



CHRIST CENTRAL



SESSION 8

The Holy Spirit - Community & Worship

Key takeaways for new believers:

- The church is a community of believers - who aim to 'share life' together
- Reliance on God and His Holy Spirit are key to ensuring that community life goes well, and is a big witness to those around

Part 1

worship

community

mission

- Review the story from session 7 on the Holy Spirit. Talk about participants' experiences of retelling the story or contemplating the story since the previous session.
- Talk about the participants experience of the Holy Spirits guidance and power in their lives during the last week
- Allow participants time to discuss any pastoral / spiritual issues on their minds
- Spend some time in worship and praise



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Part 2 (story)

identity

worship

community

mission

Transition from session 7: In the last story, we saw how the church was born and God sent his Holy Spirit to the believers. We saw the impact the Holy Spirit had on the believers and those around. Today we are looking at another part of church life, the church community.

The Believers Form a Community (Acts 2:42-47, 6:1-7)

All believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing meals, and to prayer.

A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. They worshipped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity - all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.

... The believers rapidly multiplied, there were rumblings of discontent ... *some* believers complained about *others*, saying that their widows were being discriminated against in the daily distributions of food.

So the Twelve called a meeting of all the believers. They said, 'We apostles should spend our time teaching the word of God *and in prayer*, not running a food program ... so, ... select seven men who are well respected and are full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will give them this responsibility.

... Everyone liked this idea, and they chose ... *seven men including* Stephen (a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit) ... The seven were presented to the apostles, who prayed for them as they laid their hands on them.

So God's message continued to spread.

Questions for discussion

1. What do you like about this story?
2. What bothered you about this story?
3. What does this story show you about God?
4. What does this story show you about people?
5. What does this story mean for your life? How will you live your life differently having learned this story?



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Part 3 (practice / takeaways)

identity

community

mission

Ask the remaining questions:

6. What does this story mean for your life? How will you live your life differently having learned this story?
7. How will you remember this story?
8. Is there anyone you would like to tell this story to?

Pray that new believers will know how they can become more involved in the church community.

Pray through any pastoral or spiritual issues that may have been raised.

Encourage participants to read and meditate on a selection of the following Bible verses:

- 1Cor 12:1-13:5
- 1Pet 3:8
- Acts 4:32
- 1 John 1:7
- Colossians 3:13
- Proverbs 27:17
- Romans 12:16
- John 15:12-13

Other useful media resources

Here is a video link from the churches in Teeside that gives a good descriptive of church and community:

“Let me tell you about my church” <https://vimeo.com/303250409>



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Notes for leaders

Here are some points to consider as you prepare or that may be brought out in discussing this topic. A list of key Bible verses that can aid the discussion are included in the takeaway above.

These are additional questions that may come up during discussion.

- Some new believers may not have a church background and be unfamiliar with everyday words/phrases in the Bible.
 - **Apostle** – each of the twelve chief disciples of Jesus Christ. An important early Christian teacher or pioneering missionary.
 - **Lay hands on them when praying** – Is an ancient Jewish practice, a way to commission or set a person apart for special service (see Numbers 27:23; Deuteronomy 34:9)
 - **Names** - *Don't focus on remembering names of the 7 deacons. Simply referring to them as 7 men who are full of faith and the Holy Spirit is enough.*
 - **1Cor 13** – May lead to a discussion on Spiritual Gifts.
 - **Connect Groups / Discipleship Groups etc** – This would also be a good time to talk about the benefit of belonging to a small group, you could tell the group about your experience including the good and the more tricky!

What was it like being part of the early church?

- It is possible to imagine imagery of community, inclusion, acceptance, love. Sharing, giving, sacrificing.
- There was a great sense of oneness, being on the same accord, having the same agenda – it was about sharing Jesus with everyone and loving each other.
- The excitement and expectation of the early church, the miracles performed and witnessed – being part of that must have been amazing.
- Wisdom that was shown by the apostles. They saw the problem and came up with a solution from being frustrated that they couldn't get their work done – so they delegated which opened up opportunity for others to grow, learn and bless others.
- Although there was oneness, there was still division possibly even lack of maturity that led to feelings of discrimination and rumblings of discontent.
- The early church wasn't perfect. This is both encouraging and not. *All churches have problems. If your church's shortcomings distress you, ask yourself: What can I do to make my church better. A church doesn't have to be perfect to advance the cause of Christ – (extracted from Life Application Study Bible – NLT version).*

Why weren't women chosen as part of the 7 full of faith

- The fact that no women were chosen amongst the 7 men may cause disappointment or raise questions in some. The Bible doesn't elaborate, but it may be that women had other roles at that time.
- Women are seen as equal to men in God's eyes and honoured throughout the Bible. (Acts 1:2-14) and Jesus recognises their worth e.g. Mary sister of Martha, who washed Jesus' feet.

How do you fit in God's community?

- You may sometimes hear, God has a plan/a purpose for each of us. This is true – in our lives and as part of His body, we each have a part to play that He's given us.



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- It was and still is important to spread the message of Jesus, the good news that He took our place, died for our sins and restored us to God.
- Above all, God desires that we have fellowship with Him, love each other, serve each other in love.

How are we different or the same from the early church?

- We haven't changed much in 2,000 years.
- We still grumble and can be discontent at church.
- Each person has a vital part to play in the life of the church, our community.
- We are part of a family, God's family
- Although we don't live as closely as the early church did, we can still have community with each other in the form of Connect / Discipleship Group
- We can also show love, generosity, kindness and the gifts of the Spirit

Think about your own surroundings, your community, neighbours, friends, colleagues. What role do you play with people you regularly encounter?

- Makes me think about my role in my own surroundings, at home, in my community, in my church – praying more that God would help me to do what I'm good at and called to.
- If someone is unsure about how they fit (in church) - then pray together and encourage them to talk to God about it
- Realise I can still be generous even if I don't have bags of money, I may have time or a certain skill or talent that could bless someone
- Don't put myself down because I don't know much of the Bible, God can still use me to be a blessing to someone, after all it is the Holy Spirit who can guide and direct us, as well as God's word