**COMMUNITY**

**The Magnificent and The Messy**

**10/1/24**

1. **It's Good for Us**

Improves Health and Longevity.

The most crucial factor in Blue Zone Living.

COVID and Social media have led to a loss of Community and drastically increased the reports of depression, primarily among ages 18 to 26.

1. **God Calls us into the Community**
2. **We are adopted into God's family and thus have a lot of brothers and sisters.**

\**God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to Himself through Jesus Christ. He wanted to do this, and it gave him great pleasure. Long, long ago, he decided to adopt us into his family through Jesus Christ.* (Ephesians 1:5 NLT)

\**So in Christ, we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.* (Romans 12:5)

\**Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ.* (1 Corinthians 12:12)

1. **Relationship is paramount to God**. We are to love and care for one another—it is our calling.

\**Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.* (1 Peter 4:8)

1. **Church is Critical** —We did not invent the Church; God did.

*The Church is the bride of Christ* (Eph 5: 25-27, 2 Cor 11:2, John 3:29, Rev 19:7-7, 21:9 ESV).

It’s God’s agenda for the world. Church is a family; it unites us, is a vital avenue through which we hear from God, and is how we impact the world for Jesus. Church is where we find out about needs and get help for ours; it also teaches us how to get along with our many differences.

1. **Mission and Outreach** — The Great Commission

 “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28: 16-20)

1. **The Concentric Circles of Faith**

This model shows how Jesus worked with many circles of people with different spiritual needs. This can also help us with boundaries.

**\*The Broad Group**—Everyone we interact with.

They will know we are Christians by His love. We are Christ’s ambassadors.

(John 13:35, 2 Corinthians 5:20, paraphrased)

**\*Believers and the Church**

*-And he answered them, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother."* (Matthew 5: 23-24)

-T*hey devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer... All the believers were together and had everything in common.* (Acts 2:42-47)

**\*The 12 Disciples**

Remember, Judas, the betrayer, was in this group.

**\*The Inner Circle**

The Transfiguration of Christ was only seen by Jesus’s inner circle of three—Peter, James, and John**.**

1. **Community is Magnificent**

Community is how we bring and experience the Kingdom of God here on earth. Community helps us discover God and ourselves in the process.

*-God sets the lonely in families.* (Psalm 68:6)

*-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 encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.* (Hebrews 10: 24-25)

*-Sweet friendships refresh the soul and awaken our hearts with joy, for good friends are like the anointing oil that yields the fragrant incense of God's presence.* (Proverbs 27:9 TPT)

1. **Community is Messy —** A Place of Formation and Sanctification.

John Mark Comer argues that Community is where people are formed into the image of Christ. Through the challenges and joys of relationships—learning to forgive, love, and serve— Christians are spiritually shaped. This process of spiritual formation in Community is critical, as it provides opportunities to practice the teachings of Jesus in real, messy life situations. True Community involves accountability and growth. Relationships within a community can challenge and sharpen each other, leading to mutual spiritual and personal development.

* Disconnecting ourselves from Community is less faithful than connecting through a flawed community.
* When you quit celebrating grace, you begin to forget how much you need grace. (Introduction to "New Morning Mercies" by Paul David Tripp)
* The arena we live out our relationship with God is not the Prayer Closet but our relationship with one another." (Richard Rohr)

**What keeps you from authentic Community?**

**What blocks our relationships can also block us from God.**

*Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother or sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, who they have not seen.* (1 John 4:20)

**We need to look at our part.**

"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye." (Matthew 7: 3-5)

"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there, remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift. (Matthew 5: 23-24)

***A 4-Step Exercise to Help us when Community Gets Messy***

**Step: 1**. Identify why you resist community or struggle with that problematic relationship. Get curious about your part. Does it highlight a personal weakness? Ask yourself when and why this defect shows up. Seek to understand the reason and get to the root cause. (Romans 7: 14-20)

Do you have character defects that create problems in your relationships? If you don’t know, ask a trusted friend. You may have a false narrative if you think it’s all about the other person or group. Sample List of Character Defects: Anger/Resentment, Disappointment, Fear, Greed, Impatience, Laziness, Jealousy, Pride (think you know better), Selfish, Prone to Gossip, Pessimistic. (Romans 3:23-24, 1 John 1: 8-10)

**Step 2**: Confess. (James 5:16, 1 John 1:9)

**Step 3**: Ask God for Help. (John 16:24, John 5: 14-15, Matt 7:7, Isaiah 50:7)

**Step 4**: Define and practice the opposite quality. (Romans 13: 12-14, Colossians 3: 9-10)

**Other helpful questions:**

1. Where am I to blame for this problem (circumstance)?

2. What in me, if changed, would eliminate this resentment/issue?)

**Let's take 5 to 10 minutes to think about which character deficits you want to work on or on your part in a relational conflict.**

**Questions:**

1. Is anyone brave enough to share with the Big group?
2. How can you practice Community this week? Get specific. You can reach out to a strained relationship, go to Church, look at your part, or send a God-pointing friend a thank-you note.
3. What did you learn about Community this week?