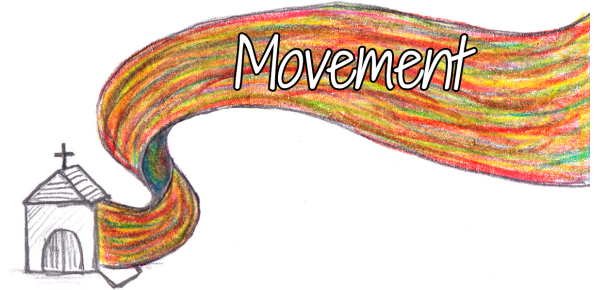


onechurch

bigIdea small group discussion

Most people don't have a problem with God. After all, plenty of people show up for church on Christmas and Easter. But unfortunately people do have a problem with the church. Over the centuries Christians have made Christianity so complex that people simply write it off as irrelevant and confusing.



BIG IDEA: Becoming a 'we' doesn't make this about 'me.'

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever been a part of an exclusive organization (perhaps a secret club as a kid or a fraternity in college)? Who did you let in? Who did you keep out?
2. How were you introduced to Christianity? Did it seem simple or complicated at the time?
3. Why do you think people have connected with this idea of creating a church where the unchurched and the dechurched love to attend? Why do you think many people don't go to church, or leave the church? What are some apprehensions one could have about getting on board?
4. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read and discuss Acts 10:1-8.* What evidence was there in the character of Cornelius that the Holy Spirit was working on him, drawing Cornelius to God?
5. Since he is a part of an occupying army, what is unusual about him? What is unusual about his encounter with God?
6. What do you learn about the character of God from His response to Cornelius through the angel (vs. 3-6)?
7. What might the three men talk about along their 37 mile trek to Joppa to get Peter (vs.7-8)?
8. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read and discuss Acts 10:9-23.*

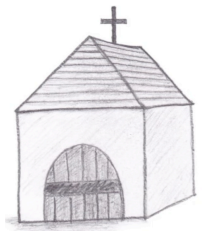
It is difficult for us to grasp the impassable gulf which yawned in those days between the Jews on the one hand and the Gentiles on the other. The Old Testament foretold a day when God's Messiah would inherit the nations, Israel would be the light of the nations showing them the way, and all nations would flow to God's house, and God would pour His spirit out on all mankind. The tragedy was that Israel twisted the idea of God's love towards Israel into favoritism, and Jews became filled with racial pride and hatred towards outsiders, even developing traditions which kept them apart (see Acts 10:28)

9. How did God prepare Peter for Cornelius?
10. What would the command in verse 15 have meant to Peter? How does it fit with the story of Cornelius?
11. How might Peter feel when the men sent by Cornelius, accompanied by a Roman soldier, showed up?
12. What are some preferences, traditions, or beliefs you have held that have limited your ability to reach out to people who are different than you?
13. Why is it easy for us to view church as being all about us and our needs? What is the danger in possessing this mindset?
14. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read and discuss Acts 10:23-48.* What evidence is there that Cornelius expected God to work (vs. 24-26)?
15. What would have been the consequence if Peter or Cornelius had not obeyed God?
16. What is the message that God has for Cornelius (vs. 33-43)?

THINK ABOUT IT

Can you think of a time that you felt like sharing your faith, but felt intimidated or unsure if you should? What stopped you? How can we move past this fear that prevents us?

Now think of others in your larger sphere of influence (neighbors, co-workers, family) that are struggling and not connected into community. Write their names down. What is going on in their life that makes them come to your mind? How can you begin to move into their life and invite them into your own?



MOVING FORWARD

The object of our mission is people. The only thing we can do here on Earth that we cannot do in heaven is reach out to people who are far from God. We are inviting others to what God has invited us to encounter: to see, experience, trust, believe and walk. Reaching involves identifying who is within your reach. Whether you believe it or not, God has you right where He wants you. All around you are people who are desperate for meaning in their life. They want nothing more than to hear there is a God full of grace and mercy who desires to be in a relationship with them.

Pause for a second: Who are the “they” in your life? Perhaps you know someone that is desperately searching for God, but doesn’t realize it. This person could be a family member, friend, co-worker, neighbor or anyone else in your sphere of influence. Their attempts to find fulfillment in things of this world have left them frustrated. Yet, they continue this vicious cycle of placing hope in things that will eventually let them down. Your heart aches for them because you realize these worldly longings that captivate their attention are at their core a longing for God.

When reaching people, there is a key element that is often taken for granted. That is the issue of *relationship*. When you have a relationship with someone, you know whether person has placed their hope on a shaky foundation and can speak truth into these areas. Realizing you have their best interest at heart, they trust that your words are coming out of a place of love.

Reaching people is not a passive activity, and many times it is messy. Helping someone walk with God requires taking the time to get to know them. The challenge before you is to start somewhere with someone. Just begin to move in. Outside your front door is an entire neighborhood of hurting people waiting for someone to engage them.

We have to be reminded that God is the author of everyone’s story, which makes each story we hear unique along with the individual care we should provide. Using Christ as our model for intentional help, our goal as brothers and sisters in Christ is to understand people’s story so we can better speak God’s truth into their life. If you want to develop the relationship with them, you have to allow them to move into your life.

All this talk of moving into people’s lives can appear a bit overwhelming. After all, there are only so many hours in the day. Coming up with a list of names only adds to this tension. Now, consider the opportunities that exist in the neighborhoods around oneChurch.tv: 114,000 unchurched people live in Clarksville/Ft. Campbell. This is a responsibility one person cannot bear. This is exactly why we are called to be the Body of Christ. You impact a few “neighborhoods” while someone else touches another block closer to their “home.”

It is our mission to reach people and help them walk with God. But, we can’t help them if we don’t reach them. ***We need to regularly see and experience church through the eyes of the unchurched person.*** Why? So that we don’t begin to turn inwardly and begin wanting what happens in church to be only about us. Becoming a ‘we’ doesn’t make this about ‘me.’ *If we don’t regularly remind ourselves of this, we’ll drift into the mindset that the church is here to meet my needs and we’ll forget all about the hurting and lost people who live all around us.*

CHANGING YOUR MIND

Then Peter replied, “I see very clearly that God doesn’t show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right. Acts 10:34



Movement

DIGGING DEEPER

1. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read and discuss Acts 11:1-18.* Why do you think Luke took the time and space to record the events of Acts 10:9-46 over again?
2. Of what importance is the gift of the Holy Spirit in Peter's argument? Why would this have such a strong influence on the Jerusalem believers?
3. How do you explain the change of attitudes from Acts 11:2 to Acts 11:18? How does this story relate to Acts 1:8?
4. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read and discuss 1 Peter 3:13-22.* This verse touches on the fact that those around us will ask us why we have so much hope – that is a doorway that we are called to step in and share! Why would someone ask you about the hope that you have?
5. Do you regularly express God's love and demonstrate the hope that you have through the example of your life? What does it mean when someone doesn't ask?
6. Too many churches have been building walls instead of bridges. Too many churches have turned in their search lights for security lights. How can we keep the focus on those outside the faith?



Movement