

Icebreaker:

How did you feel about going to church as a child or youth? What was your experience?

Read: Acts 1:6-8; 2:37-47

Discuss:

1. Jesus talks in Acts 1 of being witnesses (with the power of the Holy Spirit) in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth. What is your Jerusalem? What is your Samaria? How can you be a witness to the ends of the earth?
2. Compare this statement by Christian author Shane Claiborne with what we read in this week's scripture. "We have not shown the world another way of doing life. Christians pretty much live like everybody else; they just sprinkle a little Jesus in along the way. And doctrine is not very attractive, even if it is true." How does ZPC compare to this statement and to what we see in Acts 2:42-47?
3. What is the closest you have come to experiencing the kind of fellowship the early church experienced in Acts?
4. Dietrich Bonhoeffer states that, "The Church is Christ existing as community." What do you think of this statement?
5. In what ways has your home group (living in community) shaped your faith?
6. Describe three simple ways that you or your group could assist ZPC in its mission to be the church. If you are already doing something as a group to assist the mission of ZPC, list that as well.

As your group closes, please keep the following prayer requests in mind:

- > Prayers of healing for Donna Bahler and Wanda Baker.
- > Prayers of comfort for Brent and Eileen Davis in the death of Brent's mother and for Jack and Juanita Harris in the death of their daughter.

Reminders for your group:

> Christmas is coming! There are many opportunities for you and your Home Group to get involved including Operation Christmas Child and Shepherd Totes. More information at zpc.org

Leader's Notes:

The church is the body of Christ. The church is us. The church is ZPC. The church is the universal church of Christians around the world. This week we look at the role of the church and how we compare today with the earliest church described in Acts 1 and 2. Please read these passages to give yourself insight before you meet this week. Also, if your group has some good stories to share about question 6 about your home group experience, please send those to Sally at sallyb@zpc.org. People don't have to share their names if they want to remain anonymous. Have a great group this week.

[Question 1] The Holy Spirit gives confidence, courage, and boldness for us to reach out to others. These places described in Acts 1:8 are ever-widening circles. Jerusalem is right around you. Samaritans were mixed race people with those who were partly Jewish. Who are people today that you don't want to talk to – or who make you uncomfortable? That is your Samaria. The ends of the earth might be anywhere. You may not have to go on a mission trip to make an impact on the world; it can be through prayer, giving, adoption, or other ways.

[Question 2] If members don't immediately begin talking about the comparisons, ask questions such as: Do you think the way we live should look differently from the lives of non-Christians? If so, how? If not, why not? God does call us to show radical love and grace to others so much so that they may ask why. God can also use our lives even when they look very much like everyone else's lives...if we allow him to and if we are listening for his prompting. Shane's words encourage us to "speak" the gospel using actions.

[Question 3] The early church members in Acts 2 shared meals in their homes, shared possessions, devoted themselves to prayer, and met daily. Have you experienced really close fellowship similar to that? Maybe in your home group, or with close friends, maybe on a short-term mission trip, or in a time of crises. Please share with the group.

[Question 4] The church is the body of Christ. We share in relationship and in community together. The church is certainly more than just a building; the church is all of us.

[Question 5] Encourage people to share a story. As group leader, please capture stories and send them to Sally Bias at sallyb@zpc.org. This helps us to know how we are doing in home groups in building community. We will also look for an opportunity to share some stories anonymously or with the group members' names – with their permission.

[Question 6] As you share, remember the ZPC mission: Called together by God to make disciples and release them for service in our broken world. You might share how you all, as individuals or a group, share in the ministries of the church, in a program/event sort of way or in a more relational/organic way. We hope you are encouraged by sharing ways you might be the church as a group.