

# 40 Weeks of Purpose

Week 19

## Cultivating Community

### POINT TO MEDITATE ABOUT FROM LAST WEEK:

*I need others in my life.*

God intended us to share our lives together. This is what Fellowship is. He could have planned for us to be alone, but he wants us to be in an Ecclesia, so that we can live with imperfect, flawed humans and learn to love them.

We talked about the differences between Real Fellowship and Fake Fellowship

- 1) In Real Fellowship people experience Authenticity
- 2) In Real Fellowship people experience Mutuality
- 3) In Real Fellowship people experience Sympathy
- 4) In Real Fellowship people experience Mercy

### VERSE TO MEMORIZE FROM LAST WEEK:

*“Share each other’s troubles and problems, and in this way obey the law of Christ.” – Galatians 6:2 NLT*

Mutuality demands that we share each others problems, not just a one-sided relationship.

### QUESTION TO CONSIDER FROM LAST WEEK:

*What can I do today to connect with another believer on a more genuine level?*

It’s up to you. You can continue to be closed, disconnected and cold, or you can live the kind of life that God intends for you.

- Community requires Commitment
- Fellowship is God’s purpose for you, and only when you fulfill that purpose will you feel complete and whole...
- But, few things in life require as much commitment as Fellowship
- People are weak and frail and they WILL let you down

- You will not feel like the rest of the members of your Ecclesia are trying to have Fellowship with you
- You have to rise up, and choose to cultivate that sense of community all on your own
- Making that choice requires commitment
- Look how Paul describes it:
- Ephesians 4:3 (NCV)
  - 3) You are joined together with peace through the Spirit, so make every effort to continue together in this way.
- *Make every effort to continue together in this way*
  - It's not going to happen naturally
  - It's not going to come easily
- It takes two things to produce a good Ecclesia:
  - 1) The Power of God's Spirit
  - 2) Our Committed Effort
- Why is building great Fellowship so hard?
  - Why does it require so much of our effort?
- Unfortunately, most people grown up in families with unhealthy relationships, and they simply don't know have the relationship skills necessary for real Fellowship
- Last week we talked about Authenticity, Mutuality, Sympathy and Mercy...
  - MOST of those topics are completely foreign to MOST people
- People have to be taught how to get along with others
  - That is what the Bible is mainly about
- 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 3:14-15 (NLT)
  - 14) I am writing these things to you now, even though I hope to be with you soon,
  - 15) so that if I can't come for a while, you will know how people must conduct themselves in the household of God. This is the church of the living God, which is the pillar and support of the truth.

- If you are tired of Fake Fellowship, and you want to cultivate some Real Fellowship, you will need to commit yourself to FIVE things
  - And stick to them regardless of how the others act around you

### 1) **Cultivating Community takes Honesty**

- You have to care enough to lovingly speak the truth, even when you would much rather just gloss over a problem or ignore an issue
- It's much easier to remain silent when someone in your Ecclesia is harming themselves or others with a sinful pattern – But, it's not the loving thing to do
- Most people have no one in their lives who loves them enough to tell them the truth
  - Usually because the truth hurts
  - So they continue in their self-destructive ways
- Often we KNOW what needs to be said to someone, but our fear prevents us from saying it
- Fellowship is sabotaged by Fear
  - No one has the courage to speak up and they all watch a member's life fall apart
- We can't build a sense of community without candor
  - This means caring enough about someone to lovingly confront them
- Galatians 6:1-2 (AMP)
  - 1) Brethren, if any person is overtaken in misconduct *or* sin of any sort, you who are spiritual, you who are responsive to and controlled by the Spirit, should set him right *and* restore *and* reinstate him, without any sense of superiority *and* with all gentleness, keeping an attentive eye on yourself, lest you should be tempted also.
  - 2) Bear, and endure, and carry one another's burdens *and* troublesome moral faults, and in this way fulfill *and* observe perfectly the law of Christ *and* complete what is lacking in your obedience to it.
- Most Ecclesias remain superficial because they are afraid of conflict
- Whenever an issue pops up that might cause tension or discomfort, it is immediately glossed over to preserve a false sense of peace
  - But the issue never gets resolved and everyone lives with an underlying frustration

- Everyone knows about the problem, but no one talks about it
- Secrets like this create a sick environment
- Paul's solution was easy:
- Ephesians 4:25 (MESSAGE)

25) What this adds up to, then, is this: no more lies, no more pretense. Tell your neighbor the truth. In Christ's body we're all connected to each other, after all. When you lie to others, you end up lying to yourself.

- Real Fellowship (in your Ecclesia, Marriage or Friendships) REQUIRE Frankness
- Oddly enough, the Path of Conflict is the Path of Intimacy...
  - Until you care enough to confront and resolve barriers, you will never grow close to each other
  - Your best and closest friends are the ones you have had "issues" with in the past and have resolved them
- Proverbs 28:23 (NLT)

23) In the end, people appreciate frankness more than flattery.

- But, frankness ISN'T Rudeness
  - The desire to be Frank isn't a license to be say anything you want

## **2) Cultivating Community takes Humility**

- Self-Importance, smugness, and stubborn pride destroy Fellowship
- Pride builds walls
  - Humility builds bridges
- 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 5:5 (NIV)

5) All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

- Pride blocks God's grace in your life
  - We need grace in order to grow, change and heal
- We can only receive God's grace by humbly admitting that we need it

- When we are prideful, we are living in opposition to God and His grace
- How do you develop Humility:
  - By admitting your own weaknesses
  - By being patient with other's weaknesses
  - By being open to correction
  - By pointing the spotlight on others
- Romans 12:16 (NLT)
  - 16) Live in harmony with each other. Don't try to act important, but enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all!
- Philippians 2:3-4 (NLT)
  - 3) Don't be selfish; don't live to make a good impression on others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourself.
  - 4) Don't think only about your own affairs, but be interested in others, too, and what they are doing.

- Humility is NOT thinking less of yourself
  - Humility is thinking of yourself LESS
- Humility is thinking more of other
  - Humble people are focused on serving others, and don't think of themselves

### **3) Cultivating Community takes Courage**

- What is Courtesy?
  - Courtesy is respecting other's differences
  - Courtesy is being considerate of other's feelings
  - Courtesy is being patient with people who irritate us
- Every Ecclesia has at least one Difficult person
  - Usually more than one...
- God put these people in our Ecclesia for both their benefit and for yours
- They are an opportunity to grow and a test of Fellowship

- In a family, acceptance isn't based on how smart or beautiful you are...
  - It's based on the fact that we belong to each other
- Romans 12:10 (NLT)
  - 10) Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other.
- Community has nothing to do with Compatibility
- One key to Courtesy is to understand where people are coming from
  - When you know what they've been through, you will be more understanding
- Instead of thinking how far they still have to go
  - Think about how far they have come in spite of their past

#### **4) Cultivating Community takes Confidentiality**

- Only in a safe environment of trusted confidentiality will people open up and share their deepest hurts, needs, and mistakes
- Confidentiality doesn't mean keeping silent while your Brother or Sister sins
  - It means keeping silent about what they tell you afterward
  - It means keeping it to yourself and not gossiping about it
- God hates Gossip
  - Especially when it's thinly disguised as a "Prayer Request"
- Gossip always causes hurt and divisions
  - Gossip destroys Fellowship

#### **5) Cultivating Community takes Frequency**

- You MUST have frequent, regular contact with your Ecclesia in order to build genuine Fellowship
- Relationships take time
- You have to spend a lot of time with people to build deep relationships
- We often just simply don't spend enough time together to make Fellowship work

- And the time we do spend together is often spent listening to one person
- Community is not built on convenience but on conviction
  - We don't get together only when we feel like it, but we do it because we understand that we need it for our spiritual health
- Cultivating Real Fellowship means meeting together even when you don't feel like it
- Fellowship requires an investment of your time

**POINT TO MEDITATE ABOUT THIS WEEK:**

*Community requires Commitment.*

**VERSE TO MEMORIZE THIS WEEK:**

- Ephesians 4:3 (NCV)

3) You are joined together with peace through the Spirit, so make every effort to continue together in this way.

**QUESTION TO CONSIDER THIS WEEK:**

*Which of the five areas of Cultivating Community do I need to work on the most?*