

From Screen to Table

CONNECTED #3 - Pastor Gary Combs - August 2, 2026 - Acts 2:46-47

INTRO: Good morning church! Today we're continuing our series: "CONNECTED: Finding Real Community in a Digital World." We've been talking about the fact that although technology has made it possible for us to be more connected than ever, we actually feel more lonely and isolated than ever. But the question isn't whether we should give up our screens, but whether we should recognize that there is no substitute for face to face fellowship with one another. As the apostle John observed:

2 John 12 (ESV) Though I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink. Instead I hope to come to you and talk **face to face**, so that our joy may be complete.

Just as "paper and ink" were no substitute for face to face fellowship, neither are phones and tablets. So how do we move from screens to real face to face fellowship? It's about priorities. It's about what we're devoted to. That's why our theme verse for this series and for our Community Group ministry in our church is:

Series Theme: Acts 2:42 (ESV) And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the **breaking of bread** and the prayers.

Over the last 2 weeks we have discussed the first two devotions that foster real connection. They are a devotion to God's Word and to Christian fellowship. Now we come to the third, which is the breaking of bread. That's why we've titled this message, **From Screen to Table**. Because we long for the connection a shared table provides, but we have traded the table for a screen.

NEED: **Picture the modern American family at dinner.** Everybody's there. Everybody's got a plate. And everybody's got their head bowed... but they're not praying. Dad's checking the score. Mom's answering a text from the group chat. The teenager hasn't looked up in eleven minutes but is laughing out loud at something none of us can see. And the little one is watching a tablet propped against the ketchup bottle, while playing with her food.

Many of us don't have to picture it. We're living it. It was your dinner table last night. But this isn't just a matter of manners. It's a matter of formation.

Just last month, researchers published a study in JAMA Pediatrics on what's happening at American family meals. They found: **78% of parents** and roughly **70% of children** used a device during their most recent family meal (Jiawen Wu, Cecilia Sada Garibay, Matthew Lapierre, et al., research letter on mealtime media use, *JAMA Pediatrics*, June 2026).

The parents were worse than the kids. The lead author of the study said parents assume that simply being at the table means they're giving their children attention. But her research suggests that a parent's physical presence can quietly become absence when they're absorbed in a screen. Present in body. Absent in soul.

And it's not just families. It's the whole neighborhood. Back in the 1970s, the average American household had friends over for a meal about 15 times a year, most Americans got together in somebody's home at least once a month (Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone*).

Now? Face-to-face time with other people has dropped in the last twenty years. Young adults today spend about 70% less time hosting a meal or going to a party than they did in 2003 (Derek Thompson, *"The Anti-Social Century"*).

We have bigger kitchens than our grandparents ever dreamed of. Islands. Double ovens. Farmhouse sinks. Marble countertops. And nobody comes over. We have a dining room, but nobody uses it. It's the room you walk through on the way to the recliner.

Trans: But it's not merely the table, but the way we gather around it. Have we come around the meal with undivided attention and a heart focused on fellowship? In a world where we spend more time gathered around screens than around tables, have we lost one of God's ordinary means of growing us closer together and of growing His church?

BODY: In the book of Acts, Luke described how the early church grew not only through worship in the temple but also through fellowship around the dinner table. We can grow in Christian community by sharing life around the dinner table. How do we experience Christian community around the table? The text gives **three practices** for experiencing Christian community around the table.

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Read text: Acts 2:46-47 (ESV) 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

HOW TO EXPERIENCE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AROUND THE TABLE:

1. Gather regularly face to face.

EXP: (46) Notice first "day by day." It was a rhythm of life. Luke repeats it in v.47. Day by day the church gathered; day by day the Lord added. Then notice the words "attending" and "breaking." They are parallel participles describing two sides of their shared life. They gathered publicly in the temple courts, and they gathered personally in one another's homes. They needed both.

"Attending" (46) (προσκατερέω, *proskartereō*) - Same verb used in 2:42 "they devoted themselves."

"Together" (46) (ὁμοθυμαδόν, *homothumadon*) - with one mind, one accord, one passion. A compound of two words meaning to "rush along" and "in unison". The image is almost musical; as the instruments of a great concert under the direction of a concert master, so the Holy Spirit blends together the lives of members of Christ's church.

"Breaking bread" (46) - refers to sharing an entire meal, not merely bread.

"Homes" (46) (οἶκος, *oikos*) - an inhabited house, home. If our church only happens in rows, we will miss something God designed to happen in circles.

But community did not begin with their decision to become more sociable. It began when they heard the gospel, repented of their sins, received Christ, and were given the Holy Spirit. Jesus had joined them to Himself and therefore to one another. They gathered face to face because Christ had made them one.

ARG: Luke repeats the pattern as a settled practice of the early church.

Acts 5:42 (ESV) And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.

Paul recounted his ministry in Ephesus where he followed the same pattern:

Acts 20:20 (NIV) You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house.

ILL: Eastgate began house to house. Almost 35 years ago, our church began with 7 people in my living room and quickly grew to meet in other homes before we started meeting in a public place, FHMS.

APP: We must make gathering face to face a priority rather than something we do only when nothing else is scheduled. Let us worship together on Sundays, but let us also open our homes and share one another's lives. Put the phones away and remain at the table long enough for real connection to begin.

Some of us believe our homes are too small, our schedules are too busy, or our cooking is too simple. But real community does not require a large house or an impressive meal. It requires an open door, an available chair, and a willing heart. The Lord grows real community when we gather regularly face to face.

2. Share meals gladly heart to heart.

EXP: (46) Luke continued, "They received their food with glad and generous hearts." The main verb is "they received" or "ate" their food. They shared ordinary meals in one another's homes heart to heart.

"Received" (46) (μεταλαμβάνω, *metalambanō*) - to partake of, take food. "Ate together" (NIV).

"Food" (46) (τροφή, *trophē*) - food, nourishment, rations; meat. Luke's use of *trophē* strongly suggests ordinary meals were in view, but not excluding the Lord's Supper.

"Glad" (46) (ἀγαλλίασις, *agalliasis*) - exultation, extreme joy, gladness

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“Generous hearts” (46) (ἀφελότης, *aphelotēs*) - Lit., “the smoothness of a soil without stones.” Generosity, simplicity, sincerity, “singleness of heart.” “The gospel smooths out the rough places in our hearts so that we can truly fellowship.” — PJ

Put those two together: glad and simple. Full of joy and empty of pretense. That's what makes a real table of fellowship. Not the menu. Not the home decor. Not the pretty soaps and candles in the bathroom.

ARG: **Christian hospitality begins with remembering that Christ welcomed us.**

Romans 15:7 (ESV) “Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.”

Our hospitality should be glad, not grudging. It should flow from gratitude rather than obligation.

1 Peter 4:9 (ESV) “Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.”

ILL: **Entertaining vs. Hospitality.** Entertaining says, “Come see what I have prepared.” Hospitality says, “Come share the life God has given me.” Entertaining worries about whether the house is spotless, the food is impressive, and everything goes according to plan. Hospitality makes room for another person even when the house is lived in, the children are noisy, and supper is only soup and sandwiches.

APP: So here's the challenge, and I want to make it small on purpose, because small is what actually happens. Try one of our Community Groups. It's not a dinner party. Paper plates are fine. Chick-fil-A on the way is fine. Put the phones away. Not as a rule. As a gift. You're telling everyone at the table: You have all of me.

3. Witness God's work in life after life.

EXP: (47) Now watch what happens when the church eats together. Three things spill out of that room: praise, favor, and life change!

“Praising God” (47) (αἰνέω, *aineō*) - to praise, extol, to sing praises in honor to God

“Having favor” (47) (χάρις, *charis*) - grace, loving-kindness, favor.

“All the people” (47) (λαός, *laos*) - a people, people group, tribe. Their favor grew not merely among Christians but all people. Their community made the gospel visible.

“The Lord added” (47) (προστίθημι, *prostithēmi*) - to repeat; add, increase. A continually recurring act.

“To their number” (47) (ἐκκλησία, *ekklesiā*) - the Textus Receptus has the word *ἐκκλησία* here, defining the number as the number of those joining the church. The church grew.

“Day by day” (47) - Luke repeated: Day by day, the believers gathered. Day by day, the Lord added. Their daily faithfulness became the setting for His daily activity.

“Saved” (47) (σώζω, *sōzō*) - to save, to rescue, salvation. The believers gathered. The believers ate together. The believers praised God. But the “Lord... saved.” The church did not save people. Fellowship did not save people. Hospitality did not save people. The Lord saved people. The believers faithfully shared their lives and proclaimed Christ, but the risen Lord opened hearts, granted repentance, gave faith, and added the saved to His church.

ARG: **A joyful and loving church becomes a visible witness to the world:**

John 13:35 (ESV) By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

ILL: **A farmer can only prepare the soil.** A farmer can prepare the soil, plant the seed and water the ground. But he cannot make the seed grow and come alive. And we can open our homes, set the table, welcome our neighbors and tell them about Jesus. But we cannot save them. Only God can do that.

APP: Let us make room at our tables not only for close Christian friends, but also for people who do not yet know Christ. Invite the neighbor who recently moved in. Include the coworker who seems lonely. Welcome the family whose children attend school with ours or play on one of their sports teams. Invite someone from church who just started attending, but isn't yet connecting.

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CONCLUSION: The first century believers moved regularly between the temple and the table. They worshiped together in the large gathering, and they shared their lives in the intimacy of their homes.

1. They gathered face to face because Christ had made them one.
2. They shared meals heart to heart because Christ had filled them with gladness and generosity.
3. They witnessed God work in life after life because the Lord was continually changing lives.

But Christian community does not ultimately begin with our invitation for someone to sit at our table. It begins with Christ's invitation for us to sit at His.

Throughout His ministry, Jesus sat at tables with people whom respectable society rejected. He ate with tax collectors and sinners. He welcomed the guilty, the ashamed, the lonely, and the spiritually hungry.

Then, on the night before His crucifixion, Jesus took bread and broke it, and told His disciples, "This is my body, which is given for you" (Luke 22:19).

Jesus did not merely set a table for us. He gave Himself for us.

At the cross, His body was broken and His blood was poured out so that sinners could be forgiven, reconciled to God, and brought into His family. He experienced rejection so that we could be welcomed. He bore our sin so that we could receive His righteousness. He died alone so that we would never have to live alone again.

Then God raised Him from the dead. The risen Jesus ate and drank with His disciples, restored their faith, and sent them to proclaim salvation in His name.

This is the gospel-centered foundation of Christian community. We welcome others because Christ welcomed us. We love because Christ loved us. We gather because Christ has joined us together. We share because Christ gave Himself for us.

Let us put down our phones long enough to have a real in-person conversation. Let us open our homes and our hearts. Let us make room for one another and for those who do not yet know Jesus.

This week, silence the screens, and invite someone to the table. Gather face to face. Share gladly heart to heart. Then prayerfully watch for the risen Lord Jesus to work in life after life.

And perhaps you have never responded to Christ's invitation. He is calling you today, not merely to attend a meal or join a group, but to repent of your sins, believe the good news, and receive a place in the family of God.

As C. B. Widmeyer wrote in his 1907 hymn:

Come and dine, the Master calleth, Come and dine;
You may feast at Jesus' table all the time;
He who fed the multitude, turned the water into wine,
To the hungry calleth now, Come and dine.

Jesus is calling us to break bread together. There's room at His table. Christ has paid the full price for your place.

Let's pray.