



Better Together

OPENING PRAYER

Invite a member of the group to lead prayer.

Read Acts 2:42-27 (CEB)

“42 The believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to the community, to their shared meals, and to their prayers. 43 A sense of awe came over everyone. God performed many wonders and signs through the apostles. 44 All the believers were united and shared everything. 45 They would sell pieces of property and possessions and distribute the proceeds to everyone who needed them. 46 Every day, they met together in the temple and ate in their homes. They shared food with gladness and simplicity. 47 They praised God and demonstrated God’s goodness to everyone. The Lord added daily to the community those who were being saved.”

The believers had just witnessed and experienced the pouring out of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. Jewish people from many different nations, and who spoke different languages, gathered in one place and the Spirit gave them the ability to hear the message spoken in their own language. It was the undoing of the Tower of Babel and 3,000 people joined the church. The North African early church Father Augustine said that the Holy Spirit is the mutual love between father and Son. More recently, Theologian Clark Pinnock says that the Holy Spirit is the Flame of love. The church caught on fire on the Day of Pentecost because God who dwells in community of persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, poured out the flame of love on humanity.

When they left the temple that fire did not go out. They took a spark with them to their small groups. My friends, when we gather in community, we look more like the God who created us. It is in small groups that God's love is perfected in us because we put into practice the command to love our neighbor.

GROUP REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Share where you've seen God at work in your life this week.

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What are your highs and lows from this week?

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What are the benefits of being in a small group?

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Share a time in your life when the community, or your small group, helped you.

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What are some ways that our groups can reflect the love of Jesus Christ to the world?

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PRAISE AND PRAYER REQUESTS

Please go around the group and have each person share a praise for this week and a prayer request/concern.

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CLOSING PRAYER

Have a volunteer lead closing prayer: asking for prayer concerns and lifting up the needs of the group.

DAILY REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Please answer these during your personal devotional time at the end of the day or do it as a couple or family.

Where have you seen God today? For the children, we say, "what made you happy today?"

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What broke your heart or made you sad today?

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What good thing did you do for someone else today?

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What are you thankful for today?

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LABOR DAY

Supplies:

- Bible
- Sacred Candle & Matches/Lighter
- Honey
- Spoon for each family member

WELCOMING GOD:

Gather together, and welcome God into this time and space through the lighting of a candle. Take this moment to pause briefly and sit quietly in this light for a few moments, allowing time for everyone to relax their body, mind, and spirit for this time. In these moments, the invitation is to become aware of God's presence with and amongst you as a family.

SHARING WITH GOD AND ONE ANOTHER:

Say: "If anything is on our minds that makes it difficult for us to focus, let's share it now and then let it go."

- Whoever leads this portion might share what is on his or her mind to model this. Give time for each person to respond. When everyone has responded that would like to, invite everyone to place their hands out and lift them up as we give these distractions to God.

OR you can invite the family to pray together as one person leads, saying the following:

"Dear Loving God, The One who knows our hearts, celebrates our victories, grieves with us during our losses, and gives us the strength to overcome our challenges. Please help us to let go of the distractions we name now, so that we can openly share with our family and may encounter you in a special way today. Our distractions are... (let there be silence here, so everyone has an opportunity to name aloud what is distracting them).

In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen."

ENCOUNTERING GOD:

Read aloud: Acts 2:42-47.

- Take turns reading the Scripture or have a different family member read the Scripture each week.

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds[a] to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home[b] and ate their food with glad and generous[c] hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved."

ENCOUNTERING EACH OTHER:

Say: "The Bible tells us that as people paid attention to and learned from what the Apostles taught, they were filled with awe and joined together. More and more people came to be a part of the group. It must have been so sweet to be a part of the early Church community!"

Activity: Place a little bit of honey on each person's spoon to be tasted. Taste the honey. As you do, spend a few moments thinking about how sweet the honey is and how it went from creation to your table. Do you know?

Say: "It takes 4,000 bees to make one pound of honey! That means if you have an 8 oz. honey jar, it took 2,000 bees to make that honey - and that's before beekeepers harvested it! A bee's life is spent looking after the good of the hive, so they can make sweet honey. Bees live to serve others. And we might think about the Church like a beehive: we exist to love Jesus and to serve people."

Discussion Questions

- How are the people in the early Church like bees?
- What are some things we do to serve others?

Activity (continued): Taking turns, go around the table and share one thing you can do this week to serve each person gathered today.

*For an alternative, or additional, activity this week, download the #WCBackto-School Prayer & Planning Guide to complete as a family!

ENCOUNTERING GOD TOGETHER:

Say: "May we pray together as a family..."

Let us share our prayers for the world: for our country and leaders, for other countries and their leaders...

Let us share our prayers for the church, ministers, and spiritual leaders...

Let us share our prayers for our teachers, first responders, friends, and others in the community...

Let us share our prayers for our family and our own specific needs..."

If you would like to record the people for whom you pray, use the next few lines to do so:

*You can also record these requests in a family prayer journal if you are using one.

ENCOUNTERING TRANSFORMATION TOGETHER:

Pray aloud together:

God, we welcomed you here and read Your Word,
we prayed and we spent time with you,
we rested in your love for us,
and we did this all together.

Now, we promise to love one another and others as you love us.
In the name of Christ. Amen.

BLESSING ONE ANOTHER FOR OUR ENCOUNTERS WITH THE WORLD:

Invite family members to bless one another using any of the examples below or their own blessings.

Examples:

- "I love you. God loves you. I pray God blesses you."
- "God loves you exactly like you are—and so do I."
- "I love the gifts God has given you and how you bless the world with them."

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