

4 Core Devotions

Lake Cities House Churches

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Acts 2:42

Vision and Overview of 4 Devotions

In the book of Acts we see a snapshot of the practices, values, and culture of the early church that Jesus came to establish. This Spirit filled community, that deeply loved God, loved one another, and loved those who didn't know Jesus, was fueled by FOUR CORE DEVOTIONS we see in Acts 2:42. The commitment and consistent practice of these devotions in the life of the church equipped ordinary people to enjoy and follow Jesus in all of life.

Implementation

In the rhythm of House Church, each of these are practiced every week in some measure, however, we've found that it to be most fruitful and effective to prioritize one each week and give our groups space to dive deeper into that practice. Over the course of a month, rotate through each of the four devotions. (See Sample Schedule)

Leave Footprints

It is really important that you consider how you are leaving footprints for people to follow with everything that you do in your group. Give thought to what would be easily reproducible with a father/mother and their kids. Simple Starting Points are great for helping everyone engage. It is definitely a win if people engage during your group gathering, but what if people could take what you did in your group gathering and do it with their family or neighbor during the week? Then you'd be seeing momentum in discipleship!

Devotion to Apostles' Teaching (Scripture)

Key Scripture: All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (Others: James 1:25; Matt. 5:19; Col. 3:16)

The Goal: To facilitate a safe environment where people of all spiritual maturity levels encounter Jesus and discover God's truth through the Scriptures, while being provided footprints to engage the Scriptures on their own.

Starting Point - Discovery Bible Study. There are many different approaches to engaging the Scriptures, however, one of the simplest ways is called Discovery Bible Study (DBS). DBS applies 5 questions to any passage of Scripture to help facilitate discussion and ultimately discovery. The 5 questions are:

- What does this passage say or reveal about God?
- What does this passage say or reveal about man (me)?
- What command does God give me to obey in this passage?
- What promises do God make in this passage?
- Who can I share this with?

Have everyone get a Bible and turn to the passage. Read the passage 2 or 3 times together as a group. Go around the circle and have each person read one verse in order. After reading the passage 2 or 3 times, have a minute of silence for people to think or gather their thoughts. Then dive into discussion using the DBS questions. Not every passage has a clear answer to each of these questions, so obviously direct the group as needed. Questions don't have to be answered in order.

Keep In Mind:

- This is not one person's personal teaching time. One person should be designated as a facilitator to help draw others out, encourage everyone to participate, and keep the group focused.
- Some silence is not a bad thing. Let people ponder, think and meditate. Let the Spirit work.
- All sharing should be aimed at building others up and desire to know and obey God.
- Avoid controversy. If someone in the group is teaching something publicly that is clearly in error, correct them with gentleness and grace. (1 Timothy 6:3-5)

Devotion to Fellowship (Also Life on Life Discipleship)

Key Scripture: If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. 1 John 1:6-7 (Others: James 5:16; Heb. 10:24-25; Rev. 12:11)

The Goal: To shepherd a safe and authentic environment where people can be truly known and know others, be deeply loved and love others, be encouraged and encourage others.

Starting Point - Look UP, Look IN, Look OUT

This practice is done in men's groups and women's groups of 2-4 people. Start with a short DBS to help the group get focused on Jesus. Any portion of John 15:1-17 is a great Scripture for it highlights God's work and our response in the process of abiding in Jesus and bearing fruit.

Look UP - Personal Relationship with Jesus (reference John 15:1-8)

- How is God at work in your life (lifting up, pruning, stirring, pursuing you)? (John 15:1-3)
- What is Jesus speaking to you (through His Word, His Spirit, or His People)? What are you praying for right now? What is your conversation with Jesus? (John 15:7)

Look IN - Look into our hearts and relationships (reference John 15:9-14)

- Is there anything you are stressed or anxious about? Is your heart troubled, hardened or are you losing heart in any way?
- Have you been loving others like Jesus? How? If not, what is preventing you?
- Where or how are you experiencing the joy of Jesus?
- Is there any sin you need to confess and repent of? (Galatians 5:19-25)

Look OUT - Participating in God's mission (reference John 15:15-17)

- How are you blessing others around you?
 - **Begin with Prayer** - Who am I praying for? Is there testimony to share?
 - **Listen** - How's God leading me? What needs/pain points am I hearing from those around me?
 - **Eat** - Who am I eating with? Who am I sharing the table with or inviting into my home?
 - **Serve** - What are the needs around me and how can/will I (or our group) serve?

- **Share Story** - Where are my conversations with others (casual, meaningful, discovery, spiritual)? Who can I share my story with? Is there someone I could invite to do a DBS?

Pray for one another!

Acknowledge that this practice takes courage for everyone in the group, but if we commit to sharing authentically the good and the bad we will experience breakthrough, freedom, and joy in Christ. Make clear that trust is a sacred and important part of this journey and we must honor one another by not tolerating gossip or slander. It is usually best to keep any prompts or questions you are using to facilitate this time as simple and clear as possible.

Keep In Mind:

- Leaders should be willing to go first and lead out in humility and vulnerability.
- First time guests or newcomers can be given the option just to listen and observe.
- Be led by the Spirit and willing to support, challenge, correct or rebuke one another with grace and gentleness when needed.

Devotion to Prayer

Key Scripture: Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. Col. 4:2 (Others: Matt. 6:9-13; Phil. 4:6-7; Eph. 6:17-18; Matt 18:19)

The Goal: To join together in prayer, thanksgiving, and intercession, contending for God's kingdom to come and will to be done, allowing the Spirit to bring about unity and manifest through spiritual gifts.

Starting Point - Discovery Prayer

Discovery Prayer is a very simple starting point that combines DBS with Prayer. Take a passage of Scripture and use it as the prayer guide.

- **Thank** - what can I thank God for about who he is or what he has done from this passage?
- **Declare** - what can I declare to be true about God or about me from this passage?
- **Ask** - what can I ask God for more of from this passage?

There are many other ways to practice this experience of prayer. You need to be aware of the spiritual development of your group in discerning how to practice this devotion. Here are a few other simple starting points you can use:

- **Open Prayer Chain.** Open the floor for people to pray for whatever or whoever is in their heart. It can be petition (prayer for their own need) or intercession (prayer for someone else). Have each next person who prays say a prayer of agreement with the person who prayed before them before they pray what is on their heart.
- **Topical Intercession.** Rally the group to pray for a nation, topic, or specific issue or cause.
- **Listening Prayer.** Take time to pray for one another and listen to the Spirit and share prophetic words of encouragement and upbuilding. (Use the [Encouragement Card Prompts](#) handout)

Keep In Mind:

- It is generally helpful to have non-distracting background music playing.
- Leaders should be willing to go first and lead out in prayer.
- Be attentive and sensitive to the Spirit, go where he leads.
- Silence and stillness is not bad, you may even want to encourage it from time to time.

Devotion to Breaking Bread

Key Scripture: So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us. 1 Thes. 2:8 (Others: 1 Pet. 4:9; 1 Cor. 11:23-26; Act 2:46)

The Goal: To build relationships through the practice of hospitality and sharing a meal, including the LORD's Supper.

Starting Point - Dinner Club

To help spread the value of hospitality, the dinner club starting point pairs families/couples/individuals together for a meal rather than having a large group meal. The leader assigns the groups and then each group is responsible for coordinating the time, location, and details of their breaking bread meal. This allows families in the group to open their homes to one another and builds community within the group. Groups are encouraged to partake of Communion on this night (Bread and the Cup) and remember Jesus.

- Set a schedule for the dinner club in advance so people have enough time to coordinate and plan.
- Communicate vision for the Lord's Supper/Communion

Keep In Mind:

- This is an opportunity to facilitate relationships within the group.
- Encourage hospitality and allow different people to host others for meals.