



## MEFC Community Group Study Guide

For the Week of September 11th - 17th

### Getting Started

1. They go by lots of names: small groups, life groups, growth groups, missional communities, and so on. At Mound Free Church, we call them community groups. Regardless of how one refers to them, many of us have experience in these types of discipleship settings. Take some time as a group to share your honest reflections of that experience. What has been good about it? What's not been so good?

### Digging Deeper

2. Think together for a moment about the purpose of community group life. To state the question bluntly...what's the point? What key aspects of the church's life and mission are better facilitated in the context of a community group than in the larger Sunday morning worship gathering? If you get stuck, consider New Testament "one anothers" such as those found in James 5:16, 1 Peter 4:9, and Romans 12:15.

### Open Your Bible to Acts 2:42-47...

3. At Mound Free Church, we've always considered Acts 2:42 as the baseline for what ought to take place within a community group. Luke highlights four features of life together in the early church. What are these four habits of grace? Why did the first Christians understand these particular four practices to be the building blocks of the household of faith?
4. Verse 43 says that "awe came upon every soul" because of the "many wonders and signs" that "were being done through the apostles". How ought we to define signs and wonders? What exactly are they? Consider some of the following examples in the book of Acts (3:1-10; 5:1-11; 5:12-16; 9:32-35, 36-41; 13:4-12; 14:8-10; 16:16-18; 20:7-12). Summarizing what you read in these passages, what sorts of miracles do we encounter there? What is their nature, quality, or kind? Should believers expect similar wonders and signs in the church today? Why or why not? Should Luke's observation that these miracles "were being done through the apostles" have a bearing on our answer? Why or why not? Regardless of one's particular view on the miraculous gift of healing in the church today, what ought we to be sure to agree on when it comes to this issue? What special relevance does this have for us in community group life?
5. Luke goes on to describe in some detail the ways that the early church cared for one another in need (read vv.44 and 45). Were the 1st century believers communists of sorts? Did they deny one another the right to private property? How do you know? Are there any clues in this passage that shed light on this significant question? How about in Acts 4:32-35? Are these descriptions of the 1st century church prescriptions for the 21st century church? Why or why not? If not, how ought we to interpret them in our present day context? Do you see any fitting applications as you reflect on the nature of our community group ministry? If so, what?

6. Verses 46-47a (“and day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God...”) paint a portrait of far more than mere Sunday morning relationships within this local church. One of the ways we envision our community groups is that the fellowship we experience in them is so increasingly deep and rich that our groups become the first ‘line of defense’ in our care for one another (i.e. help in times of crisis, meals when a new baby is born, hospital visits for each other, support in one another’s evangelistic outreach, etc). Is your community group like that? If so, take some time to celebrate that by encouraging one another. If not...guess what? With a few deliberate adjustments, your group has a lot to look forward to together!
  
7. Read the rest of verse 47. Notice how the favor of the unbelieving community and the conversion growth they experienced were the (super)natural results of the Lord at work within a healthy church (vv.42-47a). Do you pray for the folks on one another’s ‘Lists of 5’ by name? Ever thought about inviting them to your community group? What advantages might there be of introducing one of them to life in your community group *before* an invitation to church on Sunday? Who might you invite to your group in the days ahead?