

STUDY GUIDE:

Foundations - Acts 2:42-47

I need you to know...

Attending the same church is not the same as sharing life together. Sharing life together is part of our purpose here at RBCPC. If you feel like you are just attending the same church as all the rest of us and you don't really have friends you are sharing life together with, I have two thoughts for you. First, you aren't alone. Lots of us have felt that way. And second, there is more life for you here.

Starter Discussion

Let's begin by looking at a picture of the early church.

What stands out to you in the following passage?

What are things you see as examples of the church sharing life together? *I see 13.*

How is your church experience like this?

Do you see anything that is missing in today's church?

Read this picture of the early church aloud, and answer those questions above:

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." (Acts 2:42-47)

Sharing Life Together:

There are a lot of ways this community of Christians invested in, and cared about, each other. For today, I want us to focus on just one aspect of this kind of sharing life together.

Each and every one of us only gets to share as much life as we are willing to contribute to everyone else. **Another way of saying it is, we get out what we put in.** Or, we won't have life shared with us if we wait for others to do the sharing.

- Are you naturally a pretty open about real life issues in groups like CORE?
Or are you more naturally private and protected? By the way, no judgment in this question!

- What are the pros and cons about being so open?
- What are the pros and cons about being more private?

- On a scale of 1<10, how open and sharing was that Acts 2 church from the passage?

Two people in the church:

Neal shared a story of Bill, a man who opened up, let people in, and shared his life in our church family as he fought through cancer.

Neal also shared a story where he himself chose to close-off and not share his own life struggle with cancer; resulting in loneliness and isolation from his church family.

- Can you empathize with both choices?
- This is a bit of a repeat, but who are you more apt to be?

Rhythm of Sharing Life:

Let me suggest a pattern, a rhythm that we see in our scripture and in Bill's story and mine. Think of an old fashioned doorbell that dings when you press it and dongs when you let go. There is a pattern of engage and release. You can't have one without the other. You get both or neither. Engage, release.

Sharing life together requires the same rhythm. Bill engaged his group, then released his need to withdraw and allowed them to engage with their care and support. I did neither. I didn't engage people in the challenges of my life, nor did I release my inclination to control the circumstances. Bill shared his life. I did not.

- How have you seen this in your relationships at church? Do you have a story of letting people in and walking through deep seasons of life with them?
- What do you think helps create an environment of real sharing and closeness?

A Real Life Challenge:

Sharing life together is as much a goal of ours as it is a value. We want to become people and a church where it is safe to share life together. In a book called, *The Safest Place on Earth*, Larry Crabb says that spiritual friendships are the best care there is for hurting souls. So, sharing our life with others will actually help their souls as we become spiritual friends. Verse 46 says, "*They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere.*" That sounds like spiritual friendship with people who care.

Engage and release.

We need both or we get neither. If you want to take a step and try sharing your life a little more, I'll give you a practical suggestion. Your CORE group may or may not be your starting place. Maybe start with one or two people. You may have a close brother or sister in Christ that you need to share life with... God may be laying this on your heart... We challenge you to listen and respond. Engage. Release.

CLOSE IN PRAYER