

# Be the Church: Connect

AUGUST 21, 2022

## PREPARATION

### ▶ STUDY

Spend the week studying John 13:31-35 and Acts 2:42-47. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools to enhance your preparation.

### ▶ PRAY

Pray for our pastors and this week's message, the upcoming group time, your group members and their openness to God's Word.

### ▶ LANDING POINT

Jesus's good news offers us a new type of community based on love and serving one another.

## GROUP DISCUSSION

- ▶ **CONFIDENTIALITY** | What's said in the group stays in the group.
- ▶ **NO CROSS-TALK** | Be considerate of others as they share. Refrain from side conversations and texting during group time.
- ▶ **NO FIXING** | We are not in the group to fix each other. Jesus does that part.
- ▶ **SHARING** | Be sensitive to the amount of time you share. Don't talk too much or too little. Every person brings something valuable to the group.

# INTRODUCTION

*As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.*

## THE LONGING FOR COMMUNITY

We all long for some kind of community, a place where we belong. We want to find a place where we are loved for who we are, not who we should be. We want to find connection and relationships with others. We desire to be welcomed when we arrive and missed when we're gone.

Each of us is a part of multiple communities. Think about it. You've got your family. That's one community. Then there are your co-workers, neighbors, etc. Those are communities. The people you play sports with or go running with are a community. Maybe you're into art and have found a group of like-minded creatives who like to go to the museum on Saturdays and sketch. Maybe you're part of a gaming or online community. Or perhaps your love for reading made you want to be in a book club.

There's another essential community we are a part of—the church. This week we're going to look at a picture of the kind of community Jesus wants for his followers—a community based on love and serving one another. Jesus has good news for the community—He wants to show us a new and better way to live. What did Jesus teach his followers about his church community, and what did that community look like in the early days of the Jesus movement? Let's find out

***Q:** Briefly share about a time you were a part of a community where you felt real connection with others. What did you enjoy about being a part of that community?*

## DEEPER DIVE

### JUST AS I HAVE LOVED YOU...

On the night when Jesus was arrested, He and his twelve disciples were gathered together to observe Passover, the most important Jewish holiday that celebrates the fact that God freed the Jews from slavery and oppression in Egypt. Jesus knew that His time had come. Soon he would be put to death; but before that, Jesus wanted to give his disciples one final message. Jesus, being the great teacher that He was, decided to demonstrate this message for them.

While everyone was enjoying dinner, Jesus took off His outer clothes and wrapped a towel around His waist. Then he proceeded to wash each of His disciples' feet. The disciples were shocked because this was normally the duty of a house servant. People in that time walked long distances in sandals so you can imagine that foot washing was a dirty

job. And yet, here was Jesus stooping down to wash each of His disciples' feet, even Judas's, the man who would soon betray him.

After Jesus had finished, He shared with His disciples the kind of community He would establish in His church. Let's take a look at what Jesus shared with His disciples and how the early church followed Jesus's example of loving and serving others.

***Q:** Have volunteers read John 13:31-35 and Acts 2:42-47. What impact could we have on those around us (and outside our church community) if they saw true love between us? How would that make a difference?*

***Q:** How do you see Jesus's command in John 13:34-35 reflected in how the early church lived in Acts? Where do you see fruit in how they lived to be like Jesus?*

***Q:** Based on Acts 2:42-47, how would you describe the connection believers had with each other?*

## REFLECTION AND NEXT STEPS

### GOOD NEWS FOR THE COMMUNITY

Jesus has good news for anyone who wants to belong somewhere where they are loved, welcomed and accepted. Everyone should have the chance to belong to a community where they are loved for who they are, not who they should be, and to be encouraged to become the person God made them to be—to realize their potential and make a difference in the lives of others. Everyone deserves to find connection and relationship with others.

The kind of community we are called to live in is one where we live life together through all of its ups and downs. We celebrate together and we grieve together. We enjoy football games, go to concerts, share meals together, host people in our homes, and be the kind of friend you would call in the middle of the night if someone needed to talk to you. And we do all that with one mission—to live like Jesus every day and in every way until we cannot be ignored.

God created us to connect with one another in community and **live out His example before others**. When we connect in community, we enter each other's stories in an authentic way. We set aside the artifice of trying to live up to others' expectations or make ourselves look better than we actually are. We are called to live among one another in openness and honesty. Why? Because our community is really just a bunch of recovering sinners trying to follow Jesus's example every day and in every way.

**Q:** *What are the challenges to building a community based on love and serving one another?*

**Q:** *In what ways would you like to experience more connection, both inside and outside of our community?*

**Q:** *What's one thing you will commit to doing this week to connect others to the good news Jesus has for the community?*

**Q:** *How can the group be praying for you this week?*

# COMMENTARY

## A New Standard of Love

"The standard is no longer how we love ourselves (Lev 19:18; Matt 22:37–40) but how Jesus loves us (see notes on 1 John 2:7–8). Jesus displays his love in foot-washing (see vv. 1–17 and notes) and supremely in the cross (see 15:13). Cf. 15:13, 17."

## Giving Glory to God Together

"Jesus told his disciples not only that God would be glorified through His work on the cross, but also that He would be seen and glorified through the actions of His people (vv. 34–35). If there is anything in this lonely and fractured world that speaks of the radical difference that Christ makes, it is to be found in a loving and united community of believers. The standard that should mark out the way Christians relate to one another is none other than that set by Christ Himself: 'As I have loved you, so you must love one another.'"

## Why Unity Matters

"Unity affords the greatest identifying mark of the people of God. That's why Luke emphasizes, all the believers were together and had everything in common."

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### ENDNOTES:

1. D. A. Carson, "The Gospels and Acts," in *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 1923.
2. Andrew Paterson, *Opening Up John's Gospel, Opening Up Commentary* (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2010), 118–119.
3. Kenneth O. Gangel, *Acts*, vol. 5, *Holman New Testament Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 31.