

The Spirit-Filled Church

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Acts: The Irresistible Church

Acts 2:42-47

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Due to the numerous requests that we've received from our small group leaders, we will now be offering the sermon-based study guides every week, with the exception of holiday weeks when most small groups will not be meeting. So regardless of whether the Real Community small groups are in session or not, we will continue to offer these studies.

SYNOPSIS OF THE SERMON

Modern society increasingly wants little to do with the Church. They see churches that either seem relatively the same as most people or are different to the point of being weird. The church is meant to be different, but in very specific, Spirit-directed ways. The Spirit-filled church differs from 21st century pluralistic, individualistic American norms by being devoted to fixed truth, committed to love and fellowship, practicing worship and prayer, depending on God, and by preaching and demonstrating good news.

GETTING THE CONVERSATION STARTED

These questions can be used as ice-breakers in the beginning *OR* interwoven between the questions below to draw the group into the discussion.

1. What is one of your most embarrassing moments? Have you ever drawn a lot of unwanted attention to yourself in a crowd?
2. As you look back on your life as a Christian, can you remember saying something to a non-Christian regarding God that now makes you cringe?
3. Have you ever encountered a church that was consciously trying to be "different" from other churches? In what ways? Was it helpful or hurtful to the cause of Christ?
4. What draws or has drawn you to particular Christians throughout your life? Were they different than most people, a lot like most people, or a blend of both? In what ways? Discuss.

INTERACTING WITH THE SERMON

1. In 5 minutes or less. Briefly give a synopsis of this week's sermon. What insight, principle, or observation from this weekend's message did you find to be most helpful, eye-opening, or troubling? Explain.

2. Read I Peter 2:9-12:

9 *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10* *Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

11 *Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. 12* *Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.*

(Consider the four things listed in the first portion of verse 9 as you ask the first three questions below. Why is each significant?)

- What was unique about the priest's relationship with God in the Old Testament, and what does it mean that we are now all priests?
- Why is it important to balance the fact that we are chosen with the fact that we belong to God? What attitude could result if we only believed in being chosen OR belonging to God, and not both?
- What comes to your mind when you read that Christians are a "holy" nation? Do you think of people who are automatically marked by being morally good, or merely set apart to strive for good works? If believers in Christ are a nation, where does our true citizenship lie? What does it mean, as we are also members of an earthly nation? Share ideas.
- According to the end of verse 9, what is one of the primary purposes of God doing these four things?
- What is the common mark of the citizens of the nation of God (v. 10)? Why is it important to recognize this distinction as either/or – either you have received God's mercy, or you have not? Is it possible to straddle the fence?
- According to verse 11, why do we avoid sinful desires? What do we hurt if we indulge sinful desires? Based on this verse, what is the most important part of humanity to a citizen of God's holy, chosen people: the physical things of the moment, or the often unseen things that are everlasting?
- According to verse 12, do pagans understand what is "good" and the will of God to be the same thing? If not, may we face adversity for obeying God? What is the difference between doing things that offend people (but point to the true nature of God) and just being flat-out offensive as you live out Christian principles? If the end of our good deeds is pointing "pagans" to Jesus, how must we perform our good deeds in the world?

3. In his sermon, Rich listed sets of opposing categories where a Spirit-filled church and our current society are at odds. Read the list below out loud, and go before the Lord as a group, asking Him to reveal whether your small group looks more like a Spirit-filled group, or the larger society, in regards to each area. Have the

group share what they felt God saying about the nature of your group at present. Where can you improve? This is not an exercise to beat yourself up, but to insist that your group be filled by and surrendered to the Holy Spirit. Take the remainder of the Acts series to pray through and devise appropriate steps to see God make the group what He wants it to be. Plan to answer the same question again at the end of the Acts series in a few months to chart your progress.

- I. Over again the pluralism of contemporary society, the Holy Spirit creates a church which is devoted to the apostles' teaching
- II. Over against the individualism of contemporary society, the Holy Spirit creates a church which practiced fellowship
- III. Over against the activism of contemporary society, the Holy Spirit creates a church which spent much time in worship and prayer
- IV. Over against the techniques of contemporary society, the Holy Spirit creates a church which depended on God
- V. Over against the bad news of contemporary society, the Holy Spirit creates a church which preached and demonstrated good news