

HOW WE DO LIFE TOGETHER

EXPLORING MEMBERSHIP

CLASS 4

A Vision that Compels Us

We mentioned Acts 2:42–47 in our first class. We believe it’s a God-crafted picture of the early church given as a vision to compel us, inspire us, and instruct us.

It’ll serve as a helpful outline as we look at how we do life together at Cornerstone:

And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³ And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵ And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶ And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42–47)

The Sunday Meeting

The early church models a rhythm of life that includes gathering corporately and then meeting in smaller contexts. We see them “attending the temple together” and then gathering “in their homes.”

The corporate gatherings allowed for a common hearing of “the apostles’ teaching” and “the breaking of bread” (i.e., the Lord’s Supper). In other words, preaching and the sacraments were part of their meetings. We learn in the NT their meetings also included:

- *Collections for the poor and for ministry (e.g., 1 Cor 16:1–2; 1 Tim 5:17–18)*
- *Praises (Eph 5:18–19)*
- *Prayers (1 Tim 2:1)*
- *Spiritual gifts (1 Cor 14:26–27)*
- *Affection and fellowship (1 Thess 5:26)*

Since the 4th century in the time of Constantine, Christians have made Sunday mornings the time when they should gather in this larger meeting. This is “the Lord’s Day” (Rev 1:10) for us, too, our regular time to worship our God.

Home groups

These larger meetings were combined with smaller ones, typically in people’s homes. We see that as a model, too. Relationships, service, hospitality, and discipleship need smaller settings like a home to really thrive.

Our application of that is our home groups, bimonthly small groups that typically meet in member’s homes. These are times where the Christian life can go from a bit big and theoretical to the circumstances and details of our lives. A big part of the fruitfulness and strength of Cornerstone has to do with our small groups.

Hospitality

Acts 2:42–47 also shows us a church engaged in regular hospitality. “Breaking bread in their homes” (2:46) isn’t the Lord’s Supper but the sharing of a meal as an expression of Christian love and commitment.

Hebrews 13:2 exhort us,

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. (Heb 13:2)

“Show hospitality” in the Greek is an interesting compound verb, *philoxenia*. It takes the word for “love,” *philos*, and combines it with the word for “stranger,” *xenos*. Biblical hospitality is “love of the stranger,” which reminds us that early Christians often housed Christian travelers they didn’t know. Remember, this was a time before Hampton Inns and AirBnB. A place to stay wasn’t a given. Hospitality in the NT, then, includes real generosity and sacrifice for those who come through our doors.

We, too, seek to be a place where relationships and ministry are fostered by extending hospitality to people inside and outside of the church.

Lives Marked by the Joy and Power of the Spirit

In this shared life of Acts 2:42–47 two things stand out that remind us of God’s presence among them, a pronounced joy and an evident power of the Spirit. “Righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” is one of the hallmarks of the kingdom of God (Rom 14:17; cf. Acts 13:52). The world can do superficial happiness, but only God can do a deep joy amidst the tragedies and difficulties of life in this fallen world.

And then there's the presence of the Spirit's power. It's true this early church had the Twelve apostles who were given a unique ministry. But throughout the New Testament, power is connected with God and his people—not just the first apostles. God's power working in us and through us impacts our life together. It impacts how we pray for one another and minister to one another.

The One Others of the New Testament

One thing modelled by Acts 2:42–47 is seen throughout the entire New Testament. It's a set of commandments that unpack for us what it means to love one another. These fifty (*fifty!*) or so "one others" of the New Testament call us to be involved in each other's lives in ways that help us all to flourish in Jesus Christ:

- *"Love one another" (John 13:34–35; Rom 12:10; 1 Thess 4:9; 1 John 4:7–12)*
- *"Serve one another" (Gal 5:13; 1 John 4:10)*
- *"Build one another up" (1 Thess 5:11)*
- *"Encourage one another" (1 Thess 5:11)*
- *"Bear one another's burdens" (Gal 6:2)*
- *"Exhort one another every day" (Heb 3:13)*
- *"Teaching and admonishing one another" (Col 3:16)*

The one others are one of the reasons we know Christians are to be actively engaged in a church. Without a church you can love, but you can't "love one another." You can serve, but you can't "serve one another."

Ministry Teams

Our shared life means also that we're taking the gifts God gives to each of us and finding ways to serve others with them:

10 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: 11 whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1 Pet 4:10–11)

11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ (Eph 4:11–12)

At Cornerstone one of the ways we do that is through our ministry teams. Our bookstore, children's ministries, ushers, sound team, worship team, prayer team, evangelistic efforts, Women's Planning Team, and a host of other teams of people are what we call "ministry teams."

We try as much as possible to match a person's gift with their area of service. We believe this maximizes their joy and effectiveness and fruitfulness.

Where Should You Start?

If you're new to the church and still adjusting to things, you might be wondering where to start with these ideas. Here are some simple steps for you:

1. Find a home group that meets near you (look on our website at the map and schedule of the groups).
2. Look at our newsletter or around the church on a Sunday to see how people are serving. Where do you feel drawn to get involved? Ask a person serving in that area how to do it.

3. Read the New Testament. As you do, ask yourself, *“What is this telling me about how the early did life together in their churches?”* Then, go and do it!

Our Next Class: How We Do Mission Together