

Reflection on Community
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You've no doubt heard it said that it takes a village to raise a child. Well, it takes all kinds of people sharing their gifts, their dreams, their passions, their skills, their time and energy, their ideas, their enthusiasm and their commitment, to make a village.

Hare had a wonderful vision for a gift he wanted to share with the other animals, but he couldn't possibly have made it real all by himself. The community is only as strong as the people who inhabit it.

It can be easy to forget that and to believe that only other people - the "people in charge" have the power to make good things happen, that only the leaders - or those with special talents or with more money - can really change things. But it's just not so. It takes all of us, every one of us...to support our families, to raise our children, to care for our elders and those who are sick, to build a new building...

There's a man named Bob Waldrop who said it well. He said,

It does take a village, to work with the family, to raise a child and weather the storms of life. If we want that kind of support, the place to begin is with ourselves. Community, like charity, [he says] begins at home. You start building a good neighborhood when you yourself decide that you will be a good neighbor. If you don't know anyone on your block, you can take the initiative. You can bake some bread and take it to your neighbors and introduce yourself. You can join a church and become part of that community. You can reach out to your own network of friends and start building community.

There are many things that we just don't have much control over [says Bob]. But like eating good food, building community is something that you can do, right here, right now, in the place where you are now -- whether or not you have a job, an education, or a car. Be the first one on your block to reach out and touch your neighbor. Find - together... -- a new sense of purpose and life on your street. Make your neighborhood - or your church! - your village and find the truth that humans have learned the hard way. United we stand, divided we fall -- cooperation is as important as competition. Maybe, at certain times and places, it's **more** important.

Bob makes a good point. We start building a good church community when we ourselves decide that we participate fully in building it. And when we make that decision, we become blessed, for we begin to benefit from being part of a strong church community.

But it is not just we who are blessed. Many others are blessed as well. They benefit from our presence and our participation. Our family is strengthened and their families are strengthened. Our children grow stronger and their children grow stronger as well. When we hold ourselves back, the whole community is weakened. When we join in, when we share, our gifts become the community's gifts, too.