

All In 2020 Part 2

Community

January 12, 2020

Opening Question: Would you rather be picked first or last to be on a team?

INTRO

Community is a popular buzz word in society, desired by most, but experienced by few.

Yet, community is crucial to followers of Jesus becoming what they were meant to be and indispensable to fulfilling the cause of Christ.

What is community? Community is a unified body of individuals such as:

- a: people with common interests
- b: a group of people with a common characteristic

For the Christians, we have Jesus in common. We should be a body of individuals unified by the person of Christ working towards the purposes of Christ.

Why is it so important as a follower of Jesus? It is:

1. Necessary for Growth

You can't grow on your own. At best, you'd learn about Christ but not be anything like Him.

True Christian community is necessary in the lives of all Christ followers, but it is very difficult in our society of ***radical individualism***.

We don't naturally live with others in mind. We've all heard the popular mottos: "you do you" "live your best life" "follow your heart". Typically, these are very self-centered statements and some of the worst, unbiblical advice we can ever give.

As believers in Jesus, we are called to live differently. We are called to live counterculturally. We are called to be submitted to God and to others.

Here's are few examples of countercultural statements in Bible:

Food sacrificed to idols:

1 Corinthians 8:9 Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak.

13 Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother or sister to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause them to fall.

This surrendering of our "rights", for the good of someone else, is not common. It is not natural.

True Christian community provides us the opportunity to live this out.

In America, we're consumed by our personal rights whether real or perceived. Our loyalties are to ourselves first then everything else comes after.

Philippians 2:3-4 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

The rights of the individual are suppressed for the good of another in their community. That requires graciousness & humility instead of selfishness and pride.

Scripture here is not advocating socialism or a some kind of mandated sharing but instead, a heart-motivated compassion.

In Christian community, there's not only the chance to practice submission and humility, but also to help others become more like Jesus.

Proverbs 27:17 As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.

Growth doesn't happen in a vacuum, self-indulgence does. Why? Because that's how we're wired. Even as born-again followers of Jesus, we still fight our flesh, our inherited sinful human nature that strives to put our feelings and desires above all else. The laboratory of relationships and community creates opportunities for us to deny ourselves and place the good of others above our own.

Marriages struggle when spouses are seeking happiness instead of wholeness and holiness.

Churches struggle when individuals are more concerned about their own needs and preferences instead of the needs of others.

Individuals struggle when their pursuit of self and feelings lead them down a path of emptiness and anxiety when they realize their pursuit of self leaves them with only themselves. They've bowed at the altar of self-love and self-worship. They are not a part of a greater purpose or greater story that every person was created to be a part of with God as the center.

It's time for the Church to stop asking God for his plan for their life and ask God where they fit in His plan which is already in place.

Character is shaped in true Christian community as we are untied around the person and purposes of Christ not a greater pursuit of self.

As Believers we must be careful that our pursuit of knowledge about Christ doesn't keep us from pursuing the person of Christ and living out the purposes of Christ.

Jesus tells us in Luke 9 we must deny ourselves to follow Him. This isn't just about Him but also about his Church, the community of Believers He's placed you in.

True Christian community should lead to refined Christian character.

Hebrews 10:23-25 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

This call to encourage is repeat many times in Scripture. This instruction to be together is critical since God hasn't called us to be loners. We weren't meant to walk alone. This call to spur others and be willing to be spurred is easily pushed aside if we're not careful.

Encouragement is appreciated. Spurring is often not.

True Christian community is vital to our development a Christians. Community is necessary for our growth, but it is also...

2. Needed for Sharing Christ

What if the world could see the Church in the context of community instead of the caricature that is portrayed in the media?

What if they could see us fulfilling the 2 most important commandments Jesus gave us? Love God & love others.

True Christian community disarms those who are resistant or simply ignorant of the Gospel.

Are using your home for the purposes of Christ. Do you realize your home can be an extension of your relationship with the Lord? Do you realize it can be used to show the love of Christ to others?

Rosaria Butterfield in *The Gospel Comes with a House Key* writes: "Radical ordinary hospitality shows this skeptical, post-Christian world what authentic Christianity looks like."

She's speaking of true Christian community on display in the homes of believers.

Tom Mercer writes in *8 to 15: Your World is Smaller Than You Think*: "...when people see a life of faith lived out before them, they naturally become curious."

In this society of radical individualism what if they could see us as the early church was seen?

Acts 2:42-47 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

This type of togetherness, community is powerful. It's needed for sharing the good news of Jesus because it gives the world a picture of Christ-like love.

The writer of Ecclesiastes describes the power of community like this:

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: 10 If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. 11 Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? 12 Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

If you read the entire book of Ecclesiastes, you see someone (assumed to be King Solomon) that experienced all life had to offer. Someone who experienced the emptiness of self-indulgence but observed the power of togetherness and concluded the only life worth living was one lived for God.

If we can capture that here and live it out, we will grow in ways we've never imagined, and we'll be much more effective in reaching others for Jesus.

Response

If you are not a follower Jesus, you were created to live in community with other Christ followers? Feel free to email info@cornerstoneSD.org is you'd like to talk about it.

If you are a follower of Jesus, who are you bringing into your life to encourage? Who are you connecting with that needs Jesus?

From 8 to 15: The World is Smaller Than You Think by Tom Mercer, he says there are 8 to 15 people that we share life with, that we regularly come into contact with. They could be friends, co-workers, neighbors, classmates, etc. These are the people we are called to reach. That is our Oikos, Greek meaning our extended household.

Fill out the Oikos card and begin to strategically investing in others.