



SESSION 6

# THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

God's people gather for community  
and scatter for a cause.



# WORSHIP

## READING PLAN

Read through the following Scripture passages this week. Use the space provided to record your thoughts and responses.

### **Day 1**

Colossians 3:12-17

### **Day 2**

Acts 2:37-47

### **Day 3**

Ephesians 2:13-22

### **Day 4**

Romans 12:4-8

### **Day 5**

Ephesians 4:1-16

### **Day 6**

1 Corinthians 16:10-24

### **Day 7**

Romans 16:17-20

## GOD'S PEOPLE GATHER FOR COMMUNITY

The church is a group of believers who gather to experience biblical community. Acts 2:42-47 gives us a great snapshot of what this biblical community looks like.

<sup>42</sup> And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to the prayers. <sup>43</sup> Then fear came over everyone, and many wonders and signs were being performed through the apostles. <sup>44</sup> Now all the believers were together and held all things in common. <sup>45</sup> They sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as anyone had a need. <sup>46</sup> Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple complex, and broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with a joyful and humble attitude, <sup>47</sup> praising God and having favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to them those who were being saved.

**ACTS 2:42-47**

Let's look at the four key elements of biblical community given to us in verse 42.

**The church devoted themselves to the apostle's teaching.** One key element of a biblical church is devotion to the preaching and teaching of God's Word. This was the very thing Paul was referring to when he said, "And now I commit you to God and to the message of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).

*How have you seen growth in the church because of a commitment to the teaching and preaching of God's Word?*

*What does Paul mean when he says a commitment to the Word will "build you up and give you an inheritance among all who are sanctified"?*

**The church devoted themselves to fellowship.** Not only were they devoted to God's Word, they were devoted to each other. The word *fellowship* means to be partners together. It means to share life together. Far from just coming to church and quickly leaving, fellowship means spending time caring for each other and partnering together in the gospel.

*What would you consider genuine Christian fellowship?*

**The church devoted themselves to breaking bread.** Some interpret this to mean simply sharing meals together, and the early church certainly did that. Acts 2:46 says, “breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts” (ESV). But the breaking of bread in Acts 2:42 could also refer to the Lord’s Supper, a special meal observed by Christ followers to remember the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

*Why is it important for believers to be reminded of the gospel of Christ by partaking in the Lord’s Supper together?*

*What are other ways the church can be intentional about reminding each other of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross?*

**The church devoted themselves to prayers.** The early church was a praying church. There are times when we need to pray alone (see Matt. 6:6), but there are also times when it’s important for the church to gather together and pray for each other.

*Which of these elements of biblical community is carried out best in your church? What makes it so effective?*

*How can you contribute to one of these elements in the life of your church?*



## GOD'S PEOPLE SCATTER FOR A CAUSE

The early church took Jesus' mandate to tell the world seriously. Within two years, they had "filled Jerusalem" with the gospel (Acts 5:28). Within five years there were multiple churches (Acts 9:30). In 19 years, they had "turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:6), and within 28 years, the gospel had spread all over the known world (see Col. 1:5-6).

*Which is most impressive to you?*

*Why do you think the early church had so much success spreading the gospel?*

The early church took Jesus' mandate in the Great Commission seriously, and the church today still takes seriously the Great Commission to tell the world the hope we have in Jesus. That is why men and women, college students, families, vocational missionaries, and volunteer workers go all around the world to declare the good news of the gospel.

Sharing with people the message of life is the job of the church. We are "ambassadors for Christ" (2 Cor. 5:20-21). Just as an ambassador lives in a foreign land, we are strangers and foreigners in this world, and our citizenship is in heaven. While we live in this world, we reflect Christ to people who don't know Him, and we tell people the good news about Jesus. Telling people about Jesus is a huge privilege for the church, but it's also an awesome responsibility.

*Who shared the gospel with you for the first time?*

*Why do you think it's important for the church to be actively sharing the gospel?*

The apostle Paul said he was “obligated” to take the gospel to every kind of people (see Rom. 1:14). He boldly proclaimed the gospel because it is “God’s power for salvation to everyone who believes” (Rom. 1:16). God still changes people’s lives today when they hear the gospel and believe on Jesus for their salvation. Paul also wrote this in 2 Timothy:

And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

**2 TIMOTHY 2:2**

***What was Paul telling Timothy in this passage? How is this applicable for us today?***

***Read the following passage, and record how each speak to the spreading of the gospel. Then comment on how we can apply each to our own ministry to the world.***

***1 Thessalonians 1:6-8***

***1 Timothy 2:3-4***

***Revelation 7:9***

***What are practical ways churches can do a better job at scattering for a cause? Give several examples.***