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Sample Chapter Inside!

# SCORPION

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roach

A N C I E N T F A I T H S E R I E S

# CONTENTS

The Way	6
The Sacred Community . . . or Youth Group	10
The Way of Prayer	26
The Way of Restoration	46
The Way of Sharing	60
The Way of Including	74
The Way of Suffering and Persecution	84
The Way of Going	98
The Way of Story	112

Do you know what the primary term for identifying the followers of Jesus who made up the early church was? They were simply called “*The Way*.” The Book of Acts uses this phrase 6 times (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22). The Way is used 6 times where the term “Christian” is used only once (Acts 11:26).

What can we learn from this title? We must not try to separate faith and works, truth from way, and end from means. Today we have a separation between what a person says they believe and the way they live their lives. For example, do you know people who say they believe in Jesus, but do not follow His teachings and/or example? For most of us it has become acceptable and normal to speak of having “faith in God” without doing the “works of God.” You will not find this separation between faith and works in the Bible. Rather than separation, there is integration.

James says it like this. *“But someone will say, ‘You have faith; I have deeds.’ Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do . . . As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.”*  
—James 2:18-19, 26

Faith is an unseen reality that produces visible works in the world. Just like the body (the part you can see) is dead without a spirit (the part you can not see). In other words, if a person’s “faith” in Jesus is not producing the “work” of Jesus, that person has no reason to think their faith can save them. It is a dead, powerless, non-faith.

Paul wrote in Galatians 5:6, *“The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.”* Love is connected to faith. Faith produces love. Acts of love are what people see, but it is produced by faith, which can not be seen. In other words, the Christlike love you express to others is directly connected to your faith in Jesus.

7

Jesus said it like this, *“ Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from*

*thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.” —Matthew 7:15-20*

The true followers of Jesus will be easily identifiable by the fruit their lives produce. Jesus said as much in John 13:35, “*By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*”

Jesus’ disciples got the message. They understood that genuine faith (belief) resulted in works, or acts of love. Therefore in the Book of Acts, and in other historical accounts, the early church is identified by the way they lived and not just by what they believed. These followers of Jesus were recognized as “having been with Jesus.” They were acting like Jesus. They were living the way He lived. They were called “The Way.”

Jesus himself said, “*I am the way, the truth and the life.*” Eugene Petersen points out that only when we put the way of Jesus with the truth of Jesus, do we get the life of Jesus. This journal is all about helping you and your friends live together in the way of Jesus.

I’ve identified seven ways the early church lived from the Book of Acts. This journal will help you take a closer look at these seven ways and encourage you to figure out together how to live the way of Jesus right where you are.

The way of prayer

The way of restoration (bringing heaven to earth)

The way of sharing

The way of including

The way of suffering and persecution

The way of going

The way of story

Each chapter is divided into seven days. Each day is designed to take 10-15 minutes.

**Day 1: Preview**—This gives you an overview of what you will be looking at for the upcoming week.

**Day 2: Meditate**—You will meditate on the key scripture(s). Let it seep into your soul.

**Day 3: Act**—Don't just sit there. Do something. Live it.

**Day 4: Reflect**—What is your response to the scripture and experience? Pay attention to how you are feeling.

**Day 5: Talk**—Gather with your friends, grab something to eat, and share together what you are experiencing, learning, and feeling.

**Day 6: Transform**—Write down your prayers, dreams, thoughts, and feelings as you consider the work of the Holy Spirit in your life.

**Day 7: Rest**—Sink down into the flame of God's love and allow Him to consume you.

# Preview

What is a *sacred community*?

**Sacred:** dedicated or set apart for the service or worship of a god.

**Community:** a unified body of individuals.

**A sacred community is a unified body of individuals who are dedicated and set apart for the service and worship of God.**

There are some big words in that sentence we don't use every day, so you might want to read it again. If your brain works like mine, read it again slowly. Now ask yourself, does that describe the community at my church?

I want to suggest that there is a big difference between being a "sacred community" and being a "youth group." To be honest, I'm not sure the world needs another youth group. However, I am convinced that a sacred community is exactly what this world needs right now.

I use the term sacred community to refer to the church who is as God intended. I use the term youth group to refer to a sacred community that is either no longer sacred or no longer community, or maybe neither. A youth group is what is left of a sacred community that has lost its vision, mission, and passion.

A sacred community is the Church as birthed by the Holy Spirit in Acts 2. It is a gathering of people dedicated to living the way of Jesus, together. It is a collection of people whose hearts have been knit together, are filled with the Spirit, and embodying the kingdom of God on earth.



### **Youth Group**

Program-centered  
Exist for self

Lacks real power  
Inward focused  
“Me before we”  
Attractional  
Boring  
All about pizza  
Fits nicely into pop culture  
Marked by cliques and divisions

In-fighting and name-calling  
Little commitment  
Governed by rules

vs.

### **Sacred Community**

People-centered  
Exist to make the world beautiful  
and right again  
Power comes from God’s Presence  
Outward focused  
“We before me”  
Missional  
Risky  
All about prayer  
Challenges pop culture  
Marked by unity and  
togetherness  
Is a place of peace and grace  
Great commitment  
Governed by relationships

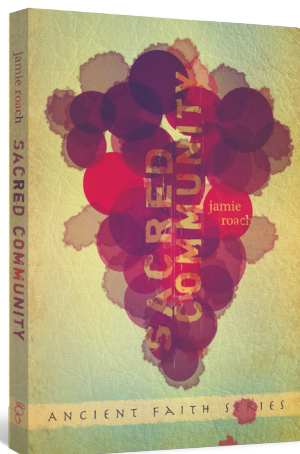
Circle the words or phrases from the list above that best describes your gathering of friends from church. What is missing?

**Jesus was deeply concerned for the continuation of his redemptive work after the close of his earthly existence, and his chosen method was the formation of a redemptive society. He did not form an army, establish a headquarters or even write a book. All he did was to collect a few unpromising men, inspire them with the sense of his vocation and theirs and build their lives into an intensive fellowship of affection, worship and work.**

**(Elton Trueblood. *Alternative to Futility*, p 29)**



# SACRED COMMUNITY



In the book of Acts the followers of Jesus were referred to as “The Way.” In other words, they were defined more by the way they lived than a clearly articulated set of doctrines. They were the church living in the way of Jesus.

*Sacred Community* will inspire you to go beyond being a group to being a community that lives together as the tangible body of Christ, right where you are. This journal will guide you through a way of prayer, restoration, sharing, including, suffering, going, and storytelling by engaging your whole self: heart, mind, body, and soul.

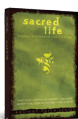
By combining meditation with action, reading with doing, talking with listening, times in solitude, and times in community, discover what it means to live in sacred community with one another.

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