

# COMMON UNITY

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Common Unity : Acts 2:1-2; Acts 13:1-2; Acts 4:29-31

CIT: The chosen texts demonstrate characteristics of Biblical Community evident in the early church.

CIS: Our desire is to model certain helpful elements of early Biblical community to be effective in planting a new church.

SO: Teaching, Actionable

**Intro:** Have you ever seen \*\*\*\*Castaway? If you haven't, spoiler alert. Tom Hanks gets stranded on an island and gets rescued but in between he's surviving and lonely.

There comes a point where he discovers a volleyball.

He's so lonely that his desire for companionship become so intense that he makes this volleyball his BFF and names it Wilson. And when he loses Wilson it felt like he lost a protagonist in the movie. You *FELT* his loss!

Tom Hanks does a great job demonstrating what being stranded on an island for years can do to your mind but the pastor in me also sees this picture being painted, in big, vibrant, impossible to ignore colors that you and I are MADE for community. **You were NEVER meant to**

do life alone. You were never meant to be stranded on this proverbial island of isolation, self imposed or otherwise.

I want to examine a few passages in the Book of Acts that give us a picture of what marks healthy, Biblical community. There are a lot of these marks! My desire is to pull a few examples of what I believe is most important to us as a Spirit led, Gospel centered community of Faith.

**Book of Acts Overview:** Written by Luke, the author of the Gospel. The Gospel of Luke was written to tell us about all that Jesus began to do and teach and Acts is like the Sequel that continues with what the Holy Spirit does through the apostles and the early church.

Essentially this is a history book of the first 30 years of the Christian church and it's expansion through the middle east and into Europe through the eyes of this man named Luke.

This is important to our discussion on community because Acts provides a glimpse into what community looked like for the early church.

**T/S: There's no place better to begin a talk about Biblical Community than the passage that details the birth of the church. Outside of just saying 'Jesus' or 'the Gospel' this first point is the anchor of meaningful community.**

*Acts 2:1-2 (NKJV)*

*<sup>1</sup>When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.*

*<sup>2</sup>And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.*

**\*\*\*1) We have a shared pursuit of Jesus.**

**EXP: Following Jesus command certain followers went to Jerusalem to pray and wait on God to move, and they were willing to wait for however long it took. Through their obedience thousands of people were saved and the early church was birthed and galvanized. This was not a random assortment of people that just showed up to church on a Sunday morning and God decided to sovereignly pour out His spirit.**

This was a community of men and women that had done life with Jesus. Walked beside Jesus. Followed Jesus. Saw all that he had done. This is the launch team for the first church plant!

**Community in English is made of two words: Common & Unity. Common not meaning typical. Common meaning shared.**

This group in the early church had a common unity, a shared pursuit of the fullness of Jesus.

**We have taken this common unity and turned it into something trivial.**

Community is one of those words in Christianity that has lost its punch from overuse and misuse! But a look at this passage can enlighten our understanding.

This was originally written in Greek and the word 'one accord' is the Greek word homothumadon. Much like 'community' is made of two words, homothumadon is made up of two root words. Homo and thumadon. Homo simply means same.

But, when I say thumadon maybe you hear a few English words. It's the word from which we get 'thermometer' and 'thermite' and 'thermos.' In Greek it carries the connotation of 'heat' and 'fire.'

**Homo, same. Thumadon, fire. So to say that they were all in 'one accord,' or they were in homothumadon would literally be saying that they had the 'same fire.'**

**\*\*\*Homothumadon**

**Do you see how this goes further than our typical understanding of what community is?** This is not a casual pursuit. This is not showing up to church and filling a seat or doing a job. Yeah, that's important, but go here with me. This is 120 believers, gathered in an upper room, pursuing God for power, in the summer, near the equator, for 10 flipping days! And God pours out his spirit and from that place He births a movement that has touched billions.

**\*\*When you are in true community you aren't just in proximity to other people, but you begin to burn for the same things. Common Unity looks like burning together for a shared passion.**

**ILL:** Have you ever been around a group of people that are passionate about something you just don't get?

**\*\*Just because you happened to be close to them doesn't**

***mean you are in community with them because you don't burn for what they burn for.***

Take football for example. To me Football's only fun if you're playing it. I can go to my friend's house to watch a game, have a good time and eat their wings but I can't get down with grown men painting themselves watching a bunch of overpaid guys in tight pants chase a ball up and down a field, and getting into a three day funk if their team loses. Sure, they're passionate about the Falcons, but on an real level I can't really say I'm in community with them if they can scream at the television on Sunday afternoon but not shout unto God on Sunday morning because we aren't burning for the same things!

**APP:** Just because we are in close proximity to a group doesn't mean we are in community with them. Just because we attend on Sunday doesn't mean we have a



common unity that is defined by burning for the same things. That is what I'm after.

The same way biblical community as a whole doesn't happen on accident, you belonging to community doesn't happen on accident. You must take steps forward. You want friends, the Bible says show yourself friendly. You want community, join a Life Group, and then hang out with them after the semester is over. You want deeper relationships? Text someone instead of getting offended when nobody texts you. Don't wait to for a men's prayer breakfast to be organized by the church. Have a bonfire in your back yard and talk about Jesus with the boys! Community that is wholly dependent on programs is not sustainable community nor is it biblical. Instead, be intentional about reaching out to those you want to do life with and build community.

Too many of us have stopped at events and attendance and tithing and serving in some capacity. I'm grateful

for those things, but my question are we burning for the things of God together.

I want to share with you some culture ideas that God is stirring in our team for this community. This is what we are burning for. \*\*\*\*\* (slides for each)

We are people of revival and presence.

We will chase after those far from God.

We always choose honor.

We expect the supernatural.

We dream God-sized dreams.

We are spiritual contributors, not spiritual consumers.

We have been changed. So we actively invite people to encounter God and discover real life.

Covenant Relationships matter. With God and with each other.

This is what we are about. This is what consumes our conversations. This is how you reach a city. You live in one accord. You have homothumadon. You burn for the same things. You live around a common unity.

**T/S: In the early church this essential ingredient of like fire, of promoting unity and living in one accord paved the way for the entire known world to be touched with the message of the Gospel inside of 30 years. It permeated the church as it grew through radical unity and expanded to the rest of the world through perpetual boldness.**

**\*\*\*2) We pursue radical unity.**

**I believe unity is the birthplace of a corporate anointing. \*\*\*God can do a lot with a person. . . but He can do more with a people!**

\*\*\*Ps 133:1-2

*1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity!*

*2 It is like the precious oil (oil is a picture of the anointing) upon the head, Running down on the beard, The beard of Aaron, Running down on the edge of his garments.*

This passage carries the idea that the oil of God's anointing is his blessing on the unity shared of His people. Where there's homothumadon, there's anointing. Where there's unity, there's anointing.

Have you ever heard the scripture 'one puts a thousand to flight and two puts ten thousand to flight.' That's because unity amplifies the level of anointing we operate in when we are together.

I really enjoy speaking at revival gatherings because more than likely everyone that comes to a four hour

service on a Friday and Saturday night genuinely wants awakening and the fullness of Jesus, and that common unity among the people there amplifies the corporate level of anointing and presence. It invites the Holy Spirit in a greater capacity than we are able to do on Sunday morning when half of us want Jesus and half of us want lunch.

One thing I've learned about unity, is that you don't know if you have it until you've had to have a few hard conversations. Because it is in those moments that you either choose unity, or you choose offense.

***Unity inside the church often looks like a healthy, but hard conversation with a person whose heart is for you.***

There are multiple times throughout Acts where we see leadership, wisdom, tension and confrontation used to restore unity and alignment in the church.

Acts 6 : Greek widows are being overlooked in food distribution in favor of Hebrew widows. Racism is confronted.

Acts 9 : Jerusalem leaders are leery and bickering over welcoming Paul into the church. Religious fear is confronted.

Acts 10-11 : The expansion of the faith to the gentiles and Peter defending his actions. Spiritual elitism and fear of change is being confronted.

Acts 15: The church has to stop controversial teaching about circumcision. Heresy and Truth is confronted.

Beyond Acts, most of Paul's letters contain strong rebukes to the churches, all for the sake of alignment and unity.

**Galatians:** Paul confronts Peter over his hypocrisy towards gentiles. Legalism is out of control.

**Corinthians:** Sexual immorality has turned into a huge issue in the church.

**Gospels:** Jesus confronts Peter saying 'Get behind me Satan. You have in mind the things of man and not of God.' Next time someone asks you 'what would Jesus do' just remember that calling someone Satan is within the realm of possibility.

**\*\*\*Real unity is forged through intrepid honesty and bold love in the context of a deepening relationship both with God and each other.**

Jesus discerned the motives of Peter's heart. And he called him to task on it. Ironically, Peter could have said 'only God can judge me.' Now, I get Jesus is God, people. Stay with me for the purpose of this illustration!

When people say 'only God can judge me' part of me wants to say 'that should scare you.'

In my experience most people that default to that kind of response will not grow or mature because no one ever has permission to help them and speak into them. They constantly live in patterns of dysfunction because they aren't willing to pursue relational unity and make the necessary adjustments to belong to a community beyond church attendance and superficial 'ain't God good, brother, church was good today' relationships.

**\*\*\*True Biblical community is not committed to your happiness. It's committed to your holiness.**

I cannot remember a time over the last year of working with our lead team that having a hard conversation either from me or directed towards me hasn't helped me grow and actually served to deepen my relationships.

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**For those Initiating:**

I want to share a few principles for these kinds of conversations, and I want to give a big caveat. I try to follow each one of the statements I'm about to share. I've also fallen woefully short on many occasions of every single one. I'm often brash, often all business instead of all unity, often say things that with the right heart and the wrong words. But I'm also a work in progress because I have leaders that have hard conversations with me about these very things where I miss it! I hope you'll take these to heart and consider them the next time you have to have a hard conversation with someone.

\*\*\*\*\* (slide for each)

Grace, love, and honor are more important than my felt need of being right.

If you seek to bring someone into alignment, be willing to help carry their burdens according to Galatians 6:1-2.

Examine your heart first. Its crazy how when someone is wrong we want to judge, but when we are wrong we want grace.

Is what you are saying right, helpful or necessary. If my knee jerk reaction is to correct then my heart isn't right.

Boldness doesn't mean you aren't meek. Don't be a jerk.

Recognize the journey they are on. Respond accordingly.

See the best in every individual, and use hard conversations as an opportunity to pull that out.

Make a practice of not correcting outside of relationship. Relationship trumps authority every time.

Go to the person. If you are talking to others about someone else, you're the one that needs to be corrected.

Assume the best. Only speak out of love and honor. Make sure you are really for the other person before you ever speak to them.

Do it face to face. They need to hear your voice to hear your heart.

Don't be shy about expecting followers of Jesus to actually follow Jesus.

Choose your battles. Not every hill is worth dying on.

**For the Confronted: (lessons I've personally learned from being confronted and called out)**

It's not a bad thing. It's about being aligned with Jesus and his church, and someone cares about you enough to call you out on something. Know you are loved.

Fight to be unoffendable. Your first choice in these convos is 'will I be offended or not.'

Reply, don't react. Defensiveness hinders growth.

Be willing to be accountable to someone.

Understand that biblical confrontation is actually God protecting you. It's the animals that stray from the herd that make easy targets for the lion.

Consider that God is calling you to another level of pursuit. Grow from it. After all, being called to live a better life is not a bad thing.

Don't value your personal freedoms over your pursuit of God. Ultimately, it's about the mission of the church.

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I can't tell you how many times I have had friends, pastors and leaders call me on my crap. It's not fun.

Listen, **The truth will set you free. It will usually**

tick you off first, but it will eventually set you  
free!

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T/S: So we have a shared pursuit (homothumadon), we have radical unity that aligns the church. The last mark of common unity I want to tackle today is consistent boldness.

**\*\*\*\*4) We have a Consistent Boldness**

*Acts 4:29–31 (NKJV)*

**\*\*\*\*<sup>29</sup>Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to**

***Your servants that with all boldness they may speak***

***Your word,***

**<sup>30</sup>*by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs***

***and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy***

***Servant Jesus.”***

***31 And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.***

This prayer comes right after an angel helps Peter escape from jail. He was going to be martyred. The early church is undergoing great persecution. Attacks are coming at them from every angle.

They didn't ask God to kill their enemies. They didn't even ask for the persecution to stop! Instead they asked to be able to speak the word of God with boldness, and they asked that he move in power, even as their lives are on the line. They asked God to make the Gospel effective through them!

**\*\*\*Walking closely with other followers of Jesus produces a consistent boldness in our hearts and lives.**

It transforms our speech. It shapes how we act. It sharpens our spirit man.

**ILL:** I am not like my wife. I wasn't always saved. And before I met Jesus, weekends were not productive unless I had done at least one really stupid thing. Fighting with whoever. Doing things to get my adrenaline up. Jumping off of something tall when you're drunk. I was always doing stupid stuff.

I have made this observation though. Out of all the dumb things I did I never did any of them alone.

This is a principle I believe carries over to community. It is easier to step out in boldness when someone is stepping out with you.

**EXP:** Now, this passage I just read was chosen because I love it, but really, it's a motif in the New Testament. Acts 2. Acts 3. Acts 4. Acts 13. Acts 16.

I am convinced the reason that the early church saw such consistent supernatural manifestation wasn't just because of their individual anointing, but the fact

that everything they did was predicated upon community. They were praying together, they were breaking bread together, they were discussing the Apostles' teaching together and their unity brought their anointing to a place of healing people together, releasing the kingdom together, raising the dead together, and preaching the Gospel with signs and wonders. . .together.

**App:** They early church had this shared passion where they burned for the same things, they had a radical unity that they weren't afraid to protect, and they had a consistent boldness that actively expanded the Kingdom.

*Are we living that way? Are we listening, repenting, turning, becoming more like Jesus, burning for the same things in Biblical community, and leading others to do the same, or are you just enjoying church because it's what you do on Sundays in the south.*



**\*\*\*Are we accountable with the Gospel and with our Devotion.**

Does someone in your life have permission to say 'who are you praying for, what's God saying, where are you struggling right now.' If not, I am like Paul, I beseech ye brethren by the mercy of God, invite real community into your faith journey. Yeah, it's hard at first. Yeah it's more than a life group. Yeah, it requires transparency and vulnerability, but you'll never be the same. It's worth it.

**\*\*\*Are you praying for people, building relationships, sharing meals, serving people, and sharing your story.** I am convinced that if Jesus has truly and deeply changed us then there will be a desire to want to invite people into this life in God that we have. And if there isn't a desire to see people meet Jesus maybe we didn't really say yes to following Jesus. Maybe we just said yes to attending church every few weeks.

Conclusion: The Bible is filled with stories of thousands being impacted. But it's also filled with stories of one being reached or one family being converted or one life being changed.

**\*\*\*Reach One.**

pray

Gospel. Giving opportunity for people to meet Jesus.