

A photograph of several golden wheat stalks with long, feathery awns, blowing in the wind against a clear, light blue sky. The stalks are positioned in the lower half of the frame, curving upwards and outwards. The text "The Community of Christians" is centered over the middle of the image.

The Community of Christians

The Community of Christians

- Problem: loss of younger Christians and the unsaved children of Christians to the world.
- Reasons?
 - Is it the teaching in the local church or the lack thereof?
 - Parental guidance, influence, or the lack thereof?
 - The education establishment, entertainment industry, peer pressure?
 - A host of other factors?

The Community of Christians

- The Amish allow their teens to leave the community and experience the world of the “English.”
- More than 90% return to Amish traditions for life. Why?
- They experience a sense of community that seldom exists in contemporary America. (*Steven Nolt, A History of the Amish, p. 284-285*)

The Community of Christians

- Why is it that when most denominations and churches of Christ (except for those using various unauthorized social programs) are losing youth, while the Amish are keeping most of their youth?
- The answer is community.
- We have traded community for technology that enables us become even less community oriented.

Community In The New Testament

- Community is present from the beginning of the church. The brethren were “together.”
- Acts 2:42-47 - “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. 43 Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. 44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, 45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. 46 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”

Community In The New Testament

- The church is a group of individuals working together for common purposes and for its own common good -- community.
- 1Cor. 12:12-28



Community In The New Testament

- Idea of restoration and preservation in bearing one another's burdens. Social superficialities indicate that nothing is wrong...
- ...but those in close relationships know when things are wrong.
- Gal. 6:1-2 - “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. 2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

Community In The New Testament

- The question is: are we willing to invest ourselves in one another so as to have those kinds of relationships?
- James 5:19-20 - “Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, 20 let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.”

The Importance Of Community

- Community is easily overlooked as unimportant, but yet it must remain critical. This is especially true in our isolated world.
- Where can people turn for community today?
- Unfortunately, our society has sacrificed community on the altar of technological progress.
- Should we blame technology and progress?
- I believe that the selfish desire to distance ourselves from others existed first, and technology has simply made it easier to do.

The Importance Of Community

- We can maintain some essential communities regardless of circumstances.
 - The earthly family
 - The spiritual family
- A strong spiritual community can survive time and technology.
- If the Amish willingly choose their lifestyle over what the world offers, then Christians can choose to maintain the extended family and the family relationship that is the local church.

The Importance Of Community

- If we as Christians in a local church do not function as a strong community, but are just like everyone else, what makes us distinct?
- If we provide no more community within the church than denominations or world at large, we shouldn't be surprised when our young people leave.
- If we act little different from denominational, liberal, or even some conservatives do in terms of community, why should we really expect anyone to desire to be part of our family?

The Importance Of Community

- People from outside visit and investigate churches for the purpose of finding community, another name for a place to belong, a place to be in fellowship with others, to find a place where they can have their needs addressed, and where they can invest their energy, time, and assets for others with whom they share the community.

The Importance Of Community

- One remaining essential point: Growing families are messy.
- And so are growing churches.
 - 1Thes. 5:14 - “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.”
 - Col. 3:12 - “Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering...”
 - Eph. 4:2 - “With all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love.”