

CHAPTER 10: AGENDA-FREE COMMUNITY

QUESTION: What is your motivation for inviting people to church? How can you discern between a worthy motive and a hidden agenda?

QUESTION: How do you define "evangelism"? What should the church's goal be? Is it possible to be truly agenda-free?

QUESTION: What communities are you a part of that feel agenda-free? What does that feel like?

QUOTE: Before it was ever an institution, before it was a massive entertainment compound, before it was a weekend mountaintop destination, the Church was a community, one whose lifeblood was real, authentic, interdependent relationships. People gathered together to bear one another's burdens, to worship and learn and serve, and to work out together how the words and ministry of Jesus translated into the ordinary lives of those who sought to follow after him. p.96

TEXT: Acts 2:41-47—So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate

their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

QUESTION: What are the chief characteristics of the early church? How do you see these being lived out/not lived out in the modern church?

TEXT: Acts 4: 32-37—Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. There was a Levite, a native of Cyprus, Joseph, to whom the apostles gave the name Barnabas (which means "son of encouragement"). He sold a field that belonged to him, then brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

QUESTION: Do you see any differences between this text and the previous ones? What challenges does it present to us when we think about the church today?

QUOTE: An odd collection of humanity come together daily to share stories, to break bread, and to encourage one another. The "Church" was simply the natural by-product of followers of Christ living together. It was the uniquely sweet yield of disparate people knowing one another and being known. These relationships became the very heart of the spiritual community they birthed and the recognizable and captivating thing about them to the watching world. Their greatest testimony was their intertwined lives, not their buildings or their brand or their vacation Bible school. p.97
