

Where Everybody Knows Your Name Gary Post - August 1/2, 2015

I. The Search for "Community"

A. Remembering Cheers: "Where Everybody Knows Your Name"

B. Loneliness and Isolation: The Epidemic of Our Time

"Compared with our counterparts from even a generation ago, we're much less likely to know our neighbors, to invite friends over for dinner, to join social clubs, to participate in a local church or synagogue or mosque, or to take part in community sports leagues (bowling, softball, tennis, and so on). We're less likely to get married, and less likely to stay married when we do take the plunge. We also spend less time developing and maintaining friendships. According to a recent landmark study of American social life, half of all adults lack even a single close friend they can rely on."

Dr. Stephen Ilardi, The Depression Cure

C. What is "Biblical Community" and what distinguishes it from others?

Read about it: Acts 2:42-47

II. "Koinonia": "Sharing a Common Life" (Closest concept = "community")

A. Depending on context, variations of *koinonia* meant fellowship, sharing, participation, partnership, and community

B. Greek word "koinonia" used in vs. 42 is translated here as either "to fellowship" or "the fellowship"

They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. (NASB) (Connotes *activity*)

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. (ESV) (Connotes *relationship*)

C. Biblical Community includes shared relationship with God and each other

What we have seen and heard we announce to you too, so that you may have fellowship with us (and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ).

I John 1:3

D. Biblical Community is "spiritually organic" - shares a common source of life

"Those first Christians of Acts 2 were not devoting themselves to social activities but to a relationship — a relationship that consisted of sharing together the very life of God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. They understood that they had entered this relationship by faith in Jesus Christ, not by joining an organization. And they realized that their fellowship with God logically brought them into fellowship with one another.

Through their union with Christ, they were formed into a spiritually organic community... It is this spiritually organic relationship that forms the basis of true Christian community. It is not the fact that we are united in common goals or purposes that makes us a community. Rather, it is the fact that we share a common life in Christ... It is when we grasp this truth that we are in a position to begin to understand true community."

Jerry Bridges, True Community: The Biblical Practice of Koinonia

Apostle Paul's instruction on the shared life of Christ in each believer:

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.
And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.
Galatians 2:20

When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.
Colossians 3:4

E. Biblical Community is sharing both material and spiritual gifts of grace

And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.
Acts 2:44-45

"The earnestness with which the people of this religion help one another in their needs is incredible. They spare themselves nothing for this end. Their first lawgiver put it into their heads that they were all brethren."
Roman Satirist Lucian, 130-200 A.D.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.
Colossians 3:16

"It is, first, a sharing with our fellow-believers the things that God has made known to us about himself, in hope that we may thus help them to know him better and so enrich their fellowship with him."
J. I. Packer, God's Words

F. Biblical Community makes us "partners" with God in spreading the Gospel

For you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now.
Philippians 1:5

All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.
II Corinthians 5:18-21

G. Biblical Community has the capacity to redeem a corrupt and hostile culture

"The Greco-Roman cities were usually filthy and overpopulated. Homelessness, poverty, and violent ethnic strife were common. The cities were a melting pot of ethnic diversity. In addition to the physical misery, Greco-Roman cities suffered from social chaos, high mortality rates, and a constant influx of immigrants."

Joel Comiskey, Biblical Foundations for the Cell-Based Church, p. 110

"Privacy was rare in such small houses in a dense area. For instance, in Rome, most people lived in small apartments called *insulae*, in poor conditions with a high rental fee. Most people lived on streets and sidewalks. The house was for sleeping and storing one's belongings. Privacy was not possible for the ordinary person. Live happened in front of the neighbors."

Wayne Meeks, The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul

H. Enter the "Oikos"—God's Transformational "Church in the House"

"As Jesus transformed people, they behaved differently within their oikos relationships. Husbands loved wives, slaves were treated with dignity, married partners submitted to one another, and love reigned supreme. Friends and neighbors were drawn to this new transformed community... The main evangelistic outreach was the attractiveness of the community life that the early believers projected. People could see the changes up close as community life was lived out in the open.

The attractiveness of the new, called out society spread throughout the Mediterranean world. When people noticed how lives were changed and how the believers bonded together, they believed the gospel message. Christians would gather together in homes to instruct one another, study, pray, and use their spiritual gifts. Their pagan neighbors witnessed that Christ had established a new order--one based on love and caring relationships."
Ray Stedman, Body Life

"We, who used to value the acquisition of wealth and possessions more than anything else, now bring what we have into a common fund and share it with anyone who needs it. We used to hate and destroy one another and refused to associate with people of another race or country. Now, because of Christ, we live together with such people and pray for our enemies."
Justin Martyr 100-165 A.D.

III. "One Anothers:" What Biblical Community Looks Like Lived-Out

A. Apostle Paul's description of the transformation from old life to new

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.
I Corinthians 6:9-11

Washed: Cleansed of their sins because of Jesus' blood, shed for them

Sanctified: Declared holy in their standing before God; being made holy in their experience over time through the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in their lives

Justified: Declared by God to be NOT GUILTY forever because Jesus paid the penalty
By this will everyone know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. John 13:35

B. "One Anothers": Practical demonstrations of Christ's love toward each other

- Be at peace with one another (Mark 9:50).
- Love one another (John 13:34).
- Be devoted to one another (Rom. 12:10).
- Honor one another (Rom. 12:10).
- Live in harmony with one another (Rom. 12:16).
- Stop passing judgment on one another (Rom. 14:13).
- Accept one another (Rom. 15:7).
- Instruct one another (Rom. 15:14).
- Greet one another (Rom. 16:16).
- Serve one another (Gal. 5:13).

- Carry one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2).
- Be patient, bearing with one another in love (Eph. 4:2).
- Be kind and compassionate to one another (Eph. 4:32).
- Forgive one another (Eph. 4:32).
- Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Eph. 5:19).
- Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (Eph. 5:21).
- In humility consider others better than yourselves (Phil. 2:3).
- Teach one another (Col. 3:16).
- Admonish one another (Col. 3:16).
- Encourage one another (1 Thess. 4:18).
- Build one another up (1 Thess. 5:11).
- Spur one another on toward love and good deeds (Heb. 10:24).
- Do not slander one another (James 4:11).
- Don't grumble against one another (James 5:9).
- Confess your sins to one another (James 5:16).
- Pray for one another (James 5:16).

IV. Koinonia Today: Recapturing Biblical Community

A. Back to the Future: Oikos Groups at New Hope

B. Core principles for Oikos groups at New Hope

1. The mission is the spiritual formation of disciples of Jesus Christ.

"The purpose of this church is to glorify God by producing maturing followers (disciples) of Jesus Christ through the four scriptural principles of Learning, Loving, Worship and Prayer." New Hope Constitution

2. Word of God, prayer, reliance on the Holy Spirit will be the central focus.

3. Emphasis on the cultivation of closer relationships; doing life together

4. Opportunity for each one to develop and use their unique spiritual gifts

5. Groups grow and multiply as their community life attracts new members

6. Group leaders will be trained in effective small group leadership

7. Groups are *missional*, periodically engaging together in service inside and outside the church to demonstrate the love of Christ in tangible ways

D. Next Steps (Call/text Gary @ 517.896.2119 or gary@newhopehaslett.com)

1. Assemble and train group leaders:

2. Organize and deploy the various groups based on available leaders

V. The Time Challenge: What portion of our time and activities matter for eternity?

Recommended Reading:

True Community: The Biblical Practice of Koinonia

Leading Life-Changing Small Groups

Destination: Community

Biblical Foundations for the Cell-Based Church

Jerry Bridges

Bill Donahue

Rick Howerton

Joel Comiskey