

## Hope Revolution- Part three – Tag, you’re it.

April 16, 2023

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### BIG IDEA – The revolution is still alive today.

#### scripture focus - Acts 2:42-47 NLT

**“All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord’s Supper), and to prayer.** A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. **They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord’s Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity— all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people.** And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.”

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Sure, it took a while for the first followers of Jesus to acclimate to the massive challenge and changes that took place in their lives, their city, and the country. Now the work would be living the gospel and continuing the revolution that Jesus started. It was all in the hands of Spirit filled and empowered leaders. Their leader, their mentor and guide would not be Jesus, it would be the comforter that was sent to take them and the living Church, the body of Christ as the Apostle Paul calls it, forward and into the future.

Oh, we could talk about the massive growth of the global Christian church. From 20 frightened folks a few weeks after Jesus’ death to 2.6 billion today. The early church saw conversions at about 40% growth each year. Today that trend is about 1.8% per year, matching the total population growth rate of 1.8%. This means that about 25% of the global population are Christian in some form.

However, a quarter of the population doesn't mean they are all the radical revolutionaries we think of when describing the early church, right?

What were they doing and how were they living that made them such radicals in their cities? And how did that continue to fan the flames of this revolution, started by Jesus, and continued to be fueled by the Holy Spirit?

### **Acts 2:42-47 NLT**

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The community of believers, the Church, began meeting regularly, even daily, after the miraculous and spectacular outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. They launched the celebration, gathering and experiencing God with several thousand believers who were supercharged by the Spirit of God.

“Pentecost” is actually the Greek name for a festival known in the Old Testament as the **Feast of Weeks** (Leviticus 23:15; Deuteronomy 16:9). The Greek word means **“fifty” and refers to the fifty days that have elapsed since the wave offering of Passover. The Feast of Weeks celebrated the end of the grain harvest.**

The mini version of discipleship: **“All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord’s Supper), and to prayer.” Acts 2:42 NLT**

Of course, Luke picks up the rest of the core practices of the “gathering” of the church,

**They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord’s Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity.**

This makes up the life rhythms and daily, weekly ways the church did life together. It’s obvious, though, **the church does life together.**

This was the Biblical template for how we show our friends, family members and neighbors that we are different because this is how we love one another.

Out of church history there were major, stark differences in the church ethos, it’s culture that arose outside of our desire to just fellowship as a true family. **It turns out that Jesus’ revolutionary messages and methods took root in the way believers actually behaved in a worldly system.** And it was earthshaking!

### **John Mark Comer – Live No Lies**

Writes about the late **Dr. Larry Hurtado, historian of early Christianity, in his wildly celebrated book Destroyer of the Gods,** told the story of **how a tiny Jewish sect of Jesus followers overcame the bastion of paganism and won over the Roman Empire in only a few centuries.**

His thesis was that it wasn’t the church’s relevance or relatability to the culture but its difference and distinctness that made it compelling to so many.

**Did you hear that? It was NOT the church’s relevance, it’s similarities or cool factor in the culture – NO! It was their distinctness, being radically different than their neighbors** that drew the most attention. But it was not a difference just to be weird or defiant – these differences were taken right from Jesus’ contrarian teaching and the way He treated people. **The church actually started living the WWJD (what would Jesus do) life!** This is thousands of years before bracelets

and bumper stickers marketed our message, instead of just living the message.

There were five of them:

The church was marked by **five distinctive features**, all of which made it stand out against the backdrop of the empire:

- **The church was multiracial and multiethnic, with a high value for diversity, equity, and inclusion.**
- **The church was spread across socioeconomic lines as well, and there was a high value for caring for the poor;** those with extra were expected to share with those with less.
- **It was staunch in its active resistance to infanticide and abortion.** Because they valued the life of the mother and her baby!
- It was **resolute in its vision of marriage and sexuality as between one man and one woman for life.**
- It was **nonviolent, both on a personal level and a political level.**

Comer suggests **“if you plot those five features onto the map of modern American politics, the first two sound like liberal positions, as they are dealing with race and class; the second two sound like conservative positions; and the last one doesn’t jive with either.”**

He wrote, No political party or intellectual ideology outside the church of Jesus—that I’m aware of—holds all five together.

**These were the basic cultural values of the early church in stark contrast to the culture of Roman and Greek citizens and even sometimes the Jewish community as well.**

The church wasn’t necessarily railing and rallying against the culture of its day, they just went about living out the way of Jesus to each other and those in whom they saw that needed help.

I believe if you look deep enough, you’ll find the core cause that Jesus lived and died for.

Jesus didn't campaign for racial or ethnic equality, he just ate with, talked with, and healed those from very different backgrounds than himself.

Jesus didn't stage rallies and protests about the treatment of the poor and physically disabled. Again, he just spoke with them and highlighted stories about them.

Jesus didn't gain a political platform and raise money surrounding the value of womanhood and the gift of children. He defended the outcasts and sternly warned adults about their views of children.

**Jesus lived, spoke, and taught in such a way that these "causes" all shared the same core principle – Humans are loved and valued enough to give his own life for them to be free and survive their own bad choices!**

### **Glenn, how are we supposed to live counter-cultural today?**

There is a lot going on outside of church, outside of our normal friend and family groups. It's overwhelming, it's intense, it's intimidating. Of course, if you are the argumentative type, this may sound fun for you. But I'm not asking you to be argumentative, I'm asking you to see people like God saw you before he redeemed you.

If you were a really bad sinner like me, it's easy to remember how awful I was before Christ.

If you were a really good sinner, it'll be harder to see all your "self-righteousness" as filthy rags as Isaiah wrote in 64:6 **"We are all infected and impure with sin. When we display our righteous deeds, they are nothing but filthy rags.** Like autumn leaves, we wither and fall, and our sins sweep us away like the wind."

As we have talked about all the causes that are capturing our attention as well as dividing us along generational, political, educational, or economic lines, we, as followers of Jesus, have to get our act together and agree for unity's sake alone to focus on

the people behind the causes, campaigns and angry protests. The only way to see them and figure out how to love them is to get to know the person, and not their cause.

This may only happen through a supernatural love and perspective from God! It probably will never happen just naturally on our own.

The hope revolution means that God helps us believe and behave in ways that honor Him, but also sees people as He does, “lost, blind and hopeless.”

Those looking from one cause to another trying to find justice, purpose and meaning and hope. **They will never find it in a cause or a whole list of causes. They will never be able to change culture or society as a whole to match their ideals without changing the human soul! Only our creator and savior Jesus Christ has that capacity to do so.**

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## NOTES

### Scriptures

#### Acts 2:42-47 NLT

**“All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord’s Supper), and to prayer.** A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. **They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord’s Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity— all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people.** And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.”

### Questions

- Q: What would you imagine the most radical New Testament believer's behaviors to be?
- Q: Do you see any similarities with Roman/Greek culture with ours today?
- Q: What do you think about the odds of Christianity ever being a success?
- Q: What cultural, religious, or societal issues did this new faith of theirs face?
- Q: Do you think unity had anything to do with the Church's influence on others?
- Q: Talk about how Jesus' cause of humanity superseded other causes?

## COMMENTARY REFERENCES

### Strong's Concordance

**1577** *ekklēsia* (from **1537** /*ek*, "out from and to" and **2564** /*kalēō*, "to call") – properly, **people called out from the world and to God**, the *outcome* being the *Church* (the mystical body of Christ) – i.e. **the universal (total) body of believers whom God calls out from the world and into His eternal kingdom.**

[The English word "**church**" comes from the Greek word *kyriakos*, "belonging to the Lord" (*kyrios*). **1577** /*ekklēsia* ("church") is the root of the terms "ecclesiology" and "ecclesiastical."]

### The Bible Knowledge Concordance

The description of the first church (2:41–47).

2:41. Three thousand who believed were baptized, thus displaying their identification with Christ. This group of people immediately joined the fellowship of believers.

2:42. The activity of this early church was twofold. The believers first continued steadfastly (*proskarterountes*, "persisting in or continuing in"; cf. 1:14; 2:46; 6:4; 8:13; 10:7; Rom. 12:12; 13:6; Col. 4:2) in the **apostles' teaching or doctrine**. The **second was fellowship, which is defined as the breaking of bread and ... prayer**. The omission of "and" between "fellowship" and "to the breaking of bread and to prayer" indicates the last two activities are appositional to fellowship.

Perhaps the **breaking of bread included both the Lord's Table and a common meal** (cf. Acts 2:46; 20:7; 1 Cor. 10:16; 11:23–25; Jude 12).

2:43. Wonders (*terata*, "miracles evoking awe") and miraculous signs (*sēmeia*, "miracles pointing to a divine truth") authenticated the veracity of the apostles (cf. 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3–4). The apostles performed many such "signs and wonders" (Acts 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 8:6, 13; 14:3; 15:12). Christ too had performed many "wonders" and "signs"—and also "miracles" (*dynamēis*, "works of power").

2:44–45. **The selling of property and the common possession of the proceeds may imply that the early church expected the Lord to return soon and establish His kingdom.** This may explain why the practice was not continued. Holding everything in common was not socialism or communism because it was voluntary (cf. 4:32, 34–35; 5:4). Also their goods were not evenly distributed but were given to meet needs as they arose.

2:46–47. **The activities described in verses 42–47 would tend to separate the church from traditional Judaism** even though every day (cf. v. 47) they continued (proskarterountes; cf. v. 42) to meet together in the temple courts.

One of the subthemes of Acts is joy, because a victorious church is a joyful one. This is seen in verses 46–47 and numerous other times (5:41; 8:8, 39; 11:23; 12:14; 13:48, 52; 14:17; 15:3, 31; 16:34; 21:17). **In their fellowship they broke bread in their homes and ate together (cf. 2:42) with joy.** (The word praising [ainountes] is used only nine times in the NT, seven of them by Luke: Luke 2:13, 20; 19:37; 24:53; Acts 2:47; 3:8–9; Rom. 15:11; Rev. 19:5).

With the first of seven summary progress reports (cf. Acts 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:30–31) Luke brought this section of Acts to a close: each day others were being saved. The church grew rapidly right from the start!

## The Lexham Bible Dictionary

### Acts and the Early Church

Acts records that the earliest Christians **voluntarily “had all things in common ... selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need”** (Acts 2:44–45 ESV). Scholars have offered varying interpretations regarding the significance and extent of this practice. For example, Bovon argues that the early church practiced “a voluntary mutual disposal of possessions” (Bovon, *Luke the Theologian*, 448). In his view, the “fellowship” (κοινωνία, koinōnia) spoken of in Acts 2:42 refers to a **fraternal assembly that included a spirit of communion and assistance to the poor, required by God of the earliest believers.** He notes that almsgiving in the early church was not that of “organized charity but of fraternal communion within the early church between ‘the haves’ and the ‘have-nots’ ... [so that] there are no needy in the people of God” (Bovon, *Luke the Theologian*, 448).

Twelftree similarly suggests that the **early church’s communal practices were a means of both preparing for Christ’s return and caring for the poor in their community.** In his view, **the earliest Christians viewed those in the church as the primary recipients of social justice, and this is contrary to the contemporary notion of seeing mission as providing social justice to those outside the church** (Twelftree, *People of the Spirit*, 45–51, 112–16, 117–203).



## The New Bible Commentary

Acts 2:41–47 (NBC): 41–43 The result of the preaching was truly amazing. The church grew from 120 to over 3,000. The apostles continued their teaching and also did many wonders and miraculous signs. **The new converts didn't merely add Christianity to their already busy lives, but devoted themselves to their Christian experience. V 42 is a compact description of Christian discipleship.**

44–47 These verses describe the Christian community in the days after the Pentecost speech. The believers displayed a generous attitude toward possessions (see also on 4:32–5:11 below). But there was no blind rush to 'rid themselves of all their possessions', as if personal property was in itself evil, instead they gave as there was the need. The believers' financial problems were not automatically and miraculously solved by virtue of becoming Christians. Even in this 'golden age' of the church, there were needy people (although because of the sharing they didn't generally remain needy; 4:34; 6:1).

**The believers continued every day to meet together in the temple courts, as well as in their homes, where they shared table fellowship.** This was a short-lived period of peace, when they could apparently meet in the temple without fear and even enjoyed the favor of all the people. This was about to change for ever. In the next three chapters, Luke presents both outside opposition and internal disharmony.

## Holman Treasury of Key Bible Words

### Fellowship

Greek expression: koinōnia. Strong's Number: 2842

Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 1:9; Philippians 2:1; 1 John 1:3, 6–7

The Greek term koinōnia means "**that which is shared in common.**" In secular Greek literature, koinōnia was used to describe the marriage bed and communal meals. In the New Testament, **the word was used to denote the believers' common participation**, or "fellowship," with the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Father and Son have enjoyed communion with each other since before the creation of the world. When Jesus entered into time, His fellowship with the Father also entered into time. During the days of His ministry on earth, Jesus was introducing the Father to the disciples and initiating them into this fellowship. The unique fellowship between God and Jesus began in eternity, was manifested in time through the incarnation of Jesus, was introduced to the apostles, and then introduced to each and every believer through indwelling of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14; Phil. 2:1).

**The richness of fellowship among the first Christians is portrayed in the early chapters of Acts. The believers met together daily in house groups for teaching, fellowship, the Lord's Supper, and prayer (Acts 2:42, 46).** So profound was their sense of togetherness that the Christians pooled their possessions and distributed them to brothers and sisters in need (Acts 2:44–45; 4:32–35). **The dominant characteristic of this early Christian fellowship was the love among the believers (1 Thess. 4:9; 1 Pet. 1:22).** Motivated by love, Paul organized a collection for poor believers in Jerusalem. In Romans 15:26, which speaks of the gifts of the churches in Macedonia and Achaia, the Greek word for “contribution” is also the common Greek word for “fellowship.” Similarly, the fellowship that the Philippian church shared with Paul was in the form of gifts which supported the apostle's ministry (Phil. 1:5; Phil 4:14–15).

## Dictionary of Bible Terms

### Good friendship among believers

- **Unity in the love and fear of the Lord** Ps 119:63 See also Mal 3:16; Php 4:1
- **Worshipping together** Ps 55:13-14; 133:1; Ac 2:42-43,46-47
- **Sharing possessions** Ac 2:44-45; 4:32-35; 11:29
- **Serving together** Gal 2:8-9; Php 1:3-5
- **Praying for one another** Job 42:10; 2Th 1:11-12; Jas 5:16
- **Living peaceably** Ro 12:18; Php 4:2-3
- **Covering sins** Pr 10:12; 16:28; 17:9 A friend does not stir up trouble by spreading details of wrongs suffered, but rather seeks reconciliation; 1Co 13:6; 1Pe 4:8
- **Restoring from sin** Gal 6:1-2; Jas 5:19-20
- **Jesus Christ is the friend of sinners**, Mt 11:19 pp Lk 7:34

### individualism

The recognition of individuality, of the differences between particular people, and of their special gifts, needs and character. In a negative sense, the term can mean placing the needs of individuals above those of the church as a whole, which is contrary to the biblical emphasis on all believers sharing in the common ministry of the body of Christ.

- Individualism stresses the differences between people
- **Recognizing people's special gifts** 1Co 12:4-6 See also Ro 12:6-8; 1Co 12:8-11,28-30; Eph 4:11; Heb 2:4; 1Pe 4:10
- **Recognizing people's abilities and opportunities** Mt 25:14-15 See also Lk 19:12-13; 1Co 4:7

## Individualism and the church

- **Recognizing the parts people play in the church, the body of Christ** 1Co 12:12 See also Ro 12:4-5; 1Co 12:14,17-20,27
- **Individualism must not emphasize the individual at the expense of the church as a whole** 1Co 12:21-26 See also Ro 12:3,10,16; Php 2:3
- **Contrary to self-seeking individualism, believers should share in the common ministry of the body of Christ** Ac 2:42 See also Ac 2:44; 4:34-35; 2Co 8:13-14; 9:13; Heb 13:16

## Brand New: A 40 Day Guide to Life in Christ, Shilo Taylor

### LIVING LIFE WITH GOD

#### CHURCH—A BUILDING CAN'T CONTAIN IT

God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. (1 Corinthians 12:24–27)

The church is made up of people who believe Jesus is their Savior and have made him first in their lives. The church isn't made up of perfect people. It is made of people who are learning about following Christ and learning how to love God and each other.

**The church, which includes all Christ-followers, meets regularly all across the globe in smaller organizations known as local churches. A local church can meet in a small building, a home, or a stadium, but a church isn't the building itself. The church is made up of people who are following Jesus.** No matter how young you are when you became a Christian, there is a place for you to be part of a local church! It's important to find a place in your community where you can learn and serve.

**The church doesn't gather to be entertained. God's desire is for the church to encourage each other, pray together, and learn together. We get to worship together, hear God's word, and serve others. We get to discover and enjoy the gifts God gives us! The church gathers to experience God's grace together in Christ.**

In Acts we read that the church “devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:42). This common life involved more than meeting in a building once a week and then going their separate ways. They ate together. They prayed together. They gave what they had to help the needy and the hurting. They shared—through their

words and actions—the good news that Jesus promises forgiveness and life to those who believe in him. Through the church God works in the world.

## Internet Links

### How Many Christians Were There in 200 A.D.?

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/evangelical-history/how-many-christians-were-there-in-200-a-d/>

The global Christian population of 40,000 in AD 150, rising to 218,000 in 200, and 1.17 million by 250.

### The Growth of Christianity In The First Centuries

<https://www.jkennon.com/discipleship/the-growth-of-christianity-in-the-first-centuries/>

At the end of the first century there were fewer than ten thousand Christians in the Roman Empire. The population at the time numbered some sixty million, which meant that Christians made up 0.0017 percent. By the year 200, the number may have increased to a little more than two-hundred thousand, under one percent (0.36). By the year 250, however, the number had risen to more than a million, almost two percent of the population. The most striking figure, however, comes two generations later. **By the year 300 Christians made up 10 percent of the population, approximately six million.**

He concludes that if Christianity grew at a rate of 40 percent per decade, “there would have been 7,530 Christians in the year 100, followed by 217,795 Christians in the year 200 and by 6,299,832 Christians in the year 300.”

Growth rate of early Christianity

<https://ehrmanblog.org/growth-rate-of-early-christianity-for-members/>

There were probably about 60 million inhabitants in the Roman Empire, give or take, throughout the first four centuries CE (the period you're asking about). It is almost universally thought that Christianity started out as a very small movement – say about 20 people a few weeks after Jesus' death.

### Status of Global Christianity 2023

<https://www.gordonconwell.edu/center-for-global-christianity/resources/status-of-global-christianity/>

2.6 billion Christians. <https://www.gordonconwell.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2023/01/Status-of-Global-Christianity-2023.pdf>

## **John Mark Comer – Live No Lies**

The late Dr. Larry Hurtado, historian of early Christianity, in his wildly celebrated book **Destroyer of the Gods**, told the story of how a **tiny Jewish sect of Jesus followers overcame the bastion of paganism and won over the Roman Empire in only a few centuries.**

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1. The church was multiracial and multiethnic, with a high value for diversity, equity, and inclusion.
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4. It was resolute in its vision of marriage and sexuality as between one man and one woman for life.
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Now, if you plot those five features onto the map of modern American politics, the first two sound like liberal positions, as they are dealing with race and class; the second two sound like conservative positions; and the last one doesn't jibe with either.

No political party or intellectual ideology outside the church of Jesus—that I'm aware of—holds all five together.

## **Destroyer of the Gods: Early Christian Distinctiveness in the Roman World** **Larry W. Hurtado.**

**Review:** <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/themelios/review/destroyer-of-the-gods-early-christian-distinctiveness-in-the-roman-world/>

<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/29894928-destroyer-of-the-gods>

"Silly," "stupid," "irrational," "simple." "Wicked," "hateful," "obstinate," "anti-social." "Extravagant," "perverse." The Roman world rendered harsh judgments upon early Christianity including branding Christianity "new." Novelty was no Roman religious virtue.

Nevertheless, as Larry W. Hurtado shows in "Destroyer of the gods," Christianity thrived despite its new and distinctive features and opposition to them. Unlike nearly all other religious groups, Christianity utterly rejected the traditional gods of the Roman world. Christianity also offered a new and different kind of religious identity, one not based on ethnicity.

## Summary of Messages – Hope Revolution:

- Part One: **Right revolution, wrong throne.** What if your revolution is for the wrong cause?
- Part Two: **Maybe our cause is too small?** Hope is a person NOT an idea or a cause.
- Part Three: **Tag, you're it!** Continuing the revolution that Jesus started.