

THE LIFE

EMBRACING THE LIFE OF A CHRIST-FOLLOWER

PART 2: THE PICTURE OF A DISCIPLE
Unit 3: A Disciple Embraces Christian Community
LESSON 25: WHAT DOES CHRISTIAN
COMMUNITY LOOK LIKE?

What we want students to learn: That in the Jerusalem Church, we see a beautiful picture of disciples living together in community.

What we want students to do with what they've learned: To understand the great value of sharing life in the community of Christ-following friends.

Scripture Focus: Acts 2:42-47

Overview: Christian community is more than just hanging out, something that comes so naturally to teenagers. Relationships are vital to your students' lives. But Christian community must be deeper than friendship. Christian community is the God-given space in which we're supposed to live out our lives. Over and over again in Scripture, we see God authorizing life done in community. And this community is to be different than mere friendship; it's supposed to take on the character of God, Himself. As Christ-followers, your students are called to be devoted to one another, with a faithfulness that mirrors God's. This lesson, and this unity, will help you lead your child to understand and embrace this ideal.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO

Each **LIFE** lesson comes with a Teacher Prep Video. These are short videos designed to help you grasp the main point of the lesson as you prepare to teach.

To access your **LIFE** lesson 25 Teacher Prep Video, login to your Lesson Manager, navigate to lesson 25, and click on the "Background" tab. You'll notice the Teacher Prep Video near the top of the Lesson Manager window.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

The *Bible Background* is designed to help you provide some context for the Scripture you'll be studying. The Details gives you background info for each book, The Setting informs you what's happening in and around the passage, and The Main Point gives you an overview of how the passage will be used in the lesson.

- **What do we mean by "context"?** In every **YM360** Bible study lesson, you'll notice we make a point to encourage you to provide the context for the passages you study. By "context" we mean at the very least helping students know **who** wrote the book, **when** it was written, and **why** it was written.
- **What's the big deal?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don't get a "big picture" understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God's plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the Bible Background to help summarize the context.

THE DETAILS

- **Author:** Acts has long been held to be a letter from Luke, a Gentile physician, to a man named Theophilus, possibly a benefactor of some sort.
- **Time frame:** There is some debate over when Acts was written. The suggested dates are between 70 AD

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and 80 AD.

- **Purpose:** The Book of Acts is a second letter to Theophilus that tells the story of the early Church following Jesus' resurrection. The book begins with Jesus' ascension and His command of His followers to proclaim the Gospel in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. The rest of the book traces this journey as the early church leaders proclaim the Gospel and plant churches.

THE SETTING

After the ascension of Jesus into Heaven, His followers were gathered in Jerusalem when the Holy Spirit fell upon them on the day of Pentecost. Afterwards Peter preached the Gospel with boldness, and people that spoke many different languages all heard and understood. About 3,000 believed and surrendered their lives to Christ that very day. This was the beginning of the Church. This lesson explains the fellowship that was shared among the believers.

THE MAIN POINT

Those that believed the Gospel and were saved did not then go back to life as usual; rather, these believers began to live in community – doing life together! They became devoted to the same things: the apostles' teaching, the fellowship, the breaking of bread, and the prayers. God blessed this type of fellowship and godly living with new believers day by day.

LESSON PLAN

The **Lesson Plan** contains three elements: An introductory activity called **The Lead In**; the Bible study section called **The Main Event**; an application-focused segment called **The Last Word**.

THE LEAD IN

- **Goal:** To get students thinking about the level of commitment required when one is "devoted."
- **Set-Up:** You'll want to preview and arrange to show the "Pull-Up Guy" video that can be found at: <https://youtu.be/SnNzwqySI9Q>

FIRST, show students the YouTube video featuring the "Pull-Up Guy." Then, lead students in a short discussion about how pull-ups and push-ups are this guy's specialty. Ask something like:

- **How many push-ups and pull-ups do you think you could do?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **Have you ever been that devoted to anything? Is there anything you would like to be that devoted to? What stops you from pursuing it? Explain.**
 - Answers will vary.

THEN, explain that in this lesson, you are going to be examining what the believers in the early church devoted themselves to. Say something like the following:

- **There is a lot to consider when it comes to living the life of a Christ-follower. But as we saw in the**

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case of the Pull-Up Guy, when we focus our effort and will, we can find that we can see real results. In this lesson, and in the lessons to follow, we're going to be talking about focusing on living in Christian community. We're going to learn that this is a crucial component of what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

Transition into *The Main Event* portion of your lesson.

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** For students to see the Bible's beautiful picture of disciples living together in community.
- **Set Up:** You may benefit from a dry-erase board, but it's not critical. Make sure students have a Bible or that they are able to look along with a friend.

FIRST, have a discussion with your students about what they believe are important things for Christians to devote themselves to. Redirect as needed. You may need to emphasize that believers do not need to "do anything" to earn salvation or even to be in "better standing" with God. This isn't a lesson about trying harder. What we want to discuss here is what Christ-followers should focus on to grow in their relationship with God and live at peace with others.

THEN, read or have a student read Acts 2:42-47. While they are finding the passage, provide some of the context using the Bible Background section of the lesson. Then, ask something like:

- **What did the Christians in the early Church devote themselves to?**
 - Answer: The apostles' teaching, the fellowship, the breaking of bread, and the prayers.
- **Let's take a look at each of these things. What does it look like for Christ-followers today to devote themselves to the teaching of God's Word?**
 - Answers may vary. The apostles taught the Gospel. They were committed to Jesus' teachings. For believers today, that means being devoted to God's Word.
- **What about fellowship? What does that look like today?**
 - Answers may vary. The Greek word for fellowship is *koinonia*, which means participation or sharing. Today that looks like us being involved in each other's lives and helping meet physical needs.
- **Talk about the breaking of bread. What does that mean?**
 - Answers may vary. It could refer to sharing regular meals together as well as the Lord's Supper. Think about how natural it is to share a meal with friends.
- **Finally, what about being devoted to prayer?**
 - Answers may vary. These prayers of the early church likely took place in the temple as well as in homes, as groups of believers gathered together. We should absolutely pray at church, but we should also make prayer an important part of our daily and weekly routines within our home.
- **How well do you think our church devotes themselves to these same things?**
 - Answers may vary. Help students to consider what your church does well while considering things that might need improvement. Consider taking time to discuss how students can be a part of the solution to areas that need attention.

NEXT, point out that the rest of this passage describes what took place after the believers devoted themselves to these things. Read or have a student read Acts 2:43. Ask something like:

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- **Do you think the believers commitment to the things we just discussed had an impact on them being in "awe"? Explain.**
 - Answers will vary. The things they were doing (praying, spending time together, studying Jesus' teachings, etc.) set the stage for them being in awe of the Lord. They were cultivating their spiritual lives together, so it makes sense that they were more prepared to experience the Lord doing amazing things.

THEN, read or have a student read Acts 2:44-47a. The early church was clearly intentional about spending a lot of time together and giving generously, even sacrificially, to any among them that had needs. Ask for a volunteer to come write on the dry-erase board. Draw a line down the middle. On one side you want to record aspects of this type of community that excites your students. On the other side list the parts of this type of community that would make one apprehensive. Encourage all your students to share openly. Ask:

- **What parts of this communal lifestyle makes you apprehensive?**
 - Answers will vary. Write their answers on the board. Concerns might include fears that come up for those raised in individualistic societies. Sometimes we do not like to share our space or our things. We might not be comfortable having people in our business. It's more difficult to hide sins or your struggles in a group. One must learn to be selfless and look to group needs about his or her own. One might raise concern over fairness of distribution of resources and some people being lazy.
- **What parts of this communal lifestyle most excites you?**
 - Answers will vary. Write their answers on the board. Some positive factors might include benefits such as accountability, friendship, assistance from others, and encouragement. Conversation and food would be plentiful. Time to praise God is given priority and does not appear rushed. One would not have to concern themselves with being lonely or trying to figure out life's problems on his or her own.

NEXT, read or have a student reread Acts 2:27b. Discuss that when the believers practiced devotion that lead to a proper view of God, they lived in right relationship with others, and God blessed them by adding more believers day by day. Ask something like:

- **What do you think it would be like to see people come to know the Lord "day by day"?**
 - Answers will vary. Hopefully your students think it would be exciting!
- **Why do you think we don't see that happening today?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **What cutting-edge strategy did the new believers use to reach the lost?**
 - Answers will vary. They didn't really use a strategy. They simply devoted themselves to God and each other and it looks like people took notice.
- **What encouragement should these verses give us today?**
 - Answers will vary. Regardless of the struggles or challenges of living in community, clearly this is the lifestyle that God chooses to bless. We were not meant to walk through life alone. Also, we don't have to figure out a complicated formula to reach people for Christ. We simply need to become more focused on being devoted to Christ and His people. God is in control of the rest.

Ask if there are any questions, then transition into *The Last Word*.

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THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** To reinforce the idea of being devoted - while seeing who sets the highest push-up record for your youth group.
- **Set-Up:** Open floor space for students to do push-ups and a stopwatch (or cell phone timer).

FIRST, explain that in light of the devotion shown by the “pull up guy,” you are going to see who can set the record in your youth group (group leaders are also encouraged to participate) for “Most Push-Ups in a Minute.” Ask if anyone wants to participate. If so, set a standard for what you’re looking for in the push-up and give each participant a minute to see how many push-ups he or she can do. Once all the participants are done, ask something like:

- **Let’s say you want to increase the number of push-ups you can do in a minute. What should you do over the next four weeks?**
 - Answer: Practice doing push-ups.
- **Do you think not doing any push-ups for the next four weeks would be a good strategy? Explain.**
 - Answer: Of course not! If you want to get better at something, you have to put forth the effort to practice.
- **So, let’s think about this in terms of Christian community. When you think about what we’ve talked about in this lesson, do you feel like there are any areas you could improve? Name them.**
 - Answers will vary. There are always areas in our walk with Christ where we can improve.
- **Now that we’ve identified these areas, what should you do about them over the next few weeks? Practically speaking, what are some steps you can take?**
 - Answers will vary. For example, if we don’t spend time in prayer with other believers, we should pursue praying more with some fellow believers. If we don’t study the Word with fellow Christians, we should start making that happen. In other words, we just have to get ourselves in gear and put in the effort!
- **Would putting forth no effort in these areas yield a positive result? So, why is that so often the norm for us?**
 - Answers will vary. No, we aren’t just going to magically get better at living in community and growing together in our walks with Christ. A lot of times, however, we are selfish with our time and energy and don’t feel like putting in the effort it takes to walk closely with Jesus and others.

THEN, say something like:

- **It takes work and strength training to build muscle. Our Christian lives are no different. We will not automatically become close to God. We do not naturally live selflessly alongside other believers. Although salvation is free, Christian maturity and staying in community with other believers takes effort. Let’s begin to put forth that type of effort and see how the Lord will use it to draw people to Himself like he did in Acts.**

FINALLY, have a student close in prayer that the group will be unified. Ask that God would reveal anything that is hindering the fellowship of the group and that students would make every effort to restore relationships with one another.

- Don’t forget to distribute the devotions to your students this week. If you’re posting them on Instagram or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.

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- Use the **Social Media Guide** to stay in touch with students via text or Instagram and to encourage them to follow through with reading their devotions.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU . . .

- Do you have questions about a lesson?
- Something that worked particularly well you want to share?
- Something that didn't work you want to bring up?

We value your feedback! Please do not hesitate to email us with your questions, comments, or concerns, at feedback@youthministry360.com.