



Real SMALL Community *Values Sincerity* (Acts 2:46)

By Pastor David Hillis, 31 January 2016

BIG IDEA: Real community happens when we are real with each other.

The Early Church Valued Sincerity

- When the church began 2,000 years ago and it started to really take off and grow, they decided to stay small. They knew the best way they could become like Christ was to share life together each week in small groups, as Jesus did with His small group of disciples. Going to a weekend service to worship God was great, but it wasn't enough; these early believers met in homes.
- What made these groups of believers so special?
 - They studied God's Word together, the teaching of the apostles.
 - They prayed together, expecting the power of God to move.
 - They shared *life* together and met each others' needs.
 - Acts 2:46 (NASB) tells us as they ate together, as they shared life together, they did so "with gladness and sincerity of heart."
- There was a genuine openness and transparency among them; there were no masks.
- Sincerity means to be "free from pretense of deceit; proceeding from genuine feelings; saying what you genuinely feel or believe."

Fear Challenges Sincerity

- There are a lot of challenges to living a life of sincerity.
- One is *individualism*. In our culture we tend to *lean* toward living independent, self-reliant lives. That causes us to hold people at bay from the more vulnerable parts of our lives.
- I think the greatest reason isn't *that* – it's *fear*. Fear of being vulnerable, of letting others see the challenges of our lives.

Valuing Sincerity In Grace Small Groups

- At Grace, we strive to be a community where people are loved for who they are and who Jesus is creating them to be, *not* for the mistakes they once made.
- This allows people to see they are not alone in their own battles, and drop the masks. I am encouraged as I see that happening, *especially* in our small groups.

MY NEXT STEP

What masks do I tend to wear that God wants me to stop wearing? How might a/my small group help me in this area?

FOR FURTHER STUDY/REFLECTION THIS WEEK:

1. Review Acts 2:42-47 again this week. What is listed there that you want more of in your life? Is a place for more sincerity one of them? How many people know the real struggles you face? To what degree?
2. Read Proverbs 28:13, Luke 8:17, Numbers 32:23, 2 Samuel 11:1-27 and 2 Samuel 12:1-14. These passages tell us if we conceal our sins, they will be disclosed at some point in time. What are some of the dangers of keeping your sins concealed? What concealed sins do you need to confess to God and to others?
3. Read Psalm 51:1-19 and James 5:16. In these verses, we learn there are two types of confession: confessing to God for forgiveness and confessing to people for healing. What does God's forgiveness mean to you? How has it transformed you? Why is confessing our sins to others such a vital part of the healing process?