

## Gospel Community

Intro:

If you've been in church very long, or around churches very much, you've likely heard someone talking about community, fellowship, or that the church is a family.

- These become buzzwords for churches
- Calvary community church, Hope community church of God
- Most churches don't really do fellowship well or community or family well, but they try and they appeal to our God-given, ingrained desire to connect to other people

The desire to belong is one of the most basic of human needs. The psychologist Abraham Maslow recognized this in a paper he published in 1943 where he described the hierarchy of 5 types of human needs.

1. Physical needs - food, water, shelter
2. Safety - freedom from fear, protection
3. Belonging - community
4. Esteem needs - feeling of accomplishment
5. Self-actualization - achieving one's full potential

Belonging, or community is central - it's really the core of who we are and what we need - we truly need to know (others) and be known

The Bible also states this from the very beginning of creation

Gen. 1: 26 - "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness..."

- Many scholars argue this is the first reference to the Trinity
- The first community ever referenced - God the Father, God the Son, God the Spirit - perfect community, perfect communication...
- This idea of community is part of what it means to be the image bearer of God

Gen. 2:18 - the man was alone and God then said "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."

- God created the first woman out of the man's rib
- They were meant to live in community together with God
- Daily walk with God, talking with him as they grew together

Gen. 3 - The community is broken - the man and woman disobeyed God, ushered sin into the world; sin that permeates every aspect of our lives, every part of who we are

- and they felt afraid when they heard God walking, looking for them.

## Gospel Community

Ever since then, humanity has struggled with community. I struggle, you struggle, we all struggle with other people.

Yet we have this built-in desire to be around people, to know people and be known - but as God-given as this goal is, we always seem to pervert it, avoid it, or destroy it.

Almost nothing scares me more than to be known by others, to be in community - for the same reason as Adam - I get afraid that others will see my sin.

- But community was one of the things we were created for
- Throughout the Bible, we see God upholding community, focusing on community, supporting community - Abraham, David, Prophets, Feasts, celebrations, laws on how to treat one another
- Throughout the Bible, we see people distorting the feasts, tearing down the community, taking advantage of the vulnerable in society

This pattern of broken community (with God and one another) remains with us today. Hope – Jesus' work on cross can unite us together through Gospel-centered redeemed community

The cross for us (the church) is central to building community within the Church. If the church is going to offer an alternative to the brokenness and isolation in the world, then it must be a community that is transformed by the death and resurrection of Jesus

Eph. 2:15-22 - we are a community of believers built on the cornerstone of Jesus. Through Christ we are fellow citizens and members of one household reconciled through the cross.

- We are saved to be a community, not a church of individuals
- One of the key distinctions of Radiant - GC groups are the main focus; Sun am is an the gathering of the extended family

Dietrich Bonheffer (German Pastor who opposed the Nazi's during WWII): "Christian community means community through and in Jesus Christ."

- It is in Christ that we are united together like a family

The church is a Family - this can be good and bad

- Picture family - what comes to mind?- dysfunction?

The truth is, many of our biological families are dysfunctional at some level

## Gospel Community

- “if you don’t believe you have a dysfunctional family, you are more than likely the dysfunction”
- When we hear the Bible talk about us being a family, we also get scared.
- Judge God’s family by our earthly family
- Realize how much our earthly family knows us - know our sins, past, failures
  - Forget you’ve grown and it get awkward - “it’s the weekend, I don’t have to think”

### Reject God’s family

Our culture needs a redeemed picture of a healthy family - not talking about the cleavers

- The fact that we are family needs to shape how we do things.
1. Regularly gather (Heb. 10:23-25)
    1. Celebrate together
    2. Disciple, nurture and hold each other accountable to this life together
    3. consistent involvement in each other’s lives

We are too prone to wander apart from gospel community - because of our fears - fear of truly being known - cannot hide sin

2. Encouraging one another (parakaleo)
  - Heb. 3:13 – “Exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today”

We need exhorting, which literally means “coming along-side” all for the express purpose of genuine help.

- need to be reined in from time to time
- need others to help us see our blind spots
- without loving redirection, we may eventually drift into desiring sin more than desiring God
- You need other Christians who are willing to say the hard things, ones who are ready to speak the truth in love. Do you have them?
- In true, honest Gospel community we can fight sin together - preemptive strike against a hard heart

We all need this kind of community - need Bible-believing, sin-identifying, soul-caring, Jesus-exalting friends. The type of friends, family whom we will be honest with and who will be honest with us

TRUTH: Walking with God will always lead to walking with others

## Gospel Community

A GC is one where no sin is safe but sinners are always welcome (Grace)  
- Focused on Jesus and God's grace

Jesus and his disciples:

- Called James and John (Mk. 10:37) out for being selfish, for trying to use their family status (likely cousins) for their own gain
- Called Peter out for denying him
- Calls out his disciples for not having enough faith

Jesus never condemned them - full of Grace

Just like Paul to the Church at Corinth (one of the most dysfunctional families ever)

1Cor. 1:4: "I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus."

- Real community is filled with grace
- When sin is confessed and a sinner is looking for help, the gospel doesn't burn people at the stake, it gives hope.
- Jesus goes the distance with sinners who want change

Community and the Bible are the bumpers we need in our lives. The Spirit of Christ uses both to transform us into the image of Christ.

Every day I thank God for my GC

- Pastored 5 years
- Never experienced true GC - always felt I had to hide and that I couldn't let people in
- Until going to Radiant and getting involved in a GC

A community that isn't centered on the gospel and the WOG will only gutter itself person by person into nothingness - we need the refining factory of the church of Jesus.

Through the Spirit, we pull each other back to reality, down from our big-headedness and fakeness- or up from our condemnation and shame.

Invite you to speak into my life

Who do you allow to speak into yours?

Are you part of GC? or do you show up on Sunday trying to hide?

## Gospel Community

I tried to hide for years and it wasn't fun - it led to insecurity, loneliness and a hardened heart

Now I'm in GC, which leads to deep-seated joy, contentment, love for others, a soft heart and ultimately Jesus

The Gospel is all about Jesus -

Communion - in a moment we are going to celebrate Jesus' and his work on the cross together, as a church community

On the night Jesus was betrayed, he broke the bread and said "this is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me"

He also took the cup "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me"

As we take communion, we do so together, as a church community where we remember Christ's work on the cross to forgive us of our sins,

- brings us back into true community not only with one another, but with God
- Where sin destroyed our relationship with God and with one another (Gen. 3), Jesus restores that relationship