

# **Church: Heaven on Earth (?)**

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## Introduction

### March 2023

For the next 3 weeks, we'll be looking at the doctrine of church in our Sunday gatherings and Growth Groups. In a year with big challenges around the upcoming site redevelopment, it's a great opportunity for us to re-consider the nature of our community: who we are, what we stand for, and above all how it's all possible only because of what God has done - and is still doing - for us in the Lord Jesus Christ.

These short studies have been prepared for use in Growth Groups (although they could be completed 1-2-1 or on your own). They are deliberately designed to complement the Sunday sermons, and focus on one particular passage of Scripture to enable deeper investigation of God's Word.

My hope and prayer is that this will be a wonderful moment for our whole church family to have our sights lifted and our hearts encouraged because of who God is, and what He is like, and how that changes everything ...

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Church: Heaven on Earth (?)	
Sunday Sermon	Growth Group
1. What's the point of church?	1. The perfect church (or is it?) Acts 2:42-47
2. Whose church is it anyway?	2. Life Together Romans 12:1-8
3. What should church be like?	3. Before a watching world 1 Peter 2:4-12

## **Study 1**

### **The perfect church (or is it?)**

#### **Acts 2:42-47**

1. Share your reflections from the sermon series so far ...

2. What, for you, would make for a "perfect church"?

3. Spend some time in Acts 2:42-47 ...

Acts 2:42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. <sup>43</sup> Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. <sup>44</sup> All the believers were together and had everything in common. <sup>45</sup> They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. <sup>46</sup> 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, <sup>47</sup> praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

i. Skim through Acts 1-2 to see some of the context and background to the early church. What have been some of the highlights so far?

ii. How does Acts 2:42-47 describe the first church community? What did they do? Why? What were some of the results? What words would you use to describe what it would have been like to be part of it?

iii. Skim forward through Acts 3-5 to see what happened next. How do these chapters fill out our picture of church (both positively and negatively)?

4. What are some of the **principles** from Acts 2:42-47 which we might apply at Trinity Church Adelaide? What challenges might we face in putting those principles into practice? In what areas are we currently doing well, and where might we focus our energy moving forwards?

5. In light of the passage, spend time praying for our church family at Trinity Church Adelaide

**Study 2**  
**Life together**  
**Romans 12:1-8**

1. Share your reflections from the sermon series so far ...

2. What does "church worship" mean to you? What images and activities spring to mind?

### 3. Spend some time in Romans 12:1-8 ...

Romans 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.<sup>2</sup> Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is —his good, pleasing and perfect will.<sup>3</sup> For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.<sup>4</sup> For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function,<sup>5</sup> so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.<sup>6</sup> We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith;<sup>7</sup> if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach;<sup>8</sup> if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

i. (v1) What makes "true and proper worship of God" possible? What's hard about this doctrine? What helps?

ii. (v2) What does "true and proper worship of God" look like in practice? What would help make it easier? What hinders?

iii. (vv3-8) What convictions and attitudes will help us in our **life together**? What could this look like in our church family?

4. Share with each other about particular members of our church family you have seen "living out" Romans 12:1-8. In response to this passage, how might **you** resolve to grow in your convictions, or change your attitude, or reform your conduct?

5. In light of the passage, spend time praying for the members of your growth group



**Study 3**  
**Before a watching world**  
**1 Peter 2:4-12**

1. Share your reflections from the sermon series so far ...

2. What does our world see when it looks at our church? Why? How does that make you feel?

### 3. Spend some time in 1 Peter 2:4-12 ...

1 Peter 2:4 As you come to him, the living Stone –rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him–<sup>5</sup> you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.<sup>6</sup> For in Scripture it says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.”<sup>7</sup> Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,”<sup>8</sup> and, “A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for.<sup>9</sup> But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.<sup>10</sup> Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.<sup>11</sup> Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul.<sup>12</sup> Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

i. How is Jesus described in vv4-8? How would you explain this to someone who is not yet a believer? How does this description make you feel?

ii. What are the 4 ways that God's people are described in vv9-10? Which of the various images do you find particularly encouraging, and which do you find most challenging?

iii. According to vv11-12, how are we to conduct ourselves before a watching world? What will be easier, and what do **you** find hard? What could help? What hinders?

4. What are some of the particular challenges for our whole church family at Trinity Church Adelaide when it comes to living out vv11-12? How might we be better? What will encourage us to persevere?

5. In light of the passage, spend time praying for our watching world

