

## **How to Use Sermon Resources**

- **READ AHEAD TOGETHER** - MCG's should use the Devotional at the end of this resource as a reading plan for the week leading up to your meeting.
- **SIT UNDER THE WORD** - This resource is filled with scripture references. Read them aloud, together before you answer any questions.
- **APPLY TRUTH** - The goal is deep discussion and application, not necessarily to complete this resource. Don't squash a good discussion. If you get into something important along the way that's fine.

## **Small Group Discussion Guide**

**Opening Prayer** [ 2 mins ]

**Use the Overview** [ 5 mins ]

- Cover any key points for people who missed parts or all of the sermon

**Scripture Deep Dive** [ 30-40 mins ]

- Opening Question
- Read the scripture for each question then ask the question. Some have multiple scriptures.

**Close in Prayer**

- In this extended prayer time, ask others to pray as they feel led, pray in a circle, pray over one another, pray to your left, or pray for someone specific. Whatever seems best.

**Split Time (if applicable)**

- Men with men, women with women
- Share in a circle. "What's one thing you want to celebrate? What do you need prayer and accountability for?"
- After everyone shares, pray in a circle for the person to your left/right.

## **SERMON OVERVIEW**

### **"Engaged in Biblical Community" - Acts 2:42-47**

**Sermon Summary:** This sermon explores what it means to be a follower of Jesus who is engaged in biblical community, emphasizing that true biblical community goes beyond casual friendship or social gatherings. Drawing from Acts 2:42-47, the message highlights that biblical community must be centered on God's Word, characterized by deep devotion to one another, and committed to God's mission. Matt contrasts mere community with biblical community, stressing that without Scripture at the center and accountability present, we simply have social gatherings rather than the transformative relationships God intends.

#### **Key Points:**

- A follower of Jesus is someone in a growing relationship with Jesus who is engaged in biblical community and actively discipled others
- Biblical community must be devoted to God's Word, not just social connection
- Biblical community is characterized by devotion to one another through fellowship, prayer, breaking bread together, sacrifice, hospitality, encouragement, and worship
- Our culture's hyper-individualism has led to increased loneliness, anxiety, and isolation with serious health consequences
- Biblical community must be devoted to the mission of God, collectively caring about the eternal destination of others

#### **Scripture Reference:**

- Acts 2:42-47 (primary passage)
- John 15 (referenced from previous week)
- Acts 6, 11, 14, 15, 16, 20 (supporting references)

#### **Stories:**

- Matt's personal testimony of growing up in Indiana with good friends but lacking biblical community until college, where he experienced transformative accountability and discipleship for the first time
- The hypothetical illustration of joining an "East Wake Pickleball" Facebook group and meeting regularly but never actually playing pickleball, demonstrating that community without its defining purpose is not truly that type of community
- Attending an NC State basketball game with his son and observing two men who criticized everything rather than contributing to the atmosphere, illustrating how negative attitudes spread within community

# Scripture Deep Dive

## Opening Question:

Reflect on your own experience: What are some characteristics that distinguish a community gathering from a biblical community? Have you ever been part of a group that embodied these characteristics?

### I. Biblical Community is Devoted to God's Word

1. **Acts 2:42** - How does the apostles' devotion to teaching influence the early church community? Consider Hebrews 4:12 and discuss how the living nature of God's Word should shape our interactions and decisions within a community.
2. **Acts 6:2-4** - Why was it important for the apostles to prioritize the ministry of the Word over other tasks, and how can modern churches apply this principle to ensure biblical teaching remains central? Refer to 2 Timothy 3:16-17 to discuss the authority and purpose of Scripture in community life.

### II. Biblical Community is Devoted to One Another

1. **Acts 2:44-45** - What might be some challenges in seeking to hold "all things in common" today, and how can we prioritize others' needs without neglecting our responsibilities? Consider Philippians 2:3-4 as you discuss how humility and selflessness affect community dynamics.
2. **Acts 2:46-47** - The early believers practiced hospitality and shared meals. How does the act of hospitality contribute to a stronger sense of community and unity? Explore Romans 12:10-13 as you consider practical ways to embody these practices today.

### III. Biblical Community is Devoted to the Mission of God

1. **Acts 2:47** - How does community praise and witnessing to others lead to growth in faith and numbers, according to this verse? Discuss how Acts 1:8 frames the mission mindset and how it applies to our daily lives and interactions.
2. **Acts 11:21-23** - In what ways did the encouragement from Barnabas in Antioch impact the growth and mission of the early church? Use Colossians 4:5-6 to delve into how our words and actions can actively contribute to the mission.

## **5 Day Devotional**

### **Day 1: Devotion to Teaching and Fellowship**

**Reading:** Acts 2:42, 2 Timothy 3:16-17

**Devotional:** The early church demonstrates the foundation of biblical community by prioritizing the apostles' teaching and fellowship. It emphasizes the importance of Scripture as the guiding force in our communal and personal lives. Like the Acts 2 church, we too are called to prioritize God's Word, seeking its wisdom and allowing it to shape our relationships and decisions.

**Reflection/Prayer:** Pray for a renewed hunger for God's Word and wisdom to apply its truths effectively in your community relationships.

### **Day 2: Awe and Wonders**

**Reading:** Acts 2:43, Matthew 18:20

**Devotional:** When believers gather in genuine faith and expectation, God's presence is manifest in awe-inspiring ways. The signs and wonders experienced by the early church were a testament to their collective faith and God's power. We are reminded that when we come together in unity and prayer, God is present and actively working in our midst.

**Reflection/Prayer:** Reflect on times when you've witnessed God's work in community settings. Pray for greater awareness of God's presence and activity in your daily life.

### **Day 3: Sharing and Sacrifice**

**Reading:** Acts 2:44-45, Philippians 4:12-13

**Devotional:** The believers' willingness to share and sacrifice their possessions highlights a heart transformed by love and unified purpose. This act of generosity fulfilled needs and strengthened their bond. Today, we are encouraged to practice generosity, trusting that God provides for all our needs as we care for others.

**Reflection/Prayer:** Identify a way you can practice generosity within your community this week. Pray for a generous heart that reflects Christ's love.

### **Day 4: Joyful Gatherings and Hospitality**

**Reading:** Acts 2:46, Romans 12:10-13

**Devotional:** The early church enjoyed the simplicity and joy of meeting in each other's homes, sharing meals, and celebrating life together. Hospitality is more than opening our homes; it's opening our hearts to cultivate relationships. Embrace hospitality so that God's love can flourish and connections can deepen.

**Reflection/Prayer:** Commit to reaching out to someone in your community this week for a meal or coffee. Pray for opportunities to extend hospitality and build meaningful connections.

### **Day 5: Praising God and the Growth of the Church**

**Reading:** Acts 2:47, Colossians 3:16

**Devotional:** The daily praise and worship of the early church overflowed into their community, drawing more to the faith. As we make praise a central part of our lives, God uses our worship as a witness to His goodness and love. We are reminded that our authentic expression of faith can be a powerful tool in sharing the Gospel.

**Reflection/Prayer:** Spend time in praise, focusing on God's attributes and goodness. Pray for courage and clarity to share your faith with others naturally.