

I like Church... that feels the presence of God! Acts 4:23-35

Small Group & Personal Bible Study Lesson: Pastor Dennis Hadley



Daily Scripture Reading:

1. Acts 3:1-10
2. Acts 3:11-26
3. Acts 4:1-22
4. Acts 4:23-31
5. Acts 4:32-37

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

Continue to start your gatherings by asking people to share what God is revealing to them from the book of Acts. Challenge people to read their Bible each day and study the book of Acts.

Encounter the Living God

In Acts 4:23–31, Peter and John report their meeting with the Sanhedrin. The passage doesn't specify their location, but we do know that they were speaking to the gathered church. After the believers raised their voices together in prayer, the Lord revealed himself in three ways: The meeting place was shaken, the people were filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God boldly.

Would it be exciting to have your church meeting place shake because of the presence of the Lord? What about knowing that everyone around you was being filled with the Holy Spirit and would leave the gathering ready to speak boldly to others about Jesus? Maybe these experiences are more than most of us are prepared for. But God wants to meet us right here, right now. We must prepare our hearts and our minds to meet God whenever we come together in His name.

Certainly we all should come together with expectancy, believing that God will be present and will make himself known to all who truly seek him.

Small Group Lesson: Read Acts 4:23-35

1. What does this passage reveal about the presence of God?

Let people share their own thoughts. One thing I notice is that when they turn to the Lord in prayer (v24-30), He responds (v31) and His people are changed (v32-35)

Read Psalm 84

2. In your own words express the desires and longings of the psalmist. Which of these longings do you share for yourself and our church?

He acknowledges that God's presence is the best place to be. He longs to be in the presence of God.

I also desire the presence of God. When I experience His presence in a powerful way through worship I am satisfied in ways that the world can never match. I long to be in His presence at all times. It is my hope and prayer that our gatherings will allow every individual to experience the presence of God in a real and personal way.

3. According to this Psalm, what are some of the benefits that come when one's heart is set on God?

He knows that those who trust and remain in the Lord are blessed. We are blessed as we praise Him. We are strengthened as we set our hearts on Him.

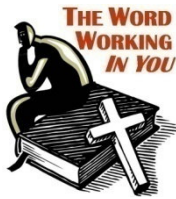
4. Reflect on a time when you have felt the presence of God is a powerful way. Share your experience with the group and how that has impacted you walk.

Let people share from their experiences. I feel the presence of God in a powerful and moving way often in our worship time on Sunday morning at EVC. I also experience that in times we

gather together for prayer at the church. I have felt God move when we meet in small groups to pray and praise God together. My wife and I enjoy going to Christian concerts together and I have experienced God in powerful ways in the presence of 25,000 people coming together with one heart for God to worship Him and cry out to Him for His glory to be revealed. No matter how small or how large, God will come to His people when they turn their hearts and minds toward Him in worship and prayer.

*Optional Lesson: The Church Encounters the Living God
By Dr. Charles Lake (Copies Available in Lobby)*

This week we will ask people to begin to think about how we prepare ourselves to come into the presence of God. This is a good thing for us to do to direct our hearts and mind to God and to remove the obstacles of life that come between us and God. Even when you begin your small group meetings, praying and spending time in worship will allow us to hear God clearly and come to Him uninhibited.



Action Step #2: Prepare to Meet with Your King

Whatever else you long for church to be, it is first and foremost a place to meet with God. But so often we walk away from church not having found him. That is not because he is not present but rather because we don't come prepared to meet him. A busy distracted life can prevent us from opening our hearts and mind to seeking to worship God. Unconfessed sin can be an obstacle when it comes to encountering the Lord. Who looks forward to meeting with a creditor you haven't made things right with? So instead of attending church as a routine part of your schedule or coming in feeling guilty, come prepared and come clean before God prior to entering his house. And come expectantly to meet your best friend and your God!

Directions: If you are struggling with sin, find a place to be quiet with the Lord sometime Saturday. "I feel really embarrassed about what I've done . . ." you can begin. Tell him how you have mixed feelings about going to church tomorrow; that you don't want to be a hypocrite. Then confess your sin and plead his forgiveness. When you've made things right before God, you'll be much freer to meet him in church and hear what he has to say to you. Assure him that your heart is open to his voice and you will hear from Him!

Before you come to worship at church, just spend some time with God, just the two of you, no distractions, and no agenda, except to praise and worship him in the quietness of your heart!

Be ready and excited to worship the Lord. Say, "I'm not sure what others want to tell you, but this Sunday I personally want to praise you for being . . . forgiving, kind, good, patient, true, etc." Know what your thoughts are and express them quietly during the music, prayer, and communion time. When we prepare ourselves to meet the King, we will. And when we stand in the presence of God, we are forever changed.

Action Step Follow-up

- I am prepared to meet with My King in worship today
- I am praying the looking & listening with Jesus Prayer

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

Reflection: Describe your encounter with your Lord this week.