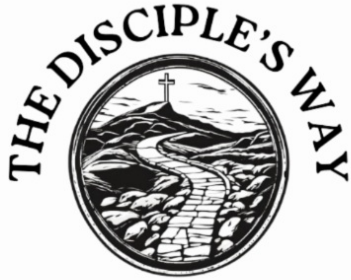




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Christian Formation  
at Christ Church Cathedral

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## Week of June 3, 2024

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### **MONDAY, June 3, 2024 - Acts 2:41-43, 46-47, 5:12-14**

#### **An awe-inspiring quality of community**

In one day, the early Christian community in Jerusalem went from about 120 members (cf. Acts 1:15) to roughly 3,120 members! What made that first Christian church so appealing? They certainly had an awesome truth to proclaim (“the apostles’ teaching”), a strong connection with God (“prayer”), and caring hearts (“demonstrated God’s goodness”). But it’s easy to skip over one aspect of their spiritual life so meaningful Luke named it twice. They “shared meals” (verse 42) and “shared food with gladness and simplicity” (verse 46).

- Pastor Lloyd John Ogilvie wrote, “Life together in the early church is described as breaking of bread and prayers. In order for people to be galvanized into oneness in Christ, it takes time to be together to listen to each other, care, and be for each other.” \*In what ways has relating to others more deeply than you can in a couple of minutes after worship helped you to grow spiritually? How have you seen others grow in Christ through such times?
- What practical problems do you think these first Christians faced in growing into a true “fellowship” (e.g. Acts 6:1 showed one challenge they faced)? What appeals to you about the bondedness pictured in this passage? Our time and culture differ from theirs. How can the opportunities for fellowship and meal-sharing planned in our remodeled “Solomon’s Porch” building lead to a similar quality of life today as you see in this passage?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, I’m tempted to think, “It’s just a meal.” Remind me of all the times you reached people’s hearts as you ate with them, and help me to value that more highly. Amen.

\* Lloyd John Ogilvie, *The Preacher’s Commentary Series, Volume 28: Acts*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983, p. 74.

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## TUESDAY, June 4, 2024 - Romans 12:9-18

### What God calls us to be the best at

The apostle Paul provided a portrait of what a Christian life should look like in this passage. Paul had never been to Rome (Romans 15:22-24), but he was aware from friends who had been there that Jewish and Gentile Christians had tensions about parts of the faith, even as they faced Roman enemies all around them. Paul offered advice on how best to interact with each other, and with people hostile to Christian faith.

- The church today has many enemies, though it's usually expressed in more tolerant ways in the Western world. Like the Christians of Rome, we cannot abandon our faith in order to repay evil with evil actions. In what ways have you blessed people who harass you? What does it mean for us today to "associate with people who have no status"? What role should these people play in the church?
- How can we best live out the love of others that Paul described in this passage? How can we live at peace with all people today, at a time when many political and social voices try to polarize us, and set us against one another? How have you fallen short of Paul's counsel? How have you lived up to the wisdom he offered?

**Prayer:** God, open me to your Word. Bless my enemies. Humble me in all aspects of my life. Give me your wisdom and love, so that I may follow your commands to love others and live in peace with them. Amen.

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## WEDNESDAY, June 5, 2024 - Hebrews 10:22-25

### We need each other to spark love and good deeds

As Acts 2 reported, the very first Christians in Jerusalem formed a congregation that met regularly, shared life, and supported one another. As the gospel spread, Christians in other places also formed congregations, often more than one in each city. They knew they were part of something bigger than just their local congregation. But they also knew that they belonged, grew and served together in those local churches.

- Pastor Lloyd John Ogilvie wrote, "The final miracle of the Holy Spirit on that day of Pentecost was the birth of the church. You may wonder why I call that a miracle. It is because I know human nature. Next to the transformation of persons, the second greatest miracle is oneness with others who have been transformed." \*In what ways has the Holy Spirit helped you bridge differences and find oneness with other members of your church family?
- Think about the depth and quality of the connection you have with other people in your church. Is anyone on your "2 a.m. call list" if you faced a serious problem? Are you on anyone else's list? That kind of connection never happens overnight; building trust takes time and shared experiences. How can you let the Holy Spirit deepen your friendships now, so that you are there to uphold one another through any of life's storms?

**Prayer:** Lord God, thank you for connecting me to your family. Help me to "spark" love and good deeds in others, and to be receptive to your sparks as they arrive in my life. Amen.

## **THURSDAY, June 6, 2024 - 1 Corinthians 12:12-18, 26-27, Galatians 5:26-6:2**

### **The body of Christ—parts of each other, helping each other**

The apostle Paul reminded his readers in Corinth that their varied gifts were not tools to outdo others in a quest for power or glory. Connected in Christ, they needed to depend on and support one another. To the Galatian Christians, he wrote that part of their God-given mission was to “carry each other’s burdens.”

- As Paul unfolded the metaphor of Christians as “the body of Christ,” he noted that our body parts do not envy or compete with another. Rather, as he wrote in verse 26, “If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part gets the glory, all the parts celebrate with it.” Who have you known who lived out that spirit as a member of “the Body of Christ”? How can you more fully honor both your own gifts and those of others?
- We are called to live a kind of life that “watches over one another in love.” Are there people in your life with whom you have the kind of trust, candor and mutual support Galatians 6:1-2 describe? What concrete choices can make this a reality in the relationships you value most?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, so often the world around me says, openly or subtly, “It’s every man (and woman) for himself.” You call me to a very different approach to life. Give me the heart to live out your calling. Amen.

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## **FRIDAY, June 7, 2024 - Romans 14:13-19**

### **God’s family: living in peace, building each other up**

We sometimes think “church” means a big building. Paul’s letter went to a group of smaller “house churches” in Rome (cf. Romans 16:5, 10, 15). Paul wrote to Roman Christians about disputes over food choices, urging “the strong” to care about and encourage “the weak,” rather than mocking or discouraging them. They didn’t always agree on how best to live their faith. We can differ on the details, Paul said. The central command is to love. Life in God’s Kingdom is about “about righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

- Paul wrote that as Christians focus their spiritual walk on “righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit,” they are able to stop sniping at one another. How easy or hard do you find it to lay aside a value system built on “being right” to live a life that seeks to lift up others? What helps you see whatever good things you have as gifts meant to bless others, not just to cling to for your own sake?
- “Stop judging each other,” Paul wrote directly. In what ways does that set a high, serious standard for how we relate to one another? Could it be seen as setting a “low” norm for acceptance, one even a woman taken in adultery or a thief on a cross could pass? Which do you find more challenging: the “height” or the “lowness” of Paul’s standard?

**Prayer:** Lord God, only you are wise enough to judge the thoughts and intentions of each person's heart. Help me release the urge to judge others, and instead to seek to live with all people in your peace and love. Amen.

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## **SATURDAY, June 8, 2024 - 1 John 4:7-12**

### **Loving one another with God's love**

As John wrote about how Christians treat one another, he likely thought about himself and Jesus' other disciples. They jockeyed for position and got angry with one another at times (cf. Mark 10:35-45). Over time, Jesus re-shaped their thoughts and actions. John knew that loving others with Christ's love doesn't spring from a naturally warm human disposition. It goes much deeper than just being "nice." This kind of active love comes from the heart of the God of the universe. God loves us—that is the reason that we love.

- An unknown humorist wrote, "To live above with saints we love—ah, that will be glory! To live below with saints we know—well, that's another story." But John (and the other Bible writers) said that, in Christ, we are able to grow beyond that. Which people, inside or beyond the church, do you find it hardest to love? Read and pray through this passage, plugging in their names and faces. Ask God to help you live out God's love even toward them.

**Prayer:** Dear God, you ARE love—what an amazing, mind-stretching truth. You know that it's not quite as natural for me to love. Please keep loving me as I stretch and grow in my ability to reflect your love to others. Amen.

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**Family Activity:** Jesus asked His followers to treat others the way He did. As a family, discuss your responses to each of these scenarios:

- A new person comes to your Sunday school class and doesn't know anyone.
- The person standing in front of you at the grocery store drops a dollar.
- Your neighbor is an older woman and lives alone. A storm comes and all her trash cans fall over.

Talk together about ways to be Christ-like in each of these situations. This week ask each other, "How did you follow Jesus today? Did you ignore an opportunity to serve? How can you do a better job being kind to others tomorrow?" Pray together, asking God to help you be a faithful follower of Jesus.

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