

I like Church... that cares about the community! Acts 5:12-16

Small Group & Personal Bible Study Lesson: Pastor Dennis Hadley



Daily Scripture Reading:

1. Acts 7:1-53
2. Acts 7:54-60
3. Acts 8:1-8
4. Acts 8:9-25
5. Acts 8:26-40

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

Capture the Heart of Our Community

If our church burned down, or the church doors had to be permanently closed for some reason, would anyone in our community grieve as they passed by? It is our passion to see Evergreen Valley Church be a church that our community would miss if we were no longer here. I pray that the people in our community will see us as a special part of the Evergreen area so that God may be glorified.

Some churches have become adept at capturing the heart of their community. While not compromising what they believe, they are, as their Lord was, well thought of by outsiders. Acts 5:12–16 states that the early Christians were highly regarded by the people. More and more men and women were being converted, which speaks well of the impact the believers were having.

Do you get the feeling that the New Testament church was more community oriented than are most churches today? We want you and EVC to be highly regarded by our community. We want to see us have a positive impact for Jesus on our community. If we learn to cast better “shadows” with our lives, it could be as Mr. Rogers said, “a beautiful day in the neighborhood.”

Optional Lesson: Capturing the Heart of the Community by Dick Dill (Copies available in the Lobby)

Small Group Lesson: Matthew 5:13-16

- First discuss why you think are called to be salt and light. Read Matthew 5:13-16 together and really think about what these verses say to you. Also, consider reading 2 Corinthians 5:14-21.

We are to shine Christ to the world through our good deeds and through our love. Jesus said we are the “salt of the earth.” We bring out the good flavor to the world. He also said we are the “light of the world.” We must shine Christ in the darkness to the world so that they may “see your good deeds and praise your Father in Heaven.” Our light should not be hidden. It should be put on the hill where all people can see it. But here is a key point, we do not shine our light so that people see us and praise us. We shine our light and do good deeds to shine the light of Christ so that God may be praised. (v16)

1. How is our church salt and light to our community?

(Think about our work in Kids Clubs, Senior Centers, and other local ministries, and some of our community events...)

Let me help you with just a few (in no particular order) I can think of off the top of my head. I apologize for not naming them all.

- Every week our church sends people to the two different Senior Centers, Sunrise and Regency located on San Felipe Road for Bible Study, Worship, and Fellowship. Currently Hiram Catrett leads this ministry. Over the past few years many individuals from EVC have helped touch the lives of people living in these homes.
- Every week a few members of our church go down to InnVision, a homeless shelter in San Jose to volunteer their time to minister to men living on the streets. Currently Steve Belarmino leads this ministry. Several people have been used by God to touch the lives of many men living in desperate

situations. These volunteers have led some men to Christ and helped many others return to God's grace through the teaching the word, praying with them, and most importantly serving them dinner and caring for their needs. Others have helped by donating blankets, coats, and clothing during winter months to keep people on the streets warm and dry.

- Every week, nearly 50 volunteers from EVC serve at one of our three Kids Clubs in public schools or behind the scenes in administration and support roles. These volunteers have made it possible for EVC to touch the lives of nearly 400 students and their families each week. We have witnessed decisions for Christ in students and in parents of students. We have served the families with free breakfast gatherings, a free summer day camp for kids called Summer Splash which included a family Hot Dog BBQ. Every year we collect names from the school district to help families in need at Christmas with food and gifts.
- We have hosted events at EVC and at Public Schools to just simply bless our community. These events include Trunk or Treat (Coming Up). The Hunt (An Easter Egg Hunt "Eggstavagnza"). We have hosted free car washes, community clean up days, and participated in the community event, Day in the Park. We have collected and distributed food and gifts to our community regardless of their connection with the church.
- Don Smith leads a ministry called Prison Sports that goes out to the local prisons and uses sports ministry to share the love of Christ with incarcerated men.
- Margarete Campisi works with a ministry called Kairos Outside that reaches out to families of people in prison to care for and minister to these men and women left behind.
- Pastor Galley Molina leads a ministry called S.O.S to young boys who are at risk and without a man in their lives. Galley and others come along these young boys to mentor them as big brothers and show how men of God are to live.
- JoAnn Taku has a special heart for her neighbors. She spends much of her time and energy praying for and getting to know them better, hosting get-togethers in her home and ministering to her non-Christian neighbors. Recently, two of her neighborhood boys who she began bringing to church with her were baptized and they are now praying for their mother.
- Rene Brogdon works with "Thread of Love" to provide a service of sewing burial gowns for babies that die in the hospital. In doing so they bless the mourning parents with love.
- Tom Hunt uses his business connections to gather names and each year collect and provide food for hundreds of needy families.
- Pastor Tim Wood, Greg Trapp, Bill Hayden, Ryan Hunt, Galley Molina... and a whole host of others use their Harley Davidson Motor Cycles to reach out and attract other guys on bikes to seek Christ through EVC's Third Day Riders. By simply being able to identify with these men of God, many guys have been attracted to EVC. On occasion, a Sunday morning service could resemble a biker bar.
- Greg Trapp volunteers as a leader with the San Jose Police Department Chaplaincy office While Pastor Tim and I (Dennis) are volunteer chaplains that serve the San Jose Police Department whenever they need spiritual advice or counseling for an officer, the family or for a crime victim or during a tragic accident.

NOTE: There are many more examples to share but my fingers are getting tired and I do not know about everything going on through the people of EVC. Hopefully your group will share with each other. I would love to hear the stories so email me with any specific things people are doing to reach out to the community so we know.

2. Think about someone in our church that lives out having a heart for his/her community. Share with the group, what this person is doing to serve others and how that shines a light in the community.
3. A little salt and light go a long way. Think about it, salt on the bland food has a great affect on the taste. Light in the darkest places shines brightest and is the most noticeable. What are some things you personally could do to help your church be salt and light?

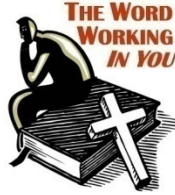
Let people share how they might begin to be intentional in impacting their community for Christ and how they might be salt and light.

4. Notice the purpose of letting your light shine is to draw others to God. What people do you hope will see our church's light and be drawn to God? How can you help make that happen?

Although we can not make someone believe, in fact we can not make someone even seek Jesus, but we can make Jesus shine and become more appealing by genuinely living out our faith and shining our light through our lives. Let this question make people think about how intentional they are in drawing people to God. This will start with praying for individuals. It will include being available, caring, meeting needs, being real with others. It also means we must be willing to share who Jesus is to us and how he has impacted our lives and we must be willing to confess our faith in Jesus as our savior and redeemer.

Action Step #4: Attract Others by Saying Good

We Christians can be expert complainers. We and then wonder why the people we invite church to capture the heart of our community; reputation—but how can it when we're always



Things about the Church

whine about every little detail of church life don't want to come. We may long for our we may yearn for our church to have a good complaining about what's wrong?

What if we changed our strategy by changing our attitude? What if we started focusing on the good things about our churches (Philippians 4:8)? What if we regularly told others, inside the church and out, about those good things? What if each church member became sort of a public relations rep for the church? We might just give people reasons for wanting to come, rather than reasons for staying away.

Directions: Every day this week write down something good about our church (or people in our church family). It should be fun to see how the things you can come up with. Think of ways your church friends are serving the community in various ways. Pray about it, then try to tell someone outside our church about one of those good things. You can share with fellow members too, but try to talk to some people outside your church that is not yet a follower of Jesus.

Then, during the coming weeks invite him/her to church. Once you've been saying good things about the church for a while, he/she may want to come.

Action Step Follow-up

- I am listing one good thing everyday about my church
- I have shared a good thing with someone outside my church
- I am asking the Holy Spirit to help me identify pollution in my life
- I am prepared to meet with My King in worship this week
- 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: How has thinking about the good things in our church brightened your days?