianity is now almost impossible to explain, not because the concepts aren’t intelligible, but because the living, moving, speaking examples of our faith don’t line up with the message.”*

Do you agree or disagree? What is the solution? What might it look like in 2015 for someone to be a ‘living, moving, speaking example of faith in Jesus that DOES line up with the message of Christianity?’

Take time to pray for each other, that there would be congruency between the way we live and what we say we believe.

6. Do you think it’s possible for someone to be a Christian and not part of the Church? Why or why not?
7. Jesus not only says that he will build his Church (Matthew 16:18), but he promises to *empower* it by his Spirit (Acts 1:8). How might a church empowered by the Holy Spirit look different from a Church that isn’t walking in the empowerment of the Spirit?
8. Spend some time in listening prayer. **Ask Jesus the following question: “How in this coming week would you specifically have me ‘go & be’ the Church where I live, learn, work and play?”**