

## Creating a Culture of Community 3/12/23

*The difference between being a church attender and a church member is commitment to community.*

“Attendees are spectators from the sidelines; members get involved in the ministry. Attendees are consumers; members are contributors.” **Attendees want the benefits of a church without sharing the responsibility.** They want covenant without commitment. Bob Savelle

Without commitment and consistency from members, the church remains more of an event or activity than an actual community. While there’s certainly good that comes from any organization that worships God and loves people, a church without consistent attendance and engagement will be limited in its ability to help people grow.

Connection means we grow from just a crowd to a community that really cares for each other. In other words, we become a family.

Problem> North American consumer culture is opposed to the biblical culture of community because we are looking for someone to do everything for us.

May I congratulate and commend you for your strong commitment to community.

There was once a pastor who had a little five-year-old daughter, and the little girl noticed that every time her dad stood behind the pulpit and was getting ready to preach, he would bow his head for moment before he began to preach. The little girl noticed that he did this every time. So, one day after the service the little girl when to her dad and asked him, “Why do you bow your head right before you preach your sermon?” “Well Honey” the preacher answered, “I am asking the Lord to help me preach a good sermon.” The little girl looked up at her father and asked, “Then how come He doesn’t do it?”

**Psalm 57:1** *“Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me! For **my soul trusts in You; And in the shadow of Your wings I will make my refuge, until these calamities have passed by.**”*

David certainly knew calamity as he battled against King Saul and his enemies sought His life. Over and over again throughout the Psalms we

see David calling on God for mercy and deliverance, but we also see him placing his trust in God. He knew that God was a place of refuge from all his troubles. A refuge is place where one can go for protection. It's a place of safety and shelter from danger or trouble. It's a place to run to when being pursued. Notice that a refuge does not mean that trouble or danger will never come. Rather, it's a place where we can seek safety during the danger or trouble.

*David is not being chased by an enemy but by his spiritual father and mentor. He doesn't want to have a meeting of the minds to discuss a disagreement. Saul wants to utterly destroy David!!*

**Psalm 91:1** *He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust."*

*Refuge and Fortress- He who dwells in the shadow of the fortress of God can count on, trust in those walls for protection. Waiting on God is not inactivity in many cases it is eager anticipation of the angelic to be activated on your behalf. Way too many unemployed angels!*

David felt a tremendous amount of injustice and betrayal. Rather than defending himself and starting a war of words he retreated to the refuge of Gods wings. It was in this place of refuge that David was renewed.

It was from this place of refuge that David was rewarded. Why? He trusted in the Lord's methods more than his own.

The dwelling place is the same as the secret place. This is the private place where He provides provision for the weary soul. It may be your retreat center. It may be time to make a reservation so you can be restored! May I propose to you that it was from the place of calamity that David found community. He discovered that as he hid in the shadow of God's wings, that he also found comfort from those close to him.

We are not called to use the carnal weapons of this world. These weapons can't operate and function properly in this battle. I'm convinced many in the church are not trained in how to use heavenly weaponry and that is why they are beat up, broken and spiritually destroyed. They surrender ground that has already been given to them. WHY would you do that?

A Famous Pastor in Bridgewater once said,  
Surrender is sitting back in silence!!! Those who find solitude in silence  
have willfully surrendered the potential salvation of a city.

With that said, we should Not criticize shy people. In many cases , sitting back doesn't always mean you are not moving forward. It just means that God is moving before you to make the rough places smoother for your advancement!!!

The danger is when the sitting back becomes sitting down and a stationary place becomes the place of silence.

In a time of trouble David went and made God his refuge and dwelling place here in Adullam, justice of the people. Everyone who needed justice followed David.

David has been cut off from community by his family, his friends and his followers. He is in a place that prevents fellowship with others. David was brought to the place where he had nothing and no one but the Lord God. That cave was a place of separation!

We often find ourselves in the caves as well, don't we? God will bring us to the place where we are alone with Him and shut off from the rest of the world.

We fear those times, but they often precede the times of God's greatest blessings in our lives! David alone in the cave; Jacob was alone in his tent; Elijah alone by the brook; Job alone surrounded by his friends; Moses alone on the backside of that mountain; Jesus alone in the agony of Gethsemane and Calvary.

Each of these experienced their greatest triumph after that time of being shut up and shut off by the Lord. **You see, there are lessons that are learned in the dark that cannot be learned in the light.**

It was through David's failures that his character was revealed.

**1 Chronicles 12:22** *"For at that time they came to David day by day to help him, until it was a great army, like the army of God."*

**During this time of constant conflict David grew strong community. The Community grew strong!!!**

He worked with what he had. He made what appeared to be a weakness into a strength.

Something was happening in the cave of conversion. Transforming lives to Impact their world. People in this province are looking for purpose. They will find it from those who are planted, poised and ready to proceed! Move out and Move forward!

**Community was created!**

*This is the benefits of community, when no one cares who gets the credit. Is there anything we can't do when we lock arms?*

**2 Corinthians 1:3-4** *"Blessed be ... the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, **that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble**, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God."*

*The reason HE comforts you with all comfort is so you can comfort others with the same comfort that you have been comforted with.*

There is a plaque on the Statue of Liberty with a poem, The New Colossus, by Emma Lazarus, addressed to those who arrive in America from foreign lands. In part it reads: "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. *Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!*"

*"The compassion element of the Great Commission is contingent on our definition of community"*

Your Neighbors will have a hard time thinking you want them in heaven if you don't want them in your living room!

WE NEED TO BE FOCUSED ON THE CONNECTION aspect of Community.

When was the last time we stepped out of the isolated incubator of the Christian social club and interacted with a sinner?

How many Muslim friends, Hindu friends, Gay or Lesbian friends?

**Practice cultural accommodation as much as possible, without compromising biblical absolutes.**

Why? Because cultural issues are an important part of communicating to the community. People can "hear" the message of Christ better when it comes from someone who accommodates the hearer culturally.

Cultural dissonance is "noise" which makes it more difficult to hear the message.

It is a musical term that relates to disharmony in a chord.

I don't play the piano, but I know when I hear something that isn't right.

Some may be nodding in affirmation on the outside but shaking your head on the inside. Some may be standing on the outside in solidarity but sitting down on the inside in rebellion

It is our job to create a broad-based coalition of believers that know how to connect in the community regardless of ethnicity and cultural constraints. It is through the connection that community is created

"Churches should be prophetic breeding grounds for generational synergy." Rev Kevin Wallace

**GENERATIONAL SYNERGY:** Is the condition where distinct generations run together in a cooperative kingdom arrangement in such a way that the combined effect is greater than the sum of the individual effects produced by each generation.

When we are homogenous and everyone is born in the same generation, we tend to suffer from what leadership experts call, "group think"

Group Think-When everyone in the group thinks the same, acts the same, looks the same, talks the same, dresses the same and no one in the group can see outside the thinking of those in the group.

It is our calling to create a multi generation church that functions off of the synergy and collective ideas of each other. One that supernaturally embraces the collision of heaven and earth. One where community is more than a fashion statement but a way of life.

Corporations are spending millions of dollars teaching, training and demonstrating how each generation is a value asset that can bring a wealth of info to the table.

Young are collaborating with the old to form a melting pot of wisdom that will set them apart from the status quo. Never before has there been in many cases 4 generations functioning under one roof in the labor force.

Tells me there are 4 generations of people trying to get into the church!!! I'm going to figure out how to make that happen.

The devil has exploited and magnified our differences to the point that the church cannot connect to a community and so we become culturally irrelevant.

But in 2023 God is bringing generational synergy to the church to leverage the unique attributes that each generation has to offer. This is how the Family of God will function.

**We have to learn how to leverage differences, not let them divide us.**

We all have idiosyncrasies that are different in our generations, but that's what makes a culture different yet attractive at the same time. It is what helps us diversify. We must work diligently to diversify the generational blend of our church and create a community that embraces multi ethnic cultures.

Young people might know technology, but they don't have a testimony like the seasoned saints.

Young people need to sit under Jean Ann and let her pour into you.

**How do we create community without compromising the culture of Christ.**

## Acts 17:16-34 In Athens

**16 While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols.**

<sup>17</sup> So he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. <sup>18</sup> A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to debate with him. Some of them asked, “What is this babbler trying to say?” Others remarked, “He seems to be advocating foreign gods.” They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.

<sup>19</sup> Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? <sup>20</sup> You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we would like to know what they mean.” <sup>21</sup> (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.) <sup>22</sup> Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. <sup>23</sup> For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god. So, you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you. <sup>24</sup> “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. <sup>25</sup> And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. <sup>26</sup> From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. <sup>27</sup> God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. <sup>28</sup> ‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’<sup>[a]</sup> As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’<sup>[b]</sup>

<sup>29</sup> “Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. <sup>30</sup> In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. <sup>31</sup> For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.”

<sup>32</sup> When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, “We want to hear you again on this subject.” <sup>33</sup> At that, Paul left the Council.<sup>34</sup> Some of the people became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others.

1) We must **replace** our eyes with God’s eyes to see man’s dilemma

<sup>16</sup> While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols.

2) We must **recommend** and be convinced of the solution

<sup>17</sup> So he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there.

3.) We must **recall** or prepare to explain and bring meaning

<sup>18</sup> A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to debate with him. Some of them asked, “What is this babbler trying to say?” Others remarked, “He seems to be advocating foreign gods.” They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. <sup>19</sup> Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? <sup>20</sup> You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we would like to know what they mean.” <sup>21</sup> (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.)

4.) We must **realize** people are searching for answers. <sup>22</sup> Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious.

5.) We must **respond** to peoples understanding

<sup>23</sup> For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god. So, you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to



you

6.) We must **reason** with people in a non-confrontational manner verses 24-25

7.) We must address the very **real** spiritual needs of people vs 27

8.) We must **relate** or learn to speak in a language people can understand. <sup>27</sup> God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us

9.) We must be **relevant**; we must not compromise <sup>30</sup> In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. <sup>31</sup> For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead

10.) We must **remember** that not all will respond in favor of our testimony. <sup>32</sup> When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, "We want to hear you again on this subject." <sup>33</sup> At that, Paul left the Council. <sup>34</sup> Some of the people became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others.

11.) We must never **regret** that which we stand for. "We want to hear you again on this subject. Why? You have earned the right by respecting their opinion.

12.) We must be **receptive** of other people's beliefs.

13.) We must **radiate** the glory of God within us

