

**May 16, 2021 James Gallaher**  
**Series: Creating Community – Value the Process**

God has the authority to define what community is. **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.*

When we look at the birth of the church, we see the above definition of sharing what they had and having one heart and one mind. Their heart was to live for Jesus. But by looking at the outcome of this community, it can seem difficult or impossible to obtain today especially when we look at just the result. We should value the process more than the product or result. Sometimes, we expect community to be available without the process. But what does it cost? It can cost time, relationships, investments from us. Sometimes, if it's not easily accessible, we get uncomfortable, walk away too easily, live in broken relationships, and in broken places.

Baptism was about the cost that people were willing to pay to be a part of community. To the early church, this was a statement to everyone around them that they were turning around from the life they were living (repenting) to follow after Christ. To make this statement of baptism cost them something - family, other relationships, business dealings. It solidified their commitment to one another. It was worth the cost as it was from the heart - made it valuable. They suffered the same and shared with each other. The gain was worth the cost.

**Acts 2:43-47** *Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all the believers were together and had all things in common; and they would sell their property and possessions and share them with all, to the extent that anyone had need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.*

This was the product but what about the process? Community is formed when we value the process more than the product. If we don't value the process then it is hard to experience the joy of the product. Celebrating baptism is our statement to the world that we identify with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. To the early church, it was their way into community.

**Acts 2:41** *So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.* 3000 people baptized on one day. Can you imagine that day with so many people excited to be part of this common focus, common heart, common mind of celebrating Jesus in their lives?

Acts tells us the process of making a decision to follow Jesus. **Acts 2:42-47** *they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.*

People would not willingly do that on their own so it would awe others to see this. God's abundant love allows us to bless others, not just meeting needs (or checking boxes) but to go further and to bless from the heart and to the heart of others. We have the opportunity to be a community of God today. Love will take us farther than our will.

**John 3:16** *For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. I John 4:19* *We love, because He first loved us.* The early church was motivated by their desire to love one another rather than a desire to do good. If we miss that part of the process, we will never experience the kind of community that is represented in God's Word.

God sees us how we are and He loves us anyway. It's an unconditional love. **I John 4:19** *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.* God's love removes the fear and the inhibitions we have. Then we become a community of God through the process of love and it will be significant to the world. Salvation is the goal of community.

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Do you see people as God sees people? Drivers on the road? Family? Marriage? This community?

What part of this early church in Acts 2 and Acts 4 makes you uncomfortable?

Explain the difference in the process of community versus the product of community?