



Week 16 | February 3 Sermon

Community: [Continued for the next two weeks]

This is a good season in which to start intentionally sharing stories together. No doubt you have at least picked up on bits and pieces of each other's stories as discussion and growth have taken place. Now it's time to be intentional, giving each individual significant time to share his/her story with the rest of the GROUP. This can include as much or as little as any given person is comfortable sharing. As leaders, model this by going first! Consider establishing a "schedule" so that each person knows when it will be his/her turn and can come prepared. This will take you several weeks and will be the focus of our community time together between now and Lent. Here are some key points to consider when sharing:

When people tell their faith stories, five things appear over and over again—five things God uses to grow our faith. They're ways of recognizing how God is already involved in each of our lives. It's a great way for you to think through your own story.

Practical Teaching Studying the Bible and listening to sermons make Scripture seem alive and relevant in our daily lives. They show us who God is, who we are, and who God wants us to be.

Providential Relationships God uses the people in our lives to influence us in extraordinary ways. He speaks to us through others—whether lifelong friends or short-term acquaintances. Even difficult relationships can be used by God for our good.

Private Disciplines Things like prayer, personal time reading the Bible, fasting, and solitude deepen our relationship with God. They get our hearts in synch with His.

Personal Ministry Jesus showed us that we find life by giving our lives away. When we serve others. We are privileged to partner with God in what he's doing in the lives of those we serve.

Pivotal Circumstances When big things happen, good or bad, they change the way we interact with God. Circumstances often cause us to pay attention to what He's doing in our lives.

As you think about your own story, consider how the five things have played a part in your journey with God. You don't have to talk about all five things, but chances are there are significant things to be shared within at least one or two of these categories to let your GROUPIES get to know the real you.

"Community" by Andy Stanley

Sermon Title: The Power of Herod v. The Power of Prayer | Text: Acts 12

Auditorium Discussion Questions::

Just for fun. Think about all of the various characters we've met so far in the book of Acts. The apostles, Barnabas, Cornelius, Stephen, Philip, the Eunuch, Saul, Agabus, James, John, and et cetera. If you had to choose one person with whom you most identify, who would it be and why?

In what aspect of life do you find yourself most susceptible to comparing yourself with others?

Stephen was stoned, James was executed with a sword, but Peter was miraculously delivered. Are there areas of life in which you have felt that your circumstances weren't "fair" in the grand scheme of life? How should we wrestle with these things? Can we reconcile the different stories and outcomes?

Peter was delivered "the night before" his trial (and what would surely have been his immediate execution). God could have sent the angel earlier, but He chose to time Peter's deliverance at the last minute. Have you ever had an experience in which you questioned God's timing, but then in retrospect realized that it was perfect? Would you be willing to share?

Tom talked about the "Game of Thrones" that was being played out in Jerusalem and how the early believers became pawns in the game. We live in a very different political system, yet we still struggle with being both a good citizen of our nation and community while recognizing dual citizenship in the Kingdom of Heaven. What struggles have you experienced in this reality? What lessons have you learned? What scriptural and/or spiritual principles guide your thoughts, words, and behaviors?

Sanctuary Discussion Questions::

Please read Acts 12. What does the Holy Spirit draw your attention to? Why might this be at this season of your life?

Kevin describe Acts 12 in this way: Acts 12 has a particular focus. The key emphasis and lesson is the power of united prayer.

Do you agree with this? Why or why not?

What role does the practice of prayer play in your daily rhythms?

Do you practice "united prayer" as we see throughout the book of Acts? Why or why not?

When have you been elated as prayers were answered?

When have you been disappointed as prayers were seemingly not answered?

In what ways do you see the spiritual battle between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of evil played out in Acts 12?

Why does Acts contain so many stories of the angels engaged in the living out of Acts 1:8? What do you understand about angels? Are angels important in your life with Christ? Why or why not?

Could you pray "in one accord" for 1-2 major concerns facing your small group?

