

Community Building

Called to Community

Ben Deaver at Tallgrass at The Well on September 4, 2022

1 Peter 4:7-10

So what? You're called into community and then to build community.

Feel what? Invitation to community and growth.

Now what? Take a step to build community.

VISION CASTING – Amazing community can be experienced again!

INTRODUCTION

Mingle Questions:

1. If you could live any historical figure's life, which one would you choose?
2. What is your favorite activity to do with a group of people?

Called to Community

Last Sunday Pastor Josh preaching on The Spiritual Power of Community from Ephesians 2:11-22.

Five Unique Features of the Early Church:

1. Multi-racial and experienced unity across ethnic boundaries
2. Community of forgiveness and reconciliation
3. Famous for their hospitality to the poor and the suffering
4. Community committed to the sanctity of life
5. Upheld a sexual counterculture

Let's take a look in at this early church community!

Acts 2:41-47 – Records the state of the church just days after the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, so sometime between 30-36 AD.

⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about 3000 were added to their number that day. ⁴² 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.

- Fellowship = koinania (participation in)
- Community = Common Unity – Unity around what, though?
- “The expression ‘continually devoting themselves’ is strong. This was not just something they did once in awhile. This group didn’t trust their leaders to the learning: the whole group felt they needed to know truth at a deep level. Happily, we have this same teaching from the apostles in our New Testament. So while we can’t go down some evenings and listen to Peter or John lecture, we can read and study their books. Understood properly, the church is a community of truth. We don’t come together based mainly on social need or affinity, but based on the great truths of God and especially his work in Jesus Christ.” –Dennis McCallum, *Members of One Another*, p. 3

- Every day
- Lots of food
- Lots of square footage utilized for the Kingdom
- What description of the early church gets you excited to be a part of something like it?
- What description of the early church causes you to have concern?
- What description of the early church are we strong at? What are we weak at?
- Early Church Growth
 - 1000 people in 40 AD (0.0017% of world population) to 33.8 million by 350 AD (56.5% of world population)
 - How do WE get back to what worked for the Early Church?
 - One encouragement for our church is that we've grown by 67% since the beginning of 2022, at least in our Worship Gathering. Yay!
- Edward's comments at Group – If it was countercultural and difficult yet impactful back then and there and we're seeing how countercultural and difficult this is here and now we are set up for another period of growth!
- I am excited for our church and how we came about and where we're headed!

- I am excited for our Groups starting this fall.
- I am excited for us to cultivate spaces for refuge, healing, and growth in maturity.
- 1 Peter likely written between 62-64 AD from "Babylon", likely a reference to Rome, 30 years after the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus.
- Nero reigned from 54 AD until 68 AD.

1 Peter 2:9-11

⁹ But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

1 Peter 4:7-10

⁷ The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. ⁸ Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. ⁹ Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. ¹⁰ Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

PRAY

“Father, we know the end is nearer now than ever. Help us respond to Your call into community and Your call to build community so that more will know You as their Father and Your Son as their Savior and Friend. Amen.”

- I guarantee the end is closer today than it was yesterday.
- Again, written during Nero’s reign so it probably felt like the end was near...like it’s always felt in every generation.
- Peter writes all of these things because they are 1) key ingredients to the type of community described in Acts 2 and 2) really difficult to get going.

Above all, offer love!

⁸ Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

- **Proverbs 19:11, ESV** Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.
- Overlook offense - Take risks to the point that you might offend. We can build this gracious culture.
- **1 Corinthians 13:4-7** ⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It

does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

- The pull to isolation is strong.
- The New Testament is written to community and cannot be understood or lived out apart from involvement in community.

“American Christians sense an awful vacuum in western Christianity, but are frankly confused on what to do about it. Spirituality and devotional books fly off the shelves (and many are quite good), but as we read the contemporary literature on how to fix your ailing Christian walk, and compare it with the New Testament, one big difference comes across again and again: The body of Christ. Even when contemporary writers mention the people of God as part of the solution, their discussions often become vague at that point. Many people today frankly wonder what this part means.” –Dennis McCallum, *Members of One Another*, p. 10

“In the New Testament, the context and content for every book is the same—the close community of God’s people. These are all communities, rather like the one in Jerusalem we just considered. We *never* see a version of Christianity in the New Testament that envisions the individual with his or her God. It’s *always, always, always* the people of God growing together at a deep level. Without this, much of the content of the New Testament simply makes no sense.” –Dennis McCallum, *Members of One Another*, p. 10

The “One Others”

1. **Love** one another—Jn 13:34-35; 15:12, 17; Rom 12:10; 13:8; 14:13; 1 Thess 3:12; 4:9; 2 Thess 1:3; 1 Pet 1:22; 1 Jn 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11-12; 2 Jn 1:5
2. **Serve** one another—Gal 5:13, 22; Phil 2:3; 1 Pet 4:9; 5:5
3. **Accept** one another—Rom 15:7, 14
4. **Strengthen** one another—Rom 14:19
5. **Help** one another—Heb 3:13; 10:24
6. **Encourage** one another—Rom 14:19; 15:14; Col 3:16; 1 Thess 5:11; Heb 3:13; 10:24-25
7. **Care** for one another—Gal 6:2
8. **Forgive** one another—Eph 4:32; Col 3:13
9. **Submit** to one another—Eph 5:21; 1 Pet 5:5
10. **Commit** to one another—1 Jn 3:16
11. **Build trust** with one another—1 Jn 1:7
12. **Be devoted** to one another—Rom 12:10
13. **Be patient** with one another—Eph 4:2; Col 3:13
14. **Be interested** in one another—Phil 2:4
15. **Be accountable** to one another—Eph 5:21
16. **Confess** to one another—Js 5:16
17. **Live in harmony** with one another—Rom 12:16
18. **Do not be concealed** with one another—Rom 13:10
19. **Do not pass judgment** on one another—Rom 14:13; 15:7
20. **Do not slander** one another—Js 4:11
21. **Instruct** one another—Rom 15:14
22. **Greet** one another—Rom 16:16; 2 Cor 13:12
23. **Admonish** one another—1 Thess 5:14; Col 3:16
24. **Spur** one another toward love and good deeds—Heb 10:24
25. **Meet** with one another—Heb 10:25
26. **Agree** with one another—1 Cor 1:10
27. **Be concerned** for one another—Heb 10:24
28. **Be humble** to one another—Eph 4:2
29. **Be compassionate** to one another—Eph 4:32
30. **Do not be consumed** by one another—Gal 5:14-15
31. **Do not anger** one another—Gal 5:26
32. **Do not lie** to one another—Col 3:9
33. **Do not grumble** against one another—Js 5:9
34. **Give preference** to one another—Rom 12:10
35. **Be at peace** with one another—Rom 12:18
36. **Sing** to one another—Eph 5:19
37. **Be of the same mind** with one another—Rom 12:16; 15:5
38. **Comfort** one another—1 Thess 4:18; 5:11
39. **Be kind** to one another—Eph 4:32
40. **Live in peace** with one another—1 Thess 5:13
41. **Carry** one another’s burdens—Gal 6:2

Offer hospitality

⁹ Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.

“Hospitality, because it was such a fundamental human practice, always included family, friends, and influential contacts. The distinctive Christian contribution was the emphasis on including the poor and neediest, the ones who could not return the favor. The focus did not diminish the value of hospitality to family and friends; rather, it broadened the practice so that the close relations formed by table fellowship and conversation could be extended to the most vulnerable.” –Christine Pohl, *Making Room*, p. 6

- Conversation with Pastor Sarah about Outreach and our community.
- Group conversation about these challenges today.
- People just want food and drink and your presence!
- Hospitable – hospital

“If there is any concept worth restoring to its original depth and evocative potential, it is the concept of hospitality.” –Henri Nouwen, *Reaching Out*

“The contemporary church hungers for models of a more authentic Christian life in which glimpses of the Kingdom can be seen and the promise of the Kingdom embodied. More than words and ideas, the world needs living pictures of what a life of hospitality could look like.” – Christine Pohl, *Making Room*, p. 10

“...wherever, whenever, however the kingdom manifests itself, it is welcome.” –Krister Stendahl, *The Kingdom on Its Way*

“Eat your way into the Kingdom...” –Josh Siders

- How much square footage is represented in this room?
Let's use it!
- Open your home. Open your fridge. Open your heart!
- Don't have any square footage? That's ok. Neither did Jesus, and He was very hospitable!
- **Romans 15:7, ESV** Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

Offer gifts

¹⁰ Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

- Each is each and every
- We are stewards of God's variegated grace! God's grace isn't just demonstrated through the death of Jesus on your behalf. It's also demonstrated in community where gifts are shared with one another.

Gift Lists in the New Testament

- **1 Peter 4:11** ¹¹ If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.
- **Romans 12:6-8** ⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophecy in accordance with your faith; ⁷ if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; ⁸ if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

- **1Corinthians 12:27-31** ²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. ²⁸ And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. ²⁹ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰ Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹ Now eagerly desire the greater gifts. And yet I will show you the most excellent way.
 - Then the Love Chapter!
- **Ephesians 4:11-13a, 15b-16** ¹¹ So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ^{13a} until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature... ^{15b} ...we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

- What do you notice about these lists?
 - Examples but not exhaustive lists. There are likely other spiritual gifts.
 - Not told to go and figure out what your gift is through a test or by yourself. You learn what your gifts are by jumping in and starting to love and serve one another in the context of community.

Traditional Model / Institutional Paradigm vs. New Testament Model / Organic Paradigm

- Worship Team example
- We need an environment where people can take risks and stretch themselves and explore possible gifts.
 - Bench press fail example
- We are all called to a baseline of maturity in most of these gifts.
- Growth Mindset – A growth mindset means that you thrive on challenge, and don't see failure as a way to describe yourself but as a springboard for growth and developing your abilities. Your intelligence and talents are all susceptible to growth.
- Spiritual gifts, aka supernatural gifts, emerge through curiosity and exploration and experimentation in community!

- Give one another feedback, especially positive feedback.

RESPONSE & ACTION

1. What is your next step into community?
2. What is your next step to build community?
3. Who and how are you being called to love sacrificially?
4. Who are you being invited to offer hospitality to?
5. What risk can you take to discover and offer your gifts?

INSPIRATION

SoPo Group and it's various iterations

- The most consistent things in my life in Manhattan, KS have been my marriage, my dog (who passed away in May), and my church small group.
- Started the fall of 2006 with Paxton and Judy LeMoine and another couple.
- Nate Dillon jumped in within a couple months and Jermaine married in shortly after that.
- Seasons of infertility and seasons of lots of babies
- Meeting in all sorts of homes and places
- All sorts of leaders have come and gone

- Baptisms in pools, in the Blue River, at Pillsbury Crossing, at Pott Lake No 2 in 19 degree weather, in a portable hot tub at Worship Gatherings
- People have come and gone
 - 20+ adults turnover in one year
- People who are easy to relate to and people who are very difficult – We've had some very difficult people in our group. Ask me for stories!
- Challenges faced
- So much food!
- 50+ gifts at a White elephant gift exchange during our Christmas party
- Launching new groups
- I remember when Paxton and Judy announced they were pregnant with Jurnee when we were meeting in the room at Bluestem Bistro
- Marriages and deaths
- Young and old
- Singles and marrieds
- People who've left the church but retain fond memories of our group and those relationships
- People scattered all over the world
- Consistent community for me and my family no matter what my role in the church has been
 - 2014 suicide attempt by my dad

- For all the difficult of church leadership over these past 16 years, I look back with the most hope about my impact in our community group environment.
- I can't wait to hear Jesus tell the stories of the impact of our Group over the years one day. Stories that we'll likely not hear this side of eternity.
- I want to invite up a relatively new person to our church community and to our Group, Bridget Mooney.
- I've loved seeing Bridget and her family get involved in our church. She's jumping in, loving people well, offering hospitality, and taking risks in using her gifts.

Bridget shares testimony on our community

- Bridget, Josh, and Aly Mooney
- Bridget's points
 - It's an emotionally safe community.
 - People respect boundaries well.
 - We are safe to ask questions and wrestle with things.
 - A church/community strength is fellowship.
 - I feel myself opening up in ways I haven't in a long time.
 - I love what our church has done for Aly. Giving her confidence in meeting new people and helping her develop friendships.

Invite the Worship Team up

CONCLUSION—REFLECT & REPENT

I added two reflection questions.

1. What is your next step into community?
2. What is your next step to build community?
3. Who and how are you being called to love sacrificially?
4. Who are you being invited to offer hospitality to?
5. What risk can you take to discover and offer your gifts?
6. What is the Spirit saying to you?
7. How will you respond?

PRAY

“Father, we know the end is nearer now than ever. Help us respond to Your call into community and Your call to build community so that more will know You as their Father and Your Son as their Savior and Friend. Amen.”

Chopping Block:

Sermon Structure (according to Andy Stanley):

1. **ME** (Orientation) – Introduce yourself and your topic – find common ground with your audience.
2. **WE** (Identification) – Build an emotional common ground with your audience – build as many bridges emotionally as possible.
3. **GOD** (Illumination) – God has a solution for us today – engage your audience with the text – Don't just read it. Don't explain it to death. Make it fascinating!
4. **YOU** (Application) – Find one point of application everyone can embrace. Don't ask them to make a life-altering decision. Give them a measurable or reachable goal. Encourage them to try something for a week, a day, or even a month.
5. **WE** (Inspiration) – cast a vision – prompt a decision by briefly describing what would happen if this group of people would follow what has been taught. Tell them to imagine what WE could do together.

Notes:

- Healthy Community
 - <https://www.unlv.edu/sites/default/files/24/Health-Community-January2012.pdf>
 - <https://www.uwberks.org/blog/4-characteristics-of-a-healthy-community/>
- Peter's Journey
 - 1 Peter 3:15-16
- Love covers a multitude of sin – Proverbs 10:12; Hebrews 12:15; 1 Cor 13:4-7
- Eph 4:29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.
- This is so difficult these days where words can be used so flippantly and hurtfully.
- Proverbs 10:19 Sin is not ended by multiplying words, but the prudent hold their tongues.
 - ESV When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent.
- "Diadochus of Photiki offers us a very concrete image: 'When the door of the steambath is continually left open, the heat inside rapidly escapes through it; likewise the soul, in its desire to say many things, dissipates its remembrance of God through the door of speech, even though everything it says may be good. Thereafter the intellect, though lacking appropriate ideas, pours out a welter of confused thoughts to anyone it meets, as it no longer has the Holy Spirit to keep its understanding free from fantasy. Ideas of value always shun verbosity, being foreign to confusion and fantasy. Timely silence, then, is precious, for it is nothing less than the mother of the wisest thoughts.'"

- Saint Diadochus of Photiki was a fifth-century ascetic whose works are included in the Philokalia.
- You know those people in our community who don't speak often but when they do ears perk up.
- Psalm 39:1a I said, "I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue..."
- James 3
- "Over the last few decades we have been inundated by a torrent of words. Wherever we go we are surrounded by words: words softly whispered, loudly proclaimed, or angrily screamed; words spoken, recited, or sung, words on records, in books, on walls, or in the sky; words in many sounds, many colors, or many forms; words to be heard, read, seen, or glanced at; words which flicker off and on, move slowly, dance, jump, or wiggle. Words, words, words! They form the floor, the walls, and the ceiling of our existence." – Henri Nouwen, *The Way of The Heart: Desert Spirituality and Contemporary Ministry*, p. 45
- If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.
- Col 1:28-29 ²⁸ He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. ²⁹ To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.
- Servant leadership, now understood as virtuous globally, came directly out of Jesus' teaching and example of leadership.
- Mark 10:45