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Acts 2:42-47

The Cornerstone Core: Community

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“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” Acts 2:42-47 (NIV)

Community – We gather together to worship God and welcome new friends.

Introduction:

1. I want to share two stories with you, one of experiencing community and one of lacking community.
2. When I was 17, my friends and I got caught doing things we shouldn’t have done.
3. I was friends with four guys, and when I confessed first, it led to the loss of each of those friendships.
4. For the next two years my friends were mostly online people I played games with online—I felt alone.
5. A few years later I graduated college and moved to Falls Church VA where I knew nobody.
6. I joined a church, started co-leading a small group, and began to invite people over to play board games.
7. Our small group grew from 4 to about 10-12, and our game night group grew from 4 to 65.
8. My friends loved me so much, when I went left, they threw me a going away party (pin the mustache).
9. My question to you is... which community are you in right now, a wasteland or a garden?
10. Are your most significant relationships on Facebook or do you have face-to-face friends that love you?
11. Acts 2:42-47 tells us God gives us deep and loving relationships through the church community.

(How do we as a new church begin to cultivate this community? And if you’re new, how can you take part?)

I. Christian community begins by loving God. (**Read Acts 2:42-43**)

(We form community as we love God through **teaching, prayer, and worship.**)

A. We love God through **teaching** Christ (v. 42-43)

- a. It says “they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching...”
- b. In Acts 2:14-41, Peter explains how the OT points to Jesus (Joel 2:23-32, Psalm 16:8-11)
- c. Peter preached this message... Jesus came doing “wonders and signs” but people didn’t believe.
- d. Instead, wicked men put Jesus to death on the cross, but God raised him from the dead.
- e. Now Jesus is seated at the right hand of God and will judge those who reject him.
- f. The Bible says the people “were cut to the heart” and asked Peter “what shall we do?”
- g. Peter tells them to repent, confess, and be baptized, putting their faith in Jesus, and 3k do so.
- h. The people ignored Jesus’ “wonders and signs” but v. 43 tells us they paid attention to Peter’s.
- i. God gave “wonders and signs” to the early apostles to prove the OT is about Christ.

(Community forms around Christ.)

B. We form community around beliefs and people all the time.

- a. In middle and high school, we form community around the popular kids.
- b. We form fan groups around musicians and artists (Billy Joel, Taylor Swift).
- c. We form voter bases around politicians and what they stand for.
- d. Two weeks ago Westford formed community around a 13-year old boy who died tragically.
- e. We form community around one who humbly came to serve and die for others.

(We form community as we love God through teaching, but also prayer and worship.)

- C. We love God through **prayer** and **worship** (v. 42, 46b-47a)
 - a. Verse 42 says “they devoted themselves... to prayer” and v. 46 says they were “praising God...”
 - b. Prayer and worship are like fraternal twins; they look different but come from the same place.
 - c. When we pray, we not only ask God for good things, we tell God how good he is.
 - d. When we worship, we not only say how great God is, we ask him for his Holy Spirit.
 - e. Both dependent prayer and joyful worship come from a heart attitude that loves and needs God.

(We form community as we love God through teaching, prayer, and worship.)

(Christian community begins by loving God.)

II. Christian community grows by loving each other. (**Read Acts 2:44-45**)

(Our passage talks about loving each other through **fellowship**, **food**, and **giving**.)

- A. We love each other through **fellowship**. (v. 42)
 - a. The word “fellowship” is an alien term to most of us.
 - b. We think the right way to have fellowship is with a dwarf, elf, ranger, and hobbit (LOTR).
 - c. The Greek word for “fellowship” is “koinonia”, which means “communion” or “participation.”
 - d. In 1 Cor 10, this “koinonia” describes what happens in the Lord’s Supper and in feasts to idols.
 - e. When they ate or drink to God or idols, they “participated” in something spiritual.
 - f. In the same way, when we “fellowship” we “participate” in each other’s lives spiritually.
 - g. We “fellowship” when we pray for each other, talk about God, and help each other repent.

(The word "fellowship" is summed up in the term "spiritual friendship.")

- B. As I prepared this week, I learned the history of the term, “spiritual friendship.”
 - a. In the 1100s, an English monk named Aelred wrote a book called “spiritual friendship.”
 - b. To this monk spiritual friendship was loving God and loving each other.
 - c. This friendship is not selfish or lazy, but requires “dialogue, exchange, sharing and self-giving.”¹
 - d. As we experience “spiritual friendship” we experience “God’s love.”
 - e. Several religious organizations named Aelred their patron saint of homosexuality.
 - f. Culture often tells us, “If you want to make friendship better, add sexuality.”
 - g. Christ tells us the best way to make “friendship” better is to add “citizenship”
 - h. Philippians 3:20a tells us “...our citizenship is in heaven...” (NIV)
 - i. Brothers and sisters in Christ all around the world share the same homeland.

¹ <http://www.catholicireland.net/aelred-of-rievaulx-on-spiritual-friendship/>

(Christian community grows by loving each other.)

(We love each other through fellowship, but also through food and giving.)

- C. We love each other by sharing **food** and **giving** to each other.
 - a. The “breaking of bread” in v. 42 and 46 is probably both the Lord’s Supper and meals.
 - b. Verse 46 says they broke bread in their homes, likely at dinner.
 - c. If you want to get to know someone, invite them over for dinner (fatten friendship w/ food).
 - d. Don’t wait for someone to invite you over—be the one to invite others to dinner.
 - e. Not only do the early Christians feed each other, they sell their valuables for each other.

(This isn’t Communism, because the giving wasn’t forced, but that doesn’t mean it didn’t hurt.)

(This really get’s down to the heart of what Christian community is.)

III. The core of Christian community is costly love. (**Read Acts 2:46-47**)

- A. The core of Christian community is costly love.
 - a. The believers gave their finances (v. 44-45), their energy (v.46), and their time (v. 46).
 - b. Can you imagine selling your house or property to help someone in need?
 - c. The NIV says “they continued to meet...” but “they were devoting themselves...” is better.
 - d. This devotion means “to persevere in some activity like a loyal soldier.”
 - e. These believers spent their energy and strength on caring for each other.
 - f. Verse 46 says they were meeting together “every day” or “day by day.”
 - g. The investors on Shark Tank like to say, “The most valuable commodity I have is my time.”
 - h. We give our time to each other without getting richer or more powerful.
- B. The core of Christian community is costly love.
 - a. This type of love is both personal and public.
 - b. Believers gathered in “their homes” and at “the temple”—both personal and public places.
 - c. Our modern day equivalent are small groups and the church, but that’s only half accurate.
 - d. The temple was the religious, economic, and political epicenter of Jerusalem.
 - e. Believers sacrificed their reputations as they met at “the temple” (Town Hall, Market Basket).
 - f. When the Jews saw their faithfulness to Christ, some had “favor,” but others persecuted them.
 - g. The Jerusalem church was so poor they had to share with each other.

(The core of Christian community is costly love.)

(Are you starting to see how expensive yet beautiful Christian community is?)

- C. Marriage is a parable for the type of community we can have in Christ.
 - a. In a healthy marriage, intimacy isn’t forced, it’s wanted. (In healthy community...)
 - b. You spend time talking and hearing each other’s fears and struggles.
 - c. You share your finances and make no plans to end the relationship.
 - d. You think of ways to surprise the other person with gifts or notes.
 - e. You know your husband or wife will care for you no matter the cost.

(The core of Christian community is costly love.)

(Why should we give up so much for others?)

- D. The Bible teaches that God is a Trinity, which means one God in three persons.
- a. God the Father has known and loved the Son through the love of the Spirit for all eternity.
 - b. Jesus had known and experienced perfect relationship with the Father forever.
 - c. At the cross, Jesus willingly experienced broken relationship on our behalf.
 - d. Throughout all the gospels, Jesus always calls God his Father, except at the cross.
 - e. In Mark 15:34b, Jesus cries out, “My god, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (NIV)
 - f. Jesus experienced the Father’s hatred for our sin so that you and I never have to.
 - g. Jesus can take your broken relationship with God and give you his perfect relationship.
 - h. Now you can know, without a doubt, that God loves you and cares for you.
 - i. Christ’s death makes it possible for you to experience eternal community with God.

(So the question is... are you living in the community Christ has purchased for you?)
(Or are you living as if you don’t have Christ’s relationship with the Father?)

- E. We live in the community Christ purchased for us when:
- we approach God with joy and not regret,
 - we know God loves us and cares for us,
 - we form “spiritual friendships” with other believers,
 - we don’t separate ourselves from Christian community,
 - and when we care for our brothers and sisters in Christ even when it hurts.

(The core of Christian community is costly love.)

Conclusion:

1. Luke ends v. 47 by writing, "And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."
2. Both the attitude of believers and the will of God matter for church growth.
3. The church didn't focus on gaining numbers but on loving God and loving each other.
4. Although Luke holds this church up as an example, he doesn't tell us they were perfect.
5. You and I are going to make mistakes, but we love each other, and it’s going to be okay.
6. The core of Christian community is costly love.

Benediction: Romans 15:13 (NIV) “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”