

Foundation Series

Week 2 – Care/Community

Engage

- Do you regularly volunteer for a group or organization outside?
- Have you ever volunteered for a non-profit outside of church?
- Have you ever been involved in a neighborhood or community project/event?
- What do you feel is the difference between a neighborhood and a community?
- Has there ever been a time in your life when you experienced the care and support of a group of friends? What were the circumstances? Was it hard for you to receive their care?
- Most of us find it easier to offer support and encouragement as opposed to receiving it. Why is that?

Explore

Read Acts 2:42

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=acts+2&version=NIV>

- “Devoted themselves to Fellowship” what does that phrase mean and/or suggest?
 - devoted means to value, to commit wholeheartedly. At times to overlook or even put up with
 - fellowship - **how would you define that word?** (more than eating together/drinking coffee)
- Can you think of an example of groups of people that devote themselves to each other outside of family? Why is this important?

Acts 2:44-47

*44 And all who believed were **together** and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple **together** and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.*

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=acts+2&version=ESV>

- What word is used several times and inferred throughout this passage that becomes a theme?
- “**they were together**” - what does that word suggest to you? More than simply being in the same place at the same time.
- Do you know why they were together? What happened just 2-3 months prior in John 19?

Acts 2 takes place 2-3 months after Crucifixion – it was still not a good idea to identify yourself as a follower of Jesus (not politically correct or socially accepted). To follow Jesus, in some cases meant losing family connection, which in that culture was everything. Society was built on family and clan connections. You were responsible for taking care of your family and family was responsible for taking care of you.

- the word "together" in this context means to be other centered. We are better together
 - Shared sense of identity. These are now my brothers and sisters (i.e. my family)
 - Shared sense of responsibility vs4
- How would you describe their attitude towards their "stuff"?
- What happened when they came together? They became aware of who was hurting, who was hungry, who was lonely. They were honest with each other
- Shared sense of Mission vs47 - What is the connection between the fact that "they enjoyed the favor of all the people" and "the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved"?
- This community of people became attractational. People were impressed by the authentic community, and it made them receptive and open to hearing about Jesus?" people caring for each other like that became a powerful tool for authenticating the Gospel Message. They could see it being lived out, and the response was, "how do I get in??"

When these people in Acts became followers of Jesus, they were now a part of the same family. They had the sense that we are in this together (i.e. we take care of family). They sold their possessions. Possessions (material things of this world) were seen as resources to be distributed to those in need.

- In everyday life is it the natural mindset of Americans to sell possessions for others?
- Do you see the same mindset when a natural disaster occurs, or when a car accident happens and someone needs help?
- What do most people instinctively do when a family member needs something?
- What is the emotional difference between giving to Goodwill and giving something to someone you know.
- Are men more willing to receive gifts with no strings then women? Why?

Apply

- What expectation do non-Christians have of Christians when someone is in need?
- What expectation do Christians expect of other Christians when someone is in need?
- As followers of Jesus what is our responsibility in the sense of community?
- In light of what we have just read and discussed, what are some of the expectations we might have for the group as a whole and for each other? What can we do together or individually with the talents and gifts we have? (suggest going through a spiritual gifts discovery exercise in the future)
- What are some of the benefits we can expect to experience if we begin to live this out?