



## Silverdale Baptist

Small Groups ~ Why Small Groups? ~ Acts 2:36-47 ~ 08/13-14/2022

### Big Idea

God didn't design us to live life alone. We are designed for relationships. The early church did relationships in small groups.

### Getting Started

**Do you feel lonely?**

**What do you do when you are feeling a deep sense of loneliness?**

In the US, 36% of adults suffer from a profound sense of loneliness. Young adults (51%) and young mothers (61%) are the groups most likely to experience loneliness.

We need each other!

We need real human connections because God created us that way. Small groups in the church are a great way to develop relationships and cure loneliness. And more than that, small groups are the Biblical way to support each other. So this week begins our annual church-wide study with a look at the Biblical mandate and human need for small groups.

**Leader note:** *This week, campus pastors will preach on the subject of small groups. Since each pastor will have a different outline and engage with a different passage, we will not include sermon outlines in these small group notes. We have chosen a classic text instead on small groups, Acts 2, as our key passage. This lesson will guide you through a study of Acts 2:36-37.*

### Learn

Acts chapter 2 takes place in Jerusalem, 50 days after Jesus was crucified, buried, and resurrected. The people gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost. Jerusalem was crowded, and many of the people present had also been there for Passover, 50 days earlier. In Acts 2, Jesus'

apostles were gathered in Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit descended on them, and Peter preached the first Christian sermon. Peter's sermon begins in Acts 2:14. For this lesson, we will focus on the result of Peter's message. Peter concluded his message in verse 36, and the rest of the chapter tells us how the people responded to the gospel.

## Learn

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 2:36-47.

**What is the main idea in this passage?**

**How did the people respond to the gospel?**

**How many believed Peter's message and responded?**

About 3000 people responded to the gospel and were baptized. Amazing! Suddenly the church grew by 3000 people! But unfortunately, the church had no facility to hold that many people. There were no church buildings and no organized discipleship program. So what do you do if you have no programs and no facilities?

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

**What did the new believers focus on, or devote themselves to, in this passage?**

**Starting in verse 42, what were the characteristics of the new church?**

**In verse 46, where were they meeting?**

The early church's structure was based on small groups meeting in homes (Acts 2:46). The church went to the temple to pray and share the good news with other Jews. But the church met in homes. Why? There was no building for them to meet in. The church of Jerusalem, 3000 strong on day one, met in small groups and not in a large congregation. The Lord added to their number day by day (verse 47). Fellowship and discipleship did not occur in an auditorium with music and sermon. Fellowship and discipleship happened house to house in small groups of people.

But, did the church model change after the book of Acts?

| HAVE VOLUNTEERS READ ROMANS 16:3-5; COLOSSIANS 4:15, PHILEMON 1-2.

**Where did the church meet in these verses?**

One last passage to consider.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ HEBREWS 10:23-25.

**Verse by verse, what is the author encouraging us to do in this passage?**

The early church met in small groups. Sometimes they found ways to meet together in larger assemblies, like in the temple (Acts 2:46), but the most common description in the New Testament is meeting in homes. By the end of the book of Acts, the church among the Jews had grown to tens of thousands of believers (Acts 21:20), yet they met in small groups in homes.

## Apply

**Why are small groups important?**

**From what you have read in Acts 2, what should be the characteristics of a small group?**

**What can you do to deepen relationships with others in your small group?**

## Pray

Father, we know that the body life of the church is so important. We understand the Christian life is about relationships, our relationship with You and each other. Help us to develop deeper relationships with each other. Show us how to stimulate each other to love more and do good deeds. Thank You for teaching us that life is better together. Amen.

## Dig Deeper

Commentary

### **Acts 2: 36–41.**

The Holy Spirit took Peter’s message and used it to convict the hearts of the listeners. (In Acts 5:33 and 7:54, a different Greek word is used that suggests anger rather than conviction for sin.) After all, if they were guilty of crucifying their Messiah, what might God do to them! Note that they addressed their question to the other Apostles as well as to Peter, for all twelve were involved in the witness that day, and Peter was only first among equals.

Peter told them how to be saved: they had to repent of their sins and believe on Jesus Christ. They would give proof of the sincerity of their repentance and faith by being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, thus identifying themselves publicly with their Messiah and Saviour. Only by repenting and believing on Christ could they receive the gift of the Spirit (Gal. 3:2, 14), and this promise was for both the Jews and the “far off” Gentiles (Eph. 2:13–19).

It is unfortunate that the translation of Acts 2:38 in the *King James Version* suggests that people must be baptized in order to be saved, because this is not what the Bible teaches. The Greek word *eis* (which is translated “for” in the phrase “for the remission of sins”) can mean “on account of” or “on the basis of.” In Matthew 3:11 John the Baptist baptized on the basis that people had repented. Acts 2:38 should not be used to teach salvation by baptism. If baptism is essential for salvation, it seems strange that Peter said nothing about baptism in his other sermons (Acts 3:12–26; 5:29–32; 10:34–43). In fact, the people in the home of Cornelius received the Holy Spirit *before they were baptized!* (Acts 10:44–48)

Since believers are commanded to be baptized, it is important that we have a clean conscience by obeying (1 Peter 3:21), but we must not think that baptism is a part of salvation. If so, then nobody in Hebrews 11 was saved because none of them was ever baptized.

Acts 2:40 indicates that the Apostles continued to share the Word and to urge the people to trust Jesus Christ. They looked on the nation of Israel as a “crooked generation” that was under condemnation (Matt. 16:4; 17:17; Phil. 2:15). Actually, the nation would have about forty years before Rome would come and destroy the city and the temple and scatter the people. History was repeating itself. During the forty years in the wilderness, the new generation “saved itself” from the older generation that rebelled against God. Now, God would give His people another forty years of grace; and on that day, 3,000 people repented, believed, and were saved.

### **The Church Walking in the Spirit (Acts 2:42–47)**

The believers continued to use the temple for their place of assembly and ministry, but they also met in various homes. The 3,000 new converts needed instruction in the Word and fellowship with God’s people if they were to grow and become effective witnesses. The early church did more than make converts; they also made *disciples* (Matt. 28:19–20).

Two phrases in Acts 2:42 may need explanation. “Breaking of bread” probably refers to their regular meals, but at the close of each meal, they probably paused to remember the Lord by observing what we call “the Lord’s Supper.” Bread and wine were the common fare at a Jewish table. The word *fellowship* means much more than “being together.” It means “having in common” and probably refers to the sharing of material goods that was practiced in the early church. This was certainly not a form of modern communism, for the program was totally voluntary, temporary (Acts 11:27–30), and motivated by love.

The church was unified (Acts 2:44), magnified (Acts 2:47a), and multiplied (Acts 2:47b). It had a powerful testimony among the unsaved Jews, not only because of the miracles done by the Apostles (Acts 2:43), but also because of the way the members of the fellowship loved each other and served the Lord. The risen Lord continued to work with them (Mark 16:20) and people continued to be saved. What a church!

The Christians you meet in the Book of Acts were not content to meet once a week for “services as usual.” They met daily (Acts 2:46), cared daily (Acts 6:1), won souls daily (Acts 2:47), searched the Scriptures daily (Acts 17:11), and increased in number daily (Acts 16:5). Their Christian faith was a day-to-day reality, not a once-a-week routine. Why? Because the risen Christ was a living reality to them, and His resurrection power was at work in their lives through the Spirit.

The promise is still good: “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:13). Have you called? Have you trusted Jesus Christ to save you?<sup>1</sup>

### **Hebrews 10:23-25**

*Let us hold fast (v. 23).* The readers of this epistle were being tempted to forsake their confession of Jesus Christ by going back to the Old Covenant worship. The writer did not exhort them to hold on to their salvation, because their security was in Christ and not in themselves (Heb. 7:25). Rather, he invited them to hold fast “the profession [confession] of ... hope.” (There is no manuscript evidence for the word “faith.” The Greek word is “hope.”)

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<sup>1</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, [\*The Bible Exposition Commentary\*](#), vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 410–411.

We have noted in our study of Hebrews that there is an emphasis on the glorious hope of the believer. God is “bringing many sons unto glory” (Heb. 2:10). Believers are “partakers of the heavenly calling” (Heb. 3:1) and therefore can rejoice in hope (Heb. 3:6). *Hope* is one of the main themes of Hebrews 6 (vv. 11–12, 18–20). We are looking for Christ to return (Heb. 9:28) and we are seeking that city that is yet to come (Heb. 13:14).

When a believer has his hope fixed on Christ, and relies on the faithfulness of God, then he will not waver. Instead of looking back (as the Jews so often did), we should look ahead to the coming of the Lord.

*Let us consider one another (vv. 24–25).* Fellowship with God must never become selfish. We must also fellowship with other Christians in the local assembly. Apparently, some of the wavering believers had been absenting themselves from the church fellowship. It is interesting to note that the emphasis here is not on what a believer *gets from* the assembly, but rather on what he can *contribute to* the assembly. Faithfulness in church attendance encourages others and provokes them to love and good works. One of the strong motives for faithfulness is the soon coming of Jesus Christ. In fact, the only other place the word translated “assembling” (Heb. 10:25) is used in the New Testament is in 2 Thessalonians 2:1, where it’s translated “gathering” and deals with the coming of Christ.

The three great Christian virtues are evidenced here: *faith* (Heb. 10:22), *hope* (Heb. 10:23), and *love* (Heb. 10:24). They are the fruit of our fellowship with God in His heavenly sanctuary.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, [\*The Bible Exposition Commentary\*](#), vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 315.