

CHURCH: A People
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Acts 2:42-47 & John 17:20-23
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Reflection & Discussion

The Church is...

Read and discuss Acts 2:42-47 (NIV)

⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶ 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, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved

*What is the first thing that comes to mind when finishing that sentence? What does your answer and any others' answers reveal about how we think about church?

*What strikes you about Luke's picture of the church in this Acts passage? How is he inviting us to look at it?

Jesus prays for those who will be the church...and us, before the church exists

Read and discuss John 17:20-23 (NIV)

²⁰ "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹ that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²² I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— ²³ I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

*What do you notice in these verses about what Jesus is praying for?

*What is the significance of the communal nature of his prayer? Why does Jesus' prayer fundamentally change the way we must think about church and our relationships in it?

God isn't simply saving individuals; God is creating a people

The New Testament asks, "now...who are you becoming *together*?"

*What does forming us together look like? What work in and through us that God intends to do, can only be done with others?

*What is your honest assessment of the importance you place on others in your spiritual life?

*Why does the world's belief in God depend on our relationships with one another?

The church isn't something we build. It's something God is creating

We only get to decide whether we will receive one another as God's gift and be formed with others.

*How are you learning to receive the people God has already given you?

*What is difficult about this church God is creating? When have you seen it working well?

*What is the Spirit saying to you about being part of a people? About the importance of being formed together?

*What is one step you could take this week?

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