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## We the Church: "Journeying Together"

**Today we're taking that basic premise, humans are not meant to be alone (think of the beginning of the Bible (Gen 2:18: - "It is not good that the man should be alone"), and we're explore how Christ is forming the church to be that place of human partnership with God. The church, not as a building, but as a collection of Jesus followers is meant to be on a journey together throughout time and space. From the calling of the 12 disciples, to today, and long after us too.**

"Journeying Together" (Acts 2:44-47)

*44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.*

What we just read is a picture of what is often called "the early church."

**Is that the right name for it?**

- yes, it was about as early as you can get!

-no, because in the span of the first 5-10 years, let alone the first 30 years, the church went through massive growth and change. The picture we have in Acts 2 is incredibly important, but it is only one snapshot of the early church we meet in Acts.

- the Red Hot centre of the church. When Unity is at its peak. When time and distance and yes, decay, haven't had their effect on the church, this is what it looks like.

Is this church perfect? NO! But it is like an old family picture that reminds us of our roots, and what is possible,

"All who believed were together and held all things in common."

**God's heart is to bring people together.**

-This early church was born out of the fire of Pentecost just weeks earlier.

-no one following Jesus was alone.

- "all who believed" which at this point in the new church would have been literally everyone in the world who had encountered Jesus.

- the church doesn't stay this way for long:

- Through time, growth in the church, persecution and even financial troubles, the church dispersed and formed all across the ancient Middle East.

- "The church" when from "one central city church" to a whole bunch of "local churches" in different places. Even in the "early church" a more recognizable form of church (to us) began to emerge.

**Acts 19:8-10**, where we meet the church in a very different place and season of growth, even though this is taking place only maybe 20 years into the life of the church.

Ephesus is nothing like Jerusalem. It is pagan, it is worldly. It is a place where people of all nations pass through and have made it a multi-cultural city. It is a stronghold of Greek paganism, especially for the God Artemis.

This presents amazing opportunities to make the gospel known to people from all over the world, but also means the Christians feel opposition on all sides.

*8 And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. 9 But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus. 10 This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.*

### **How long did Paul spend in Ephesus?**

Over two years.

- Paul and the disciples he had with him looked for people who were peaceful to their message and they journeyed with them for a long time.

When Paul experienced opposition in the synagogue, did you notice how many people it was who ran him out of that particular gathering?

"Some"

Not all, not even most. But Paul recognized that there were a lot of people who WERE peaceful to the gospel - of course, they didn't believe it (YET), or didn't believe all of it, so he was determined to stay with them as long as he could.

**What did he do in the "Hall of Tyrannus"?** It doesn't say he taught or preached - he "reasoned" he dialogued, he argued, he listened and responded. That's the type of thing that happened for 2 years there.

Paul and his disciples discerned with the people needed there:

- a. First, Paul encountered both eagerness and objections - so he adapted his ministry there - leaving the synagogue to find a neutral place to hold discussions about Christianity.
- b. Paul discerned that the people there needed time. They needed to ask their questions in the hall, sure, but they needed more than that.

**Paul set up his life there.** He lived there, worked there, ate his meals with the people and he and the disciples must have rented a house or room.

The life of Acts 2 was imitated, but not duplicated. In a different culture, time and place, the believers still shared meals, worshipped together, and shared the fruits of their labour as far as they could.

**Journeying together was not about showing up, dispensing truth, and leaving people to accept or reject it. It was about coming in, seeking a place to engage people, to speak and listen, and then, setting up a life there.**

**Are you ready to try this? To share you life with people, pour into a small group who pours into you? To “reason” together with people and hear questions and think about how Christ answers them?**

**Some ideas: Questions after the service? Forum evenings where we have open discussion and questions? Invite your friends and neighbours? Partner with YFC and others to make that happen? Put the coffee on and lets reason together? What are your ideas?**

-a comparison to the army:

-Christ is the Head, the *commander* of the church. The whole church across time and space is like the *Army*. Denominations (when properly understood) are like *legions* within the army, and local churches are like *companies* in a legion, and small huddles of Christians who walk together are like *squads*.

Who's in your squad? Are you engaged in your company – the local church?

Our spiritual health is tied to the connections we have within the faith. There is simply no biblical description of the Lone ranger