

Christian Community

1.20.08

Intro

1. The purpose of the 21 Days of P & F; strengthening congregational unity & spiritual vitality so we can advance God's Kingdom more radically in our area.
 - a. Key objective for 2008 is to develop a greater level of community in the church.
2. Be prepared word – on the website
3. LT & deacons directive – must have broader & deeper level of fellowship; thru unintentional neglect the relational structure has broken down.
4. Unity value statement
 - a. I love the diversity of our church.
 - b. Unity value

Unity

Jesus prayed that we would be one as He is one with the Father, so that the world would say that He had truly been sent by the Father (John 17.20–23). We desire to walk in love and unity, so the world will acknowledge who Jesus really is (John 13.35). Unity is not achieved by being alike, but by glorifying Christ and edifying others (1 Cor.12.12–26). This is demonstrated when we live out the *"one another's" of Scripture. We agree on the core beliefs, mission, vision and values of WDBC. When conflicts arise, we will intentionally work through them while demonstrating an attitude of love, grace and respect towards each other. Since we are brothers and sisters in Christ, there is no place for a judgmental or critical spirit among us.

CIM – The Christian life is meant to be walked out in close relationship with other believers. Your personal faith walk is insufficient until it's wed (personal coupling of one's life to others) to the lives of other believers.

Community in the Life of Jesus

- Mt.4.11 – it was an individual trial, but he needed strengthening from angels. He couldn't have advanced w/o others supporting him.
- Mt.4.18–22 – the calling of Peter, Andrew, James & John. They were more than just disciples of Jesus, but they were his friends. There was relational bonding not just functional training. They were friends at heart (truly loved each other) & in purpose (to advance God's Kingdom). There is a job to do, but there's a relationship to be enjoyed as well.
- Mt.8.14f; 9.10f – Jesus in a casual atmosphere. He fellowshiped & enjoyed the company of others. Jesus wasn't this stiff, single minded, detached soldier who had no time for friendships.
- John 11 – Jesus loved Mary, Martha & Lazarus.

Community in the Life of the Early Believers

- Acts 2.1
- Acts 2.42–47 – note the words together, sharing, fellowship
- Acts 4.32, 35f
- Acts 5.12

Definition: Christian community is a body of believers who share their lives together for the common purposes of knowing Jesus, advancing His Kingdom and demonstrating the His character to each other.

- Body of believers – more than yourself or family
- Share their lives – we intentionally involve ourselves with each other
- Knowing Jesus – deeper walk
- Advancing His Kingdom – the cause; salt & light; power & compassion
- His character – living the “one anothers” & exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit to everyone

Community is critical because...

- Jesus needs a body
 - Jesus is the head and the body must be responsive to the Head's desires. In the natural, a body can't do its own thing w/o there being some negative consequences. Like kidney failure, or respiratory illness, etc...it affects the whole.
 - Jesus limited His work on earth by involving us in the process; He could've done it by himself, but he's given us the authority & responsibility to do His work on earth.
 - the more we're in line with him & each other the further we can go; just as our natural bodies are in a place of strength when everything is working properly so it is with our church body
 - Ill - Doing the 21 Days of P & F together
 - When we aren't sharing our lives together or worse, rejecting parts of the body of Christ it's like the body turning on itself with devastating consequences.

- We need each other
 - God created us in a way that we need people in our lives. We weren't hatched and then left to fend for ourselves.
 - We are nurtured and encouraged in families & this is to be the same in our spiritual lives with our spiritual family
 - We learn what Jesus is like as a part of a body of believers through testimony and actions.
 - Illust - Through others we receive God's love, encouragement & acceptance...people who say, "I was thinking about not coming to church today, but I'm so glad I did!"
 - Conversely, w/o deep involvement in a body, we tend to be self focused & intolerant of others. We tend to accentuate others problems & Minimize our own. Like that of an only child. We need each other for a bigger picture & great vision.
 - The fruit of the Spirit is cultivated in our lives when we're in a body. It's like you've heard, "I thought I had a lot of patience

until I had kids.” Think of where your spiritual development would be if you didn’t have good role models, counselors and even a few conflicts. Conflicts aren’t to be avoided, but embraced for in them we find the Lord.

- For blessing & protection. A body of believers is like a sheep fold, which provides identity and protection. We also need accountability for when we get hurt or fall into error.
 - III – Bob May’s analogy
- The Kingdom needs to be advanced
 - We are to work together to advance God’s dominion over the earth. He gave his charge to advance His Kingdom to a company of people not to individuals
 - The NT model – go into an area, do the stuff of the kingdom, and start congregations.
 - When work is done that doesn’t link the people together the impact is limited. It’s the difference between a wave & a tsunami.
 - George Barna’s mistake of calling for an end to the traditional church & for free agent Christianity.

Practicalities

- LT 2008 Goals – develop greater level of community
- Find an ABF or small group
 - ABLE pathway
 - Small group...young adult small group, Alpha, start your own
 - ABF – Renew
 - Willow Projects Team
 - Feeding Friendsee – Life Church’s commitment to fellowship
 - Ladies on the cruise this week
- Find a place to serve – critical to relationship developing
 - Willow Involvement Steps – brochure/website
 - Those in ministry look for others
 - Those not in ministry look for opportunities – Min.Booklet or talk with LT

- Turn over of leaders the last 16 months

Conclusion:

- Christian community is where God lives; God lives among people who love Him & each other; He commands a blessing there.
- 2008 Priority; be prepared

Lord's Supper