



Acts and The Early Church (Week 3/8) Enjoined as a Household of Faith

Small Group Discussion Questions

Connect *How should the presence of God with you by his Spirit change your day to day?*

Warm-Up

1. What is the difference between living with unrelated housemates and living with family?
2. What does it mean to be “enjoined as a household of faith”? (see Galatians 6:9-10)
3. How have you been blessed by being a member of God’s household?

Read Acts 2:42-47

4. What is the connection between the Day of Pentecost and the life of the early church?
5. Does the way we live challenge the values of the world or blend in? In what ways do you think our connectedness in community is countercultural?
6. What were the main regular practices of the church? How committed were they?
7. In what ways do you see our practices as a community reflect that of the early church?
8. What would devotion to the apostles’ teaching have looked like?
9. What does fellowship mean in this context? How is it different to friendship?
10. What would breaking bread have involved? Why was this so important?
11. What would have shaped the church’s prayer life? What do you think shapes ours?
12. How should this example shape our devotion to God?
13. Why were people in awe of the apostles? How can God use us?
14. Describe the generosity of the early church? Why was it so radical?
15. Share a time when you have experienced generosity within a community of faith. In what ways do you think you could grow in generosity towards the life of our community?
16. How do we translate their approach to possessions and meeting the needs of others?
17. What made the early church so attractive to people who didn’t yet believe in Jesus?
18. What do you think is attractive about our community to those who do not yet believe in Jesus?
19. What difficulties might the early church have faced in keeping an authentic witness to the gospel?
20. What qualities or practices in our church family might draw in people who are new to faith or exploring Christianity?
21. What challenges do we face when we try to share the gospel in our everyday places?

Apply *What do you need to surrender to live more like this household of faith?*

Pray *Lord Jesus, thank you for showing us the faithfulness of the early church, devoted to you, caring for one another, and shining your love to the world. Make us a true family of believers, united in your truth, generous in love, and bold in witness. Fill us with your Spirit so that our lives point others to you. Amen.*

GOING DEEPER

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Small Group Discussion Questions

On Your Frontline this Week

What are you giving your attention to actively at the moment? How is it shaping you?

For Families

- *Download:* some of the family resources to use at home: stbartskids.org

Listen, Watch, and Read

- *Listen (sermon):* “The Spirit Breaks Out!” by Vaughan Roberts:
<https://stebbes.org/sermons/gods-spirit-filled-family/#sermons>
- *Listen (sermon):* “A new Community” by Tim Keller:
<https://gospelinlife.com/sermon/a-new-community/>
- *Listen (series):* “Commitment of a Living Church” by All Souls, Langham Place:
https://www.allsouls.org/Groups/223099/C191_Commitment_of_a_Living.aspx
- *Listen (sermons):* “Previous Series on the Early Church and Acts 2” by St Bart’s:
<https://www.stbarts.com.au/sermon-series/our-church>

Series Resources

- *Read (book):* “Strange Religion” by Nijay Gupta. 📖
- *Read (commentary):* “The Challenge of Acts” by Tom Wright. 📖
- *Read (book):* “Why the Gospel” by Matthew Bates.
- *Read (advanced commentary):* “Acts: Witnesses to Him” by Bruce Milne.

📖 [Available to borrow in the Church library](#)

Talk 3/8 (ACTS): 10 August 2025
“Enjoined as a Household of Faith”
by the Rev’d Dr Daniel Rouhead
Bible Passage: Acts 2: 42-27

INTRODUCTION

Over 100 years after the Titanic sank to the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean on its maiden voyage, people are still fascinated by the story, flock to exhibitions of items collected from survivors or the wreck, and even visit the remote site. In so many ways, life aboard the Titanic, with First Class, Second Class and Third Class passengers, mirrored English society at the time. The passengers of each class were separated, socially and culturally, even physically, as locks and barriers kept the different classes of passengers apart. These divisions also translated into survival rates when the ship struck an iceberg: 62% of 1st Class passengers survived but only 25% of 3rd Class. Even though the American Declaration of Independence, more than a century earlier, had asserted that all people were created equal, on board the Titanic, the lives of the wealthy were deemed more valuable.

In the first century, Roman society was very similar - highly structured, hierarchical, and unequal. Every person had a place in the social order, and moving between classes was rare. At the top, were the Emperor, the Senators and the Business Elite, while at the bottom were slaves. In the middle, were Roman citizens and freed slaves who usually worked as tradies, small business owners or artisans, in many cases for their former masters. The Roman household was a miniature version of the Empire with the head of the household at the top and slaves at the bottom. Everyone had their place which translated into privileges, duties and responsibilities...as everyone worked together for the prosperity of the household. Of course, those at the top benefited the most from the success of the household.

As the early Church emerged from the Day of Pentecost, we see people transformed by faith in Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. The amazing consequence of this was a transformed community of faith which was completely different from contemporary Roman and Jewish culture. Today, we focus on the church as “the household of faith”. This phrase comes from Galatians 6:10, Paul writing: “And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Gal 6:9-10).

Many modern translations use family instead of household, making the church “the family of believers” in the NIV. The early church didn’t function like a club, event, or crowd. It was like a family where God was Father, Jesus was Lord and brother, and believers were siblings – brothers and sisters in Christ. They were bound not by bloodlines, but by shared faith in Jesus and the indwelling Holy Spirit. They lived like a spiritual family, deeply committed, radically generous, joyfully united, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. In just 6 verses, the shared life of the early church is described so richly, showing their love for God, their love for one another and their love for the world.

LOVE FOR GOD \ VERSES 42-43

Let's begin with verses 42-43: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles". We know they also continued to meet in the Temple courts. The first followers of Jesus were devoted, that is totally committed to, four different rhythms of life – the teaching of the apostles, fellowship, the breaking of bread and prayer.

These four activities weren't just religious habits, they were the foundation of the church's identity and a radical way of life in the first-century Roman world. Here's why each was significant:

1. The Apostles' Teaching

The apostles passed on what they had learned directly from Jesus - his words, his actions, the meaning of his death and resurrection, and the promises of the Kingdom. In a world full of competing philosophies and gods, the apostles' teaching provided a unified, authoritative truth rooted in the eyewitness accounts of Jesus. It formed a new worldview, replacing Roman values of power and status with the gospel values of grace, humility, service, and sacrificial love. It kept the community centred on Jesus, not just on experiences or traditions.

2. Fellowship (Koinonia)

Fellowship was more than casual friendship, it was the deep, mutual sharing of life, resources, joys, and burdens. In the Roman Empire, society was divided by class, ethnicity, and gender. Koinonia broke those barriers, treating all believers as equal members of God's family.

3. The Breaking of Bread

This meant shared meals in homes that would have included the Lord's Supper on some occasions, strengthening fellowship and remembering Jesus' death and resurrection as Jesus had commanded them.

4. Prayer

Prayers are ongoing, communal conversation with God—thanking him, interceding for specific needs, and seeking God's guidance. In a culture where prayers were often transactional (offering sacrifices to get blessings from gods), Christian prayer was relational, rooted in trust and intimacy with the Father. It acknowledged their dependence on God's power, not human strength, for growth and mission. Prayer shaped their hearts, aligning them with God's purposes and sustaining them through persecution.

These activities weren't just spiritual disciplines - they were a countercultural way of life that formed their beliefs through teaching, bound them together in fellowship,

centred them on Jesus through the breaking of bread, and connected them to God's power through prayer.

These priorities demonstrated that their love for God was spirit-led and relational, not just based on following rules. The Jewish leaders focussed on the Law, traditions, the Temple and rituals of sacrifice. However, Jesus pointed out, in Matthew 15, that some traditions were taking people further away from God. Some people were pledging money to God, not as an expression of love or trust, but to avoid supporting family members such as their parents – Jesus said they nullified the word of God for the sake of their traditions. He called them hypocrites and said Isaiah was right when he prophesied about them:

‘These people honour me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me.
They worship me in vain;
their teachings are merely human rules.’

Roman religion focused on appeasing gods through rituals with the guiding principle being: “I give so that you give.” The goal wasn't relationship, but exchange: you offered prayers, sacrifices, or took part in festivals to secure particular blessings: for example, good health, victory, fertility, or political favour. If you kept the gods happy, they would bless you; if not, disaster might follow. Religion also served the state and reinforced the social order.

How was the early church different? They met regularly...they were devoted to the apostles' teaching, prayer and fellowship...they met in homes, not temples or synagogues...as they sought to love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength. This meant that God worked in and through them, as “everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles” (2:43).

How might the example of the early church inspire us to love God wholeheartedly:

1. Meet regularly for worship and fellowship
2. Grow in our understanding of God and all that he has done through reading the bible and bible-based teaching
3. Meet here in church and in homes
4. Pray individually and with our community.

How might God use us if we are totally devoted to him?

2. LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER \ VERSES 44-45

We saw in the first two verses how worship and fellowship are so closely connected. We are called to love our neighbour because God has loved us, forgiven us and poured his Spirit into our hearts.

In the Roman Empire, society was divided by class, ethnicity, and gender. *Koinonia*, or fellowship, broke those barriers, treating all believers as equal members of God's family. It provided tangible love and support, especially for the poor, widows, and slaves, making the church a safe refuge in a harsh world.

Meals in Roman society also reinforced social boundaries, rich dined with rich, poor with poor. People only invited others to meals whom they acknowledged as equals, and the reverse is true as well, people only accepted invitations to meals from people they accepted as equals. In the church, everyone gathered and ate together as equals, members of the same family: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female...” (Gal 3:28)

These next two verses in Acts focus on how believers expressed their love for each other.

“All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need” (2:44-45).

They lived out a deep community where no one was in need because everyone belonged. In a household, everyone plays a role. Similarly, the early church took responsibility for one another, disciplined each other, and responded to the needs of the group. They weren’t consumers of a service, but contributors to a family. It seems likely that everyone didn’t sell everything they had, but that they were willing to sell everything to meet the needs of their brothers and sisters.

This is fleshed out a little in Acts 5: “For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need. Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means “son of encouragement”), sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles’ feet” (Acts 5: 34-37).

In the world, relationships were based on power, family obligation, or status...while most communities were built around survival, hierarchy, and duty. Through generosity, the church was creating a new kind of society...where money wasn’t power, where status didn’t matter, and where the poor were lifted up rather than ignored.

How can we love one another as a family loves one another?

1. Develop and prioritise relationships across boundaries, not thinking that we are better than we are
2. Practice radical generosity that is costly and sacrificial
3. Love one another as Jesus has loved us

As we reflect on Jesus’ command to love one another, we should be reminded of these words: “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

3. LOVE FOR THE WORLD \\\ VERSES 46-47

The generous hospitality of the early church opened the door for outsiders to experience the welcome and love of God. Their love for one another, and their care

and concern for the least were a witness to God's love, mercy, compassion and kindness. The early Christian homes were not just centres of hospitality and worship, they were centres of mission, too. Their doors were open...not just to each other, but to outsiders who were drawn in by love and the Spirit's power. Outsiders were welcomed, not feared or excluded.

“Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (2:46-47)

Despite unfounded criticism that Christians were behaving inappropriately because they met in secret, there was a public and joyful element to their witness. Their love spilled over into the public sphere, they were visible in the marketplace, at meals, and in acts of service. Their joy wasn't locked away in private worship...it radiated into their neighbourhoods. “Enjoying the favour of all the people” meant the distinctiveness of the family of believers was noticed and admired, even by those who didn't yet believe.

The result was this: the church was growing: “And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved”. Their attractiveness wasn't marketing, it was authentic love put into action. People joined because they saw a different kind of community (family): self-giving, joyful, united, and hopeful. God's love for them, and their love for God overflowed into love for the world, making the gospel message believable. The challenge for us is to allow God's love to overflow through us on all of our frontlines, so that people can see and experience God's love for them.

CONCLUSION

To be a household of faith meant the early church lived like a spiritual family - deeply connected, generous, unified, and devoted to one another in Jesus. It was a place of belonging, responsibility, worship, and mission, a powerful witness to the world.

What does it really mean to be “enjoined as a household of faith” or “a family of believers”? And how should this early example challenge our comfort, our culture, and our calling?

We should be devoted to God, not just interested. We should be all-in, as much as we're able, not just attending or present. We should be a church that truly shares, forgives, welcomes outsiders, and calls out injustice. We should challenge selfishness and upend greed, refusing to worship comfort. Our lives should be so different—and so beautiful—that others want to know why.

So here is the challenge:

Will we devote ourselves—truly devote ourselves—to God's Word, to prayer, to fellowship, and to breaking bread together?

Will we love one another so deeply that it makes the world take notice?

Will we love the world enough to risk our comfort so that others might find Christ?

Let us pray

Prayer:

Lord, help us to be wholehearted in our relationship with you. Help us to use all we have to love and build up our brother and sisters in Christ. Make us compelling, so that through our life together, others would see you.

Bind us together, Holy Spirit. Let us be enjoined as a true household of faith.

Amen.