

# Bible Study: Living as God's People in Community

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Theme: God designed His church to live in unity, bear one another's burdens, meet physical needs, and shine as His hands and feet in the world.

## Introduction

God never intended for His people to live in isolation. From the very beginning, He declared, "It is not good that man should be alone" (Genesis 2:18). Humanity was created in the image of a relational God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—who exists in perfect fellowship. That same design is woven into our lives: we are made to live in relationship with God and with one another.

When Jesus came, He not only brought salvation to individuals but also formed a new community—the church. The book of Acts shows us believers gathering together in worship, prayer, and fellowship, sharing what they had so that no one was in need. Paul describes the church as the body of Christ, each member uniquely gifted and necessary for the whole to function.

God's plan is clear: the church is to be a family where we bear each other's burdens, care for the needy, and shine as a living testimony of His love. This is not just a calling—it is our identity as followers of Christ.

In this study, we will explore how the early church lived this out, and then four key areas of how God calls us to live as His people today.

## How the Early Church Did This

### 1. They Devoted Themselves to Fellowship and Teaching

Acts 2:42 (ESV): And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Lesson: A healthy church is built on both truth and relationships. We need teaching and fellowship—not one without the other.

### Discussion Questions with Answers

Q: What stands out to you most about the early church's example?

A: Their deep devotion, radical generosity, and unity.

Q: Which part of their lifestyle do you think our churches today need to recover the most?

A: Stronger discipleship, more practical generosity, every believer serving.

Q: How can we take one small step to live more like the early church this week?

A: Share a meal, give to meet a need, reach out to someone struggling.

✦ Challenge Question: If someone looked at my life this week, would they see the same devotion, generosity, and love that marked the early church?

## 2. They Shared Possessions and Resources

Acts 2:44–45 (ESV): And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.

Lesson: God calls us to see our possessions as tools to bless others, not treasures to hoard. Radical generosity makes the gospel visible.

✦ Challenge Question: Do I see my possessions as mine alone, or as resources God has given me to bless others?

## 3. They Bore One Another's Burdens

Acts 4:32–35 (ESV): Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

Lesson: The church should be a place where no one suffers alone. Love means carrying one another's burdens.

✦ Challenge Question: Whose burden can I help carry this week — through prayer, encouragement, or practical support?

## 4. They Cared for the Vulnerable

Acts 6:1–6 (ESV): Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution... And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, 'It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve

tables...’ And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus... These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

Lesson: Churches must prioritize the poor, widows, orphans, and the marginalized. Compassion is not optional—it is central to Christian identity.

✦ Challenge Question: How am I personally helping to ensure the vulnerable in my community are cared for?

### 5. They Lived as a Witness to Outsiders

Acts 2:47 (ESV): Praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Lesson: The world may not read the Bible, but they will “read” our lives. Our unity and love are a powerful testimony to Jesus.

✦ Challenge Question: Would outsiders describe me as someone who lives with joy, integrity, and visible love for others?

### 6. They Equipped Every Believer to Serve

Ephesians 4:11–16 (ESV): And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God...

Lesson: The church flourishes when every member serves. No one is too small, too weak, or too unimportant in Christ’s body.

✦ Challenge Question: Am I actively using my spiritual gifts to build up the body of Christ, or am I sitting on the sidelines?

## Takeaway

God’s plan for His people has always been more than just individual salvation—it is about forming a community that reflects His love and character to the world. As believers, we are not called to walk alone but to live in fellowship with one another, growing together in faith and obedience. When the church lives this way, the world sees a reflection of Christ Himself—a Savior who bore our burdens, met our deepest need, and invites us into His eternal family.

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God never intended for us to live isolated Christian lives. From the very beginning, His plan has been for His people to live in **community**, reflecting His love through mutual care, service, and witness to the world. Let's look at what Scripture says about this:

## 1. God's Design for Community

### **Key Scripture:**

*Acts 2:42-47 (ESV)*

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

### **What the Writer Was Expressing (Luke):**

Luke paints a picture of the Spirit-filled church living in unity, generosity, and joy. He shows us that community life was central to the gospel witness of the early believers. Their devotion to teaching, fellowship, prayer, and sharing revealed that following Christ is not an individual pursuit but a shared life that attracts others to the Lord.

### **Discussion Questions with Answers:**

1. **Why did God declare “It is not good that man should be alone” (Gen. 2:18)?**
  - Because we are created in God’s relational image.
  - Isolation leaves us vulnerable to temptation and discouragement.
  
2. **How does fellowship help us grow spiritually in ways personal devotion cannot?**
  - Others can encourage, correct, and strengthen us.
  - Testimonies and shared experiences build faith.

### 3. What practical steps can you take to deepen fellowship with others?

- Join or host a small group.
- Invite others into your home.
- Regularly check in with a friend or prayer partner

#### **Challenge Question:**

Am I living in authentic Christian fellowship, or am I trying to follow Jesus in isolation?

#### **Memory Verse:**

*Ecclesiastes 4:12 (ESV)* — “And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.”

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## 2. Bearing Burdens Together

#### **Key Scripture:**

*Galatians 6:1-2 (ESV)*

“Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

#### **What the Writer Was Expressing (Paul):**

Paul reminds the Galatians that love is not abstract but practical—it is seen in restoring the fallen and carrying the heavy loads of others. He emphasizes humility and gentleness in helping others, warning against pride or judgment. In doing this, believers fulfill “the law of Christ,” which is the command to love one another as He has loved us.

#### **Discussion Questions with Answers:**

##### 1. What are some burdens that are hard to carry alone?

- Grief and loss.
- Family conflict or financial stress.

- Spiritual struggles or temptation.

## 2. Why is sharing struggles difficult for many Christians?

- Fear of being judged or misunderstood.
- Pride in wanting to appear “strong.”
- Lack of trust or safe relationships.

## 3. How can we build a culture of burden-bearing in our local church?

- Practice openness and honesty.
- Create safe prayer groups or accountability partners.
- Respond with compassion instead of criticism.

### Challenge Question:

Whose burden can I help carry this week — through prayer, encouragement, or practical support?

### Memory Verse:

*Romans 12:15 (ESV)* — “Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.”

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## 3. Meeting Physical Needs

### Key Scripture:

*Matthew 25:35–36 (ESV)*

“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.”

### What the Writer Was Expressing (Matthew recording Jesus):

Matthew records Jesus’ words about the final judgment, showing that acts of mercy to the least and most vulnerable are counted as service to Christ Himself. The message is clear: true discipleship is revealed in tangible compassion. Faith that does not lead to action is empty, but love expressed through service reflects the heart of Christ.

### **Discussion Questions with Answers:**

**1. How does meeting physical needs demonstrate God's love in practical ways?**

- Shows faith in action, not just in words.
- Reflects Christ's compassion for the poor and needy.

**2. What examples of mercy ministry do you see in your community?**

- Food banks, shelters, clothing drives, or community meals.
- Churches providing financial help or visiting the sick.

**3. What small steps can your group or church take to meet needs this week?**

- Donate food or clothing.
- Visit someone lonely or in the hospital.
- Offer financial or practical support to a struggling family.

### **Challenge Question:**

If Jesus came to me hungry or in need, how would I respond — and am I treating “the least of these” the same way?

### **Memory Verse:**

*James 2:17 (ESV)* — “So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”

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## **4. God's Plan: The Church as His Hands and Feet**

### **Key Scripture:**

*Ephesians 4:11–16 (ESV)*

“And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in

every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”

**What the Writer Was Expressing (Paul):**

Paul explains that Christ Himself has given the church leaders and spiritual gifts, not so they do all the work, but to train and equip every believer for ministry. The goal is growth into maturity, unity, and Christlikeness. Paul emphasizes that the church is not a passive crowd but a living body where each part works together in love.

**Discussion Questions with Answers:**

**1. What does it mean for the church to be Christ’s “body” today?**

- We represent Christ to the world.
- Each believer has a unique role, like body parts working together.

**2. How can we discover and use our spiritual gifts to serve others?**

- Pray for guidance and seek God’s direction.
- Try serving in different areas and see where God blesses.
- Listen to encouragement or confirmation from others in the church.

**3. In what ways can the church shine more brightly in today’s culture?**

- By living with integrity and holiness.
- By loving without discrimination or favoritism.
- By meeting needs and offering hope in Jesus’ name.

**Challenge Question:**

Am I actively using my spiritual gifts to build up the body of Christ, or am I sitting on the sidelines?

**Memory Verse:**

*Matthew 5:16 (ESV)* — “In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

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## Final Takeaway

This week, don't let the message remain only in theory or good intentions. God's Word always calls us to action. Take one **specific, concrete step** to live out what we've studied together. Even small steps, done in faith, can make a great impact when offered to the Lord.

- **Community:** Make room in your life for others. Invite a friend, a neighbor, or a fellow believer to share a meal, pray together, or simply spend time in fellowship. Relationships are built one invitation at a time.
- **Bearing Burdens:** Look for someone who is struggling—whether spiritually, emotionally, or physically—and commit to walk with them in prayer and encouragement. Don't just say, "I'll pray for you"; stop and pray with them. Send a note, a verse, or a word of hope.
- **Meeting Needs:** Identify a tangible need and meet it. It could be donating groceries, offering transportation, visiting someone who is lonely, or giving financially to help someone in crisis. Let your faith become visible through compassionate action.
- **Being His Hands and Feet:** Remember that you represent Christ wherever you go. Shine His light in simple, everyday ways—through kindness to a stranger, integrity at work, patience at home, or boldness in sharing the gospel when the opportunity comes.

### Challenge:

Prayerfully choose at least one of these steps this week, and then act on it. Trust God to multiply your obedience into something far greater than you could imagine. Your simple act of love may be the very thing that points someone to Christ and brings glory to the Father.

## My Prayer for You

Father, thank You for calling us into Your family, the church. Teach us to love one another deeply, to share in each other's burdens, and to meet the needs of the hungry, the poor, and the broken. Fill us with Your Spirit so that we may shine as lights in this world, bringing glory to Your name. Help us to walk together in unity, compassion, and mission until Christ returns. In Jesus' name, Amen.



### About This Bible Study

This Bible study, *Living as God's People in Community*, is designed to help believers rediscover God's plan for His church as a family of faith. From the very beginning, God intended His people to live in relationship with Him and with one another—not in isolation. The Scriptures show us that the early church was marked by unity, generosity, compassion, and mission.

The goal of this study is not just to gain knowledge but to put God's Word into practice. As we live in true community—sharing life, carrying burdens, serving others, and shining God's love—we reflect Christ to the world and fulfill His calling for the church.

### About the Author



Dr. Cecil W. Thorn, ThD, is a teacher and servant of Christ with a passion for guiding believers into deeper intimacy with God through Scripture, prayer, and Spirit-led living. His ministry is devoted to equipping the Church to walk in truth, freedom, and faithfulness to Christ's call.

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