

This week Pastor Andy delivered the last installment of the four part series "Caring for Humanity." This week's message is entitled "Non-Negotiables of a Fully Engaged Church." Andy begins by talking about how as a parent it is important to give your children godly rites of passage on their journey toward adulthood. These might be things that test their courage and maturity, so that they will be better prepared for the life ahead of them. As the parent, if you don't give your children these benchmarks to measure themselves against, they will often view themselves according to worldly standards and pursue the wrong rites of passage. In the same way, we as a church have certain rites of passage that we are measured by in terms of our maturity and how well we are fulfilling God's commission for us. Andy lists four things which we must have as a fully engaged church. First, we are to have a God given purpose. God provided that purpose with His command to go into all the world and preach the good news. This gives your individual life purpose as well as the church body as a whole. As part of that godly purpose, you are reminded to obey the two great commandments: to Love the Lord with all your heart, soul, and mind, and to love your neighbor as yourself.

Next, we are to call upon the Holy Spirit. Just as the Holy Spirit came upon those early Christians in Acts chapter 2, this is available to us now as a church. When we allow the Holy Spirit to come in and move among us, we can know that God is with us and is working in our church to serve His purposes. It is important however, that as the Spirit works in us and among us that we be mindful to do everything in a "fitting and orderly way" (1 Cor. 14:40) so that visitors or outsiders are not turned away or think badly of us.

Thirdly, reaching the lost should be our top priority. As an individual, you can fulfill this by sharing your faith with the people God puts in your life. As a church, we can obey this command by pursuing new opportunities to reach out to new people, inviting and welcoming people who don't yet know Christ so that God can work in their hearts to bring them to repentance and salvation.

Lastly, we must realize that diversity is a kingdom mandate. Just as Paul was led by God to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, so you are called today to share God's love with everyone you meet regardless of their age group, background, social status or ethnicity. Pastor Andy shares how Vineyard made a decision to become a multicultural church and we can now see the rewards of that in our ethnic diversity. There are two categories of diversity that we as a church need to embrace and embody: accommodating and assimilating. Accommodating is saying "You are welcome here." Assimilating is saying "We will adapt your culture into our church experience." We at Vineyard have adopted these practices in our church leadership and through our worship. As we more closely resemble our community as a whole we are able to better meet the needs of all people. As members and leaders of our church, how will you help Vineyard meet and fulfill these rites of passage?