



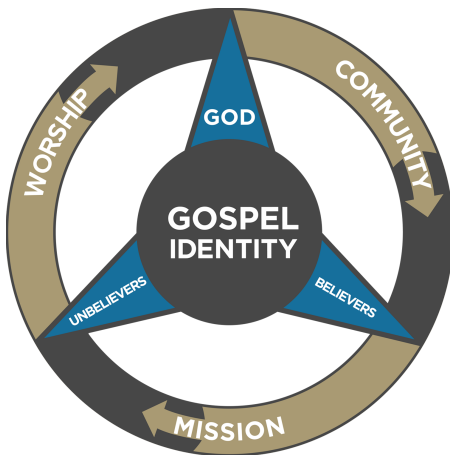
# COMMUNITY GROUP

Launch Curriculum

PART TWO



Take a moment to briefly review the Discipleship Chart together.



**Our Disciple Chart visually shows what a disciple is:**

- The center represents a disciple's **gospel identity** that is found in Jesus and what He has done for them.
- The triangles represent a disciple's **gospel relationships** with God, believers, and unbelievers.
- The outer circle represents a disciple's **gospel rhythms** of worship, community, and mission.

## DISCUSSION: SERVE YOUR CITY WEEK

In the last week of this curriculum, we ask Community Groups across Northern Nevada to serve their cities. Like God who moved toward us before we ever moved toward Him, we will serve those around us as a demonstration of God's love.

How and when your group serves your city is up to you (a simple prayer walk is a way to serve your city). You can serve someone/somewhere all week, one day, or one hour. Pick a date now, discuss how you'll serve your city, and then pray about your plans, asking God to bless your work!

### IDEAS

- Purchase gifts or supplies for teachers
- Visit a retirement home to serve and talk with residents
- Clean up a park or school
- Provide groceries or a night out for families in need
- Make care packages for first responders
- Provide lunches and prayer to those in need
- Pay for laundry at a laundromat and pray for people there
- Adopt a foster family and provide meals
- Volunteer at a crisis pregnancy center
- Pray for & feed the homeless
- Paint/fix playground equipment
- Provide stocked backpacks for students
- Hand out hygiene kits
- Prayer walk in your neighborhood



## SECTION 3: RELATIONSHIP WITH BELIEVERS

In this section we're exploring what it looks like to have relationship with believers.

### Week 9: We Nurture the Church

#### ICE BREAKER

*Write about a time in your life when a brother or sister in Christ brought you comfort and hope during a difficult time. What did they do? How did their words and actions make you feel? Have a few people share their answers.*

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#### READ

**Take turns reading aloud** the Big Idea, Quotes, and Article ("Nurture the Church") below.

#### **BIG IDEA**

The church is a family of redeemed sinners given the privilege of nurturing one another toward godliness.

## Quotes

*Those who love their dream of a Christian community more than they love the Christian community itself become destroyers of that Christian community.*

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer

*Loyal fellowship of believers is not an 'add on' to good doctrine. Fellowship of believers is often the vein through which the Savior's blood pumps us whole and well.*

- Rosaria Butterfield

## Article: Nurture the Church

If someone asked you why regular Christian community is a part of your life, how would you respond?

For centuries, Christians have gathered together in gospel-centered community even when gathering was dangerous. Even today, Christians gathering in a country like Afghanistan are almost always risking their lives to do so.<sup>1</sup> Why do Christians do this?

Because *Christians are related by blood*.

No, we don't share DNA, but we share something much more fundamental: we're all united to the Lord Jesus. Through His shed blood, Jesus has made Christians members of His family. And one of the most crucial components of any healthy family is deliberate *nurturing*.

What do we mean?

The first step is to understand what nurture means. Dictionary.com defines nurture in this way:

*"To feed and protect; to support and encourage; to bring up, train, educate."*

To nurture is to *deliberately help someone toward a healthy goal*. The healthy goal for Christians is *godliness*. The Apostle Paul calls Christians to this communal, transformative life in Romans 12:

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<sup>1</sup> Read about the persecution faced by Christians globally at [www.opendoorsusa.org](http://www.opendoorsusa.org)

*"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind..." (Romans 12:1-2).*

This is a key turning point in Romans. Based on everything Paul has taught about the gospel of Jesus in Romans 1-11, he calls Christians to pursue godliness in chapter 12. We don't catch this in English, but in the original language the "you" and "your" are plural. Verse 1 could realistically be written like this:

*"I appeal to y'all, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present y'all's bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is y'all's spiritual worship."*

That might be bad English, but it's great theology. The pursuit of godliness is a family undertaking, which is why the Holy Spirit gives every Christian spiritual gifts:

*"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit [...] To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." (1 Corinthians 12:4-7)*

*"What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up." (1 Corinthians 14:26)*

The takeaway is this: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have invited you into helping your brothers and sisters become more and more like the Lord you all love, and to allow your brothers and sisters to do the same for you (see Ephesians 4:11-14).

So let's take a look at how to practically nurture the church.

## EXERCISE: HOW TO NURTURE THE CHURCH

Theologian and pastor Bryan Chapell helps us start the work of nurturing on the right foot when he writes,

*"What Christians do is based on who we are in Christ. We obey because God has loved us and united us to Himself by His Son; we are not united to God, nor do we make Him love us, because we have obeyed Him. Our obedience is a response to His love, not a purchase of it."<sup>2</sup>*

We have to continually come back to the gospel as we pursue godliness together.

***Below verses from Romans 12:9-21 that show different ways we can nurture one another toward godliness.***

**As a group, read the passage together.**

**Then dialogue about and write** your responses to the questions.

As a reminder, if you're an extrovert, make sure you allow those who are quieter to speak up so that all members of the group have some ownership in how the group pursues godliness.

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<sup>2</sup> Bryan Chapell, *The Imperative-Indicative Balance*, [www.9marks.org](http://www.9marks.org)

## Romans 12:9-21

9 Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. 10 Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. 11 Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. 12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. 13 Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. 17 Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. 19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." 20 To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.



How are these commands connected to the person and work of Jesus?

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“Love” is mentioned twice in this passage. What does genuine, biblical love for look like? How do we practically practice this within Community Group?

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Of all of these commands, where is our Community Group the strongest? Why?

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Of all of these commands, where is our Community Group the weakest? Why?

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## PRAYER

- Based on your responses to the questions above, pray that God would shape each person and the group as a whole into Christians who deliberately and joyfully nurture one another toward godliness.
- Ask God to protect your group from satanic division, selfishness, and bitterness.
- **Write out** any specific prayers that you'd like to be praying for one another:

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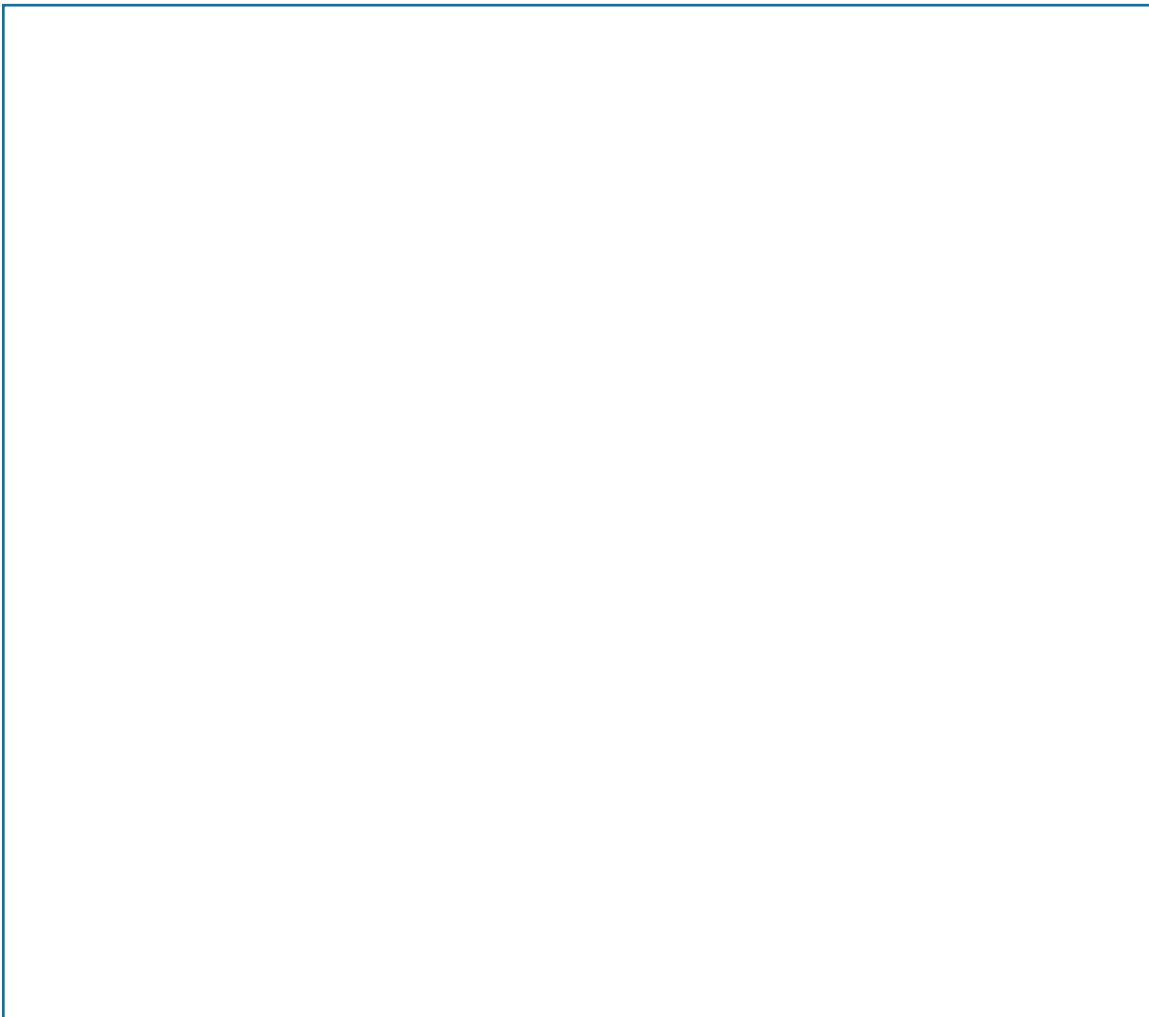
## SECTION 3: RELATIONSHIP WITH BELIEVERS

### Week 10: Unity in Diversity

#### ICE BREAKER

*This week we're looking at godly diversity amongst believers and the unity we have in Christ.*

**In the square below, draw** your family & home growing up, using images that show how your family related and interacted (i.e. if your family was loud and social, draw some of the parties you hosted). Explain your drawing to the group.



## DISCUSSION: GOD-DISHONORING DIVERSITY

**Read** the descriptions of cultural diversity below, then discuss the question.

*Not all diversity promoted by our culture honors God.*

### **Sexual Diversity**

*Accepting the many ways to identify one's gender beyond the God-given categories of "male" and "female"; Accepting all sexual desires, including homosexual or bisexual desires, as beautiful and good.*

### **Worldview Diversity**

*Accepting all beliefs and ideas about God, humanity, morality, meaning, and reality as equally legitimate and true.*

### **Spiritual/Religious Diversity**

*Accepting that all religions are equally valid paths to salvation, eternal life, or absolute truth, and that all forms of spiritual practice (including tarot cards, crystals, astrology, psychics, palm reading, etc.) are legitimate methods for relating to, accessing, or worshiping God.*

*What's destructive and harmful about these types of diversity?*

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**Read** the quotes & summary below then do the study on the next page together.

## Quotes

*The world imagines it will see diversity spring from a culture that promotes individualism. But true diversity will only come as we die to ourselves and prefer the needs of others. We must re-evaluate our personal preferences, political leanings, socioeconomic status—indeed, our very lives—in light of the gospel of Jesus Christ.*  
- Doug Logan

*If we look at the history of the world and we look at the situation of the global church today, we find that Christianity is, hands down, the most diverse movement in all of history.*  
- Rebecca McLaughlin

## SUMMARY

Unity in diversity isn't a core value because it's *useful* (i.e. if we have diversity, we'll have varied perspectives and skill sets.) or because it's *relevant*. Unity in diversity is a core value because...

***The Father sent Jesus for, Jesus willingly died for, and the Holy Spirit applies the work of Jesus to a diverse people from all tribes, languages, and nations. The gospel being embraced by people from all over the world glorifies God.***

As Doug Logan writes, "May we never yawn at something for which our Savior bled."

## STUDY: GOD BOUGHT UNITY IN DIVERSITY

As a group, read through the passage below and answer the questions.  
Remember: Community Group is a safe place to get the wrong answers, ask questions, and lovingly disagree.

*Note: In this passage, the Apostle John sees a vision of heaven and he poetically describes what he sees. While discussion could go a number of directions, our focus will be on the lyrics of the worship song that the twenty-four elders sing: God's plan of salvation has been accomplished, and a diverse group of people are included in this salvation.*

### Revelation 5:6-10

6 And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. 7 And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. 8 And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9 And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, 10 and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."

### Questions

1. Who is the "you" referencing in verse 9? Why is this person being worshiped?

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2. Look at verses 9-10. What details do you notice in the lyrics of the worship song? How do these details inform our view of unity in diversity?

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3. This diverse group of saved people have a new purpose and future. What is this new purpose and future? Why is this significant?

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4. How are God's diverse people saved? How does this help us understand the basis of Christian unity?

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What else stands out or is confusing to you from this passage?

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## PRAYER

**Use the lyrics from Revelation 5:9-10 as a guide** to praise the Father, Son, and Spirit for saving all kinds of people. Ask for God to bring godly diversity, and ask God for help to put your pride to death.

- **Write out** any specific prayers that you'd like to be praying for one another:

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## REMEMBER: SERVE YOUR CITY IS COMING IN 2 WEEKS

We're asking you to serve your city. Just as God moved toward us before we ever moved toward Him, we will serve those around us as a demonstration of God's love. Serving your city is as simple as praying for your city on a walk together.

How are plans coming along? Let's remember to keep praying that God would bless our efforts, give opportunities for evangelism, and protect us from the devil.





## SECTION 4: RELATIONSHIP WITH UNBELIEVERS

In this final section of the curriculum we're exploring relationship with unbelievers, those who have not trusted in Jesus for salvation.

### Week 11: God's Evangelism Plan

#### ICE BREAKER

How would you summarize the mission of the church?

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#### STUDY: THE MISSION GIVEN TO GOD'S PEOPLE

**Read** the Quotes and Big Idea below. Then discuss the Bible study questions.

##### Quotes

*We have a timeless story from God, which is true for all peoples of all cultures and in all places. But at the same time, it has to be told by a person who is in a time, culture, and place.*

- Sam Chan

*You can scare people toward heaven, but you can't scare anybody in. Saving faith means receiving Christ as your treasure, not just as a fire escape.*

- John Piper

#### BIG IDEA

The mission of the church is to make disciples by bearing witness to Jesus Christ the Son of God, in the power of the Holy Spirit, for the glory of God.

There are many good, culture-transforming things individual Christians do - practically serve and love our neighbors, pursue and spread goodness, truth, and beauty, love our families, etc. - but the mission of the church as a collective is "to be a witness for Christ, and not a substitute for Christ."<sup>3</sup>

What this means is that the church has a specific, God-given mission of **witnessing** or telling others about Jesus.

**In the passages below, circle the purpose statements**, the phrases or words that tell us **what** the church is going to do or is called to do by God.

**Matthew 28:18-20**

*16 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. 17 And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

According to this passage, what is the mission of the church? What is the motivation for doing this?

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<sup>3</sup> James Bannerman, *The Church of Christ*.

**Luke 24:44-48**

*44 Then [Jesus] said to [the disciples], "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." 45 Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, 46 and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, 47 and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things."*

According to this passage, what task does the church participate in? What is the motivation to accomplish this task?

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**Acts 14:19-23**

*19 Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. 20 But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city, and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe. 21 When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, 22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. 23 And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.*

According to this passage, what did the early church do? Why?

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## DISCUSSION: YOU'RE FITTED FOR THE CHURCH'S MISSION

**Read** the Summary below, then discuss the prompts.

### Summary

Based on the passages above and other New Testament passages, we could say that the mission of the church is "to make disciples by bearing witness to Jesus Christ the Son of God, in the power of the Holy Spirit, for the glory of God."<sup>4</sup>

So what is *your* role in this mission? Think about **where** God has put you, **who** He has put around you, and **why** this mission is worth your sacrifice.

### Where

Think about your neighborhood, your area, your city, your state, your country. What are the predominant idols of your area? What are the struggles you see?

**Discuss the people, problems, and opportunities you see in your area.** Ask God to open your eyes to people, problems, and opportunities you have missed.

Commit to prayer walking or driving around your area - where you live and where you work.

**I will personally prayer walk/drive on this day:**

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<sup>4</sup> Adapted from Kevin DeYoung, "The Mission of the Church" for [www.thegospelcoalition.org](http://www.thegospelcoalition.org)

## Who

There are unbelievers in your life. What are their burdens? Goals? Hobbies? What do they think about Jesus?

How often do you pray for them? How can or should we pray for the unbelievers in our lives?

**Make a list of people to pray and fast for.** If you're stuck, think about neighbors, coworkers, other parents, family members, friends, people you regularly see at stores, etc. - then ask God to give you specific opportunities for evangelism in the next month. Ask God to give you boldness to step into the opportunities He gives you.

**God, please give me opportunities to love and evangelize to:**

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## Why

What makes Jesus and His mission worth pursuing and living for? What specifically about God motivates you?

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## PRAYER

Pray that God would be known and worshiped by those in your life who do not currently know and worship Him.

Pray that God would give you His heart and passion for the mission of the church, and that He would also help you be ready to share the hope of the gospel that you have (see 1 Peter 3:15).

Pray for opportunities to proclaim the gospel, use your talents and skills for the church's mission, and share your own story of God's goodness.

Pray for your group's upcoming serving

- **Write out** any specific prayers that you'd like to be praying for one another:

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## REMEMBER: SERVE YOUR CITY IS COMING NEXT WEEK

As you approach the last week of curriculum, remember that we're asking you to serve your city. Just as God moved toward us before we ever moved toward Him, we will serve those around us as a demonstration of God's love. Serving your city is as simple as praying for your city on a walk together.

How are plans coming along? Let's remember to keep praying that God would bless our efforts, give opportunities for evangelism, and protect us from the devil.



## SECTION 4: RELATIONSHIP WITH UNBELIEVERS

### Week 12: In the City, for the City

Not all groups will be able to serve their cities physically, but we would encourage all groups to serve in some capacity, even if it's neighborhood prayer walk.

On the next page you will find prayer prompts from Acts 13 that you can use either before going out to serve your city physically, or in place of serving your city physically.

**Read** the following summary, then pray for your city, using Acts 13:44-49 as a guide for your prayers.

#### *Summary*

In the Old Testament era, God's people served as a light to the nations. Their distinct worship and holiness was supposed to attract the surrounding nations to Israel's God. This was a "come to us" kind of mission.

In the New Testament era, or what the Bible sometimes calls "the last days", God's people go out. In the book of Acts, God's people start in a small huddle in Jerusalem, then they go outside the city into the area of Samaria, then they go out even further, ending with the Apostle Paul proclaiming the gospel in Rome. This pattern continues throughout church history, up to today. God brought the gospel all the way from Jerusalem to Northern Nevada.

Serving our neighbors is one way for us to open up opportunities for proclaiming the gospel. Relationships built through serving might last for years, and God may give you many opportunities to tell the people of your city about His grace. If we orient our lives toward God and others, practice hospitality, pray for God's blessing and power, and decide to live on mission, Jesus will be glorified, and the gospel will advance.

## **Prayer**

Use the following passage from Acts 13 to pray for your city. The passage has been broken up into suggested prayer prompts.

**44 The next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord.**

Pray for God to bring this kind of hunger for His Word.

**45 But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him. 46 And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. 47 For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, "I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth."**

Pray for God to give you boldness in the face of opposition to Jesus and His gospel.

Pray for God to protect you in times of opposition or ridicule.

Pray for those who oppose Jesus and His gospel.

**48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.**

Praise God for His salvation.

Ask God to save many in your city.

Ask God to bring you into situations where He can be glorified, and those who were once dead in sin can be saved and given the joy of the gospel.

**49 And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region.**

Ask God to make this a reality in your city.



- **Write out** any specific prayers that you'd like to be praying for one another:

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