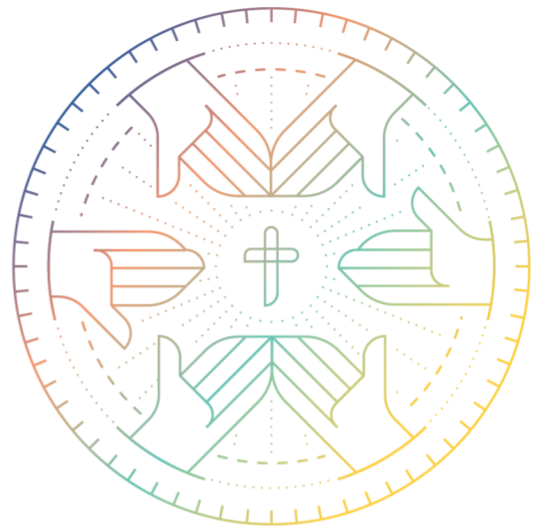


Group Life.

WE ARE BETTER TOGETHER



WELCOME (10 MINUTES)

This week we are continuing our series, *Give Me Strength*. In this fourth week, we'll talk about how community is important for our transformation and how there are small, but specific, spiritual practices that God can use to increase our strength through community.

- Please don't forget to take attendance via the attendance reminder email. It's important!

ICEBREAKER (10 MINUTES)

Much of the life of the early church took place in their individual homes. What is your favorite feature in your current home or apartment? What do you like the most about where you live?

[Host Guidance: this should be a fun way of hearing how each person views their home or apartment, what they like about it, perhaps even what they dislike about it, or some renovation or change they'd like to make. Just a way to know more about the people in your circle of community.]

INTRODUCTION (5-10 MINUTES)

Was there one idea that stood out to you from Doug's message on the importance of community?

Read Acts 1:3-5.

Imagine what it was like for the early apostles and disciples during those first 40 days after Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. Perhaps some were scared, excited, confident, confused, grieving, relieved, anxious, or even vengeful. What emotion can you imagine yourself having during those early days?

[Host Guidance: try to get each person to share an emotion they might have felt and why they chose that emotion. It's likely that everyone experienced that season in different ways, yet the church still achieved powerful unity and community.]

INTO THE WORD (25 MINUTES)

Read Acts 2:42-47.

Describe the various characteristics of the early church. What aspect or characteristic of the early church do you find most inviting (meaning, makes you want to be a part of this church)? Is there an aspect that surprises you?

[Host Guidance: Looking at the six verses just read, what would the list of characteristics look like? It might include study, learning, miracles, sacrifice, etc. Try to draw out from your group the one characteristic that is most appealing to each person, as well as the aspect that sounds surprising. Don't be shocked if some people find having "everything in common" most surprising.

Group Life.

WE ARE BETTER TOGETHER



A follow up question might be “How is the characteristic you chose similar or different from our church today?”]

Read Acts 4:32-35. How does this passage add to our understanding of what life was like for those first believers? What stands out to you?

[Host Guidance: be sure that the idea of “awe” comes up in the discussion. The early disciples were in awe of the power of God being displayed by the apostles. How might the self-sacrifice of many of the believers through their generosity also have created awe among them? Do you sometimes feel a sense of awe at how God works in your life, your small group, or at Fairhaven Church?]

Read John 13:34-35. Think about the many expressions of love that characterized the early church. How did those expressions draw outsiders to the message of Jesus? What happened to the church as a result?

[Host Guidance: people are always drawn to love. The early believers loved one another in tangible and generous ways and people on the outside watched them. Obviously, loving miracles of healing, salvation, and extraordinary community attracted people to the faith. The church grew exponentially because of these many expressions of God’s love in the hearts of his people. May the same be true of us here at Fairhaven!]

APPLICATION (25 MINUTES)

[Host Guidance: don’t feel pressure to cover all the questions below. Pick the one or two questions that might lead to the best conversation, but if discussion fades, include the others.]

In what ways is your small group experience similar or dissimilar to the description of this early church? Are there other meaningful ways you experience community at Fairhaven? Share with the group what you’ve found meaningful.

Doug talked about how the early church had all things “in common,” including their Savior, their story and their calling. How would you describe the things you have “in common” with the other members of your small group?

Doug mentioned that there are 59 “one-another” statements in the New Testament and that we cannot accomplish those in one hour, once a week. What’s one idea or suggestion that would help your small group to practice the one-another’s of Scripture?

How does your experience in a circle of community prepare you to go out into the world during your week?

PRAYER (10 MINUTES)

Father God, in a world that values independence and individualism, you have placed us together in a community of faith we call Fairhaven. Here you have given us each a place to belong and a story to share. We come together because of our love for you and our desire to be more like Jesus. We are grateful that we are not alone in our journey...in our difficult circumstances and hardships or even in our joy and excitement. As we gather, may we commit to practicing the "one-another's" in this group and caring deeply for each other. Would you enable us to both give and receive your love in a way that brings you glory. **Amen**