

Series: Born to Belong

Lesson 1: Community is Belonging

Lesson Objectives:

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to...

- Identify the elements of a healthy community and the elements of an unhealthy community.
- Explore the idea of community as found in Acts 2 and relate this to their own group.

Materials Needed:

- Chairs, arranged according to Lead In
- Board and markers (optional)
- Costumes (optional)
- Copies of page A-11
- Pens
- Bibles

Lead In:

Before students arrive, arrange the chairs as follows: one group of three, one group of two, and then individual chairs scattered around the room. These should be spread out to minimize interaction between the students. As the students arrive and enter the room, assign them to a chair. Allow the students to interact with those in their grouping of chairs but not outside their group, and instruct them that they cannot move the chairs.

When it is time to begin, ask the students these questions, leaving them in the seats where they are. Solicit a few answers for each one. Record them if you have a board handy.

- 1. What does the word community mean to you?**
- 2. When have you felt like you were part of a community?**
- 3. Today when you came in, did you feel a part of a community? Why or why not?**

Likely, the students will have thought the seating arrangement to be a little awkward and they will have expressed this in answer to the third question. Ask them if they think they could make a better seating arrangement to foster community. Allow them to try. If you have set up the chairs well, they won't have to try very hard to make it better. They might put them in a circle or a horseshoe. Congratulate them on their good seat planning and ask them what they think the lesson will be about today. Community! That's right! Move on to Task One.

Task One:

Divide the students into three groups and give each group a separate set of instructions (this can be done out loud in front of everyone so that they all understand the task). The instructions are as follows.

Group 1 – This group is going to write a Community Constitution. Encourage them to generate articles of requirements for a healthy community. The main objective for this group is to have students identify ideal characteristics of a positive community. This group can pretend that they are a group lobbying for healthy communities in society. Do the first example on the spot out loud. Ask for an example that meets the criteria, such as “Healthy communities diverse” or “Good communities are always looking for ways to improve.”

Group 2 – This group is going to write the Anti-community Constitution, a list of rules and requirements to stifle community. To help them get into character, this group can pretend that they are a group lobbying against communities in society. Do the first example on the spot out loud. Ask for an example that meets the criteria, such as “You have to be beautiful to be in our community.”

Group 3 – This group is going to act as a television presenter, who will have to interview the two lobby groups (Group 1 and Group 2). The scene will be a television interview designed to help the public understand the stances of these two groups. The television presenter’s job is to help the public make a choice between the two groups and to test that the two groups have really thought through good and bad community. Once they have interviewed the two groups, they will decide who makes a better case to the public.

Give the three groups about ten to fifteen minutes to prepare their constitutions or interview. When they are done, ask each group to choose one or two representatives to go on “television” and represent the views of the group. Have Group 3 interview the representatives from Group 1 and 2. Bring in some costumes or props if you think your group would enjoy this. At the end, send the representatives back to their groups and ask Group 3 to decide who made a better case for or against community. Have them report their decision and why they made it. They can take into account the quality of the argument as well as the position of the lobby group.

When this little drama is over, ask the students to identify one thing that stood out to them from the debate. What did they learn from it? What do they think are the key components of healthy community.

Task Two:

Transition by asking the students why they think they are studying community in their weekly Bible study or youth group meeting. Solicit some answers. The desired answer is something like, “Our community is the way that we love each other and express Christ’s love not just for ourselves but for everyone.

Ask the students if they can think of any advantages to a community like the church. Of course, there are many, such as having older role models, meeting people who are different than us, knowing there is a group of people to turn to when we have problems, working together to do good in the world, and so on.

Finally, ask students if they know which passage in the Bible is almost always associated with community. You can give hints like “It’s in the New Testament” or “Luke wrote that book” or “It’s on page 456 in the red Bibles” or whatever will help them figure it out. Tell the students that they are going to read that passage and answer some questions about it with their same small group. Hand out copies of page A-11, *Digging Deeper*, and pens and give students a few minutes to answer the questions.

When they are done, ask one or two members of each group to stand. Have those members rotate one group clockwise. Have those members compare the answers from their source group to the answers of their new group, looking for any areas of disagreement. When this is done, ask all the groups whether there was any disagreement and what it was. Clarify and correct as needed as the students share and discuss their answers.

Closing:

To conclude the lesson, gather the students together again and challenge them to generate some ideas out loud that would help build positive community in your group. Have someone pray that God will allow each person to work together towards building a stronger community.