



SEMI-ORGANIZED LOVE Wk 3: *Christian Life=Shared Life* @pastorerichuffman @thestoryhouston

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In one sentence, what do you think the church should be *doing*?

After the church “born” in the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, here’s what the first Christians did:

Acts 2:42-47 They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe...All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Acts 4:32-37 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God’s grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them. From time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales...and it was distributed to anyone who had need.

From the moment the Holy Spirit dwelled among them, they shared their lives with each other. Look again at the passages above, and make a list of everything they shared with each other:

It all sounds like a Marxist fever-dream, right? Were the first Christians socialists?

A Jesus-centered church is always interested in the \_\_\_\_\_ while insisting on \_\_\_\_\_. Sharing \_\_\_\_\_ isn’t the \_\_\_\_\_; it’s a \_\_\_\_\_.

How does this way of life cut through the liberal-conservative divide in our culture?

Consider this quote, write your own reflections below, and discuss with your Chapter:

“When our churches become *spiritual spas* in which we retreat from the world, our salt loses its saltiness, and we are no longer able to impact the culture.” - Richard Stearns, *The Hole in Our Gospel*

The Christian way of taking care of one another isn’t rooted in \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, or \_\_\_\_\_. It’s \_\_\_\_\_. We’re generous because God is generous. *Jesus revealed the generosity of God.*

Matthew 25:34-36 Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance...[f]or I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something



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to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

In addition to Jesus' teachings, the first Christians affirmed their way of life in other writings:

Romans 12:10-11 *Love one another; outdo one another in showing honor. Never be lazy in showing such devotion.*

At first, Christians were a joke to the Romans. Then, we were a threat. But through all the mockery and persecution, Christians followed Jesus' way of love and forgiveness. The result was the transformation of the Roman way of life, as demonstrated in letters written by the Roman Emperor Julian around 355 AD.

"Why do we not observe how the kindness of Christians to strangers, their care for the burial of the dead, and the sobriety of their lifestyle has done the most to advance their cause? Each of these things ought to be practiced by us... It is disgraceful when no Jew is a beggar and the Christians support our poor in addition to their own..."

"Erect many hostels in order that strangers may enjoy my kindness."

For I was a stranger and you welcomed me...

"I have ordered grain and wine be distributed from me to strangers and beggars in my name..."

For I was hungry...I was thirsty...

"I believe even prisoners deserve the same kind of care."

For I was in prison...

"Do not therefore let others outdo us in good deeds, while we are disgraced by laziness."

Outdo one another in showing honor. Never be lazy in showing such devotion.

"We ought to share our goods with all men."

All the believers were one in heart and mind...they shared everything they had.

How did Christians hijack the Roman Empire and culture? With political power or military force? Fiery Facebook debates? What was their strategy?

How can we do the same thing today? What's our *strategy*?

"The world can no longer be left to mere diplomats, politicians, and business leaders. They have done the best they could, no doubt. But this is an age for spiritual heroes - a time for men and women to be heroic in their faith and in spiritual character and power. The greatest danger to the Christian church today is that of pitching its message too low." - Dallas Willard, The Spirit of the Disciplines