



ORIGINS

Exploring the way of
the early church

Acts 1:1-2 NIV

[1] In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach [2] until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.









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THE WAY OF THE EARLY CHURCH

1. COMMUNITY WHERE HEAVEN AND EARTH MEET

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2. COMMUNITY OF COURAGEOUS WITNESS

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URGENCY

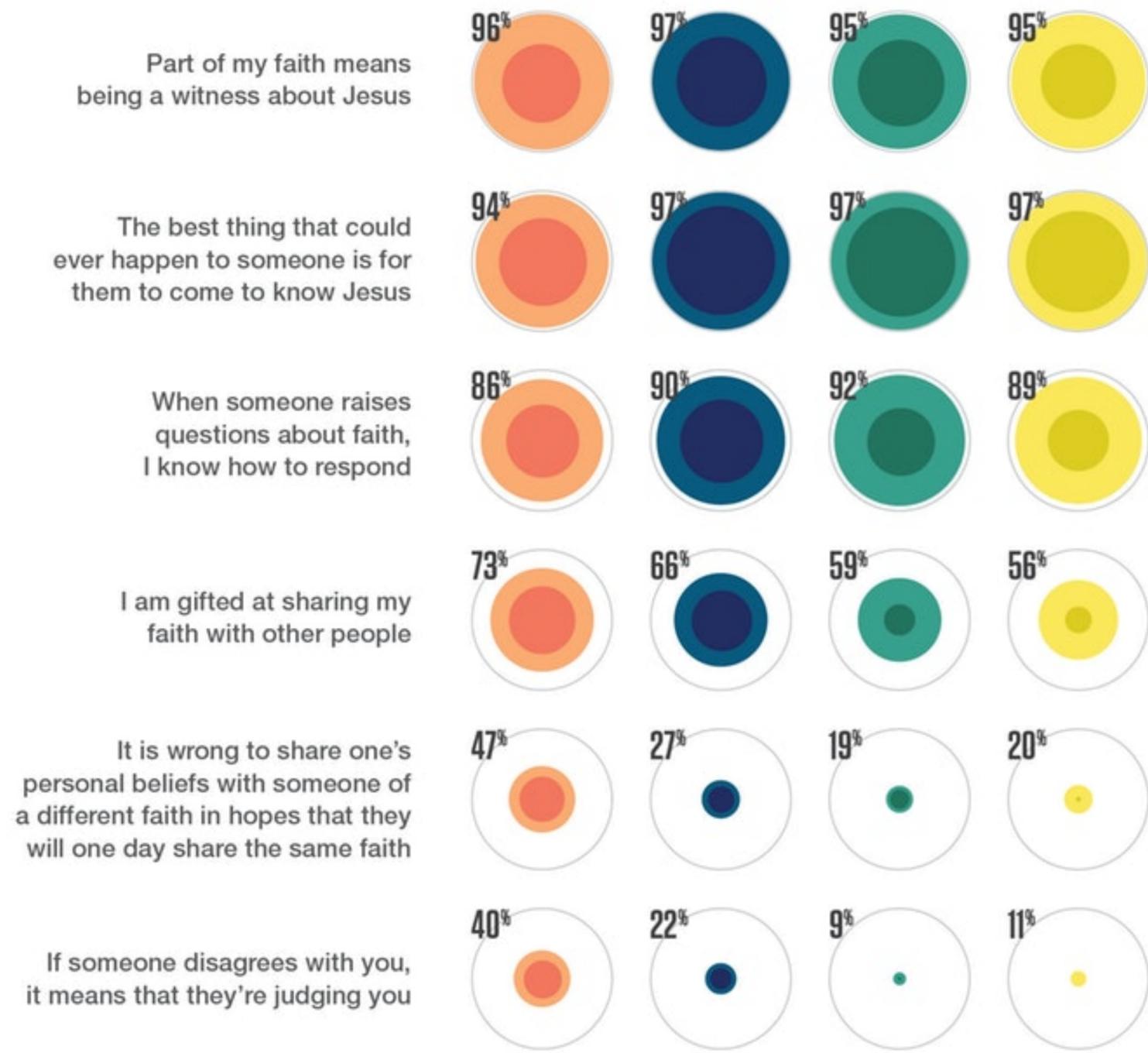
GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES ON FAITH-SHARING

Barna

% strongly + somewhat agree among US practicing Christians

● Dark = Strongly agree
● Light = Somewhat agree

● Millennials ● Gen X ● Boomers ● Elders



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3. COMMUNITY OF RECKLESS HOSPITALITY

Early Church – If they did not have enough food for the hungry people at their door, they would fast together until everyone could share a meal together. They believed that if a child starves while a Christian has extra food, then the Christian is guilty of murder.

“When someone strips a man of his clothes, we call him a thief. And one who might clothe the naked and does not – should not he be given the same name? The bread in your cupboard belongs to the hungry; the coat in your wardrobe belongs to the naked; the shoes you let rot belong to the barefoot; the money in your vaults belongs to the destitute.” – Basil the Great, 4th Century, Early Church Leader.

The reputation of the early church is evident in the words of Aristides who, when asked to submit a report on the Christians to the Roman emperor Hadrian, describes the Christians in this way:

They love one another. They never fail to help widows; they save orphans from those who would hurt them. If they have something they give freely to the man who has nothing; if they see a stranger, they take him home, and are happy, as though he were a real brother. They don't consider themselves brothers in the usual sense, but brothers instead through the Spirit, in God.

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4. COMMUNITY OF INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

Acts 6:12-15 NIV

[12] So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law. They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin. [13] They produced false witnesses, who testified, "This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law. [14] For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us." [15] All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

Acts 7:54-60 NIV

[54] When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. [55] But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. [56] "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." [57] At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, [58] dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. [59] While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." [60] Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep.

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5. COMMUNITY OF RADICAL OBEDIENCE

Acts 10:1-8 NIV

[1] At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. [2] He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. [3] One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, "Cornelius!" [4] Cornelius stared at him in fear. "What is it, Lord?" he asked. The angel answered, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God. [5] Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter. [6] He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea." [7] When the angel who spoke to him had gone, Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier who was one of his attendants. [8] He told them everything that had happened and sent them to Joppa.

Acts 10:9-23 NIV

[9] About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. [10] He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. [11] He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. [12] It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds. [13] Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat." [14] "Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean." [15] The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." [16] This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven. [17] While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon's house was and stopped at the gate. [18] They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there. [19] While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men are looking for you. [20] So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them." [21] Peter went down and said to the men, "I'm the one you're looking for. Why have you come?" [22] The men replied, "We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told him to ask you to come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say." [23] Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests.

Acts 10:23-29 NIV

The next day Peter started out with them, and some of the believers from Joppa went along. [24] The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. [25] As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence. [26] But Peter made him get up. "Stand up," he said, "I am only a man myself." [27] While talking with him, Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people. [28] He said to them: "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile. But God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean. [29] So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. May I ask why you sent for me?"

FAITH

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LENGTH OF TIME BETWEEN GOD SPEAKING AND OUR OBEDIENCE

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GOD'S SMUGGLER

One man's mission: to change the world

Brother Andrew

CONTEMPORARY
HODDER CLASSICS

One of my favourite parts of God's Smuggler is when Brother Andrew got a visit from a man named Karl de Graaf who was part of a prayer group in which people often spent hours of time in prayer, most of it listening in silence:

I went out to the front stoop, and there was Karl de Graaf. "Hello!" I said, surprised. "Hello, Andy. Do you know how to drive?"

"Drive?"

"An automobile."

"No," I said, bewildered. "No, I don't."

"Because last night in our prayers we had a word from the Lord about you. It's important for you to be able to drive."

"Whatever on earth for?" I said. "I'll never own a car, that's for sure."

"Andrew," Mr. de Graaf spoke patiently, as to a slow-witted student, "I'm not arguing for the logic of the case. I'm just passing on the message." And with that, he was striding across the bridge.



Acts 1:6-9 NIV

[6] Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" [7] He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. [8] But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." [9] After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.



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