

COMMUNITY: What the Gospel Alone Makes Possible Session 2 | Brian Chesemore September 13, 2015

*“Through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known...”
(Ephesians 3.10)*

I. Introduction

A. Our Recommended Text: *The Compelling Community: Where God’s Power Makes a Church Attractive* by Mark Dever and Jamie Dunlop (Wheaton, IL: Crossway; 2015)

B. Introduction and Overview

- Week One: A Biblical Vision of Community
- ***Week Two: The Aim of Gospel-Community***
- Week Three: How to Foster Gospel-Community
- Week Four: How to Protect Gospel-Community

C. Additional Recommended Reading:

- *Side by Side* by Ed Welch (Crossway Books)
- *The Trellis and the Vine* by Marshall/Payne (Matthias Media)
- *Community* by Brad House (Crossway)
- *One-To-One Bible Reading* by David Helm (Matthias Media)

II. Community Restored:

A. Those spiritually dead are made alive in Christ (Eph. 2.1-10)

Notice the difference God’s Mercy Makes (2.4)

“To be a Christian is, first and foremost, to belong to the triune God and to be named for Him. This is the heart and core of the privileges of the gospel. Once we were aliens from the family of God, strangers to Christ, without desire or power to please Him. But now, through the Son whom the Father sent into the world to save us, and the Spirit who brings all the resources of Christ to us, we have come to know “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God [the Father] and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.” To become a Christian believer is to be brought into a reality far grander than anything we could have imagined. It means communion with the triune God.”¹

¹ Ferguson, Sinclair. *The Trinitarian Devotion of John Owen*. (Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust, 2014) pg. 28.

B. Those spiritually separated are made into “one new man” in Christ (Eph. 2.11-22)

Notice the difference that union with Christ makes. (v.13)

- Gentiles once far off have been brought near
- Israel and non-Israel are made one
- There is no dividing wall of hostility
- Laws and practices that privileged Israel are abolished
- He created one new man in place of the two
- Strangers and Aliens have become fellow citizens

“through the church (One New Man) the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known...” (Ephesians 3.10)

Key Question: Having been “made alive” and “brought near” and added to “the church”, how am I to foster what God created?

III. The Aim of a Gospel-Community

A. What the Lord Creates, We Pursue and Protect (Eph. 2.19-22, 4.1-3)

1. In these verses, Paul calls those formerly known as strangers and aliens “fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.”
2. This household language gives way to the language of the building itself “being joined together, grows into a holy temple. This building has as its cornerstone Christ Jesus.
3. The hostility which was formerly characteristic, has now, by the power of the Cross, been torn down. Peace now reigns in our relationship with God and with each other.
4. Fully realized as people are ransomed “from every tribe and language and people and nation.” (Rev. 5.9)
5. In our relationships we work hard to display the character of Christ to our friends. This is how we “walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called...” (4.1)

- Humility and Gentleness:
 - Do I live amazed that I am a recipient of the mercies of God? (Eph. 3.8)
 - Do I treat others' interest as more important than mine? (Phil. 2)
 - Do I enter into the joys and sorrows of those around me? (Rom. 12.13-16)

- Patience, Bearing with one another in love
 - Gal. 6.1: When others stumble...
 - James 1.12 In our trials
 - Rom. 12.13-16 In others' trials
 - 2 Tim. 2.24 Enduring Evil
 - 1 Cor. 13 Charitable to Others

- *Eager to maintain* the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace

6. Practical Ideas for Application: Ephesians calls us to...

Go Broader In our Relationships

- Pursue the grace that comes through a variety of relationships
- Who can I learn from who is older?
- Who can I reach out to who is different?
- Who can I serve who has practical needs?

Go Deeper In our Relationships

- Whose joy can I more fully enter into?
- Whose sorrow can I help to bear?
- Is there someone I resent or avoid who I need to actively love?
- Is there someone I need to ask forgiveness of or extend forgiveness to?
- Is there someone who I can serve?

B. While Pastors Equip, We are all to Grow into Maturity (Eph. 4.11-16)

1. He builds His Church Through Word-Saturated Leaders (v.11)

Teaching God's Word is the primary expression of leadership in the Church.

2. He builds His Church Through Word-Equipped Christians (v.12)

When leaders are governed by the Word of God, teaching what accords with the truth, the saints of God are **equipped**.

“The ministry of the word reproduces itself in the ministry of the people...This is what happens when the word of God as it were jumps from the pulpit and starts running around our lives. We begin to discover that the gifts the Lord has given to us as individuals are sharpened and honed and strengthened...in order that in due time we may be able to serve and minister to others. When there is a motivation to serve and love others, there will always be a sphere for the use of your gifts.”²

“For even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mk. 10.45)

3. He builds His Church towards the Goal of Maturity (v.13)

Trademarks of a mature church:

- Unity of the Faith and the Knowledge of the Son of God
- Mature manhood
- The measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ

IV. Three Practical Avenues to Strengthen Unity and Maturity:

A. Pursue Community With Consistency:

“Do not give up meeting together” (Heb. 10.25)

The primary expression of this is on Sunday mornings.

- Hear the Word read and preached.
- Declare our dependence and trust in God through prayer.
- Sing the truths of God’s Word in response to his grace.
- Participate in the sacraments.
- Edify one another through the gifts of the Spirit.
- Contribute Financially to the ministry of the church.

This is the pattern we see throughout the New Testament.

Acts 2:42, “And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”

² Ferguson, Sinclair. Sermon on Ephesians 4.

B. Pursue Community With Commitment:

1 Peter 5.2-3 “Shepherd...those in your charge” (cf Heb. 13.17)

The primary expression of this is in Local Church Membership.

"Church membership is a gift of grace. Like all relationships (marriage, parenting, employment, teams, citizenship), it has its pain. But, more than most of us realize, it has its life-sustaining, faith-strengthening, joy-preserving effect according to God's plan and mercy. The Christ-displaying, corporate ministry of the Word of God comes to us in church membership in ways that we cannot predict. I urge you not to cut yourself off from this blessing by staying on the edges of Christ's church."³

“The New Testament assumes that all Christians will share in the life of a local congregation, worshiping in the body, accepting its nurture and discipline (Matt. 18.15-20; Gal. 6.1) and sharing its ministry and witness. Christians who refuse to join other believers disobey God and spiritually impoverish themselves (Heb. 10.25).”⁴

C. Pursue Community With Closeness:

“Let brotherly love continue.” (Heb. 13.1; cf. Eph.4.29-21; 1 Cor. 13)

The primary expressions of this are in Community Groups and Mutual Discipling Relationships

“We’re all in need of grace. There’s no one you know who doesn’t need more of it. And God has so composed His church that when we’re together in a larger corporate gathering or in a small group or even in casual conversation, we can both receive grace and communicate grace through the exchange of edifying and appropriate words...Through each and every interaction, however casual, however brief, I want to impart grace through my words, for that’s God’s purpose in granting us this gift of speech.”⁵

³ Piper, John. When I Don't Desire God (Wheaton, IL: Crossway) pg. 131-132.

⁴ The Reformation Study Bible. General Editor R.C. Sproul (Lake Mary, Florida: Ligonier Ministries, 2005). Pg. 1709

⁵ Mahaney, C.J. Humility: True Greatness, (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2005), 118.