

## MAIN POINT

Today marks the beginning of our “Living Sent” series, during which we’ll study portions of the Book of Acts to gain insight into how we, the congregation of Chets Creek, can live in a missional fashion. As we live a life sent to speak and serve in this world, we’ll see some challenging and encouraging examples of what this looked like for the early church. A missional life is a life lived together. Like the early church, we are called to live in community with other believers, worshiping God together, growing in faith and understanding of Scripture, and sharing the gospel with others.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

**What is your favorite thing to do in Jacksonville with a group of friends? Why do you love it?**

**Have you ever tried to have that same experience on your own? If so, what was different about trying it alone, rather than being with other people?**

**Based on what you know today about the Book of Acts, how important was community to the people in the early church? Why do you think they put so much emphasis on doing life together?**

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

**> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 2:44-47.**

**According to these verses, what are marks of a healthy church? What attitudes accompanied these actions?**

**What did the people demonstrate by selling their possessions and by their unified commitment to the church?**

**Which of these actions—fellowship, worship, discipleship, and evangelism—do you more naturally gravitate toward? Why is the balance of all four important for the individual Christian and the church as a whole?**

Remind your group of the five connections emphasized in our LifeGroups mission statement: Healthy LifeGroups connect people with God through worship, with one another through fellowship, with God's Word through discipleship, with those without Christ through evangelism, and with purpose in life through ministry.

**How do our church's commitments align with the mission of the Acts 2 church?**

**How are these connections strengthened by doing life together? What might happen if we tried to live out these values on our own?**

All four things that are listed in 2:44-47 happened as part of the church community: they were devoted to learning God's Word, fellowship, breaking of bread, and to prayers. First-century believers were motivated by the gospel to learn and grow together as disciples and to do their part to spread the good news. The early church also made sure that every member's physical needs were being met. They saw each other as a close family, bonded together by a saving relationship with Christ.

**What impact do you think the early church's community had on its rapid growth (v. 47)? What does the world learn about God through healthy Christian community?**

**What does it mean to "live sent," or on mission for God? Why is doing life together such an important aspect of living sent?**

The unity of the church was a testimony to God's presence, and "every day the Lord added to them those who were being saved" (v. 47). The early church was a growing church. They first had a reverent fear for God that guided them in their daily living (see v. 43). Next, they made loving other believers as themselves a priority for their fellowship, even to the point of selling private property in order to provide for members in need (vv. 44-45). They followed Jesus' great commandment to a "t." And God honored them for that by blessing them with new members every day.

**For first-century Christians, what was the draw for becoming part of a local body of believers? Is it the same draw today?**

**What are some of the unique challenges we face as we practice biblical community?**

**In what ways is our church currently impacting the city of Jacksonville?**

**Would people outside of our church say we model the characteristics of the Acts 2 church? Where do we excel, and where might there be room for improvement? What can our LifeGroup do to help?**

## NEXT STEPS

Leave your group with these parting thoughts, designed to put action to the truths learned and re-emphasize the principles from your meeting time.

The church plays an incredibly important role in the lives of Christians, and it's primarily through the church that God shares His gospel with the world. This week, look for some unique ways to strengthen your community. Here are a few suggestions:

- If you're a group that usually focuses on fellowship, mix it up a little and invest together in a local missions project or a volunteer opportunity in the church. Check out the Missions page of [chetscreek.com](http://chetscreek.com) for some suggestions and partnerships.
- If you're a group that actively participates in a lot of ministry together, spend an evening sharing great food and talking about the most meaningful projects you've been a part of this year. Use this as a time to brainstorm the next service project you'll be involved with, or the new needs that have surfaced in your ongoing ministry.
- If the people in your group aren't connected to one another, take an evening and go out to eat, play games, or just meet at a coffee shop to talk about life.

Whatever you choose to do, make sure the focus is on becoming more like the church Jesus has in mind. Also encourage your group members to come back next week prepared to share about opportunities they've had to share Christ as they've lived sent.

## PRAY

Lead your group in prayer asking God to bless the church with a unity born of genuine love that Christians have for one another. Ask God to build up the faith of each person so that he or she may love God with all his or her being and that each might truly demonstrate love for one another. Thank God for the opportunity He gives us to be a part of sharing His gospel with the world.

## FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up e-mail to your group with some or all of the following information:

- ☐ Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
  - **What is God teaching me about fellowship with others at Chets Creek?**
  - **What step can I take to respond to His teaching this week?**
  - **How is the Holy Spirit changing the way I think about my involvement at Chets Creek and our mission to each other and the Jacksonville community?**
- ☐ The challenge to memorize Acts 2:44-47.
- ☐ A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.

## CHETS CREEK CHURCH

## LIVING SENT

ACTS 2:44-47

LIVING SENT TOGETHER

## LIVING SENT TOGETHER (ACTS 2:44-47)

**2:44-45** One of the most amazing characteristics of the Jerusalem church was its sharing its material possessions with the needy. The Christians voluntarily shared with anyone who needed help. As part of their fellowship, the early church practiced a community of goods for a short time. Distribution to members of the faith community took place according to individual need. This practice did not last long, likely because it was logistically difficult and fraught with potential abuse (see chaps. 4-6).

Later, Luke noted that these church members were “of one heart and soul” (4:32). No one remained needy for long because the church responded quickly and generously to need. The money was brought to the apostles, who were in charge of the distribution (4:34-35). Luke highlighted the role of Barnabas in this generosity (4:36-37), but he also noted the hypocrisy of Ananias and Sapphira, who lied about their actions (5:1-10).

**2:46** Although these believers understood Jesus to be the fulfillment of the Jewish hope for the Messiah (2:36), the members of the Jerusalem church were primarily Jewish in background. They still went to the **temple complex**. They would not participate in the sacrificial system any longer, since Jesus was the perfect sacrifice for their sins. They may have wanted to demonstrate the continuity between their Jewish heritage and their new faith in Christ. Also, they may have found opportunities to witness to their Jewish friends and relatives.

Besides gathering together in the temple complex, these Christians **broke bread from house to house**. Quite likely this means they gathered regularly in houses for worship and the Lord’s Supper. Christians did not typically build church buildings in the early centuries, so they met in homes. When they gathered in homes, these disciples expressed gratitude for their shared meals. These gatherings were marked by a **simplicity** or “sincerity” of heart (NIV). They did not need to put on airs; they genuinely worshiped God.

**2:47** One result of the early church’s worship and witness was **having favor with all the people**. In these early days the people of Jerusalem were generally open to the Christians. Later on, the Jewish leaders tried to restrict their public preaching (4:1-22).

The early church was an evangelizing church. Luke recounted that every day the Lord added to those who were being saved. He did not say how this took place, but it appears that evangelism took place primarily through the gathering of Christians in the temple and in individual houses. The crucifixion and resurrection of Christ were at the heart of early Christian preaching, which called for immediate response from anyone who listened. Such enormous numerical growth eventually attracted the attention of the Jewish leaders.