

# A House To Call Home

## Part 1 - We are an Open House for Jesus

### Christ-centered community

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)

<b>A House To Call Home</b> The LORD is building a spiritual House (Christ-centered community) that He can call Home, so He can call others home.  <i>We live+give because of Jesus!</i>	
<b>Open House:</b> modeling the Gospel by the way we gather as a Church community  <i>Because of Jesus   Sunday Celebrations</i>	<b>House of Glory:</b> ministering to the LORD together  <i>Believe with Community   House of Prayer</i>
<b>Green House:</b> making disciples family-style  <i>Belong in Family   Faith Families</i>	<b>Storehouse:</b> mobilizing servant leaders  <i>Become ambassadors for the City   Serve Team</i>

### Our gatherings matter to God,

because the way we gather (for/ around Jesus) models the Gospel.

<b>How Believers Have Gathered In Church History</b> (By Chris Needham)
<p>In a day and age where we have Bible applications on our smartphones with dozens of translations, bookshelves about the Bible, and an Internet full of every Bible question we could ever ask...</p> <p>We often forget that the People of God throughout most of history did not have access to personal Bibles.</p> <p>In fact, it wouldn't make sense because for most people who lived over the past 3,000 years since Moses, most people couldn't read!</p>
<p>So how did Worshippers of God hear His words? <i>At the Community Gathering!</i></p>
<p>Since ancient times, God's people assembled together at the Temple, the Festivals, or the local Synagogue on Sabbath for the public reading and teaching of God's Word.</p> <p>This is the same rhythm we see Jesus participate in since He was a small boy. Jesus Himself would gather in community at the local Synagogue for the public reading of Scripture, for teaching, and for prayer.</p>

His followers continued in this same pattern of life. Acts 2 tells us the earliest Church community devoted themselves to teaching, fellowship, prayer, praising God, and sharing meals.

And where did they meet up for this? Both at the Temple and in their homes...

The only real “tweak” (or change) that Believers made was shifting their gathering day from Saturday to Sunday, in honor of the Resurrection of Jesus.

The counter-cultural, shocking aspect of these gatherings was that every was Equal in Christ.

From the Servant to the Ruling Class, everyone would serve one another and sit at the same level. The world had never seen anything like this before; indeed the Christians were accused in Acts 17 of being those “who have turned the world upside down!”

Needless to say, it was not a popular message in the Roman Empire, and fierce persecution came... Christians were rounded up for centuries to be put to death as Martyrs.

But the routine Community Gathering did not end! Even at the threat of the Colosseum, Followers of Jesus did not abandon their sacred calling to gather... They just had to move underground and began meeting almost exclusively in homes.

Fast-forward almost 2,000 years and the gathering of the Believers has remained consistent through every twist, turn, and movement of Church History.

In 1906, the Azusa Street Revival began in Los Angeles. Even in Jim Crow segregated America, the revival brought unity amongst diverse ethnicities, with writers of the time reporting that in the Revival: “the color line was washed away in the Blood of Jesus.”

Millenia later, and the Church Gathering was still revolutionary in the surrounding culture!

And to this day, in places like the Middle East, Christians meet underground in their homes... Under threat of prison or even death, they boldly meet - even this very Sunday.

Most of them, like us, have access to personal copies of the Bible. They can access YouTube sermons, Bible websites, and play recordings of Worship music. However, none of these blessings prevent them from bravely venturing out on the LORD’s Day to continue the only rhythm of life that has ever been known to God’s People since the very beginning.

As Hebrews 10:25 says: “Don’t stop meeting together with other believers... and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”

See, the practice and rhythm of gathering for the LORD matters, because it’s clear through the centuries that The LORD Himself is doing the gathering.

Gathering in Jesus’ Name matters to God, because the way we gather *models* the Gospel...

## The Way We Gather Models The Gospel

### Let's look at Jesus, our Model!

From beginning to end, Jesus modeled the Gospel message and mission by gathering people.

Mark 1:16-17 NLT (Jesus' first calling)

- Jesus said: Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of people!
- What happened: God gathered them, and recruited them to gather like Him!

Matthew 28:18-20 (Jesus' final Great Commission)

- Jesus commanded: Go and make disciples of all nations...
- What happened: The disciples instinctively planted churches.
- Gathering in large groups and scattering into small groups is part of the disciple-making pattern that Jesus imprinted on His Church.

### The way Jesus gathered unlikely people modeled the Gospel.

Luke 6:12-16 (Jesus gathers His apostolic team)

One day soon afterward Jesus went up on a mountain to pray, and he prayed to God all night. 13 At daybreak he called together all of his disciples and chose twelve of them to be apostles. Here are their names: 14 Simon (whom he named Peter), Andrew (Peter's brother), James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, 15 Matthew, Thomas, James (son of Alphaeus), Simon (who was called zealot), 16 Judas (son of James) Judas Iscariot (who later betrayed him).

Peter & Andrew – irreligious vs. religious seeker

“Sons of Thunder” & Thomas – passionate (reckless) vs. intellectual

Matthew & Simon – political rivals

John & Judas – different heart postures

Peter & the others – different stages of life

This is just as miraculous as God gathering all the animals into the Ark with Noah. They should be “eating each other alive,” but instead they actually find a way of escape into God's new creation together. Jesus is the Ark, and Lord of all!

## **Jesus makes “Church” possible!**

See, Jesus does the impossible every time we gather in His Name!

Imagine a large orchestra playing beautiful music together... without a conductor... and without music score! That's a picture of how miraculous it is when Believers harmonize under the influence of the Holy Spirit and Word of God. The way we interact as the Body of Christ is meant to glorify God.

When Believers gather in Jesus' Name, we do not simply try to remember what Jesus said and did in history (Acts 1:1). Instead, we are experiencing the Risen LORD in our midst by His Spirit and Word.

In Revelation 2:1, Jesus Christ is described as “the One who walks among the seven gold lampstands.” (John explains in Revelation 1:20 that the lampstands are a picture of the churches.) The miracle of gathering in Jesus' Name is that the LORD is with us!

The fellowship with the LORD and each other is impossible His Light! We have fellowship in the Light! In light of Jesus, we can experience a quality of life in community that is greater than our own constraints.

1 John 1:5-7

This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you: God is light, and there is no darkness in Him at all. 6 So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness; we are not practicing the truth. 7 But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin.

Jesus tells a story about a banquet, expecting us to join!

Luke 14:16-24

Jesus replied with this story: “A man prepared a great feast and sent out many invitations. 17 When the banquet was ready, he sent his servant to tell the guests, ‘Come, the banquet is ready.’ 18 But they all began making excuses. One said, ‘I have just bought a field and must inspect it. Please excuse me.’ 19 Another said, ‘I have just bought five pairs of oxen, and I want to try them out. Please excuse me.’ 20 Another said, ‘I just got married, so I can’t come.’

21 “The servant returned and told his master what they had said. His master was furious and said, ‘Go quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and invite the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.’ 22 After the servant had done this, he reported, ‘There is still room for more.’ 23 So his master said, ‘Go out into the country lanes and behind the hedges and urge anyone you find to come, so that the house will be full. 24 For none of those I first invited will get even the smallest taste of my banquet.’”

See, if we don't model the Gospel as the full-participation experience that it is, we are not preparing believers to "devote themselves" to the spiritual practices that we see in the early Church's example.

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; emphasis added)

The way we gather for/ around Jesus models the Gospel and multiplies it.