

# Authentic Community

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## Sermon Synopsis

In this episode of *World Impact*, Dr. Billy Wilson shares a powerful message on “Authentic Community” from the heart of Jerusalem, a city central to God’s unfolding plan for humanity. Speaking to the importance of the Church in the life of every believer, Dr. Wilson emphasizes that despite shifting generational attitudes, the Church remains a non-negotiable part of Christian discipleship. He reminds viewers that the Christian life is not meant to be lived in isolation but within the fellowship of believers, where each person has a role to play in building up the body of Christ.

Drawing on the cultural backdrop of Middle Eastern hospitality, Dr. Wilson highlights how the early Church, as described in Acts 2, was knit together through meals and fellowship. Sharing bread and table was not only a social act but also a covenant of peace that created deep bonds of love and unity among early believers. This example becomes a call to today’s Church to recover the same spirit of authentic fellowship.

The message also speaks to generational dynamics, noting how Millennials and Generation Z often view the Church differently. While many in younger generations struggle with institutional religion, Dr. Wilson stresses that church involvement is essential for a meaningful and growing faith. To this end, he urges believers to remain connected to their local church and to embrace the blessings of accountability, fellowship, and service.

With pastoral wisdom, Dr. Wilson exhorts believers to honor their church leaders in tangible ways—from listening attentively, praying consistently, and offering encouragement, to celebrating personal milestones. He describes the Church through three powerful biblical metaphors: as a **building**, it is the dwelling place of God’s presence; as a **body**, it depends on the unique contribution of every member; and as a **family**, it provides spiritual kinship that transcends earthly ties.

Dr. Wilson concludes with a heartfelt invitation for believers to return to the joy, unity, and love that characterized the early Church in Jerusalem. He calls on Christians to embrace diversity within the family of God, practice sincere love toward one another, and represent Christ faithfully to the world. This message reminds viewers that authentic community is not optional but central to God's design for His people—a place where His presence dwells, His love is displayed, and His mission is carried forward.

## Sermon Highlights

- The need for authentic Christian community is as vital now as it was in the early Church, where believers devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer (Acts 2:42-47).
- The Church is essential for spiritual growth and success as a believer; it offers a place for vertical connection with God and horizontal relationships with fellow Christians.
- Honoring church leaders and pastors is integral to church community; simple acts such as listening, providing feedback, praying, and giving encouragement can significantly bless them.
- Understanding the Biblical metaphors for the Church: as a building joined together in Christ (Ephesians 2:20-22), as a body with diverse but unified members (1 Corinthians 12:12-27), and as a family where believers are God's children through faith in Christ (John 1:12-13).
- Engaging and contributing to the Church by not just attending services but also actively participating in the life of the community through volunteering, financial support, and celebrating each other's lives.

## Scripture Verses

### Acts 2:42-44

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common.

### Ephesians 2:20-22

Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

### 1 Corinthians 12:14-20

Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. Now if the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,' it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the

sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

#### 1 Peter 2:17

Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor.

#### John 1:12-13

Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

#### Romans 12:9-10

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.

#### Genesis 28:10-19

Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Harran. When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. There above it stood the Lord, and he said: "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it." He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven." Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. He called that place Bethel, though the city used to be called Luz.

#### Ephesians 6:19-20

Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

#### 2 Peter 3:15

Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him.

#### John 3:1-5

Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come

from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him." Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again." "How can someone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!" Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.

## Quotes

- "The community that united the early church had deep roots in the concept of hospitality." - Dr. Billy Wilson
- "Bill Hybels said many years ago, 'the local church is the hope of the world.' Well, I don't exactly agree with that. Jesus is the hope of the world, but the local church is important." - Dr. Billy Wilson
- "The third word picture in scripture for the church is a word picture of family." - Dr. Billy Wilson
- "God has empowered them to be His son or His daughter. So love them, embrace them, form community with them and be strong in Jesus Christ." - Dr. Billy Wilson

# Bible Study

## Objectives

- Understand the biblical concept of authentic community.
- Recognize the importance of the local church in the believer's spiritual growth.
- Explore the roles and responsibilities within a Christian community.
- Honor and support church leadership as part of sustaining a healthy community.
- Identify the unique aspects of Christian community that differentiate it from other social groups.

## Reading and Reflections

- Read Acts 2:42-47 to see the early church's example of community.
- Reflect on Ephesians 2:19-22, where Paul speaks of believers being built into a holy temple.
- Consider 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 and the analogy of the church as the Body of Christ.
- Meditate on John 1:12-13 and the concept of being born into the family of God.

## Key Observations

- The early church was characterized by sharing, unity, and mutual support.
- The local church operates as a spiritual building with Christ as the cornerstone.
- Every member of the church has a unique role and function, much like the human body.
- Becoming part of the church is akin to being adopted into a new, spiritual family.

## Personal Reflections

- Reflect on how your own involvement in church community has impacted your spiritual growth.
- Consider ways you can more effectively support and honor your church leadership.
- Think about your role within the Body of Christ and how you can better serve.

## Lessons for Daily Life

- Christian community is a place of both receiving and giving support.
- Church involvement is not just attendance, but active participation in the life of the community.
- Honoring leadership and fellow believers is central to a healthy Christian community.

## Practical Applications

- Actively listen and provide constructive feedback after sermons.
- Commit to regularly praying for your church leaders.
- Volunteer for service opportunities within the church.
- Cultivate relationships by participating in small groups or Bible studies.
- Give financially to support the work and mission of the local church.

## Challenges for the Week

- Invite someone for a meal to foster deeper community ties.
- Write an encouraging note to someone in your church who may be struggling.
- Ask your pastor how you can pray for them specifically this week.
- Share your testimony with someone outside of your church community.

## Further Study

- Study the 'one another' commandments throughout the New Testament (e.g., love one another, bear one another's burdens).
- Read a book about biblical community, such as 'Life Together' by Dietrich Bonhoeffer.
- Explore the historical background of the early church to understand the cultural significance of their community.

## Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, we come to You with grateful hearts, rejoicing in the community you have given us. Let Your Holy Spirit guide us in strengthening our bonds, honoring our leaders, and serving as vital members of Your Body. May our lives reflect the love and unity that is found in Christ, and may we be a beacon of hope and light to those seeking refuge. Grant us the wisdom to support one of our own and the courage to extend our fellowship beyond the church walls. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

# Daily Devotionals

## Day 1

### Scripture Verse

Acts 2:42-43 – ‘They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.’

### Reflection

The early church exemplified a profound sense of community, bound together by the teachings of the apostles, fellowship, shared meals, and prayer. Imagine the atmosphere of awe and wonder as signs and miracles unfolded among them, authenticating the power of the Risen Christ within their midst. This community was radically counter-cultural, united not by race, social status, or even familial ties, but by the Spirit of God. In our own lives, how often do we find ourselves isolated, choosing solitude over the messiness of community? Yet it is within this very 'koinonia' that we find strength, encouragement, and the tangible presence of God. As we step into our own congregations, do we come with hearts ready to contribute to the unity and purpose of the body of Christ or merely as passive recipients? Reflect on how you can devote yourself to the biblical model of fellowship, breaking bread with others not just in physical nourishment, but in genuine relationships that build up the church. Let the awe of God's presence be not a distant memory but a daily pursuit as you align your life with His divine blueprint for community.

### Prayer

Heavenly Father, instill within me a heart that yearns for true community. May I actively participate in the fellowship of believers, embracing teaching, prayer, and the breaking of bread. Fill me with awe as I witness Your work in and through Your church. Amen.

## Day 2

### Scripture Verse

Ephesians 2:20-22 - 'built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.'

### Reflection

As we reflect upon the image of the church as a sacred edifice, consider the significance of each stone laid upon the foundation of apostolic and prophetic revelation with Christ as the enduring cornerstone. This architectural imagery evokes a sense of permanence, purpose, and collective identity – we are individually and corporately fashioned into a dwelling for the divine. Ponder how your life, likened to a stone, contributes to the structural integrity and beauty of God's temple. Are you allowing the Master Builder to shape you, place you, and use you in conjunction with others to manifest His presence? Think of the strength garnered when believers are interlocked in unity, each supporting the other, none standing alone, but all enveloped by the Spirit of the Lord.

This day, seek to understand your role in God's grand design, and commit to being a living stone that upholds and adorns His holy temple.

#### Prayer

Lord, mold me as a living stone, perfectly fitted for Your holy temple. May I find my place in the body of Christ, upholding and being upheld, in the unity of Your Spirit. Amen.

### Day 3

#### Scripture Verse

1 Corinthians 12:14-20 - 'Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. Now if the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact, God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.'

#### Reflection

The apostle Paul's analogy of the body is a powerful depiction of the intricate interdependence within the Church. Within our biological bodies, every part has a unique function, yet each is critical to the holistic functioning of the organism. Similarly, within the spiritual body of Christ, our diverse gifts, backgrounds, and abilities are orchestrated by God's sovereign design, each contributing to the edification and mission of the Church. Reflect on the importance of embracing diversity and the unique gifts that God has blessed you with. Are you willing to value the contributions of others, recognizing that their differences are essential to the completeness of the body? Consider how you might better serve and support the various members of your church, acknowledging that the health of one part affects the well-being of the whole. Remember, no act of service is insignificant, and no member is dispensable. We are called to a beautiful partnership, woven together by the Spirit into one cohesive tapestry, displaying the glory of God to the world.

#### Prayer

Gracious God, thank You for incorporating me into Your body. Help me to appreciate the diversity of gifts around me, and to serve in harmony with my brothers and sisters. Guide me to fulfill my role in Your divine symphony. Amen.

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