

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

(Acts 2:42-47)

## ***Making the Case for Community*** **LESSON 2: A People of Community**

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### **Designed for Community**

Interdependence: God & man – *Acts 17:24-27*

God desires our interdependence not for His benefit but for ours. To prove it, He shares His **emotions** (*Exodus 32:9-10, Ephesians 4:30, Zephaniah 3:17*), involves us in His **decisions** (*Genesis 18:23-26*), and immerses Himself in our **concerns** (*Romans 8:26-27*).

God takes a deep interest in our affairs – *Matthew 10:30, Psalm 56:8* – and dwells in us – *1 Corinthians 6:19-20*

Interdependence: among men – *Genesis 2:18, 21-24*

As Father, Son, and Spirit are One and yet Three, so God desires we experience this connection, both in marriage and in the church – *Ephesians 5:28-31, Romans 12:4-5*

We must pass on the faith, one to another – *Romans 10:14, 1 Timothy 1:2, 2 Timothy 2:2*

### **Sustained by Community**

Four primary benefits of Biblical community:

#### **STRENGTH**

Community multiplies your strength in the face of inevitable struggle – *Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, John 16:33*

Community aids and empathizes – *Romans 12:15, James 2:8, Galatians 6:2*

#### **WISDOM**

Community shares wisdom – *Proverbs 15:22*  
Leave your agenda at the door and you can share your burdens and benefit from other people's experience.

### **ACCOUNTABILITY**

To learn is good but insufficient – *James 1:23-25*

If you hear and learn then turn away, the impact is short-lived, but community acts as James' mirror, keeping what you learn before you and holding you accountable.

Real community is confidential and safe and leads to healing, growth, and purity – *Proverbs 27:17, 1 John 1:7*

### **ACCEPTANCE**

Where else but the church can you find true acceptance? Family? Work? Neighbors? The church is the only institution given this mandate from Jesus – *John 15:12-13*

We can't compete with movies, television, amusement parks, and concerts for entertainment, but we CAN offer superior community! The world offers bars, bowling, and bingo; we can offer strength, wisdom, accountability, and acceptance.

### **DISCUSSION:**

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Share an experience where you were strengthened by a small group.

Was there a time you received real help after sharing a difficult decision with a small group?

Why do you think we turn away from truths about ourselves?

What would help you feel safe disclosing your struggles?

Do you think it is common in today's church for people to find acceptance? Why or why not?