

MARCH 21, 2021
LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
THE WAY | TOGETHER ON THE JOURNEY
ACTS 2:42-47
WINTER QUARTER WEEK 11 OF 11

EFCC's definition of a disciple: Someone who is learning to live in the way of Jesus with the heart of Jesus.

EFCC's discipleship values: Pursuit, Obedience, Journey, Wholeness, Togetherness, Mission.

EFCC's discipleship model: being WITH (upward focus), becoming LIKE (inward focus), doing As (outward focus).

EFCC's discipleship methodology: focus on what we need to learn, what we need to practice and who we need to be in relationship with.

For this week, the discipleship values are *together and journey*. The part of the model best captured is *doing as*. Jesus lived in community with others on His journey to accomplish the will of God. He models it well, and His disciples picked up on that and shaped an early community that resembled what God has in mind for His people.

For those who are interested, it is my conviction that this passage is descriptive (as opposed to prescriptive) and that it provides us with valuable principles for how we are to live as the people of God. We can learn much from it, and should, but we are not called to replicate it in the exact same way that we see it presented in this passage. The principles and the values that it teaches are for us today, but here is freedom to work those out in our 21st century context.

Engaging with Each Other

1. What would an exact opposite of you be?

Extroverted, undisciplined with money, someone who loves to sit and talk for hours and hours, uninterested in sports, an artist, short, fat, woman, verbal processor, lover of Star Wars, lover of Tolkien.

Engaging with the Scriptures (READ THE PASSAGES TOGETHER HERE)

2. What words best describe the atmosphere in this passage? Why?

Here are some which come to mind:

- Devoted (v. 42, 46)
- Excited (v. 42)
- Committed (v. 42, 46)
- Prayerful (v. 42)
- Reverential (v. 43)
- Open (v. 43)
- Generous (v. 44, 46)
- Willing to (v. 45)
- Hospitable (v. 46)
- Worshipful (v. 47)
- Well thought of (v. 47)

The point of this question is simply to get people talking about what type of community this was. It's quite a list. And it's quite impressive. There is a lot packed into six verses.

You don't necessarily have to ask the, "Why?" question for each of these.

3. Which of Ryan's four observations about the church stand out to you at this point in your life? Why?

Here are his four observations:

- Shared Devotion
- Sacrificial Generosity
- Supernatural Power
- Steady Growth

They can share about more than one. And, leaving some out doesn't mean the person thinks they are without value. They are all invaluable, actually, but God is doing different kinds of things in all of our lives, and one or two of the four might be more significant than three or two are. I'm trying to let people share about what God is up to in them right now.

Also, how the folks answer will give insight into the type of community they want to be part of, and that will be a great asset to you in your shepherding and leading. Wouldn't it be interesting if a common theme emerged among the responses? It could be God's way of directing you as you lead the group to take some steps of growth in the days to come.

If the discussion is waning, you could ask people to share which of the observations in Question 2 stand out to them at this point in their life, and why. That should give plenty of fuel for the discussion fire.

For me, it's Shared Devotion and Steady Growth. I think Shared Devotion leads to Sacrificial Generosity., actually. Shared Devotion is a Keystone Value. And while Supernatural Power is very important and necessary, it isn't as important that it be exhibited in the U.S. in manners and ways that are consistent with how it was exhibited in this text.

There is a lot that goes into why I picked what I picked. I'll unpack that with my group, but I will say that one reason I chose both of these is because they've been a part of my journey and I value them highly. My parents continue to model Shared Devotion to God and to a group of God's people with whom they have been connected for over 50 years. They have lived this text out. I have watched them. I value this for my life.

Secondly, I attended a church growing up that experienced Steady Growth. God's hand of blessing was on it and it went from a church plant of 50 to over 2,000 people over the course of about 30 years. It was a healthy, steady growth.

I want to be a part of a church and a Life Group that has a Shared Devotion, and I want to be a part of a church that enjoys Steady Growth because of the blessing of God.

How about you?

One more thing before I moved on to the next question. Because I see Shared Devotion as a Keystone Value in this text, I believe that the other three things that are true of this early church naturally cascaded from it. Thus, when Shared Devotion is present, the other three will eventually be present as well (in churches and Life Groups). The place to start is on Shared Devotion. A group that is devoted to God and each other, a church that is devoted to God and each other, will enjoy His blessing.

4. What tends to keep the church in America from experiencing a similar kind of fellowship?

The “similar kind of fellowship” to which I am referring is everything that is described in Acts 2:42-47. So, **“What tends to keep the church in American from experiencing the things that are described in Acts 2:42-47?”**

There are no doubt lots of things. Here are some that come to mind:

- Lack of a desire to have this kind of mutual connection with others.
- A busyness that precludes the time that is needed to develop the kind of relationship with a person where you’d naturally sacrifice for them out of the desire of your heart.
- Other priorities/desires/perceived needs.
- Misplaced priorities/desires/perceived needs.
- Our cultural focus on rugged individualism.
- Impatience.
- Greed.
- What else?

The point of this question is to get people thinking about what things might be getting in the way of them experiencing a similar kind of fellowship with others at EFCC with the hope that the Holy Spirit would speak to them about taking a “next step” toward this kind of living.

A lot of the things that people might be afraid of from this text (financial sacrifice, or put another way, financial generosity), opening up their homes for people to come in and have a meal, meeting together regularly, etc. become things that you willingly choose to do when you have deep connections with others. When you realize that these believers were doing these things because they wanted to, and not because they were being compelled to, then you realize the way forward into this kind of “want to” living is to make a commitment to a group of people and let God do His work in your heart as you live out your commitment. Am I saying it’s always easy? No. Am I saying there isn’t sacrifice? No. But things just seem a little easier when your heart is in it.

There is that great line from the movie *Fireproof* where one of the characters says, “Lead your heart, don’t follow it.” This is that kind of thing. We have to lead our heart into places where God can change it so that we can have the very thing for which we deeply long but are very much afraid. This question helps people identify those things that are holding them back. We trust the Holy Spirit to do His work.

5. What aspect of life in the early church do you most desire for EFCC or this group?

This question may already have been covered, but if not, direct that the answer be drawn from the fullness of the text.

Here is another question to ask/challenge to give, **“Would you commit to praying this week about one thing you can and will do in your sphere of influence at EFCC to help bring this about?”** I’m not talking about a lifetime commitment, but a commitment to do one thing. Maybe it’s to contribute something to the Fellowship Fund for the first time? Maybe it’s to agree to host the Life Group for once? Maybe it’s

to have lunch with someone else in your Life Group sometime during the next month? Maybe it's to commit to attend church and your group every week, regardless of how tired or overwhelmed you might be? Perhaps it's to share more personal prayer requests for the next two or three group gatherings? Perhaps it's that your group decides to stay together after this series ends? There are so many things anyone can do to move the needle forward. As I've written before, never underestimate the power of one!

Engaging the Scriptures with Life

- 6. How can you pray for each other this week?**