

11. Walking Together

(“Authentic biblical Community”)

Became Christians

Walked through gates of heaven, as it were, one person at a time

On the other side of the gate was our new family — a family that we can walk together with through life

New Father

New “brothers”

Most common way for NT to refer to believers — men & women

Family not divided by gender, race, or class

Family bound together by love for our father — through him to one another

This loving unity of the family of God preaches Jesus to world — John 17:21, 23

Because authentic biblical community is so important,

Not surprised that there are great challenges in creating it

Our American culture is one of individualism, fragmentation, and isolation

Not community

Gallup — Americans are among the loneliest people in the world

More toys to play with — but no one to play with

Randy Frazee —The Connecting Church

So many disconnected circles of relationships — Church, work, family neighborhood, soccer, basketball, girl scouts — many; disconnected

The very thing we crave the most — authentic relationships built upon the redeeming work of Jesus Christ — never find because we are too busy living fragmented, disconnected lives, without margin

Fraze documents the cultural changes in the past 100 years

Flight of people from rural areas to the big, impersonal urban areas

We used to sit on the *porch* — Now inside air conditioning; decks out back

Walk to neighborhood stores — drive to super stores (speed checkout)

Walk around the block — treadmills and watch the news

Stand in line at the post office — television so don't have to talk to people

Never leave the house — shop on the Internet and not pay sales tax

Randy Frazee, *The Connecting Church* — page 159

"Have one meal per week together" — isolated, fragmented, lonely culture

Problem: we were built for community

Adam — "It is not good for man to be alone."

Created the church to meet our deep need of community

Model of the early church — Acts 2:42-47

All about God — God is in the center — pervades everything they do

"Devoted themselves to ... the prayers" — "Praising God"

Evangelism — "Being saved"

Worship — "day by day attending the temple together"

If God not center — social club, community center

Without God — merely friends and casual acquaintances

Only because God is our Father that we are truly brothers, not divided by gender, race, or class

If God is truly in the center of our lives — individually/corporately

This fact will of necessity flow out in many directions

Greatest Commandment followed by second

1. Growth in spiritual maturity — individually and corporately

“Devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching”

Discipleship — Col 1:28-29 (Eph 4:11-15)

Biblical preaching — Sunday School with Grudem — BTI — BT.org

2. Fellowship

“Devoted themselves to ... fellowship”

“Day by day [they were] breaking bread in their homes”

Fair to say that the church was the social center of their lives

Christian crock-pot

Dysfunctional family vs. Scottish examples

Encourage you to make family of God the primary social circle of our life

Church full every hour — coffee; basketball; tutoring

Authentic, biblical community is more than good times — as important as that is

Haven of grace — Yancy — defined

“One anothers” — Live in harmony — not pass judgment — not speak evil — encourage — show hospitality — bearing burdens—Eph 4:32

Impossible to be obedient to God in isolation from the family of God

3. Ministry (“service,” “outreach”)

Service for the body

“Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another” (Heb 10:24-25).

All gifts are for the edification of the body, the common good

Finances — 1 John 3:16-18

Service outside the body — missions; evangelism

John 17 — Show Christ to be sweet — “Having favor with all the people” — saved

Hard work

“For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works in me”
(Col 1:29) — manual labor

Begins with a common purpose — ≠ community center — glorifying God

Tozer: How do you tune 100 pianos to play together — same tuning fork

Lives are focused on God, saying/doing only what will advance God’s kingdom

Even in our eating and drinking — driving purpose is to glorify God

May I encourage you to simplify your life, as I struggle to simplify my own

Make these, your brothers, the central relationships in your life

When conflict comes — work through it, lean into it, grow into it, don’t turn run

Kind, tender-hearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you.”

Then we start to become that “Haven of Grace”

Honest, open, authentic relationships

Masks come down — receive/give grace

Bear one another’s burdens

Encourage one another toward holiness

Loneliness, and need to belong, will be gone

More importantly: John 17

Radical, counter-cultural, way of looking at life

Just like Jesus and the early church