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Devotional  
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## Building Immunity in the Community - The Church, by Shirley Martens

It's hard not to notice all the media attention to the H1N1 flu. It's also difficult to not have an opinion on 'to vaccinate or not to vaccinate'. It's a choice that individuals have to make for themselves. Yet, vaccinations are not meant only for the individual. The benefits to the local community and the world are vast. History has shown that vaccinations have wiped out many diseases that devastated thousands of people.

We know from Scripture that the church works in a similar way, functioning as a body and. Each individual makes a choice to attend church, to be involved in a pastorate, care group, youth group or many other places designed to connect Christians with one another. As individuals we benefit by staying connected and involved, but it also benefits the whole body of Christ. We need to gather together to study God's word, pray together and serve with one another.

In his book, What Jesus Demands from the World, John Piper makes a statement based on Matt. 22:39, "All sin comes from a desire to be happy cut off from the glory of God and cut off from the good of others". Commitment to each other is a powerful immune booster the church needs to ward off infectious sin. When we each commit ourselves to the Lord and to one another and make this a priority, it benefits our Church today and future generations of the Church as well. As we meet regularly (weekly at a minimum), we grow in relationship to one another and with God, our Saviour.

Each one has a significant function in the body, which always requires personal involvement. Paul speaks to us in 1 Corinthians 12, about the role the individual plays in the body:

"The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body....

... in fact God has arranged 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?...

... The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" ...

... there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it."

Community is simply defined as: 1) A group of people living in the same locality and under the same government. 2) A group of people having common interests.

We come to church because we live in a certain area and have something in common, but being a part of the Body of Christ goes beyond that. It entails *communitas* where all are equal and consider all others as valuable as us. *Communitas* is an acute point of community, taking it to the next level. Rather than embracing the church from our individualistic points of view, we need to function as 'a unit'. Notice that this is a singular term, not plural. Not just doing for each other but with each other including getting involved with other churches.

*Communitas* vs community: Community is a concept where we are individuals within the structure of a group or doing something for someone else. It still contains a 'me' and 'them' difference. *Communitas* regards all within that group of community as equals and that others have as much value as we ourselves.

At the age of 16 I witnessed a most profound example of the spirit of *communitas*. My dad, a farmer, suffered a severe head injury that spring. By fall he was still unable to work the machinery to harvest the fields. All would be lost. Then one day, I saw 5 combines on our field. The neighbouring farmers abandoned their own fields to help Dad. This was phenomenal! You see, when the grain is ready to be harvested, no time can be wasted. There is a huge sense of urgency. During harvest time farmers are out on those fields from dawn to dusk and sometimes all night. A storm could destroy

them in a matter of hours or minutes. These farmers risked everything in order to help our family. They could have chosen to finish their fields before helping us, but they didn't. They all pulled together because my dad's fields were as valuable to them as were their own.

As part of the Body of Christ, making personal decisions for the greater good of the community often means sacrificing certain pleasures or treasures or activities. Some good questions for a parent to ask: will this activity my child is in train him or her to promote the Gospel of Jesus? How will this activity benefit the Body of Christ? Will it spread the Gospel of Jesus? Will it help those in need? As adults we need to ask these same questions of ourselves in all that we do. Remember that Jesus is King! We are not designed to cater to ourselves and our children, friends or family! We are designed to serve our King! It's of vital importance to get together with others who are like-minded and work together in *communitas*.

How does this look practically? The writer of Hebrews admonishes us to, "...hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching." Hebrews 10:23-25.

Let's remember the words of Jesus, "... I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!" Matthew 25:40.

The body needs each part to function as a whole. So I invite you to watch the sermon: [why you should love the church](#) . Join a pastorate or a care-group. Start a family Bible study with a few other families. Take some time to reach out within the community of Abbotsford: volunteer for the Extreme Weather Program ([afb@telus.net](mailto:afb@telus.net)), visit someone without family in the hospital or seniors home on Christmas Day (contact the hospital first). Also reach out to the global community: Sponsor a few Compassion children! Go on a short-term mission trip, help with [IJM](#) . We need to view the needs of those who live in our local and global communities as valuable as our own needs.

Joining **The City** will help us to seek out opportunities to serve.

The City is an exciting new Northview website designed in such a way that the local church community can connect more easily and to enhance personal and group relationships and ways to serve. Find out how you can join up at [northview.org](http://northview.org) or call the church.

Blessings, on behalf of the Northview Women's Commission

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