



Discussion Guide Church — Part 5 LEADER GUIDE

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You were made for more than a comfortable, self-focused faith. You were made to be part of something bigger. In this series, we're rediscovering what the church was always meant to be: not a program to consume, but a Spirit-filled, Jesus-shaped community that's alive, vital, and still changing the world. We'll look at the stories competing for our hearts, and rediscover the one true story we were made for!

NEED A RESOURCE, HAVE A QUESTION, OR WANT TO HAVE A CONVERSATION?
Let us know how we can help! Contact your groups director or discipleship@rockbridge.cc

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"The church is not a museum for pristine saints, but a hospital ward for broken sinners."
[Timothy Keller]

LEADER RESOURCES || **Leader Note** *We do our best to equip, empower, and encourage you to shepherd your group well.*

- **Passage Summary**
 - Luke provides a beautiful description of the early church as it faithfully followed Jesus. At the heart of this community is a steadfast devotion to God that was expressed in four key ways. Luke's description warns against spiritual isolation, minimizing the importance of the church, compromising the church's witness, using the world's methods, and settling for a watered-down versions of Christianity.

ENGAGE & CONNECT || **Leader Note** *The goal for the icebreaker is to prepare your group for the conversation ahead by connecting with one another's hearts and building joy together.*

If church met at your house every week, where would you host people? How many could fit?

BEGIN WITH PRAYER || **Leader Note** *Begin your time together thanking God for his presence and praying His word back to Him. Ask a few people to pray, taking a posture of humility and dependence!*

Jesus, make us the bride who will be united to You forever. How do You want us to do things?

MEMORIZING SCRIPTURE || **Leader Note** *Help your group memorize the new verses together by having each person read them aloud. The goal is to enjoy hiding God's word in our hearts together.*

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

[Hebrews 10:24-5, ESV]

BIG IDEA || **Leader Note** *Read this aloud so your group knows the theme of today's reading and discussion.*

The Jesus Church is the fulfillment of God's family plan.

PASSAGE & DISCUSSION || Leader Note Your role is to FACILITATE, so keep your group moving along, encourage people to share, and look for opportunities to point out the grace and glory of God! Here are two reminders: 1) Every question does not have to be answered ... go where the Spirit leads! 2) Answers do not have to be read aloud ... they're for guidance!

Have someone read aloud Acts 2:42-47 in the ESV.

1. What part of this description strikes you the most? *Answers will vary—be curious and ask them what made that facet stand out to them.*
2. How is this description different from church the way you are used to? What elements are the same across time and culture? *It's worth discussing whether church was forever meant to look like this model, or if there's room for a lot of different expressions of church, but with the same spirit and goals. How valuable is teaching, eating together, hanging out, and prayer to us now?*
3. If you could write a description of church now, like Luke did here, what would it say? *What kinds of things are we devoted to? What is most important? What would an outsider notice about church if they were new to it?*
4. What brings you to awe? *Awe happens when we see something vast, something bigger than what we can control or do. Storms, the sea, a sunrise, the view from a mountaintop—all are natural wonders of creation that bring us that awe and reverence and fear that comes from looking outside ourselves to something greater than we are.*
For newer groups: Consider taking your group outside for a few minutes to look up at the sky. The Bible says that God sends the clouds and wind from His storehouses. How amazing is our God?
For more established groups: take this a step further—what is different about your prayers when you begin with awe of God?
5. How does the early church eat differently because of God's Spirit within them? *Literally, they're eating with gladness and generosity in their hearts. This is a community that is both grateful for the food they have and sharing it freely with those in need. Is this what we see today? Why or why not?*
6. We see in this passage that the church was growing in worship toward God and, at the same time, in favor toward the people around them. How is that balance doing in our group?
For newer groups: you have time now to set the stage for the culture of your group. *For established ones:* this is a good time for a checkup—are we growing in praise and favor? If not, what is at the root of it?
7. Matt described the results of the Spirit in the early church as “spiritual sunshine” that had several expressions (Awe/authority, moral enthusiasm, the inexplicable, care, generosity, power to overcome, thankfulness, and helpfulness.) What are some ways that we see spiritual sunshine in our group? *This could be a great moment to point out in someone a “I see Jesus in you in how you are always so thankful” or a chance to say, “there is something unique in our group. That spiritual sunshine looks like X.” When we start looking for the evidence of God's work in our lives, it puts into perspective the things we might be going through or have overcome together.*
For newer groups: What spiritual sunshine are you hoping to see in our group as we grow together?
8. Is there a way the Spirit is leading us together to become more like Jesus? *This is a little different from the question of individual faith—how is each of us becoming more like Christ on our own. Newer believers may need to start there. But the goal is not for each of us to be an individual vine, but for us to be united together to Christ and nourish each other and be pruned and bear fruit*

alongside one another.

9. What do we need to devote ourselves to? *This would be a good one to lead as a prayer first, then ask people to share what they heard. God, what do we need to devote ourselves to?*

STEP OF OBEDIENCE || Leader Note This is an opportunity for people to put into practice what the Spirit is inviting them to do and live in obedience to God for the sake of love! You can encourage your group to be accountable to one another and use these to follow up with one another throughout the week.

As you consider your next step, reflect on: 1) How can you devote yourself to the things that matter most? 2) Pray for the Spirit to come and make changes as He sees fit.

Give your group a few moments to reflect on their answers to the questions above. Then have your group answer the question aloud. Feel free to separate into smaller groups of 2 or 3 for this question, so each person has others praying with them for the needs they're taking before the throne.

PRAYER FOCUS || Leader Note Be intentional about saving at least 5 minutes to pray together. Try the prayer activity below or pray for one another's personal requests!

"Holy Spirit, we want You to be among us, ungrieved by what You encounter here. But, for that to happen, we first need You to be among us and show us Your grief. Remake us. Remold us. Heal and cleanse and awaken Your church, so that we will be filled with Your joy and light and dwell with You again. Amen."