

Week Three: *It Takes a Village*
Acts 2:42-47

Spend FIFTEEN - Day One

1. Who are the core people in your “community”? Which people around you would leave a gap if they weren’t there?
2. What do you think are the defining reasons that move a person from “acquaintance” to “inner circle”?
3. How many of your immediate neighbors (on your street or in your apartment building) do you know? Are they a part of your community? Why or why not?
4. Think about some communities of which you are a part. What did it take to “join” that community (either “formally” or “informally”)?
5. What does it take to join a church community?
6. Read Acts 2:42-47. This passage lists four key features of the early Christian community. What are they? How well did your earlier list match up with the example from Acts 2?
7. Close your FIFTEEN in prayer, thanking God for placing you in a community of his believers.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Two

8. Start your FIFTEEN by rereading Acts 2:42-47. What are the four key features of the early Christian community? Let’s explore the first one today.
9. GK Chesterton once reflected on what makes an American an American. It’s not our ethnicity, or our geography, or our language. It’s that we hold a common “confession.” What would you say is the common confession of the United States?
10. The cartoon Superman once summarized our national confession as “Truth, Justice, and the American way!” Some might say the Constitution or “Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.” But, when there is disagreement on the American confession, we end up with partisanship, racial tensions, and class struggles. The United States are no longer very united. With that in mind, what would you say is the Christian “confession”? What principle(s) should unite Christians?
11. A Christian community must be “devoting itself to the apostles’ teachings.” Back up a bit from these verses and read Acts 2:14-39, what the Apostles were teaching. What/who was the focus of their teachings?

12. How can a group of otherwise diverse people come together by gathering around spreading the news of Jesus' death and resurrection?

13. How can a family bond be strengthened by joining efforts with a community focused on this same goal?

14. Close your FIFTEEN in prayer, thanking God for giving us a community of believers who passed down their teachings about God. Ask him to unify us around the mission of declaring who he is and what he has done for us.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Three

15. Begin with reading Acts 2:42-47 again. What four things marked the early church?

16. Today let's focus on "fellowship." What are some real world examples of fellowship? (See verses 44-45 for some help.)

17. Why is fellowship a necessary part of church community?

18. These days, our smartphones allow us to do all of our banking, communicating, scheduling, playing, entertainment, and more from our couch. Does this count as fellowship? Why or why not?

19. Most sociologists agree that smartphones and social media provide the *illusion* of fellowship, but actually increase isolation, anxiety, and depression. What are ways that a true church community could combat these trends?

20. Right now, stop and reach out to someone that you haven't connected with in person for a while. This moment, schedule a time with them—whether it's coffee, lunch, or helping them run errands together. Take one step towards regaining true fellowship.

21. As you conclude your FIFTEEN, pray for the people in your close circle. One by one, naming each person, ask God to enrich them, their lives, and their community.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Four

22. How often do you share a meal with close friends or with family? How often are you left to grab a quick bite by yourself?

23. Look again at Acts 2:42-47. What is the third important aspect of a true community?

24. Most translations list the third thing as “the breaking of bread.” What do you think this actually means?
25. An obvious answer is sharing a meal together, but only one major Bible translation actually explains what this verse is really referencing: the New Living Translation (NLT). You can find this translation here: www.biblegateway.com/verse/en/Acts%202:42. Why is this an important difference?
26. This verse is not simply referencing meals together, but one specific and important meal: the Lord’s Supper! Look at 1 Corinthians 10:16-18. What is a major benefit of the Lord’s Supper?
27. God could have used a number of rituals to unite us around. What is special about a meal?
28. Just as sharing meals together with family and friends reinforces your bonds, so sharing the divine meal of the Lord’s Supper reinforces the unity of our own Christian community. The next time you receive communion, take a moment to look around at all the people worshipping with you. Maybe you know them, maybe you don’t. Maybe they’re similar to you, maybe they’re not. But, in communion you are supernaturally made into a unified community with them, which is an amazing thing.
29. Close your FIFTEEN by thanking God for his gift of communion to unify his people into a loved community.

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Five

30. Think about the different times you pray during the week. Do you pray more often privately or publicly with a group?
31. Prayer as it is described in most spiritual books today is generally an individual, private thing. But, look at Acts 2:42-47 again. What is the fourth trait of the early Christian community?
32. On a scale of 1-5, how comfortable would you be praying in front of a group of other people? Why is that?
33. How does it feel to have someone pray for you in a group of people?
34. C.S. Lewis has a wonderful quote: “Do not waste time bothering whether you ‘love’ your neighbor; act as if you did. As soon as we do this we find one of the great secrets. When you are behaving as if you loved someone, you will presently come to love him.” How might this quote apply to prayer?
35. Commit to making time in the next few days to pray with and for another person. This could be your spouse, or a friend, or even a stranger that God places in your path. How might prayer move you towards creating greater community with them?

36. Finish your FIFTEEN by thanking God for the opportunity to pray among our community. Ask him to give you the courage and opportunity to pray with others, that you may be an ambassador for God to the world.