

***What Is Community?***

*They devoted themselves to the apostle's teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer...All the believers were together and had everything in common...And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

*Acts 2:42-47*

What comes to your mind when you think of community? Perhaps a town or a specific group of people. Having read the passage above you may be thinking of what we call the "Community of Believers." While there are variations in the dictionary definition of community, two aspects of the definition are: 1. A class or group with common interests, 2. Likeness or identity. When the church began there were many thousands of people in Jerusalem. They had gathered from all over the region and from many different countries to celebrate Pentecost, meaning they shared a common religious interest. We also know they shared in a common crime which was the execution of an innocent man in a manner not allowed by Jewish law: they crucified Jesus. Outside of this, there was really nothing more that bound these people together. For many, that would change on the morning of Pentecost for on that morning the apostles received the Holy Spirit and preached the first Christian sermon, to which three-thousand responded the very first day. The community of believers had begun.

The question of what a community is, however, has still not been answered. I have put together an acrostic to help us remember the real meaning of community. The intent is not to provide an exhaustive definition of community, but to give us an easy way to remember crucial aspects of a properly functioning community. As you read the acrostic I ask you to keep a couple of things in mind: 1. I am not saying all communities are this way, only that they should be, 2. How well does this describe the most important community, which is the church, 3. What other words would you interject to describe the Community of Believers.

**C**ommon interest – This is the foundation of any real community. Without it, there is no reason to exist. Our foundation is Christ.

**O**asis – Unlike a mirage, an oasis is real. When we feel we are in the wilderness of this world, the church should be the community that refreshes and strengthens us.

**M**eaningful – People want meaning and purpose in their lives. Christ came with an eternal purpose which gives the only true meaning to life.

**M**ixture – In Christ we are made one (Galatians 3:28) but we do not lose our individuality. We are able to share our strengths and weaknesses.

**U**nity – While the first century Christians were not always of one mind, they were certainly always of one purpose, which motivated their actions.

**N**ecessary – A hermit is one who is alone and crabby. Being a hermit Christian keeps us from experiencing and giving the free flow to each other and the world.

**I**dentification – When people do not feel they belong, they lose their sense of self-worth. In the church, everyone matters.

**T**houghtful – A real community works towards the betterment of others. I cannot be a thoughtful person and a selfish person. The Lord wants us to be thoughtful.

**Y**ielding – Closely tied with being thoughtful, there are times when we need to yield to the wishes of others, as long as those wishes are not opposed to scripture.