

## Revitalize: Sense of Community

I have a pet peeve about big trucks backing into parking spaces, especially in small parking lots. But if I lived in Massachusetts that wouldn't be one of my pet peeves because there are so few trucks (especially big pick-ups). Depending on your community your likes and dislikes may vary.

Each church is a community. Have you ever thought of your church that way? As our towns and cities have grown, as Americans we are often disconnected from our neighbors and neighborhoods. We are too busy; we aren't in our front yards much; we don't walk, we drive everywhere; and we move around a lot. After 20 plus years I really only have a passing acquaintance with most of my neighbors. I had hoped when we first moved to Greeley from the Denver area that our neighbors would actually be neighborly. Unfortunately the very first encounter we had with a neighbor was anything but. It's too long a story to share here, but suffice it to say, my dreams of an idyllic neighborhood were shattered. So if our neighborhoods are more isolating than friendly, where do we find community?

Some gen-xers and millennials are purposely creating community in their living situations and organizing through social media. But that's not my generation and we had to develop a sense of community the old fashioned way. First we made friends with some of my husband's work colleagues, especially those around our same age that had kids the same age. Then I made friends with a few of the moms at the pre-school where we enrolled our daughter. But our main source of community has been through our church.

Acts 2:42-47 talks about the early days of the church. In the T.V. show, A.D., the Bible Continues, it showed a number of believers had set up a tent town and lived closely together. Their common belief drew them together into a community. For a time, they were a separate community. As believers, we are still drawn together; after all we have the same Spirit living in us.

But why is community so important? "The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him'". Genesis 2:18. That is the beginning of community. We have a God-given need to interact with other people; to develop relationships and friendships and alliances. God himself longs for community. One reason he created Adam was for companionship. And God created Adam to not be alone. Nine times in Genesis in the King James Version, God uses the phrase, 'be fruitful and multiply', and once in Leviticus. If God doesn't want us to establish community, then why suggest filling up the earth with people?

The community of our church doesn't fit everyone. Every church has a unique culture. Our church is sort of like my neighborhood, families with kids, middle-aged empty nesters, a few millennials, and some senior citizens. But the culture of cowboy church can be totally different, boots and hats and blue jeans and an understanding of a more rural/agricultural lifestyle. A megachurch in a big city would have another kind of culture or several different communities even that meet under their banner. God knows we are all unique and that some people like Southern Gospel while others worship to Christian Rap. That is why churches are diverse. But not feeling that you fit in at the first place you go, or after you have tried a church one time doesn't mean that it isn't the community for you. Community needs a variety of people.

Maybe you remember that you are part of a body, “The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.” I Corinthians 12:12. Our church community, any community is like that. Not everyone in a community should be a baker, you need doctors and lawyers and IT guys too!

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love comes from God. “ I John 4:7. That’s what community is about. It’s an extension of family, it’s God’s family coming together, working together, not always perfectly, but doing our best, in God’s will.

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