

April 11, 2021 James Gallaher
Creating Community

Community is universal as we all have a desire to be connected to others. We cluster in what we overlap in as in doing the same things or thinking the same way. What does a community in the Kingdom of God look like? Many believe that "community" is a time to get together as a congregation. But is it?

The triune God is one. **Genesis 1:26** *Then God said, "Let Us make mankind in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the livestock and over all the earth, and over every crawling thing that crawls on the earth."* Mankind began from a community - God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; three in one. So we gravitate to community as we were created. **John 17:21** *that they may all be one; just as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.* God wanted the world to see our love and community with each other.

Adam realized his aloneness as he names the animals. When he sees Eve, he has an immediate connection with someone like him. **Genesis 2:25** *And the man and his wife were both naked, but they were not ashamed.* Nothing was hidden from each other, yet not ashamed.

Then sin... Adam and Eve's first response was to cover themselves. They also hid from each other and from God. How many believer's continue to hide what is really inside from those around them? How many are ashamed or terrified of what people might see or think? We cover the sin in our lives because our community might not accept us. Then we have a disconnect, an awareness of differences, and are ashamed of what is exposed. It's then a fractured form of relationship. We tend to build connections but not unity. Connections are easier and based on external things we can control.

What is the answer to this fracture? The cross! But our relationship with God remains fractured until we accept what Jesus did on the cross. Jesus paid for our sins. Jesus died to set us free. **John 8:36** *So if the Son sets you free, you really will be free.* In order to be free from something means that we need to admit that it exists. But we tend to be afraid to admit to our community for fear of ending those relationships.

Community tends to develop around things that are common - a group of people that have a particular interest and/or proximity. But what happens when it changes? Did God intend for something more for community? Should it satisfy something bigger than proximity? How do we attain it? The answer... Jesus! We complicate it by trying to pay for our sins. Jesus paid for them on the cross.

Understanding that our primary identity is in Christ sets the foundation for us to discover true community. True community transcends proximity, interests, and even our differences.

Community cannot be based solely on everything that is the same with others, otherwise, it will stifle growth and true understanding. When real community is built on things that are internal then my identity in Christ creates for us a community that transcends worldly differences.

2 Corinthians 5:17-21 *Therefore if anyone is in Christ, this person is a new creation; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their wrongdoings against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin in our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

We are reconciled to God because of Jesus Christ. We are a new creation with no need to hide from each other. Community built on anything other than the cross will lead to failure.

Acts 4:32-36 *And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them. And with great power, the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all. For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales and lay them at the apostles' feet, and they would be distributed to each to the extent that any had need.*

Scripture doesn't say that they were required to do this. There were so many differences in this community, yet this group grew. Belief was the foundation for this community and any real community. They shared a common understanding of the cross - one heart and one soul. Their heart was their love for one another; it was their motivation. Thousands were coming together because of this oneness. One soul was their common bond of Jesus Christ. We all have a need for community and all have a need for a Savior. You can have a worldly community but it will change. If we start with Jesus, then we have a community that will not change. Should we not offer a community that changes lives?

Describe a place where everyone seemed so different from yourself?

What is true community?

How have you hidden from true community?

What do you need to be set free from?