

ENGAGE: PART 1

BY STEVE WIMBLE

PREACH SUMMARY

Last year, at the start of our Engage series, Steve shared the remarkable story of the founding of the early Church (Acts 2). At the end of the chapter we read about what the early church did - Acts 2:42-48 speaks about them being **devoted** (ENGAGED) to teaching, community, the breaking of bread, and prayer. God added to their numbers daily with those who were being saved.

In Acts 3, we read about Peter and John going to the temple at the time of prayer. There they find a man, lame from birth, who used to beg at the temple steps. They say to him: "We don't have money to give you, but what we do have is something much better than that (paraphrased). In the name of Jesus rise up and walk." The lame beggar gets up and walks. Everyone who knows him is amazed. A crowd gathers and Peter and John start telling them about Christ...

At this point it all seems amazing. Everything seems to be going so well... until we pick up a twist in the story in Acts 4. Peter and John get arrested. They are threatened and told to stop!

What would you do in their situation? Would your response be something like: "God, I'm not sure that I am going to put myself out there again?" or "The next few years I am just going to fly under the radar to avoid arrest?" or "I will never try to help someone in need again!"?

2017 was a tough year for many. You may not have been arrested as was the case with Peter and John, but perhaps you've been tempted to draw back a little and say: "I'm not going to put myself out there this year! Look what happened last year."

What did Peter and John do? They went back to the church and told their story. And they prayed together - not a soft, quiet prayer - "*They raised their voices together in prayer to God...*" Acts 4:24. Their prayer was bold: *Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness [courage]. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.* Acts 4:29-30.

They were asking God for more boldness and courage to do even more for Him. They asked for more healings - the exact thing that had caused them to get arrested. What kinds of prayers are we praying? Look at this prayer from the Old Testament, prayed by Isaiah: *Yes, Lord ... we wait for you; your name and renown are the desire of our hearts.*

Isaiah 26:8. These are the kinds of prayers that we should be praying!

We see the response from heaven to their bold prayers in Acts 4:31: *After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly [courageously].* God responded to their prayers of faith and courage. The theme for Vision 2018 is COURAGE. Let's ask God for more courage this year. More boldness. To speak about Him. To live for Him.

It is interesting that the rulers, the elders and the teachers of the law took note that these uneducated men (Peter and John) had been with Jesus and that they were turning the world around. We become like those we spend time with. Are we people who show signs of spending time with Jesus?

We then celebrated courage by looking back on some CityHill highlights from the previous year:

- Curro School was started 24 years ago. This year there are over 1300 children enrolled in the school.
- In 2014 we launched our Embo site. The church there has been meeting in a tent. Two years ago we raised funds for a building. Plans have been passed and on the 24th of March is the grand opening of our 450 seat building at the Embo site.
- 635 volunteers participated in 102 events during our Nation Changers month last year. During 2017 Nation Changers R1,15 million raised. As a direct result of the generosity of your giving, 608 kids received brand new backpacks filled with stationery at the end of 2018.
- CityHope Disaster Relief distributed 1045 Hope kits and another R1.8m worth of relief during 2017.
- CityReach set a goal in 2015 to move from two mission trips in the year to one trip per fortnight by 2020 (a total of 26 trips per year). In 2016 there were 6 trips, and in 2017 a total of 14 trips. There are 24 trips planned for 2018.

Finally we look forward to the year ahead. Two of the things that we believe God has placed on our hearts as key focus areas are: Young People and Multiculturalism.

Also coming up is our *Better Together* series - a church-wide campaign like *Transformed*. It runs from 11 Feb - 18 March and we are again looking for people who are willing to host six-week Better Together groups!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What were your highlights from Vision Weekend and Sunday's messages?
2. On Sunday we spoke about engaging with God. Over the last few weeks how has your engagement with God been at a personal level?
3. The Lord's Prayer says: "*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven..*" Matt 6:9-10. In what ways do you think God may want to use you to extend His kingdom this year?
4. Over the next two Sundays, we are invited to get involved in serving in the life of the church. What areas have you been involved in previously, and what are you thinking of getting involved in this year?
5. Speaking of engagement: is there anyone in this group who has not yet been baptised and wants to obey God's command in this area? The next water baptism service is on 18th Feb. (please send names through names to Sophia on admin@cityhill.co.za)
6. In three weeks we are starting a six-week church-wide series called *Better Together: 40 days of Community*. It is in the same format as the Transformed series we did last year. This is a fantastic opportunity to invite people to join your group for duration of the series - and hopefully they will stay on afterwards! Make a list of 2 or 3 friends each that you could invite to join your group. Is there anyone in your group who would like to host their own six-week group during Better Together? (Names can be emailed to: admin@cityhill.co.za).

Prayer points: Spend time praying for boldness and courage to invite friends to come to the Better Together series. And passion to advance God's kingdom in every area of our lives this year.