

# 5

# LIFE IN COMMUNITY

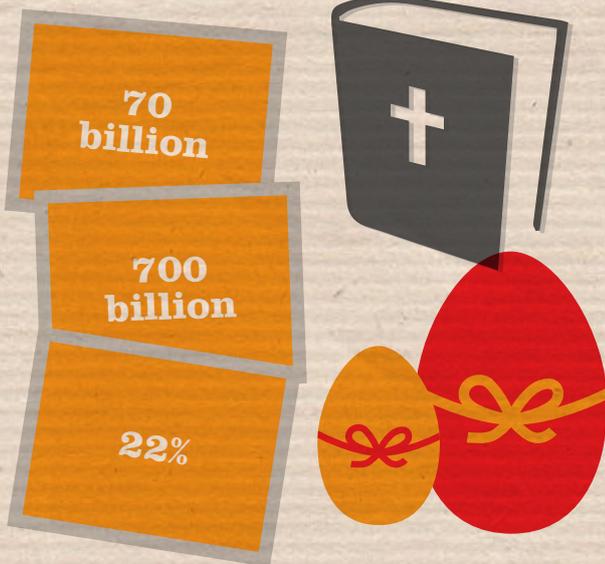
The early Christians were known as followers of The Way. Following the message of Jesus changed their whole way of life and they were well known for being different from the society around them. What can we learn from how they lived?

THE EARLY CHURCH DIDN'T HAVE CHURCHES TO MEET IN. WHAT WAS IT THAT MADE THEM A COMMUNITY?



## YOU WILL NEED:

Bibles, symbolic foods (for suggestions, see over) and a display of the numbers: 700 billion, 70 billion, 22%.



## GET STARTED: What is church?

- Ask one person to perform charades for the group; they must get the group to guess the word 'church' by acting without using words or noises. How do they do it?
- Ask the group to give their definition of church. If a particular church community unexpectedly had to stop meeting in a certain place on a Sunday morning, how would they continue to be a church?



## READ: Acts 2:43-47

- What things do the early Christians do together?  
*They spent time together, broke bread together, ate together and shared their possessions – with each other and all those who had need.*  
*Christian life was lived in community.*
- Even in Acts though, we read of people falling short of the ideal and of disagreements arising.  
- Why is living in community hard? What are the challenges?



## READ: Acts 2:43-47

The early Christians were not just telling people their testimony, they were also acting out the power of the good news to those around them. They made sure that poverty ended within their community and nobody was left in need.

As we've seen, generosity and living well together had always been part of God's plan for people. The early Christians finally lived in a way that God's people had never quite managed before – knowing Jesus and his resurrection made them live in a way that demonstrated new life and the kingdom of God on earth.

The generosity they showed to their communities – in sharing possessions and meeting each other's needs – was, Luke is telling us, testimony to this change: testimony of the new life made possible by Jesus' resurrection.



## ACTIVITY: Our community?

Display these numbers, and ask the group to guess what they represent:

- 700 billion (Total amount of minutes spent on Facebook every month.)
- 70 billion (Total pieces of content shared on Facebook every month.)
- 22% (Percentage of teenagers who login to Facebook more than 10 times per day.<sup>1</sup>)

In some ways, we're more connected with people than ever before in human history, yet in others we probably interact less with people who don't 'fit in', for whatever reason.

Research<sup>2</sup> suggests that we spend more time on social network sites like Facebook when we're feeling lonely but that they can actually make us feel worse rather than better.



## DISCUSS: Communities

Discuss whether or not social networking sites bring us closer together as a community.

- How different would the world look if we shared our possessions in real life, rather than content on the internet?
- What are the benefits of living in community?
- What could we learn from the Early Church?

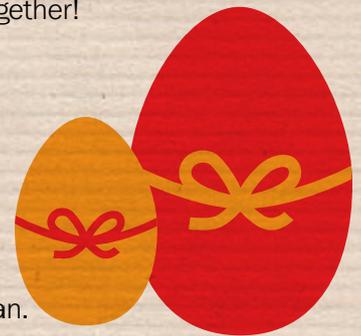


## ACTIVITY: Eating together, sharing together

Get hold of as many symbolic foods (such as those listed below) as you can to display on a tray. Get people to talk about or guess what they mean to different people. And then eat them together!

- Special chocolates – given as a sign of love or affection.
- Hot cross buns – eaten on Good Friday, traditionally to break a fast.
- Easter eggs – to symbolise new life.
- Doughnuts – eaten by Jews at Hanukkah to commemorate the miracle of oil keeping a flame alight for eight days in the temple.
- Dates – often eaten by Muslims to break the fast during the month of Ramadan.
- Chinese dumplings – eaten at the start of the Chinese New Year to symbolise prosperity.

Why not add in your favourite childhood food or a food that has a particular memory for you and share with the group why that's the case?



<sup>1</sup> [statisticbrain.com/social-networking-statistics/](http://statisticbrain.com/social-networking-statistics/)

<sup>2</sup> [bbc.co.uk/news/technology-23709009](http://bbc.co.uk/news/technology-23709009)

## **DISCUSS:** **Food**

- Why is food such an important part of culture, and why do we use it to celebrate or commemorate certain occasions?

Food is such an integral part of our very existence that eating together helps to build relationships and strengthen bonds. Shared experiences of food unite communities.

Jesus had a habit of eating with people that were otherwise excluded or discriminated against, and a habit of doing something special at meal times.

The Early Church carried on that tradition of using meal times to get together, to share possessions and to help those in need. They continued to be good news to the poor and food for the hungry.

Bread and wine shared by Christians as part of communion service are a result of Jesus breaking bread and sharing wine at a meal with his friends. He asked us to carry on doing the same in remembrance of him.

- How could we start using all of our mealtimes to remember what Jesus and the Early Church did when they sat down to eat?
- When we live in community, everybody's needs matter. Now that our communities are bigger than our immediate neighbourhoods, how can we take everybody's needs into account in our actions?

## **DISCUSS:** **James 1:27**

- How can we look after the vulnerable in our global community?
- What are the 'pollutions' of the world that stop us bringing the kingdom as it is in heaven?

## **ACT:** **Eat, Act, Pray**

We want to build a community of people who capture the vision of the Early Church and get together regularly to eat, share, pray and take action for a better world. Find the latest blog at [christianaidcollective.org/eat-act-pray](http://christianaidcollective.org/eat-act-pray) and see if you could regularly get together for a meal with a difference.

## **PRAY:**

- for people you know in your community who need support at the moment.
- for people in our global community who you don't know the names of but are still connected to.
- for you to become a community that comes together to share time, possessions and money in the fight against poverty.



Don't forget that more sessions from this series and other great resources are available from [christianaidcollective.org](http://christianaidcollective.org)

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