
Why Minding Community is Better than Finding It

One of the great myths of relational life is that community is something *found*. In this fairy tale, community is simply out there – somewhere – waiting to be discovered like Prince Charming finding Cinderella. All you have to do is find the right person, join the right group, get the right job or become involved with the right church. It's kind of an "Over the Rainbow" thing; it's not here, so it must be over there.

Which is why so many people – and you've seen them and probably flirted with this yourself – go from relationship to relationship, city to city, job to job, church to church, looking for the community that they think is just around the corner if they could only find the right people and the right place. The idea is that real community exists *somewhere* and we simply must tap into it. It's not something you have to work at; in fact, if you have to work at it, then you know it's not real community.

This mindset runs rampant in our day. If you have to work at community in a marriage, you must not be right for each other. If you have to work on community where you are employed, you've got a bad boss or bad coworkers or a bad structure. If you have to work at community in a neighborhood, you just picked the wrong subdivision. If you have to work on things with people in a church, well, there are obviously just problems with the church or its leadership or... yep, its "community."

I cannot stress enough how soundly unrealistic, much less unbiblical, this is. Community is not something you find; it's something you *build*. What you long for isn't about finding the right mate, the right job, the right neighborhood, the right church—it's about making your marriage, making your workplace, making your neighborhood and making your church the community God intended. Community is not something discovered; it is something *forged*. I don't mean to suggest any and all relationships are designed for, say, marriage. Or that there aren't dysfunctional communities you should flee from. My point is that all relationships of worth are products of labor.

This is why the Bible talks about people needing to form and *make* communities, not just come together as a community or "experience" community. It's why principles are given – at length – for how to work through conflict. It's why communication skills are articulated in the Bible and issues such as anger are instructed to be dealt with. It's why the dynamics of successfully living with someone in the context of a marriage or family are explored in depth. As the author of Hebrews puts it so plainly:

So don't sit around on your hands! No more dragging your feet... run for it! Work at getting along with each other. (Hebrews 12:12-14, *The Message*)

> [Read more from James.](#)

