

# “Community Is...”

Acts 2:44-46

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# connect groups

## PATH

Every day brings with it a list of tasks we must accomplish in order to live life and get through the day—tasks that range from mundane to difficult. Sometimes we find tips or shortcuts—often called *life hacks*—that save us time and effort. Like everyday life, our walk with Christ can be tough to get through, but we have built-in assistance to help us along the way: an authentic community of people who share our faith. This week’s Spirit Hacks from the book of Acts help us give and get the most out of fellowship.

I. Life Together (vv. 44 “*Now all who believed were together*”)

II. In the House (v. 45 “*So continuing daily with one accord in the temple*”)

III. And Your House (vv. 45-46 “*and breaking bread from house to house*”)

## POINTS

### Life Together

- The sad reality is that families are falling apart.<sup>i</sup> Because of this, people are looking to belong—a place to feel safe, to love, and be loved; this is what church should be.
- In the text, the word translated “together” is *koinonia*, which means fellowship (communion, partnership). Although the communal arrangement in the early church has faded, the *koinonia* principle remains: God’s people are to take care of one another.
- In Romans 1:6, the apostle Paul described the church as “the called.” God’s unique plan and purpose for the church is to be called out of the world. The Greek word for “church” is *ekklesia*, which means “the called-out ones.” God’s people are called out from the world’s systems (hate, violence, materialism, etc.)—those things that are hostile to God.
- This does not mean we isolate ourselves; rather, as Jesus commanded, we are to be “lights” in the world (see Matthew 5). Furthermore, we are not called out solely as individuals, but as a community, a gathering of people.
- In the text we find that the church worshipped together, prayed together, ate together, gave together, and evangelized together.
- As Christians, we are part of God’s gathering, the only organization which Jesus established and continues to maintain, purchased by His blood (see Acts 20:28).
- The church is not a museum for saints, but a hospital for sinners, and God is continually with the church through the Holy Spirit, conforming us into the image of Christ.

### In the House

- Community is not an option for Christians; it is a command to participate, a means by which God works through His people.
- Hebrews 11:25 (MSG) states, “Let’s see how inventive we can be in encouraging love and helping out, not avoiding worship together.” The church should not be miserable, but mending; not revolting, but refreshing—reviving us to be equipped people in the world.
- One of the problems with organized church today is that it is based on a consumerist model that hinges on what I can get from it; not what I can give to the Lord.
- But the Bible is clear: We should find a church where God is honored, His Word taught, and His gospel proclaimed.
- Jesus calls the church to preach the gospel to the nations, and to the world (see Matthew 28:19), not solely to people with whom we personally relate.
- One of the beauties of the church is its diversity: people of different ages, cultures, races, tastes, and so on. All of these different people have something in common: Christ (see 1 Corinthians 12:18, Galatians 3:26).

### And Your House

- Our sole interaction with other believers shouldn’t be once or twice a week when we come to church; community is life together, in the house of God, and in your house.
- The founder of an evangelical movement in England, Canon Ernest Southcott, said, “The holiest moment of the church service is the moment when God’s people—strengthened

- by preaching and sacrament—go out of the church door into the world to be the church. We don’t go to church; we are the church.”
- The Bible compares our involvement in church to involvement with a family, a body of people united in Christ. The body is dependent upon each part: the hand needs the head and heart, etc. (see Ephesians 4:15).
- As a church, Christians grow together, live together, work together, and share together— it’s what a family does (see 1 Corinthians 12). In a culture where the average American can confide in only two people,<sup>ii</sup> we need authentic community.
- We live in a world where connectivity is common: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. But one study concluded by the year 2020, the second biggest health issue will be depression.<sup>iii</sup> And in 2017, the American Psychological Association said that loneliness now represents a greater threat to public health than obesity.<sup>iv</sup>
- The truth is, we’re not built for isolation or disconnection; the human capacity for community began at creation, when God said it’s not good to be alone. We are created in the image of God, existing through community, as God is a community of Being: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- In the end, community is about God, how our relationships reflect His relationship. Church is more than a service—it is people living and loving together, serving our community with conviction and compassion in the name of Christ.

## PRACTICE

**Connect Up:** Within the Trinity there is mutual exchange of love between each Person—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As a divine community of Being (God’s triune nature), God expresses Himself through community. In theology, the divine community is called *divine economy*, the mission each Person has within the community of the Godhead. Here’s a simple example: The Father works through creation, the Son works through redemption, and the Holy Spirit works through sanctification.

How does Christian community reflect God? What is our mission—our service to God and others?

**Connect In:** As Pastor Nate pointed out, Acts 2:41-47 is a marvelous framework for Christian community. Using the principles outlined in the text, share how love and community are present in the following:

- Baptism (v. 41)
- Teaching/apostles’ doctrine (v. 42)
- Fellowship (v. 42)
- Communion (v. 42)

- Prayer (v. 42)
- Miracles (v. 43)
- Compassionate care (vv. 44-45)
- Evangelism (“the Lord added to the church daily”: v. 47)

**Connect Out:** Using your church or Connect Group as an example, what about it would be attractive to non-believers? How do your church and group reflect true Christian community? What can you improve upon this new year to reflect Christian community, helping to reach a hurting world?

<sup>i</sup>Lynn Wardle, CNS News, “Disintegration of the Nuclear Family Threatens America’s Survival,” February 11, 2015, <https://www.cnsnews.com/commentary/lynn-wardle/disintegration-nuclear-family-threatens-america-s-survival>, date accessed 1/7/19.

<sup>ii</sup>Blue Zones, “Friends Nourish the Body and Soul,” April 9, 2015, <https://www.bluezones.com/2012/04/friends-nourish-the-body-and-soul/>, date accessed 1/7/19.

<sup>iii</sup>Pamela Cowan, Calgary Herald, “Depression will be the second leading cause of disease by 2020: WHO,” date? <http://www.calgaryherald.com/health/Depression+will+second+leading+cause+disease+2020/3640325/story.html>, date accessed 1/7/19.

<sup>iv</sup>Guy Winch, Psychology Today, “Loneliness Poses Greater Public Threat than Obesity” August 23, 2017, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-squeaky-wheel/201708/loneliness-poses-greater-public-health-threat-obesity>, date accessed 1/7/19.