

April 25, 2021 The Model Community
Series: Creating Community James Gallahe

The word "community" has several meanings or ideas. We are looking at "community" as God defined and designed it. God's word is absolute truth.

Acts 4:32-35 *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.*

This might look like a cult from the world's standards but the truth of God's word doesn't change even though some may try to manipulate it or change it as a cult would. The word "need" is overused and misapplied today but a real need has to be either fulfilled or the desire taken away. The idea of community is that people's needs are being met as relationships are developed and with a love motivation. But how do we attain it?

Community, as seen in God's Word, seems impossible to attain. But as someone shows the process it becomes attainable as Paul does in Romans.

- **Romans 12:1-2** The setup.
- **Romans 12:3** The caution.
- **Romans 12:4-6** Our purpose.
- **Romans 12:9-13** The framework (1) within the church.
- **Romans 12:14-21** The framework (2) outside the walls of the church.

The Setup. Romans 12:1-2 *Therefore I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.* "Sacrifice" in the Old Testament was to take something living and offer its life on the altar. Paul talks about a "living sacrifice" which has the problem of tending to squirm off the altar when things get uncomfortable. We look at sacrifice only from our perspective, not from Christ's. Paul asks us to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice. Is it too much to ask? What do people see when we offer our sacrifice? They see our actions, our lifestyle, our driving. If we are going to be the community, we need to get this right first in our own lives before community begins.

The Caution. Romans 12:3 *Don't cherish exaggerated ideas of yourself or your importance, but try to have a sane estimate of your capabilities by the light of the faith that God has given to you all.* (J B Phillips NT) Are you too full of yourself? God can speak to you and also to others. The more we feel like we become holy, the more we tend to think of others as unholy. Don't get caught up in that thinking. The measure of your faith is based on only Christ's work on the cross not what is gained on our own. We are nothing apart from Christ.

Our Purpose. Romans 12:4-6 *For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly.* Every Christian has a calling placed on our life. Every calling is indispensable and a part of a greater calling. God is working each of us within

His community. So then the community benefits not from what we receive but from what we give. God desires us to serve within community with that calling. What has God placed in your hand? We all have a purpose to fulfill within community. Start serving to begin to find out what that calling is.

The Framework 1. Romans 12:9-13 *Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.* This is all laid out for us. This love says take off the mask. If all of you were completely exposed, would you be ashamed? The church needs to be a place to take off the mask and let others see the brokenness and healing. Are you more comfortable with your fake life? What's the purpose of community? The purpose is that the world would know Jesus. Our community with each other is that important.

The Framework 2. Romans 12:14-21 *Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. "But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.* Who is this extended to? God desires us to go beyond requirements to show the world that we are different. Each of these can be challenging as we need God to help us.

There was a man sleeping with his arm over his head. His arm went to sleep as the blood flow was cut off. Therefore, it was not recognized as he awoke and it scared him thinking it was not his. As the feeling came back, it was uncomfortable. Can you apply this picture to you and your community? Do we have the form of community without the function of community? Is your part ineffective in the community from a separation? How can you find your place?

To find true community is to function as part of the body.

Do you think that we need more tolerance or more intolerance within the church today? Explain.

What gifting has God placed in you that you can offer to your community?

How have you applied verse 19 to a situation in your life?

How is your view of community as God designed changing?