

Community

"Are you lonesome tonight?" If not tonight, then sometime in your life you've been lonely, and it's likely you'll be lonely again. God's remedy for loneliness is "community."

WHAT IS COMMUNITY?

Community is a collection of individuals bound together by common interests, beliefs, or a cause. Though we use the word "community" to describe a "group," it also describes what people experience within the group. This experience provides its members a sense of belonging, acceptance, and strength.

BIBLICAL COMMUNITY

The best biblical examples of community occur in the Book of Acts; the main features being unity, concern for each other, sharing of belongings, frequent meetings, shared meals, and worshipping together (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35).

In the church, the whole community bolsters each individual's strength. They not only pool their resources to solve problems, but they combine their prayers and ideas as well (see Acts 6:1-5).

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

Churches tend to become rigid institutions, but their true design is community. The individual talents and gifts of its members strengthen the whole community. Thus we have to exercise a high level of tolerance for diversity because the "gifts" others have are different from our own (1 Corinthians 12:4-7). The Christian community accepts everyone. The community is a safe place; people can laugh or cry, ask for help or give help, be strong or be weak. Here our relationships go deeper than the social masks we usually wear (Romans 12:9-16).

COMMUNICATION

Community thrives on honest and open communication (fellowship). Here people can admit they have unmet needs. We are accepted without

others trying to "straighten us out" (Romans 15:7). The community exists to listen, help and pray, but not to "fix" people's lives. Only God can fix us.

God's Spirit inspires a love and unity within the Church, which Christians are to help maintain (Ephesians 4:4). Close relationships form between people who have learned to be realistic about their strengths and weaknesses, and are willing to work at encouraging others.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

John Donne captured the true sense of community when he said, "No man is an island." Community is a place where individuals become whole people. No one becomes a "whole person" living in solitude. We need other people to develop our full strength.

For this reason, it's not surprising to find a variety of support groups within the church community. In these smaller environments-home Bible studies, substance abuse groups, etc.-we learn the importance of trust, commitment, and love. Without them, we fall apart.

BEFORE GOD

The Christian community meets together for two purposes: to glorify God (1 Peter 4:11) and to edify-or strengthen-each other (1 Corinthians 14:26). We worship God and give Him our needs through prayer. We also minister encouragement to each other through the personal care we have to offer.

If you would like more information about our community, please call.