

**Lesson Title:** Community

Key Concept: We are motivated to pursue our mission of ALL making disciples of ALL by our core values. They are our why. This lesson examines community as demonstrated by love, respect, and value that facilitates authentic relationships, diversity, and a place for ALL.

**Scriptures:**

⁸ Above all keep your love for one another fervent, because love covers a multitude of sins. ⁹ Show hospitality to one another without complaining.
(1 Peter 4:8–9 *New English Translation*)

² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, putting up with one another in love, ³ making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you too were called to the one hope of your calling, ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism . . .
(Ephesians 4:2–5 *New English Translation*)

Context Scriptures: Genesis 2:18; Mark 12:31; Matthew 7:12; Colossians 3:12–17

**Lesson Thoughts:**

What does it mean to be part of a community of believers? Does it mean that we must conform to the culture of the church and let go of our uniqueness, or does it mean that we embrace the identity of Jesus who redeems his creation back to their original purpose?

In the beginning when God made Adam and all creation, something was missing in Adam's life. God even said, "it is not good for the man to be alone" (Genesis 2:18). This statement reveals that even God was not enough for Adam. He needed a human community to fulfill all his needs. Eve was then created, and what God had desired came to fruition.

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When God created Eve from Adam's rib, he made her a match for him. The first humans were made like puzzle pieces that fit together. Adam and Eve were different from one another with unique perspectives, but they enjoyed a genuine relationship of equality in which they understood each other. However, disobedience caused the human community to become broken, and relationships and authentic community became incredibly difficult. Relationship and communication with God became broken, and relationship and communication with one another became broken. What was created to be a close and true community was fractured; people became isolated. Adam's disobedience caused broken relationship.

Christ's obedience brought restoration to humanity. Paul emphasizes this restoration to the Ephesians by calling for unity in a multiethnic world. Paul writes that we should "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit," because we are one family (Ephesians 4:3). Community was restored by Jesus' death on the cross and return in his Spirit, which transforms people back to God's original purpose. True community is unified by the Spirit so that we can embrace the diversity of humanity. Unity doesn't mean uniformity, but true community gives space for others to be their unique selves with gentleness and humility. The Spirit creates a new humanity able to embrace diversity and uniqueness. True community is demonstrated by love, respect, and value that facilitates authentic relationships, diversity, and a place for ALL.

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1) Why do you think Community was chosen as one of our core values?
- 2) Why do you think communication is difficult?
- 3) How does our culture impact our communication and ultimately our Christian community?
- 4) Why is it so hard to achieve and maintain diversity?
- 5) Have you experienced authentic community? What does it look like?

Notes and Reflections

- 1) Do you feel you belong to your community? If not, what prevents you from feeling like you belong? If so, what are some common principles that help you feel like you belong?
- 2) What are ways you can help others feel that they belong to our local church community?
- 3) Do a slow read of Colossians 3:12–17. What does it tell us about the attributes of an authentic community?

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Notes and Reflections, cont.