



LIFE IS *Better* TOGETHER
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Silverdale Baptist

SMALL GROUPS • THE CHURCH IS SMALL GROUPS • ACTS 2:41-47 • 9/12-13/2020

Key Truth

God's plan for making disciples involves small groups of believers who grow together.

Get Started

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

If you were stranded on a desert island, would you prefer to be alone or with a small group of friends? Why?

Name one reason you came to this group.

What are some reasons people might avoid coming to a group like this?

In Thom Rainer's book, *I Will*, he notes,

"The health of the early church was intricately tied to both the larger meeting and the smaller meeting context. It was not either/or. It was both/and."

The health of the church today is tied to both large and small groups. To grow, we need to grow together.

Learn

Small Groups - the Method of the Early Church

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 5:42.

What do you learn about the early church in this verse?

When they met, what two things were they doing?

When did they meet?

Where were they meeting?

The early church was characterized by:

- meeting in the Temple (corporate worship) and house to house (small groups).
- preaching, and teaching.

| HAVE VOLUNTEERS READ ROMANS 16:3-5 & COLOSSIANS 4:15

In both of these passages, where is the church meeting?

We use the phrases small group and church today to identify two different groups. In the early church, a group of people meeting in a house was both. The group was small because the house was small, and the group functioned as a church.

A Small Group - Jesus Model

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MARK 3:14

How many did Jesus appoint to be with Him?

At points in His ministry, large crowds followed Jesus. Once Jesus fed 5,000 in a predominantly Jewish area. Later, He fed 4,000 in a predominantly Gentile area. (John 6, Matthew 15) Jesus preached the good news and even did miracles for the multitudes, but He poured into twelve.

Jesus modeled small groups. The early church followed Jesus' model.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ HEBREWS 10:24

From this verse, what do we learn about connecting?

Which model would allow us to encourage, love, and challenge one another effectively? The multitude or the small group? Why?

The type of connection the author of Hebrews expects us to have with one another is only going to occur in small groups.

Small-Group Essential Elements

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 2:41-47.

Especially in verse 42, what characteristics of the church do you see? What were they devoted to?

What would that look like for us today?

Where would we find the apostles' teachings today?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 2:41-47

According to verses 46-47, what did the fellowship look like?

What evidence do you see in these verses of the church taking care of each other's needs?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 2:41-47

How does our small group compare to what we see in these verses?

Small group essentials.

1. The believers devoted themselves to the apostles' **teaching**.
2. The believers devoted themselves to **fellowship**.
3. The believers devoted themselves to **prayer**.
4. The believers devoted themselves to **supporting** each other.
5. The believers devoted themselves to **outreach**.

"We cannot grow effectively as a believer in isolation."

Dr. Thom Rainer

Some of the most powerful teaching moments come as we interact with others and study Scripture together. Relationships deepen, and ministry occurs when we fellowship together. We uphold the cross of Christ as the center of our focus when we share in the Lord's Supper together. We find encouragement and experience the power of the Holy Spirit when we pray

together. Every believer should be committed to being a part of a smaller group in his or her church.

Apply

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What are some of the unique challenges Silverdale faces as a church in engaging deeply with each other?

Imagine if Silverdale had a 3,000 member increase in one day. What would some of the logistical and relational challenges be?

Why was belonging to a community of believers so crucial to these first Christians? What made these believers want to get together?

Why is belonging to a community of believers so crucial for us?

Why should you, as a church member, be committed to being a part of a small group in your church?

PRAYER

Father, thank You for showing us that we are designed to live in community, to grow up together. Help us to model our small group after the early church. And, please show us who we can invite to our small group. Amen.

COMMENTARY

| ACTS 2:41-47

2:41 The Jerusalem church experienced tremendous numerical growth in those early days. Jesus' followers numbered about 120 in Acts 1:15, but about three thousand souls were added after Peter's sermon. The new Christians had accepted Peter's word and were baptized.

2:42 Luke reported four distinctive practices or activities in the Jerusalem church. First, they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching. Eventually, the church experienced persecution, and some church leaders left Jerusalem. The original apostles, however, continued to minister in this church (8:1). Reviewing the sermons and teaching reported in the opening chapters of Acts reveals the major doctrinal themes important to the early church. The apostles could report their own experiences with Jesus during his earthly ministry as well as explaining Jesus' fulfillment of

Old Testament prophecy. Biblically-based preaching and teaching are still fundamental to church life. Second, the church experienced fellowship. Fellowship translates the Greek word *koinonia*, and means “participation” or “sharing.” Third, they shared the breaking of bread. Although some Bible students think this could be sharing a common meal, many scholars believe this is Luke’s way of referring to the Lord’s Supper. The disciples had celebrated a meal with Jesus in the upper room in Jerusalem. Fourth, the church devoted themselves to prayers. The early Christian movement was bathed in prayer. Jesus’ disciples had asked Him to teach them how to pray (Luke 11:1). Jesus had established Himself as a consistent prayer, so His followers should pray as well.

2:44-45 One of the most amazing characteristics of the Jerusalem church was its sharing its material possessions with the needy. The Christians voluntarily shared with anyone who needed help. As part of their fellowship, the early church practiced a community of goods for a short time. Distribution to members of the faith community took place according to individual need. This practice did not last long, likely because it was logistically difficult and fraught with potential abuse (see ch. 4-6).

Later, Luke noted that these church members were “of one heart and soul” (4:32). No one remained needy for long because the church responded quickly and generously to need. The money was brought to the apostles, who were in charge of the distribution (4:34-35). Luke highlighted the role of Barnabas in this generosity (4:36-37), but he also noted the hypocrisy of Ananias and Sapphira, who lied about their actions (5:1-10).

2:46 Although these believers understood Jesus to be the fulfillment of the Jewish hope for the Messiah (2:36), the members of the Jerusalem church were primarily Jewish in background. They still went to the temple complex. They would not participate in the sacrificial system any longer, since Jesus was the perfect sacrifice for their sins. They may have wanted to demonstrate the continuity between their Jewish heritage and their new faith in Christ. Also, they may have found opportunities to witness to their Jewish friends and relatives.

Besides gathering together in the temple complex, these Christians broke bread from house to house. Quite likely this means they gathered regularly in houses for worship and the Lord’s Supper. Christians did not typically build church buildings in the early centuries, so they met in homes. When they gathered in homes, these disciples expressed gratitude for their shared meals. These gatherings were marked by a simplicity or “sincerity” of heart. They did not need to put on airs; they genuinely worshiped God.

2:47 One result of the early church’s worship and witness was having favor with all the people. In these early days the people of Jerusalem were generally open to the Christians. Later on, the

Jewish leaders tried to restrict their public preaching (4:1-22).

The early church was an evangelizing church. Luke recounted that every day the Lord added to those who were being saved. He did not say how this took place, but it appears that evangelism took place primarily through the gathering of Christians in the Temple and in individual houses. The crucifixion and resurrection of Christ were at the heart of early Christian preaching, which called for immediate response from anyone who listened. Such enormous numerical growth eventually attracted the attention of the Jewish leaders.