

# The Method

## *Growing Great Commandment Families:*

Acts 2:41-47

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One day, a man approached Jesus. He was an expert in Jewish law. He tested Jesus with this question, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus responded with a question, “What does your Bible say? How do you understand it?” The expert voiced the Great Commandment that Jesus taught. He said:

*“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind”; and, “Love your neighbor as yourself.”*  
(Luke 10:27, NIV)

Jesus replied:

*You have answered correctly... Do this and you will live.* (Luke 10:28, NIV)

The expert couldn't refute Jesus' answer, but it left him hollow. How would he know that he fulfilled the commandment? Who does he have to love to be justified? “Who is my neighbor?” he asked. Jesus told him the story of a man who fell victim to a brutal robbery and was left severely injured. Three fellows came upon him. Two of them were known for their devotion to God, but they were too busy to care. The third was despised for his theological compromise that marginalized God's Word. He was a Samaritan. Certainly, he is not heaven bound. However, it was he who cared for this man like he would care for himself or members of his own family. Jesus asked the expert, “Which one was the neighbor?” Who fulfilled the Great

Commandment? It was the one who behaved mercifully, rather than the ones who understood the worship of God correctly.

Our understanding of God and his word is not unimportant. Indeed, Jesus reveals God and his word; however, obeying the Great Commandment is not an activity that we do. It is a life, and a lifestyle. You can't love God with all your soul in a worship service. All your soul means all your life. It means that the love of God and neighbor are the business of your life. What the Samaritan found injured on the road is the daily business of God and his children.

Over the past month, we've considered God's great vision for the human family. Jesus said that all the law and prophets hang on the two-fold commandment, the great commandment to love God and neighbor. We've considered how God wrote it on the heart of his only Son with three color ink: the community, the Spirit and the Word. We discussed how we don't just grow. We grow on a battlefield, and we must dress for battle against deception that entraps.

These are great principles and concepts, but how do they become practical. What must we do specifically to grow Great Commandment families that are fruitful, increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it?

In the Bible we have a picture of how God led his church to do it. In Acts 2 we not only witness the work of God's Spirit on the day of Pentecost; we also see the daily operation of the community and God's Word. We actually see how the community, the Spirit and the Word dressed people for a life that fulfills the Great Commandment.

Most every day you dress at home. There are circumstances where that is not true. Police and fire fighters have different dress, so do scuba divers and people working with infectious diseases. Their work environment differs radically from home; however, most of us dress at home. If it is hot, we choose light clothes. If it is cold, we put on long sleeves.

Early Christians faced temptation and deception at home, not just at work. They needed their battle-dress, Christ's mindset, at home. In Acts 2, we see how they did this. They embraced four things – much of it at home: the Apostles' teaching, the fellowship, the breaking of the bread and prayer.

The Bible says that *the believers devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching*. The Apostle's taught from Jesus' words, deeds and the Hebrew Scriptures – the Old Testament. The people saturated their mind with the word of God, the perspective of Christ. It cleansed their attitudes of the opinion of the day. It corrected their self-righteous piety. It unveiled the presence of God that Jesus taught, affirmed and acted upon, so that they could see it too. We have the Apostle's teaching in our Bible. Have we devoted ourselves to learning from it?

The Bible says that *early Christians were also devoted to fellowship*. That means that they zealously pursued and enjoyed one another's company. They became acquainted with the ministry gifts of each other and knew each other's families because they frequently ate together and met in each other's homes. They were getting dressed for marriage as they met with one another. They were getting dressed for parenting as they prayed together. They were getting dressed for work as they played together. Their children were seeing and experiencing the effect of these new clothes that exposed and blunted Satan's deception.

Men and women with unbelieving spouses were helped as they enjoyed visits with their believing brothers and sisters in their own homes. Despite difficult challenges, they were getting dressed for battle right where they lived. They were growing Great Commandment lives that couldn't help but affect their spouses and children. If they couldn't host, they would go and meet with the family that would. Hospitality was key to growing the heart and mind of Christ, so that they fulfilled the Great Commandment.

Paul urged:

***Practice hospitality.*** (Romans 12:13, NIV)

Peter exclaimed:

***Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.*** (1 Peter 4:9, NIV)

The author of Hebrews went further:

***Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.*** (Hebrews 13:2, NIV)

I want you to visualize for a moment having Christians friends over for a recreation outing. At one point you pray blessings over one another, ask the Lord for cleansing and share in Holy Communion. (In our denominational family, we guard Holy Communion ordaining deacons and elders to administrate it, so that people won't treat it as a common meal and suffer from dishonoring Christ.) Suppose you did such a thing with approval of the deacons or elders like myself, honoring both the work of God's Spirit and the authority that God gives in the body of Christ. Suppose you did this, honoring and relying upon Christ in your recreational time. What impact would it have on your attitude? What impact would it make on your children?

A church building is a great and wonderful blessing; and we certainly need your help so that the way we maintain it gives glory to God and blesses many. However, you cannot wait until you get to this building to dress for battle. You encounter Satan's opposition at home, in your neighborhood, at work and in the marketplace. Moreover, our environment suggests that dressing once a week is not sufficient

The early church devoted itself to the word, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. When we devote ourselves to God's teaching, fellowship, the breaking of the bread and prayer, our hearts change. We bear fruit, we increase and we multiply.