**Live in Community**

 Small Group Study

**Volume Overview**

**Better Together**

Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. ([Ephesians 4:3](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Eph4.3))

*The Christian life is never lived alone. When we become a Christian, we’re adopted into God’s family. We’re welcomed into a community. We’re meant to live and grow in faith together. But that takes humility and intentionality. We grow together as we pray and study Scripture together. We bear responsibility for one another by our encouragement and our honoring of those in authority. God is growing us together as one body, one family.*

**Session Overview**

**Study Together**

**Biblical Encounter:** The Bereans Eagerly Search the Scriptures ([Acts 17:10–15](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac17.10-15))

**Outcome:** Grow in faith with others as you engage with the Bible together.

*Growing in our faith is a lifelong journey that takes intentionality, passion, and discipline. But it’s also something that is best done with others. In this session, we‘ll look at a special group of people, sometimes called the Bereans (because they were from a town called Berea). This group took the time to listen to Paul and Silas explain Scripture in a way they hadn‘t heard before. Together they studied, discussed, and discovered new truths. We can learn so much from their attitude and their practices.*

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| First time leading *Live* for Adults? Check out the [Facilitator Guide](https://0b769b0ed3569ef9d18b-f88d8272f61086866d50d048b43ef630.ssl.cf2.rackcdn.com/sites/biblengagementproject/Listen_Facilitator_Guide.pdf). |

To access session content and videos from a computer, visit: [BibleEngagementProject.com/downloads](https://bibleengagementproject.com/downloads)

**Engage**

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| **QUESTION**What is something you love to do that’s impossible (or at least not fun) to do by yourself? |

When you really think about it, it‘s hard to have fun all by yourself. Even if you do something alone, you often at least want to share it with someone else. Social media, anyone? We were created to need each other. And people thrive best when they live in a community with others.

A quick glance through any biography of a famous inventor, world leader, or accomplished musician will prove that we can’t achieve anything great completely on our own. We need people to give us feedback, help us see things from a different point of view, to encourage and mentor us, and even to compete with and challenge us. In our Bible passage today, look for some of these benefits of growing together in community and be open to God’s Spirit revealing things to you through others as you grow in your faith.

**Watch**

As we watch this video, think about your answer to this question: How can you be more intentional about studying God’s Word together with other believers?



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**Consider What the Bible Says**

The Book of Acts gives a lot of details about how the Early Church was formed. It also describes Paul’s journeys to spread the message of Jesus. At the beginning of chapter [17](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac17), Paul and Silas were in Thessalonica. Paul had gone to the synagogue to explain that Jesus was the Messiah they had been waiting for. A few people there chose to believe. But some others became jealous and started riots to get Paul and Silas to leave the city.

After being rejected in Thessalonica, Paul and Silas didn’t give up. They traveled about forty-five miles west to a city called Berea. They didn’t let the rejection in Thessalonica stop their service for God. They kept right on preaching in their new assignment at the Jewish synagogue in Berea.

**Paul Reasoned with the Bereans**

Read [Acts 17:10–11](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac17.10-11).

The Jews in Berea had a much different response to Paul’s message than the Jews in Thessalonica. They were hungry to know the truth. Often, Jewish communities of Paul‘s day had only one copy of what we would call the Old Testament, so they had to share it. They would go to the synagogue to read it or to hear it being read. They would talk about what it meant or how they could apply it. Acts tells us that the people at this Berean synagogue searched these texts together to see if Paul and Silas’s teaching about Jesus lined up with the Scriptures. They didn’t just blindly accept the message. We should also be careful to compare any teaching that we hear with what God‘s Word says.

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| **QUESTION**What do you think the Bereans were like as a community before Paul and Silas arrived? |

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| **QUESTION**Compare the response of the Bereans to Paul’s message with the response of those in Thessalonica earlier in chapter [17](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac17). How were their attitudes similar or different? |

**Many Believed**

Read [Acts 17:12](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac17.12).

As the Bereans looked for the truth in God’s Word with an open heart, many believed. Even some who were not Jewish were convinced. Today some people claim that faith is only for the simpleminded. They would argue that thinking people don’t believe in Jesus and His message. But the Bereans showed us the exact opposite result. God created our hearts and our minds, so we shouldn’t be afraid of people using those gifts to investigate the truth. It has been said that a person doesn’t really own their faith until they’ve questioned it.

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| **QUESTION**What do you think attracted the Greek men and women to this discussion of Scripture? |

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| **QUESTION**Where do you see the Holy Spirit at work in these interactions that the Bereans had with Paul and Silas? |

**Bereans Challenged**

Read [Acts 17:13–15](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac17.13-15).

Remember Paul and his companions left Thessalonica to escape the angry mob. But the troublemakers followed them to Berea. These Thessalonian Jews weren‘t satisfied with running Paul out of town. They wanted to keep him from preaching to the whole Roman world! We might assume that this would have destroyed the new faith of the Berean believers. But it seems that their serious study of Scripture had given them deep enough roots in a relatively short period of time to keep them firmly grounded.

With their help, Paul left Berea. But Silas and Timothy stayed behind to continue teaching this eager group. When difficulty comes into our life, do we have strong enough roots to sustain us like the Bereans did? Have we spent time studying the Scriptures and growing in our understanding of Jesus? This is the way to make sure that we stay connected to Him no matter what.

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| **QUESTION**Do you think the challenges the Bereans immediately faced helped make their faith stronger? Why or why not? |

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| **QUESTION**What challenges to your faith have you experienced recently? How does living your faith out in community help you overcome these challenges? |

**Did You Know?**

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| *During Paul’s day, Berea was one of the oldest cities of Macedonia and served alongside its sister city, Mieza, as a center of education for the nobles and princes such as Alexander the Great. This helps us understand why the members of the synagogue of Berea were so eager to study what Paul taught them in light of the Old Testament. It appears that study was an ingrained part of the city’s culture.* |

**Reflect**

**Grow in faith with others as you engage with the Bible together.**

There’s such a big difference between the way those in Thessalonica rejected Paul and Silas’s message and the way the Bereans wrestled with it. Those in Thessalonica were jealous and fearful of the changes these new teachings could bring. But the Bereans listened eagerly. They were curious to learn as they studied the Scriptures together. They discussed them with one another and many concluded that they pointed to Jesus as the Messiah. They even stayed calm and stood strong when resistance came.

The story of the Berean believers can inspire us in many ways. They were focused on keeping their faith in a very pagan culture through studying God‘s Word and helping each other live it out. When they were shown this new idea of Jesus as their Messiah, they were already disciplined in regular study. They combined their hunger to know the truth with a humility to listen to Paul’s message. By studying and discussing it in community, they learned from each other. Today, we can use these same methods to grow in our faith. We can study and think for ourself, but we can also learn from each other as we gain insights in our faith community.

**Listen to God**

Let’s pause and listen to what God might want to say to us about what we have read and shared. Be silent for a few moments and reflect on the following questions. Respond to the one that most resonates with what God is saying to you now. Then complete the others during Day 1 of your devotion time this week.

**Personal Reflection Questions**

*Record your answers to the following questions in the space provided or in your personal journal.*

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| **QUESTION**What can you learn about growing in your faith from the Berean believers? |

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| **QUESTION**What is your attitude toward studying Scripture? Is there anything that needs to change so you can grow? |

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| **QUESTION**What role does community play in your study of Scripture? How can you be more intentional about studying the Bible with others? |

**Activate**

The way the Bereans eagerly listened and searched the Scripture together for answers is such a great example for us today. Many of us are guilty of only allowing the “experts” to study and pass down their insights to us. But there’s great benefit to diving in yourself to understand God’s Word better. We have so many resources available to us, and there are many other people who need to learn alongside you as you grow in faith together.

**Challenge**

This week, look for some Bible study tools that might help you go deeper in your understanding of God’s Word. It might be a Bible commentary, a new study Bible, an online resource, or a podcast. Take an extra step beyond just reading a passage so that you can learn something new. One of the best ways to learn is to share what you are learning with others. Have coffee with a friend or join a Bible study, so you can be accountable to others and gain insight from what other believers are learning. Stay open to the Holy Spirit to speak to you as you study. Be eager to learn, like the Bereans.

**Prayer Requests**

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| *Note any requests from the group and pray together. Also remember to pray for them during the week.* |

Studying the Bible with others is such a helpful way to grow in our faith. It’s important that we listen to God through His Word both in community and individually. As you do the personal devotions this week, take what you’re learning and share it with others. Then listen to their insights as you learn together.

**Live on Your Own**

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| *Before you begin each devotion, pray and ask God to speak to you through His Word. Record your answers to the following questions in the space provided or in your personal journal.* |

**Day 1: The Bereans Eagerly Study the Scriptures**

Read [Acts 17:10–15](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac17.10-15).

Look back over Live in Community and complete your responses to the Personal Reflection Questions. Plan how to complete the Activate component if you haven’t already done so. If time permits, reread the Scripture too.

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| **QUESTION**What is God saying to you about growing in your faith as you study the Bible together with others? |

**Live on Your Own**

**Day 2: Be Eager to Learn**

Read [Psalm 19:7–11](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ps19.7-11).

This psalm written by David sets the tone for what our attitude toward Scripture should be and identifies many benefits of knowing His Word. God’s instruction revives, gives wisdom, brings joy, gives insight for how to live, and more. We should eagerly desire, like David and the Bereans, to learn His laws and obey them. Knowing what great rewards can be found in doing life God’s way can inspire us to be hungry to study and love His Word—both personally and within community.

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| **QUESTION**List all the benefits of studying God’s Word you see in this passage. |

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| **QUESTION**What things that you listed above are important to you? What things that you listed above have you forgotten or taken for granted? |

**Live on Your Own**

**Day 3: Meet Together**

Read [Hebrews 10:23–25](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Heb10.23-25).

The author of Hebrews taught believers in these verses to stay strong in their trust in God and the hope they had in Him. They were encouraged to meet together regularly, to find ways to motivate and help each other do what is right, and to love each other. As believers today, we also need to be reminded that we grow in our faith best when we grow with others. We need each other to stay hopeful and to remind each other of God’s promises and truths. Life can get discouraging at times, but when we’re committed to gathering with other believers, our faith can be strengthened, and we can stand firm during life’s challenges.

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| **QUESTION**What benefits have you experienced from gathering regularly with other believers? |

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| **QUESTION**What are some challenges you have faced that seemed to keep you from wanting to gather with other believers? How can these verses help you push past those challenges and continue to meet with believers? |

**Live on Your Own**

**Day 4: Be Devoted to Community**

Read [James 5:13–20](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jas5.13-20).

James was one of Jesus’ half-brothers who later became a believer. He was writing to Jewish believers in this book. In chapter [5](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jas5), we can see threads of how we are to interact with each other as believers. James said we are to pray with each other, especially when someone is dealing with hardships or is sick. We are to confess our sins to each other. We are also to lead our brothers and sisters who wander from the faith back to Christ.

This is community: sharing, encouraging, believing, and praying with each other as we grow in our faith. Community is one barrier to wandering away, getting overwhelmed, or being distracted by the lies and hardships of life. Committing to living life in relationship with others and with purpose can keep you strong in your faith.

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| **QUESTION**What things do you notice about the importance James placed on being devoted to community in this passage? |

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| **QUESTION**Think about a time when you wandered away from the truth or felt overwhelmed by life. If there were other believers who helped you, describe how it felt to have a community around you that cared and pointed you back to the truth. |

**Live on Your Own**

**Day 5: Teach Others**

Read [2 Timothy 2:1–10](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.2Ti2.1-10).

Paul was a mentor to Timothy as he led the church in Ephesus. In these verses, Paul challenged Timothy to pass on what he had learned to others. But Timothy wasn’t to pass knowledge on to just anyone—he was to choose reliable students who would also be able to teach others.

As students of God’s Word, we should also pass along the things of God that have been taught to us. We should always be learning from others, but we should also be looking for those who can learn (and want to learn) from us. Sharing the truth with others is a wonderful way to grow in your faith!

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| **QUESTION**Why is it important to look to the future when you are teaching others? |

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| **QUESTION**Who are two or three reliable people in your circle of influence who you can pass on the things you are learning from God’s Word or who you would like to learn from? Reach out to them. |