TELLING THE GOOD NEWS · STUDY NOTES

Study 9: Evangelism and the church

For personal study or groups

Your name

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How to use these notes. Watch each part's video on biblehelp.net, or read the text below. Look up each passage in your own Bible and write the answer on the lines. The verses are printed at the back if you need them. At the end there are questions to think about on your own or to discuss in a group.

PART 1

A church that commends the gospel

Together (John 13:34–35; Acts 2:42–47; Philippians 1:3–11, 27)

The New Testament never imagines a believer who stands alone. When God saves a person, He places that person in a family. One of the strongest arguments for the gospel is not an argument at all. It is a group of ordinary people who love one another.

1. A new commandment (John 13:34–35). Jesus said this on the night before He died, just after washing His disciples' feet. What is new is the measure: "As I have loved you." It is a command, so we can obey it even when our feelings do not help. To love as Christ loved is to do something for the other person. "By this everyone will know that you are My disciples." Not by our buildings or our cleverness, but by the way we treat each other. Early Christians were known for it: Tertullian reports that pagans said, "See how they love one another." The opposite is true too. A quarrelling church contradicts its own message, so if you have fallen out with another believer, go and put it right.

1 **Read John 13:34–35**

What is new about this commandment? How will people know that we are His disciples?

See also: Leviticus 19:18; John 13:1–17.

2. They devoted themselves (Acts 2:42–43). The three thousand were not left alone. They were added to a church, and they kept at four things. The apostles' teaching: the Spirit gave them an appetite for the truth. The fellowship: sharing lives, time, burdens and money. You cannot bear another person's burdens through a screen. The breaking of bread, which many understand to be the Lord's Supper. And prayer, for their words alone could change no one. Not one of the four is an evangelistic event, and yet this is the church that God was blessing.

2 **Read Acts 2:42–43**

What four things did the first believers devote themselves to?

3. The Lord added (Acts 2:44–47). Those who had property sold it when there was a need. This was not a rule, for they still had houses, but love: "What is mine is yours." They ate together in their homes, with gladness and sincerity. Hospitality is a quiet and powerful tool of evangelism, for many who would never come into a church will come to your table. "And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." The Lord did the adding. The church was faithful, and it was ready to receive those He saved.

3 **Read Acts 2:44–47**

How did the believers treat one another? Who added to their number?

See also: Acts 5:4.

Cross the room

Would a nervous visitor be spoken to in your church? One of the most useful things you can do for evangelism may be to speak to someone you do not know. Evangelism does not end when a person believes.

4. Partners in the gospel (Philippians 1:3–6). Paul writes from prison, and he thanks God with joy for their "partnership in the gospel". It is the same word as "fellowship" in Acts 2. The Philippians gave to Paul more than once, prayed for him and stood by him in prison. Not all of them could go with him, but all of them were in it with him. Every member of a church is a partner in the gospel. And the work is God's: "He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion."

4 **Read Philippians 1:3–6**

Why does Paul thank God for these believers? What is he confident of?

See also: Philippians 4:15–16.

5. That your love may abound (Philippians 1:7–11). Paul longs for them "with the affection of Christ Jesus". And he prays that their love will abound "in knowledge and depth of insight". Christian love is not vague niceness. It knows the truth and thinks about what is best for others. The aim is "the glory and praise of God".

5 **Read Philippians 1:7–11**

What does Paul pray for? What is the aim of it all?

6. Worthy of the gospel (Philippians 1:27). The word has to do with living as a citizen. Philippi was a Roman colony, proud to be Roman far from Rome, and believers belong to a greater city. "Worthy of the gospel" does not mean earning it. It means that our lives should match it: merciful, truthful and gentle. Our lives either back up the message or pull it down. And believers stand together, "contending together as one for the faith of the gospel".

6 **Read Philippians 1:27**

How are believers to live, and how are they to stand?

See also: Philippians 3:20.

7. A church that commends the gospel. Love one another, as Christ has loved us. Hold to the truth. Welcome and share. See yourself as a partner in the gospel. Live in a way that is worthy of the gospel, and leave the adding to the Lord.

PART 2

Sending and supporting

Every member a partner (Acts 13:1–3; Romans 15:20–24; 3 John 5–8)

Most of us will spend our lives in one town. So what does the Great Commission have to do with us? The church sends, and those who stay at home are partners with those who go.

1. The church sends (Acts 13:1–3). For the first time in Acts, a church deliberately sends men out to take the gospel to distant places. Look at the leaders at Antioch: a Jew from Cyprus, a man called "black", a man from North Africa, a man brought up with Herod, and a former persecutor. The gospel had already crossed the barriers that kept the world apart. They were worshipping and fasting, for mission begins with the worship of God. The Spirit asked for two of their best, and the church let them go. They prayed, laid hands on them and sent them off, and later the missionaries came back and reported to the church. God calls, and the church recognises and sends.

7 **Read Acts 13:1–3**

What was the church doing when the Spirit spoke? What did they do next?

See also: Acts 11:19–26; 13:4; 14:26–27.

2. Where Christ was not known (Romans 15:20–21). Paul's ambition was to preach "where Christ was not known". Others build on the foundation, and that work is needed too. But Paul was a pioneer, and he thought of people with no one to tell them. He quotes Isaiah's promise that those not told will see. God has promised that people from every nation will be in His kingdom, and that gives us confidence.

8 **Read Romans 15:20–21**

What was Paul's ambition? Why was he confident?

See also: Isaiah 52:15.

3. Equip me for my journey (Romans 15:22–24). Paul is older and has suffered much, and he is thinking of Spain. And he asks a church he has never seen to help him: "you can equip me for

my journey". Even Paul needed a church behind him. Those who go are people who get tired and lonely, and who need the company of other believers.

9 **Read Romans 15:22–24**

Where did Paul hope to go? What did he ask the Romans to do?

4. In a manner worthy of God (3 John 5–6). Gaius opened his home to travelling teachers he had never met. Another man in that church, Diotrephes, refused. Gaius may never have preached, but his love was spoken of in other churches. And look at the standard for sending people on their way: "in a manner worthy of God". Not as cheaply as possible.

10 **Read 3 John 5–6**

What had Gaius done? How are we to send the Lord's servants on their way?

See also: 3 John 9–10.

5. Fellow workers for the truth (3 John 7–8). They went out "on behalf of the Name", and they took nothing from those they were trying to reach, so that the gospel would not look like a business. So they depended on believers. "Therefore we ought to support such men." And here is the wonderful phrase: "so that we may be fellow workers for the truth". If you support someone who goes, you are working alongside them.

11 **Read 3 John 7–8**

Why did these men depend on believers? What do we become when we support them?

Holding the ropes

It is said that when William Carey went to India in the 1790s, one of his friends described it as going down into a deep mine: Carey would go down, but those at the top must hold the ropes. If you cannot go, hold a rope.

6. What any believer can do. Pray: know a missionary by name, and find out what to pray for. Give, regularly and thoughtfully. Welcome: have missionaries in your home, and welcome the foreign student or the new neighbour from another land. Learn about the place where they work. Encourage them with a short message. And be ready to go, if the Lord should call you.

7. Study 9 in summary. A church that loves, a church that shares, a church that sends, and every member a partner.

THINK IT THROUGH

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. If a visitor came to your church this Sunday, what would they see? Is there another believer with whom you need to put something right? Who could you invite to your table this month?

2. Which missionary do you know by name? Does "in a manner worthy of God" describe the way you support the Lord's work? Who could you welcome?

HIDE IT IN YOUR HEART

Memory verse for study 9

Learn this verse by heart this week. Cut out the card and keep it where you will see it.

TELLING THE GOOD NEWS · STUDY 9 · MEMORY VERSE

“By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another.”

John 13:35

Berean Standard Bible · biblehelp.net

“I have hidden Your word in my heart that I might not sin against You.” (Psalm 119:11, BSB)

AT THE BACK

The Bible passages (BSB)

1 **John 13:34–35** *34A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also must love one another. 35By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another."*

2 **Acts 2:42–43** *42They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43A sense of awe came over everyone, and the apostles performed many wonders and signs.*

3 **Acts 2:44–47** *44All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45Selling their possessions and goods, they shared with anyone who was in need. 46With one accord they continued to meet daily in the temple courts and to break bread from house to house, sharing their meals with gladness and sincerity of heart, 47praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

4 **Philippians 1:3–6** *3I thank my God every time I remember you. 4In every prayer for all of you, I always pray with joy, 5because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, 6being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

5 **Philippians 1:7–11** *7It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart. For in my chains and in my defense and confirmation of the gospel, you are all partners in grace with me. 8God is my witness how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. 9And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, 10so that you may be able to test and prove what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, 11filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.*

6 **Philippians 1:27** *Nevertheless, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending together as one for the faith of the gospel,*

7 **Acts 13:1–3** *1Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch), and Saul. 2While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3And after they had fasted and prayed, they laid their hands on them and sent them off.*

8 **Romans 15:20–21** *20In this way I have aspired to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation. 21Rather, as it is written: "Those who were not told about Him will see, and those who have not heard will understand."*

9 **Romans 15:22–24** *22That is why I have often been hindered from coming to you. 23But now that there are no further opportunities for me in these regions, and since I have longed for many years to visit you, 24I hope to see you on my way to Spain. And after I have enjoyed your company for a while, you can equip me for my journey.*

10 **3 John 1:5–6** *5Beloved, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers, and especially since they are strangers to you. 6They have testified to the church about your love. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God.*

11 **3 John 1:7–8** *7For they went out on behalf of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. 8Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers for the truth.*

Scripture: Berean Standard Bible (BSB), public domain. Quotations keep its American spelling. Like many English Bibles, it often says ‘man’, ‘he’ or ‘brothers’ where it means people in general, men and women alike.

FOR GROUP LEADERS

Study 9: Evangelism and the church

> **Memory verse:** “By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13:35). Say it together at the end, and ask who can say it without looking.

Aims

- See from John 13, Acts 2 and Philippians 1 that the love and life of a church commend the gospel.
- See from Acts 13, Romans 15 and 3 John that the church sends, and that those who pray, give and welcome are fellow workers for the truth.

Suggested timing (about 80 minutes)

- **5 min** Welcome and short prayer.
- **35 min** Part 1 video (15 min); John 13:34–35; Acts 2:42–43, 44–47; Philippians 1:3–6, 7–11, 27.
- **35 min** Part 2 video (15 min); Acts 13:1–3; Romans 15:20–21, 22–24; 3 John 5–6, 7–8.
- **5 min** Reflection questions. Close in prayer.

For most groups, take one part each week.

Tips

- This study is about the church together. Be careful that it does not become a time for criticising your own church or others. Ask what each person can do.
- On Acts 2:44–45, the believers were not abolishing ownership. They still had houses (2:46), and Peter told Ananias that his land was his own (5:4). It was love, not a rule.
- Some cannot attend church because of illness or age. Speak kindly about online sermons, and about how the church can care for those at home.
- If someone in the group has been hurt by a church, listen, and do not defend what was wrong.
- On the laying on of hands (Acts 13:3), keep to the main point: the church stood with those it sent.
- Have the name of a missionary your church supports, with a recent prayer letter if possible, so that the group can pray for them.
- The Carey story is told as a story, as the study says.

Answers to watch for

- **John 13:34–35:** the measure, "as I have loved you"; by our love for one another.
- **Acts 2:42–43:** the apostles' teaching, the fellowship, the breaking of bread and prayer.
- **Acts 2:44–47:** they shared with anyone in need and ate together with gladness; the Lord added to their number.
- **Philippians 1:3–6:** for their partnership in the gospel; that God will complete the good work He began.
- **Philippians 1:7–11:** that their love will abound in knowledge and insight; the glory and praise of God.
- **Philippians 1:27:** in a manner worthy of the gospel; firm in one spirit, contending together as one.
- **Acts 13:1–3:** worshipping and fasting; they fasted, prayed, laid hands on Barnabas and Saul, and sent them off.
- **Romans 15:20–21:** to preach where Christ was not known; God's promise in Isaiah.
- **Romans 15:22–24:** Spain; to equip him for the journey.
- **3 John 5–6:** welcomed travelling believers, though they were strangers; in a manner worthy of God.

- **3 John 7–8:** they took nothing from unbelievers; fellow workers for the truth.