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**TOGETHER IN LIFE | LIFE, TOGETHER | SEPTEMBER 29, 2019**

**"I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one – as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me." - John 17.21**

- As we consider our Life, Together series, we'll take the time today for us to look at what it means for us to **"all be one"**.
- What are some of the characteristics of a healthy, thriving Christian community?
- What impact does a community like that have on our lives and the lives of those around us?

**ACTS 4:31-35**

31 After this prayer, the meeting place shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Then they preached the word of God with boldness.

32 All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had. 33 The apostles testified powerfully to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God's great blessing was upon them all. 34 There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them 35 and bring the money to the apostles to give to those in need.

- To experience true Christian community, it must begin with a united heart and mind.
- This comes from a heart to know God, be filled with his Spirit and see others come to know him. – this should be our COMMON GOAL!
- The little differences didn't matter because of this common desire!

**In this scripture, we learn a few important characteristics of Christian community.**

**KIND & COMPASSIONATE**

*"There were no needy people among them."*

- Ephesians 4:32
  - "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."
- As we are filled with the Spirit and Jesus changes our hearts, we start seeing people differently. We start to see them as Jesus sees them. Compassion grows out of our hearts for one another.
- Being in community means that we care for one another. We help each other when we are in need and show grace for each other in seasons of struggle.
- The needs of our community extend beyond our possessions and finances.

- We all have seasons of need in which we cannot go it alone. We need the kindness and compassion of those around us as we go through these times.
- We need people to hold us up, challenges us, teach us, mentor us and just plain love us.
- Seeing the needs that each of us have should move us to have compassion for them.
- Let's love and serve one another with great compassion.

### **SACRIFICE & GENEROSITY**

*...they shared everything they had.*

- Christian community requires us to move more towards generosity.
- In Acts 4, there was a common heart to let go of those things they held close to them in order to be in community.
- In order to be generous, we need to be willing to sacrifice. We need to be willing to give up our comfort, our personal space, our possessions, our selfishness, our time, our plans and more.
- It is very easy for us to get tunnel vision, to get caught up in what we are doing and what we want that we miss opportunities to be generous to those around us.
- Community is at its best when we are listening to God's voice and are ready to be obedient when he calls us to give.

### **INVITATION**

- Community begins with invitation. The first community of believers in Acts began with the invitation of the gospel.
- Our community today involves the invitation of the gospel too, but it also includes the simple invitation to belong.
- We all long to belong. We all have a deep desire to be a part of something, to be included, to be invited.
- One of the simplest, yet most effective ways to practice community is to be a people of invitation.
- It never hurts to invite someone to do life with you. What's the worst that could happen? They say no? Sometimes, we just need to take a risk!

### **REFLECTING GOD'S HEART**

*"so that the world will believe you sent me."*

- Healthy Christian community not only has a positive impact on those who are a part of the church, it can also have a greater impact on those around us.
- When we live and treat each other like this, the heart and character of God is reflected.
- People see these attributes of God through the way we treat each other. Our community can influence the communities that we are in.

- We also can apply all of the attributes of Christian community in the communities that we are in every day.
    - Neighbourhoods
    - Workplaces
    - Schools
    - Sports fields
  - What happened with the community in Acts 4 when they lived like this
    - They added to their number!
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### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. How can we make sure that our community is built on the united to heart to know God and share His love with others?
2. What attributes of Christian community do you feel challenged to grow in the most?
3. Has your life been impacted by any of these community characteristics? If so, share your story.
4. What are some practical things that we can do to reflect who God is through the ways that we gather?