

The Compelling Community

4000 years ago, men gathered together on the plain of Shinar to build a name for themselves (*Gen 11:2*). With extraordinary effort, vision and organization they moved a breath-taking project forward – a tower that would reach the heavens (*vs 4*). Few things serve as a better catalyst for men getting together as does a project. The oneness and community built by these early men caught God's attention. He intended to foil their overreaching plans. To do so, He confused their language (*vs 7*). Men, confounded by this, spread throughout the world (*vs 8*), each according to their like language. Thus, ethnic communities were born and the Tower of Babel forsaken.

God, however, was not entirely disappointed by their desire for unity. In fact unity, community and a new ethnicity was exactly what God was up to (*John 17:21-23*). The catalyst for this gathering together was going to be grand. Like the tower building project, it was going to be compelling, unifying and breath taking.

Two thousand years later, devout men out of every nation gathered themselves together in Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of Pentecost (*Acts 2:1, 5*). In the midst of this multicultural gathering, a small group of men and women met together in one accord in one place. It was among this unified group who shared a like identity and affinity with Jesus Christ that the Holy Spirit made His foretold descending upon mankind (*vs 3*). Being filled with the Holy Spirit, those in the upper room began to speak the wonderful works of God (*vs 4, 11*).

Pleased by the coalescing of mankind around the work of Jesus Christ, God dissolved the language barrier. Men were confounded again, but this time it was because they heard the Gospel spoken in their language (*vs 6*). Peter, in the power of the Holy Spirit, preached to men urging them that through faith in Jesus Christ and by responding in repentance and baptism that they should be saved (*vs 14-40*).

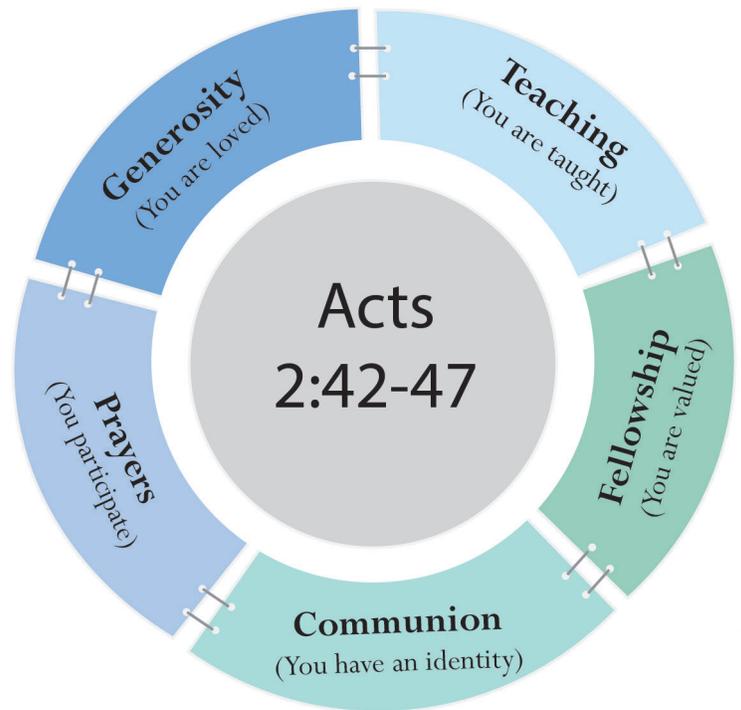
What followed was unlike anything that had occurred in previous ages. A bringing together of mankind (*vs 41*). A new ethnicity. A nation whose king was Jesus. A community built around a strong tower and that strong tower was God (*Psalms 18:2*).

In 2018 this tower remains. Erected by God as a name unto Himself, Jesus Christ still remains the center of this civilization. And the civilization is the Church. All those who have responded to the call of God through repentance of sin and belief in Him (*vs 38, 39*). Remarkably, God weaves the community of believers as a central effort in the gospel. *Acts 2:47* reads that “*The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*”

The early church found this new community to be quite compelling. *Acts 2:42, 45* states “*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every many had need.*” The same compelling elements that existed 2000 years ago exist in the church today. Consider the following five compelling elements of the church from this scripture passage. With each element, there are a few self-examination questions for you to consider if you are helping to make your church a compelling community.

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- **“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine”:** Every person has a fundamental need for teaching. The church is a community where we are taught. Sermons, Bible studies, Sunday school and discipleship instruction are just a few of the many ways instruction occurs. The church, from its inception, has embodied both the humility of “I don’t know, teach me” as well as the authority of “Thus saith the Lord.”
 - Do I have a teachable spirit?
 - Am I willing to teach others?
- **“and fellowship,”:** Every person has a fundamental need for fellowship. The church is a community where we are valued. The fellowship experienced in the church is unlike many other communities in our world, such as work or school. In these communities, the value of participants lies in their purpose. In contrast, the value of church members lies in their presence. God, having fulfilled all-purpose, places His value on us. Thus, from the youngest to the oldest, richest to the poorest, healthy to the infirmed our value does not lie in our contributions but instead in our presence in Him and consequently with each other.
 - Can I celebrate the presence of an older brother or sister and encourage them when they can’t see their purpose?
- **“and in breaking of bread,”:** Every person has a fundamental need for identity. The church is a community that views members according to their Christ-given identity. The communion service helps us shed our worldly identities and realize our vertical identity as God’s son or daughter and our horizontal identity as brethren. Our common bloodline is in Jesus Christ.
 - When I meet the brethren, do I see worldly identities or Christ-given identities?
- **“and in prayers,”:** Every person has a fundamental need to participate. The church is a community where we participate with each other. Though not the basis of our value, we do have purpose. Together we pray. Together we serve. Together we exhort. Together we endure hardship. Together we rejoice. Together we contend for truth.
 - Can I step into a place of greater service within my church?
- **“and parted them to all men, as every man had need.”:** Every person has a fundamental need for love. The church is a community where members are loved. Denying ourselves for our brother’s gain is the currency of Christ’s love to us and therefore the currency of our love for each other.
 - Is there a way to love my brethren by my self-denial?



This new community was and remains compelling, compelling not only because of what it means for its members who experience its blessings, but also more importantly because it reflects the very heart of God.

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