

I like Church... because it's a place I belong! Acts 2:42-47

Small Group & Personal Bible Study Lesson: Pastor Dennis Hadley

NOTE: We are now going back to the beginning of the book of Acts this week and we will begin reading the entire book over the next eight weeks. We will cover around 2 to 4 chapters each week. Parts of our reading each week will correspond with the specific subject we are studying each week of fairly closely. Encourage your group to read the word of God daily and come in prepared to share what God is saying to them each week.

Daily Scripture Reading:

1. Acts 1:1-11
2. Acts 1:12-26
3. Acts 2:1-13
4. Acts 2:14-36
5. Acts 2:37-47

➤ What has God revealed to you from the book of Acts this week?

I recommend you start your time with prayer and then ask the group to share what God has revealed to them as they have been reading and studying the book of Acts.

Work at Caring for Your Church Family

If a restaurant gives the impression it doesn't care about its patrons, it's going to be in trouble before long. Even years of quality service can be quickly undermined by carelessness in this area. What's true about food is even more critical for places where "spiritual food" is served.

Becoming a caring church is not something that's resolved by agreeing, "This is a good idea; let's come up with a clever logo." Everybody must own the concept and work at making it a reality (*And it will require us to call on God to change us and mold us into caring individuals He can use*). Even then, it takes time to build the kind of reputation for caring we desire. But, oh, the excitement when word gets around that "here you'll find the extended family you always wanted to be part of."

That's what Acts 2:42-47 reveals about the New Testament church. *Excerpt used by permission from 50-day Spiritual Adventure*

Small Group Lesson: Romans 12:9-16

Read Romans 12:9-16 together.

1. Which of Paul's instructions does our church follow well? Give an example.

Encourage people to think of examples of how their association with people in the church or small group follows Paul's instructions. This can be a good time of affirmation on how to live the Christ-like life. In many ways, this is a form of praise as we give all the glory to Jesus for working through His church.

2. Which do you long to see practiced in our church more?

Discuss what may be missing from the Christian life as Paul has explained it in Romans 12. These are very personal opinions and it is important not to be defensive or offensive but rather seek to learn from one another how God's family can learn to live according to His will.

3. What is one area where you personally need to improve to help your church become a more caring family?

This is where we turn focus from others to ourselves. It is important that your group understands that the church is not them but us. We are the church. And we are under the leadership and model of Jesus Christ. We must all examine ourselves and make the changes that we see lacking rather than pointing to others to make the changes. As I read the bible about the church of God I understand that all parts of the body are equally important meaning that no parts of the body can dismiss the impact they can and should have on the church body.

Read 1 John 4:7-12

Read 1 John 4:7-12 together

4. In one sentence, summarize what John is saying.

Give people some time to think about this, even write down an answer and then ask them to in their own words summarize what John is saying.

“God is love and he has shown us what love looks like in sending his son to us. Because I belong to God I must be like God and love others in the ways He has demonstrated. That is our calling as a church.”

5. What are some of the reasons John gives to encourage us to love one another. How can reminding yourself of these reasons help you care for people who seem unlovable?

Because God loved us and love comes from God. It was unconditional and without expectations. Our love must be real and is God’s way to show himself to the world.

6. Would a visitor in our church be able to recognize that love is important to us?

Let people discuss this question. Challenge them to really think about how we demonstrate love and how real it looks to others. Discuss ways you might increase your demonstration of love for one another to a love seeking world.

Optional Lesson: Becoming a Caring Family by Lou Diaz

Each week we will have an optional lesson from a Pastor. These will be printed and available at the front desk and attached on email. Feel free to use or not use this.

Each week during this study we will have an action step we are hoping you will begin to try as we go through this study to make our church more in line with what God intends it to be. This first step has to do with becoming more like Christ in how we see and respond to people. It is only when we have the eyes and ears of Jesus will we begin to love and respond as His Church is designed.

Action Step #1: “Learn to Look & Listen with the Eyes and Ears of Jesus”

As you read the gospels, it becomes apparent that Jesus had great eyes and ears. He was always seeing the hurt and picking up the cries of those around him. He didn’t just hear, he listened, he didn’t just see, he responded. As Jesus’ disciples, we are to show his kind of love to one another within the church and to others outside the church (John 13:35; Galatians 6:10). Many of us have hearts that overflow with compassion when we are aware of people’s suffering, but we aren’t always good at becoming aware. We may have Jesus’ heart, but we need his eyes and ears as well.

Think about a typical day at church, at work, in the community, or with friends. People around you may be crying out for someone to really love them with Jesus’ kind of love, but are you hearing those cries? Are you seeing those hurts? You may smile and greet others but miss the urgent message under the surface: “SOS! I need some care!”

The kind of church you’ve always longed for is a caring family, one that works hard to be attentive to needs within the church and without. You can do your part by asking Jesus to train your eyes to see and your ears to hear as he does.

Directions: Every day, say the Looking & Listening with Jesus Prayer. Feel free to put it in your own words, but try to keep the basic idea. You’re asking the Lord for guidance and checking in to see if you are seeing and hearing the same things he is. This is the sort of prayer that will affect your whole life. You will begin seeing and hearing everything in a new way.

Tip: You might develop a catchphrase that you can remember and repeat throughout the day: “Let me see with your eyes and hear with your ears, Lord,” Send these sentence prayers to God from time to time each day.

The Looking & Listening With Jesus Prayer

Lord, I long to be part of a caring church family,

But often I’m not sensitive to how people are really suffering.

Please teach me to see people like you do and to listen with your ears of compassion.

I pray for [FILL IN A NEED YOU’VE HEARD RECENTLY].

Lord, help me respond with a heart that cares the way you do. Amen

Action Step Follow-up

- I am praying the looking & listening with Jesus Prayer

Reflection: *In what specific ways could you become more sensitive to the needs of others?*