

THE FAMILY GATHERING

Acts 20.1-16

Throughout Acts, we see the gathering of Christians in local spaces as fundamental to God's plan. This runs against individualism.

Christians meet on Sundays

In the created order, God established a day of rest to be set aside for the benefit of His people. In ancient Israel, this was the last day of the week, Saturday (Exodus 20.8-11). When God the Father raised Jesus from the dead on the first day of the week, Christians shifted their meeting to Sunday (Acts 20.7; John 20.1; 1 Corinthians 16.1-2).

The Sabbath is not a rule to be obeyed but a gracious gift from God. It is time for God's people to assemble, to think about the week ahead, and to set priorities.

To what degree can I allow other things to sideline the priority of Sunday worship?

Christians share life together

We see references to "the breaking of bread" (Acts 20.7, 11; Cf. Acts 2.42). This might include a celebration of the Lord's Supper, but at the very least the first Christians ate meals together.

There is something about sharing food that binds people together. We are all equally dependent on nourishment. When we eat together, we consume the same fare. Most importantly, eating together is something families do. The modern church must work hard to have family-like interactions.

There are opportunities within Providence Church to engage people at a more intimate level.

Christians engage in the ministry of the Word

At the Sunday evening meeting, Paul uses words to build up the people in Troas (Acts 20.7, 9, 11).

If we look ahead to Paul's summary of his ministry in Ephesus, he supplies many verbs for what he did among them. He spent time "declaring", "teaching", "testifying", and "proclaiming" (Acts 20.20-21, 24, 25, 27).

Some of this speaking was dialogical, which presumes active engagement (Acts 20.7, 11). When we have open Bibles and are listening to God's Word preached, we are to be actively engaged, raising questions, and thinking about applications. Eutychus is disengaged, which is the wrong way to listen to a sincere discourse about God.

Paul preached “repentance” and “faith in our Lord Jesus” (Acts 20.21). He preached “the Gospel of God’s grace” and about the “Kingdom”. He taught “the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20.27). This means that he did not withhold truths from God’s Word that might be offensive to the listeners.

He would do this “in public and from house to house” (Acts 20.20).

He ministered “with tears” (Acts 20.19). The one speaking practices an incarnational ministry.

Key Point: We grow in Christ through corporate worship.

Application Questions:

What is Paul doing on his trip back through Macedonia (Acts 20.1-6)?

What is the significance of the resurrection of Eutychus (Cf. Luke 7.11-17, 8.49-56; Acts 9.36-43)?

What is the proper role of the congregation when the preacher is speaking from the Bible?

How can we move the church towards being a family rather than a business, university, or social club? What obstacles do we face?