

WITNESSES

“First Fruits” WITNESSES Acts 2 Small Group Plan

A poll, conducted by *Newsweek* and *Beliefnet*, asked, “Why do you practice religion?” Here are the results:

- 39% *To forge a personal relationship with God*
- 30% *To help me be a better person and live a moral life*
- 17% *To find peace and happiness*
- 10% *To connect with something larger than myself*
- 8% *To give my life meaning and structure*
- 3% *To be part of a community*
- 13% *Other*

Everyone has a reason for choosing faith. It might fall into one of the six general categories listed above or it might be so specific that it falls in the “other” category. But wherever it falls, it will be personal, or relational, or both. Faith is about God and people. Maybe this is why Jesus said that the greatest commands have to do with loving God and loving people (Mark 12:28-31).

OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- How did you feel about going to church as a kid?
- How have your thoughts and reasons changed as you have grown and matured?
- What do you like best about Prestoncrest?
- What does your connection and small group mean to you?

LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

The Witness

Acts 2:22-36

²² “Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. ²³ This man was handed over to you by God’s deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. ²⁴ But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. ²⁵ David said about him: “‘I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. ²⁶ Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest in hope, ²⁷ because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, you will not let your holy one see decay. ²⁸ You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.’” ²⁹ “Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. ³⁰ But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. ³¹ Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. ³² God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. ³³ Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. ³⁴ For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, “‘The Lord said to my Lord: “‘Sit at my right hand ³⁵ until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet. ”” ³⁶ “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah. ”

- How is the post-resurrection Peter different from the pre-resurrection Peter?
- Why did Peter quote David (vs. 25-28)?
- What did Peter want the crowd to know about Jesus?
- Was his message positive or negative? Explain.

The Response

Acts 2:37-41

³⁷ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” ³⁸ Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call. ” ⁴⁰ With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation. ” ⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

- Describe and reflect on the way this crowd responded to Peter’s message.

- What was their attitude as they heard his words?
- What were their expectations?
- How full or complete was their understanding of Peter’s message? Of the 3,000 who made a commitment that day, were they all at the same level of understanding? What lessons can we draw from this?
- What is the “gift of the Holy Spirit” (v. 38)?
- What difference would it make if the Holy Spirit were withdrawn from the Christian Community?

The First Fruits

Acts 2:42-47

⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Reaching UP

“Apostles’ teaching” ... “Prayer” ... “Praising God”

- How would you describe the worship of this Acts 2 group?
- Compare their worship picture with the average worship gathering today.
- Use this story to describe how their worship (UP) provided the power for their fellowship (IN) and their ministry (OUT).

Reaching IN

“The fellowship” ... “The breaking of bread”
 “Were together” ... “They gave” ...
 “They continued to meet together” ...
 “Ate together”

- How would you describe the emotional makeup of these people when they were together?
- Think of 3 descriptive words to explain the atmosphere of this gathering.
- How would you explain their generous and sharing spirit?

Reaching OUT

“And the Lord added ... daily”

- What made the early church so appealing to others?
- Why did the early church grow “daily?”
- Why is Luke so careful to say “the Lord” added?
- How did these early Christians partner with “the Lord” in evangelism?
How can we do the same today?

USE IT / APPLY IT ...

- What is the closest you have come to experiencing the kind of fellowship described here in Acts 2?
- Compare and contrast the Acts 2 church with most American churches today.
- What does Prestoncrest most need to learn from this Jerusalem church?
- Close by asking God to help us be more of a community than a crowd.