

LESSON 10

# Life Together (The Church)

*You were born into a family, and you grow up surrounded by them, not on your own.*

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Christianity was never meant to be lived alone.

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## WATCH BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Scan to watch the Lesson 10 teaching video – a 12-minute companion to this lesson.

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## CORE SCRIPTURE

*And let us consider one another in order to provoke love and good works, not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching.*

—Hebrews 10:24-25

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## The Faith You'd Rather Keep Private

There's a version of the Christian life that sounds almost perfect. It's just you and God. No awkward conversations in the lobby, or no one who rubs you the wrong way. You read your Bible on the back porch, you pray on your commute, and your faith stays clean, quiet, and entirely yours.

A lot of new Christians assume that's the goal, and honestly, the culture around you encourages it. We treat faith the way we treat most things now: a personal preference, customized to taste, consumed alone. Spirituality has become something you do with earbuds in.

But the faith you meet in the New Testament looks almost nothing like that. From the very first day the church existed, following Jesus was something people did together. Not because they were all extroverts. Not because the singing was good. Because the life God gives you is, by its nature, a shared life. You weren't rescued into something by yourself. You were adopted into a family.

*DISCUSSION: When you first believed, did you picture the Christian life as mostly private or mostly shared? Where do you think that picture came from?*

## What the First Christians Did



Watch what happened the moment the church was born. Three thousand people believed in a single day, and Luke tells us exactly what they did next: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer" (Acts 2:42).

Notice that's four things, and not one of them is private. Teaching, shared. Fellowship, shared. Meals, shared. Prayer, shared. These brand-new Christians didn't go home to figure it out alone. They wove their lives

together.

Keep reading and it gets more specific. "Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple, and broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with joyful and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. Every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved" (Acts 2:46-47).

This is the part people sometimes miss. It wasn't a program. It was ordinary life, shared on purpose. Tables. Houses. Food. Daily contact. The kind of togetherness that only happens when people decide to be in each other's lives, not just attend the same room once a week.

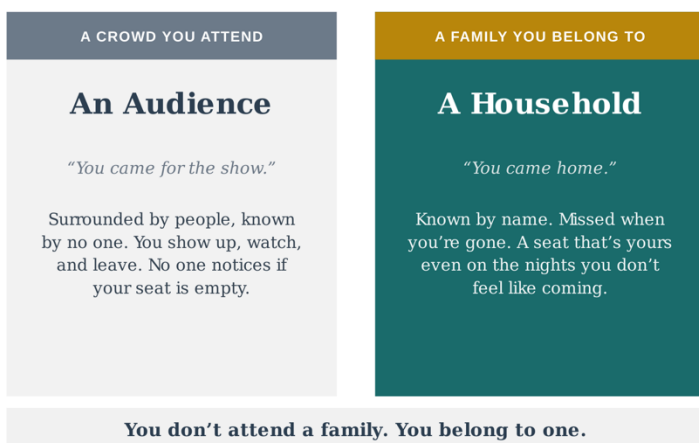
And here's the quiet thing underneath it all: it was joyful. Luke doesn't describe people gritting it out because they were supposed to. He describes "joyful and sincere hearts." This wasn't an obligation. It was the most alive these people had ever been, and they wanted to be near each other while it happened.

*DISCUSSION: Acts names four shared practices: teaching, fellowship, meals, prayer. Which one feels most natural to you right now, and which one feels hardest to imagine doing with other people?*

## Not a Building You Visit, A Family You're In

FIGURE 10.1

### A Crowd or a Family?



Lesson 10 · Acts 2:42-47

Here's where a lot of us have to unlearn something. When you hear the word "church," you probably picture a place: a building with a parking lot and a sign out front. So "going to church" sounds like going to a location, the way you go to the gym or the grocery store. You show up, you do the thing, you leave.

But in the New Testament, the church is never a building. It's people. It's a family God assembled out of strangers and made into brothers and sisters. That changes everything

about how you relate to it. You don't attend a family. You belong to one.

Think about what makes a family different from a crowd. At a concert, you can be surrounded by thousands of people and known by no one. You came for the show, not for the strangers in row twelve. A family is the opposite. A family knows your name. A family notices when you're missing. A family keeps a seat that's yours, even on the nights you don't feel like coming.

That's what God saved you into. Not an audience, a family. And this matters especially for you right now, early on, because families are where people grow up. No one becomes mature alone in a room. You learn patience from people who test it. You learn forgiveness from people who need it. You learn what love really costs from people who are sometimes hard to love. The church is where the new life God put in you gets to grow legs and walk.

*DISCUSSION: What's the difference between belonging to a family and attending an event? Have you ever been around a group of Christians who felt more like family than like a crowd?*

## Why You Can't Skip the Room

FIGURE 10.3

### Why We Gather

NOT FOR ATTENDANCE	BUT FOR EACH OTHER
<p><b>Getting Counted</b></p> <p><i>"Did I check the box?"</i></p> <p>Gathering treated as a duty to perform and a record to keep. The point becomes the count.</p>	<p><b>Spurring Each Other On</b></p> <p><i>"Let us watch out for one another."</i></p> <p>To provoke love and good works, and to keep encouraging each other, all the more as the day approaches.</p>
<p><b>We gather to be there for people, and to let them be there for us.</b></p>	

Lesson 10 · Hebrews 10:24-25

The book of Hebrews was written to Christians who were tired. Some were drifting, quietly slipping out the back, deciding it was easier to believe from a safe distance. To them, the writer says this: "And let us consider one another in order to provoke love and good works, not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:24-25).

That verse gets used as a club sometimes, as if its whole point were

to make you feel guilty for missing a Sunday. Read it again, though, and notice what it says. The reason to gather isn't to get your attendance counted. *The reason is each other.* We gather to "provoke love and good works," and to keep "encouraging each other." The command to show up is really a command to be there for people, and to let them be there for you.

You need this more than you know. There will be weeks when your own faith runs low, when you can't seem to find God on your own. On those weeks, you borrow. You sit in a room where other people are still singing the truth you can't feel yet, and their faith carries you until yours comes back. That isn't weakness. That's how it's designed to work. You cannot encourage yourself the way another brother or sister can encourage you, and you cannot be encouraged by people you're never around.

So, when the writer says don't neglect gathering, he isn't threatening you. He's protecting you. He's saying, don't cut yourself off from the very thing that will hold you up when you're weak. Stay in the room. Not because God is taking attendance, but because you were never meant to carry this alone.

*DISCUSSION: Hebrews says we gather to encourage one another. When has another believer's faith helped carry you through a stretch where yours felt thin?*

## When the Church Lets You Down

FIGURE 10.4

### What the Church Actually Is



Lesson 10 · Acts 2:42-47

Never forget that your spiritual family is a collection of fellow humans, imperfect and in the midst of a spiritual growth process, just as you are. The church will let you down. It's full of people, and people, even forgiven ones, are still being healed. Someone will say the wrong thing. Someone will forget your name for the fourth time. A family that should have shown up for you will sometimes miss the mark. If you stay long enough, the family will hurt you, because that's the risk of being in a

family at all.

A lot of people walk away right there. They came hoping for something perfect, they found something human, and they decided the whole thing was a fraud. But notice what they expected. They wanted the church to be a flawless institution, when God only ever promised it would be a real family. Families don't earn your love by being perfect. They get your commitment because they're yours.

The first church wasn't perfect either. Read a few more chapters of Acts, and you'll find arguments, favoritism, hurt feelings, and hard meetings. Honesty is the point. God's plan was never a group of people who had it all together. It was a group of people who would stay together while God put them together. You're not joining the finished product. You're joining the construction site, and you're part of what's being built.

So, give the church the same grace God gave you. Show up as someone being healed, among other people being healed. Let them see the real you, the unfinished you, and love them while they're unfinished too. That isn't settling for less than the Christian life. That is the Christian life. It was never meant to be lived alone, and the good news is, now you don't have to.

*DISCUSSION: Have you ever been disappointed by a church or a group of Christians? How might it change things to expect a real family instead of a perfect institution?*

## Looking to Jesus

Everything we've said about the church goes back to something Jesus once did with the word "family."

One day, while Jesus was teaching, his mother and brothers showed up wanting to talk to him. Someone passed along the message: your family is outside. And Jesus said something that would have stopped the room. "Who is my mother and who are my brothers?" Then he gestured toward the ordinary people sitting around him, the ones who had left everything to follow him, and said, "Here are my mother and

my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother" (Matthew 12:48–50).

He wasn't disowning his natural family. He was widening the word. Jesus taught that the deepest bonds in his kingdom aren't formed by blood or by accident of birth. They're formed by a shared Father. The moment you came to God, you didn't just get a Savior. You got brothers and sisters you haven't met yet, scattered across your city and around the world, all of them children of the same Father.

That's why the church was never optional for Jesus, and it's why it shouldn't feel optional for you. These people aren't a club you joined. They're the family Jesus says you now have. When you sit in a room full of fellow Christians, you're sitting with your siblings, and the one thing that made you related is that all of you said yes to the same God.

So when you walk into that imperfect, ordinary gathering this week, look around with new eyes. Jesus is the one who calls these people your family. You're just learning their names.

*REFLECTION: Jesus calls everyone who does the Father's will his family. Who in your church family has started to feel like a brother or sister, and who could you still get to know?*

## **DON'T FORGET**

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