

Life Group Topic #8
Our Craving for Community

WELCOME: (15 minutes)

If you could go back to one of the best “times” of your life; when would it be and why?

WORSHIP: (15 minutes)

WORD APPLICATION: (45 minutes)

Briefly read or paraphrase the following sermon summary:

Our Craving for Community

All of humanity craves for love. All of humanity craves for intimacy. Why do you think the cities of the world are filled with bars, and pubs, and discos, and coffee shops, and restaurants? One reason- it is because of our craving for community. We were made for it.

God calls us to community. God calls us to each other. To belong to God is to belong to each other. He pleads with the whole world to be reconciled to Him and in the same moment to be reconciled to each other as the people of God.

But the great tragedy is that many churches are in decline today across Canada. The reasons are complex, but among other things, people are not finding in the church the sense of belonging and connection that their souls are craving for.

Look at: I John 1:2-3: The word fellowship in this text is koinonia in Greek. *Koinonia* is the spiritual union of believers with God and with fellow believers. When a word like fellowship has lost its definition in a society, other words or terms are used to define the original concept. Christian community is the term I will use today.

1. What does this community look like that God calls us to?

Colossians 3:12-14 :This is koinonia, or fellowship, or Biblical community: this is what we crave.

If koinonia, biblical community would be our experience in the church- then it would be tremendously attractive to the world. People would not need to searching for it in bars, clubs, coffeeshops or restaurants because they would find it here

And this is the challenge for a large church like ours. How can I be bound together in perfect harmony with people who I don't know the first thing about! How could I give up my life for someone sitting beside me in the pew, when I don't even know her name?

This is one of the reasons why Life Groups exist. Life Groups are covenant communities within South Abbotsford, where you commit to doing life together with a small group of people. The invitation to join a Life Group is essentially the invitation of I John 1:3 where we say: come and connect deeply with us in this circle of people, as we together connect deeply with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ! They are meant to be safe places where we can trust each other with our pain and laughter, our confusion and our questions, our despondency and our dreams.

But let's be honest. There is nothing magical about simply attending a small group meeting.

2. So how do we discover Christian community?

Ephesians 4:11-16: What do you notice about a healthy biblical community in this passage?

We find community when we work together! When everyone does their special part, when everyone serves together, we will all build each other up, we will become more like Christ, we will be bound together in unity. But everyone has to be a player! Everyone has to do their part.

Isn't that what we want? We want to join something so significant, that we are all needed if we are ever to get the job done. We want a destiny that will demand everything we have!

Can I remind you what the New Testament teaches us about serving together?

- Service focuses first and foremost on devotion to one another within the community of faith (Romans 12: 10)
- Service is a way of life; an ongoing offering of ourselves to each other (Romans 12:1,2)

If service is devotion to one another as a way of life, than that will be expressed by many of us within the deep commitments we made within small groups, and the friendships God has given us within this body. We only have the energy to sustain deep relationships among a limited number of people, so we need constant discernment from the Lord as to who those people should be. **When we think of serving one another the question may not be so much what or how to serve, but rather who we choose to devote ourselves to.**

3. So how else do we discover Christian community?

Let's look at **Acts 2:42-47**. When we read this- it would be easy to freeze the picture at verse 45- and leave off the last two verses!

Christian community is never more healthy and vital as when it is given away to others.

The great paradox of Christian community is that when we have found it, we dare not guard it for ourselves, but we must give it away! The moment we build fences around it, is the same moment it begins to disappear.

Small groups that focus on difficult tasks- tasks that require the whole group to come together as a team to achieve something they can't do as individuals- become very close-knit. Without exception, when our small groups have made a collective effort to befriend someone who needs a spiritual family, its drawn us together and given us a depth of relationship that is hard to describe. We must give away what God has given us, or what we have will just wither away. (Randall Neighbour: Community Life 101, page. 84)

Word Application Questions:

Please keep in mind that these questions are meant as catalysts designed to get the group talking about life application.

- 1. If people are craving community today, why is the church in Canada in decline? Why are people not attracted to the church?**
- 2. Read Ephesians 4:11-16. What is your experience of church? Does it match this passage? What needs to change?**
- 3. If the primary function of Christian community is to be devoted to one another (Romans 12:10) what will that look like for us? How will we discern who to be devoted to?**
- 4. Read Acts 2:42-47. Do you agree with the statement: *Christian community is never more healthy and vital as when it is given away to other? Why or why not?***
- 5. Why do we tend to guard and protect the deep spiritual friendships we have in Life Groups, instead of reaching out to welcome others into our circle? *What are our fears?***
- 6. What steps of obedience might God be asking of our Life Group in light of these principles?**

WITNESS: (15 minutes) This section is a vision-casting time designed to get the group strategizing and making concrete plans towards reaching outward to a lost world. Relational outreach always has the goal of ultimately enfolding those we reach into the Life Group.