

GROWTHguide

"Smaller is Better"

April 30, 2017



THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURES

ACTS 2:42-47

DAY 1

Read ACTS 2:42-46

- Take time to note what is happening in this Scripture
- Why did the disciples and followers of Jesus meet and what was the outcome?
- Write out or think about five reasons how this example from the early church makes sense for your life.

DAY 2

As people, we are extremely busy! We live in the fast lane and miss out on some of life's greatest ingredients: a deepened spiritual relationship with the Lord and one another. We climb the ladder of success and we buy things seeking pleasure and relieving us from our stress. But as Solomon taught us in the Bible, "things do not bring about our true happiness."

- Where do you turn when you are lonely?
- Where do you go when you face a trial or temptation that seems beyond your level of control?
- Where can you find rest, solace, safety and love of a caring community?

DAY 3

Read Romans 12:5

- Real community is when God and people come together; not just where we meet, when we meet, the experiences we have or have not had. Community in the local church has to do with how people relate, listen, confront, stimulate, forgive, tell the truth, pray and protect. In what ways are you experiencing this with your connection at St. Paul?
- Every one of us has two innate needs: to love and to be loved. We were created to be communal creatures. We cannot find fulfillment in life unless our community life is meaningful. In the early Christian communities, this was defined by the Greek word "**Koinonia**" that is often translated "**fellowship.**" The Greek term Koinonia is rendered in English translations in various passages as "**fellowship,**" "**participation,**" "**sharing,**" "**partnership,**" and "**communion.**" How is koinonia happening in your life? Think of some specific examples.

DAY 4

As a people called "Methodists", John Wesley wrote, "**The Gospel of Christ knows no religion but social; no holiness but social holiness.**" The Body of Christ is incomplete without us, and we are incomplete without the Body of Christ. Community life is not an option for a Christian; it is an integral piece of the fabric called Christianity.

- How do you translate what Wesley meant?
- What "Community life is not an option for a Christian; it is a piece of the fabric called Christianity" mean to you?

DAY 5

Reread ACTS 2:42-46 using the Message version:

That day about three thousand took him at his word, were baptized and were signed up. They committed themselves to the teaching of the apostles, the life together, the common meal, and the prayers.

Everyone around was in awe—all those wonders and signs done through the apostles! And all the believers lived in a wonderful harmony, holding everything in common. They sold whatever they owned and pooled their resources so that each person's need was met.

They followed a daily discipline of worship in the Temple followed by meals at home, every meal a celebration, exuberant and joyful, as they praised God. People in general liked what they saw. Every day their number grew as God added those who were saved.

- It all began around a living room; better yet, a kitchen table... The kitchen table is often where life's most meaningful conversations take place. It is here that people share their experiences, discuss important decisions, and enjoy meals. It's where people reveal their dreams and disclose their fears. The kitchen table is where close friends begin to feel more like "family." How can you integrate this type of community into your life?
- Begin a time of daily prayer asking God to speak with you and lead you to commit to living as a disciple in ACTS 2:42-46. What adjustments will you need to make in life to accomplish this?

DAY 6

The reality is this: we live in a broken world and each day we learn just how much more we fall short of God's plan. Disappointments, addictions, broken relationships, society ignoring the care of their fellow man, serving false idols and leaving God abandoned at the curb are just a few

examples of where our world is. God wants us to live in community with other people - and especially with other believers. He knows that when we live just on our own, without interaction with others on a meaningful level, that something in us slowly shrivels up. And he has given us a blueprint to discover the type of community that each of us longs for.

Small Groups are one way that we pursue community and live into the model provided by ACTS 2:42-46. These groups covenant to meet weekly and pursue authentic community (accountability, belonging and care) and spiritual growth (intimacy with God, community with insiders, and influence with outsiders). Small Groups provide a safe place to find answers to your spiritual questions. Whether you're new in following Christ or several years along the journey, you need to know that it's safe to ask questions - any questions. Becoming part of a small group is a great place for you to air your doubts and misgivings and wonderings about the Bible or about Christianity, and for the group to help you discover answers along the way. Quite often your questions (which you might have termed "dumb") can be springboards to incredibly interesting and life-changing discussions about why we believe what we believe. If this seems like something you would be interested in being part of, you can contact our Senior Director of Ministry, [Bobby Van Duyne](#) for more information.

Pray for guidance over your next steps in joining a small group at St. Paul.

DAY 7

Today is your Sabbath. Take time today to reflect on what you read and thought about this week and begin to formulate your next steps to Glorify God, Grow in Faith and Give in Love.