

**Home Group notes  
w/c 24th April 2016  
United and belonging  
Acts 11:1-18**



We are following the story in Acts to see examples of the impact that the resurrection had on the lives of the first disciples and the earliest Church communities.

Take time to read the story together. Peter had needed some convincing himself that Gentiles could follow Jesus without first becoming Jews, so the story of the vision to which he refers in the reading can be found in Acts 10:9-13. Cornelius (a Gentile) had received another vision previously (Acts 10:3). Clearly, God was preparing the ground for something big - and we see that in Acts 10:44. This was not expected (read Acts 10:45), but God was at work - it couldn't be ignored or denied!

Acts 11 is the story of the row that then broke out. I gave some of the background this and the historical story of the Gentile and Jewish Churches on Sunday (you can listen at [www.ChadTalks.org](http://www.ChadTalks.org)) so we don't need to cover that again, suffice to say that although this row between Gentile and Jew rumbled on (see, for example, Acts 15 and Galatians 2) there is a strong sense of something which unites that is greater than that which separates.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul is addressing several issues which have caused division and strife in the Church. His letter leads up to that amazing chapter, 1 Cor 13, about love. But if we rush to chapter 13, we miss an amazing verse in chapter 1

I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought.

1 Cor 1:10 (NIV)

Perhaps we could *sensitively* share around the room - what are the sorts of things in our Church which cause division? Some of these will be things you observe, some will be things you are involved in. Some of these things can be resolved, perhaps others might not be resolved quickly or easily - so how might we come to obey the Scripture above - so that divisions do not prevent us being united in mind and thought in the Lord Jesus? Are we able to discuss some of these without blaming self or others?

Make a few notes for later...

<p>Things I see that cause division...</p>	<p>Things where I am part of a division....</p>
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In what ways might we as a wider Church Body work to minimise division? If division is inevitable (we are all fallen creatures) then how can we have a proactive sense of the healing of divisions

amongst us? What key characteristics do we need as a Body and as the individuals members of it? Read Galatians 5:22-23 and 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, and Jesus' own words in Matthew 5:21-24. As I read them myself I wonder whether we might not have become too accepting of division and disagreement, as if is somehow "the norm".

Characteristics I need prayer for...	What unity means for us....

To finish we need to be sensitive to the fact that there will almost certainly be some in any small group who have been genuinely hurt by a disagreement connected with Church; a row, or a cutting remark, or a lack of feeling appreciated. Human interactions means the list is endless, sadly. It might be that there is an opportunity to *sensitively* pray for this, either for healing or for a step towards healing.

Pray for each other as people are willing to share, and conclude by sharing the Peace:

We are the body of Christ.  
In the one Spirit we were all baptised into one body.  
Let us then pursue all that makes for peace  
and build up our common life.

The Peace of the Lord be always with you  
**And also with you**

Let us offer one another a sign of peace.