**Stories: The Goal of Discipleship Everyday Joy 9/23/2019**

*SermonTalk is an optional resource for Connect Group Leaders who desire to help their group underscore and apply key concepts from the sermon the previous week. The format and questions are just a menu from which you can choose or use as a foundation for further questions more specific to your group members.*

* Let’s talk movies. Downton Abbey is in theatres. Who has already seen it? Is it group date worthy?
* If you were stranded on a deserted island and could only eat one type of food, what would you choose? (Mexican, Italian, Caribbean, American, etc.)

Put a bunch of strangers around the dinner table with lots of food and it is amazing how quickly new friends are made. We may look different physically, but we can easily identify what we have in common and areas of interest just by looking at each other’s plates.

When we read through Acts, we learn a lot about how the early church learned to build community. This tight community invested time in building relationships that would help sustain it through highs and lows. Without a doubt, the early church was devoted to togetherness

As a church, we are continuing to look at Acts 2:42-47 and the stories that come from a life of discipleship. Last week’s sermon focused on the presence of everyday joy in the life of the believer. Let’s read that passage in Acts together to see what everyday joy looked like:

***42*** *They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.* ***43*** *Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.* ***44*** *All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who 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.*

The importance of community is obvious in this passage and certainly in our focus verse. Let’s read verse 46 one more time, “**Everyday they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts**,”

* What stands out for you in this verse?
* Where is community practiced and how did they build relationships?
* What was the attitude of the people?
* Why do you think the writer (Luke) was so intentional about repeating the word “together”?

The repetitiveness of “Together” is a key to what Luke is trying to communicate when he wrote Acts. This repetition highlights the singlemindedness and commonality that these early believers had. Their faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior was more powerful than anything that might divide them. They were motivated by a glad and sincere heart rather than obligation and duty.

In last week’s sermon, Pastor Jerimiah pointed out that **Biblical Community is designed to take place in the sacred and intimate spaces of life (at church and each other’s homes).**

* What is “Biblical Community”? What differentiates a church from a “Biblical Community”?
* Pastor Jerimiah contends that we are innately drawn to sacred spaces. What drew you to UBC and what would you say is the strength of the community at this church?
* What safeguards are essential for a church or a home to be a safe place for Biblical community to grow? How are those key safeguards secured into the framework of everyday practice?

A second take away from Sundays sermon is that **there is significant power in sharing a meal together because it draws us into relationship.  We need to be inviting people to dinner as much as we are inviting them to church.**

* Do you consider your family meals as having “significant power”? When are these meals particularly special to you?
* Inviting people into our home can be daunting and/or exciting. How is our prayer life impacted when we begin to ask God who He might have us invite to a meal?
* If obeying Christ changes us, then how are we changed when we begin to use our home/apartment as a community hub for Christ? Does our perspective of our family change? Our purpose? Our home? What about our time?

A final take away is that **Biblical community helps foster *everyday joy*.  When life is hard and difficult, we should have brothers and sisters that can be by our side with encouraging words that point us to the hope of the Gospel.  Consequently, we have strength to find joy even on the hardest days of life.  But it is community that helps us achieve this.**

* Share a time when you have seen a larger community of faith either celebrate with someone or walked through difficulty with someone? What impact did it have on you?
* Pastor Jerimiah contends that the Christian brothers and sisters around us give “strength to find joy even on the hardest days of life.” Based on your experience, do you agree or disagree with that statement?
* As disciples, God strategically places us to be community for others. This puts on each of us the responsibility to walk side by side with brothers and sisters pointing them to the hope of the Gospel. How does that change the way you view your responsibility/role in Sunday Connect?

**Application:**

* There are times when the community we have the most challenge cultivating is the one in our home or the one with family. What is your preferred vision of what those relationships look like? What is the most helpful way to support you long term as you pursue this?
* How can we encourage you in the week ahead to cultivate Biblical community in your neighborhood and work?
* What difficult road are you walking where you would allow us to encourage and pray for you?

How does choosing everyday joy change your perspective of the challenges of daily life?

What challenges you about the concepts that were reintroduced today?

In the last week, what forward movement could you share that we could celebrate together?

* Emotional safety is important for vulnerability to take place. What other things do you think are essential for your home to be a safe space for Biblical community? Why do you think it i
* How can “everyday joy” be Where do you practice community?
* Where do your relationships grow and become stronger?

What does it mean to “practice” community?

We know that the early church would face persecution. What impact do you think the intimate community that was built had for those members?