

Session 1: Embodied Faith, Flourishing Communities

INTRODUCTION

Opening Discussion

We long for deep community, though we don't always know how to get there.

Share in Pairs: What makes a community meaningful? Share an example of a community you have loved being part of in your life (e.g. sports clubs, college fellowship, PTA, band). Do you currently experience meaningful community? Why or why not?

Vision + Objective

Throughout Scripture we see glimpses of a new kind of community being formed by God: one that reflects God's character so all of creation can flourish as God intended. But what is the key to this flourishing community? It starts with embodied faith. When we live as Jesus has called us to live, empowered by the Holy Spirit to love radically and participate in God's work of restoring our broken world, we impact the world through our words and actions. God never intended for our flourishing to be just about us; we are meant to be a blessing to others.¹

Pray to transition.

PASSAGE STUDY

Background

- In Acts 2, Jewish believers were "filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues" (Acts 2:4). An ethnically diverse crowd gathers because they hear their native languages being spoken. Peter interprets this perplexing experience. "They" in v. 37 refers to this crowd.
- "Promise" in v. 39 refers to Joel 2:28-29
- Culturally, eating together was a sign of intimacy and trust.

Read Acts 2:37-47

Observation:

- What cause and effects do you see in the text? What patterns or repetition?
- List all the verbs that describe the actions of the community.

¹ In Genesis 12, God's promise to Abraham (the 'Abrahamic Covenant') culminates in global impact: "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Gen. 12:3, NIV).

Interpretation:

- Why might this community have been radical at the time?
- How does this community embody faith?
- Where do you see flourishing?

Application:

- How does this picture of community compare to our opening discussion of meaningful community?
- What challenges or inspires you from today's discussion?

RESPONSE**Activity**

Making Headlines: Your small group (or church) has sought to embody faith in a way that leads to community flourishing. Imagine years from now, your church is featured in the local news or has gone viral on social media. What would be the headline? What impact has your church had on the wider community or neighborhood? Do this activity individually or in pairs:

- Pass out papers, markers, color pencils, and draw the front page of the local newspaper or a social media post.
- Take turns to share aloud with the group.

Pray together over the dreams you have for your community and the barriers that stand in the way of experiencing that.

Action Step

What is one way you can live out faith like the community in today's passage? Add a calendar reminder to do that action step this week. Bonus challenge: get to know someone in your small group more deeply by meeting for coffee or a meal. Share your story or what's brought you to this small group.

Prayer