

The early Christians "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.... had everything in common... and gave to anyone as he had need...ate together with glad and sincere hearts..." and experienced God's blessing as He "added to their number daily."

GROUP MEETING FORMAT

Shepherding Groups are more than Bible study groups although that is one important element. The basic purpose of our groups is to build Christian community by developing meaningful relationships among members. Shepherding Groups look and act much like the house groups described in Acts 2:42-47.

Each group meeting includes four segments:

• WELCOME

This purpose of this segment is to develop a spirit of community and caring for one another. In the past, many groups have spent their first month together sharing conversion stories. Generally speaking, however, a great way to begin this segment each week is with a question such as, "What has God been doing in and/or through your life this past week?" or "What is the most significant thing that happened in your life this past week?" Suggestions will be offered to provide variety.

• WORSHIP

Different approaches will be suggested each week as a way of keeping worship and prayer time fresh and meaningful. This is a good time to have communion if the Lord's Supper is to be shared during your group time.

• WORD

In this section, you will find questions focused on a particular passage from the Bible. The questions will attempt to avoid an abstract discussion of issues not directly related to the lives of those in your group. Emphasis will be given to applying what is *already* known—encouraging group members to bear each other's burdens and teach and admonish one another.

• WORKS

Small groups must maintain an outward focus to remain healthy. To keep groups from becoming ingrown and self-serving, a small group must deliberately reach out. At each meeting, you will have a reminder to cast a vision for our mission as a church—*modeling the life of Christ and sharing His life-changing message.*