

Community Church Huddersfield

Roots of Restoration Notes

Session 4: The Nature of the Church - Community

1. What the Church is not:

- a. Not a building
- b. Not a series of meetings
 - i. Settling for this is one of the biggest threats to true church life today!
- c. Not a religious institution
- d. Not an organisation or club

2. What the Church is:

- a. Community of People
- b. Family (community is extended family)
- c. An alternative society!
 - i. To demonstrate to the world how to live together as community

3. We were made for community life

- a. We are not meant to be alone
 - i. The individualism of our age is so contrary to God's purpose (Gen.2:18; Hosea 8:9)

"That the church is held in such low esteem reflects not only the depths of our biblical ignorance but the alarming extent to which we have succumbed to the excessive individualism of modern culture. If we don't grasp the intrinsically corporate nature of Christianity embodied in the church, we are missing the every heart of Jesus' plan. (Charles Colson)

- b. You can only become all that God wants you to become in the context of community
 - i. You can only grow in love and only grasp the love of God 'together with all the saints.' (Eph.3:18)
- c. Community is a reflection of the Godhead (Gen.1:26)
 - i. Three in One. Diversity in Unity

4. The centrality of the local church

- a. Mystical unity is not enough. The world needs to see a visible, tangible, down to earth unity.
- b. Two key passages that give some insight into the new covenant community working in its infancy in a local church setting

i. Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

(Acts 2:41-47 NKJV)

ii. Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.

(Acts 4:32-35 NKJV)

5. The meaning of fellowship

- a. It is not just chatting over coffee at the end of a meeting or attending a mid-week meeting in the home!!
- b. *Koinonia* (Acts 2:42, 1 Cor.10:16; Phil.1:5; Heb.13:16; 1 John 1:3, 6-7) = belonging, sharing, participating, relating, intimate communing.
- c. *Kollao* (Acts 5:13; 9:26; 17:34; 1 Cor.6:16-17) = joined (like glued together)
 - i. Note how serious and radical as the joining of those in 'fellowship' together in the NT church that many dared not 'join' them

6. Marks of relationship in a new covenant community

“Relationships are the very essence of church life, and if these are not healthy and strong, that body of Christians will never function effectually for God.” (Arthur Wallis)

- a. No separation between sacred and secular/spiritual and ordinary
- b. Sharing life together
- c. Where true friendship can flourish
- d. People who enjoy being together
- e. Where people find life-joints, joined and knit together (Eph.4:16)
- f. People who are one in heart and soul (Acts 4:32)
- g. Meeting each other’s needs (Acts 4:34)
- h. Serving one another (Gal.5:13)
- i. Looking out for the interests of others before our own (Phil.2:4)
- j. Speak only what is helpful to build one another up (Eph.4:25)
- k. Love one another to speak the truth and inflict the wounds of a friend when necessary (Eph.4:15; Prov.27:6)
 - i. Not an excuse to off-load our feelings about them!
- l. Deal with conflict and disagreement in a godly and grace-filled way. (Matt.18:15-17)
 - i. Not allowing bad relationships to fester
- m. Walk in the light – no hidden issues! (1 John 1:7)
- n. Function as a body – a clear sense of being inter-dependent (1 Cor.12:12-26)

7. The gathered church

- a. Church is more than a meeting but it will include meeting together.
 - i. *Ecclesia* = a gathering or assembly of people (see Deut.31:30; Acts 19:39)
- b. Can be small in number (Matt.18:20)
 - i. Note that ‘Jesus in the midst’ points to the emphasis on gathering to meet with Jesus
- c. We don’t just want to have meetings; we want to meet together i.e. gather! (e.g. Acts 2:46) and together meet with Jesus
- d. What does the church gather for?
 - i. *Doctrine*
 - A paternal duty: fathers instructing the family (Gen.18:19; Deut.11:18-19; Neh.8; Eph.6:4)
 - ii. *Fellowship*
 - An expression of shared life
 - iii. *Breaking Bread*
 - An expression of our common life and covenant
 - iv. *Prayer and Worship*
 - To be together in God’s presence
- e. ‘Everyone has’ (1 Cor.14:26)
 - i. Mustn’t limit this to sharing a testimony in the meeting

- f. 'Tell it to the church' (Matt.18:17)
 - i. It is not just leaders and elders that deal with 'issues' – there are things that the family needs to deal with together
- g. 'From house to house' (Acts 2:46)

8. Authority and the community

- a. Coming together requires authority (Eph.1:10)
- b. Important to learn the blessing of submission
 - i. Submission to be seen in context of:
 - Heart attitude
 - Family relationship not organisational hierarchy
- c. We submit to one another in the fear of God (Eph.5:21)

9. Leadership of the community

- a. Exercising leadership *over* – elders (1 Tim.3:1-5)
 - i. Shepherding – feeding, tending, caring, correcting.
 - ii. Parenting – exercising godly authority to build us up.
 - iii. Representative (of the people), ruling (over the people) and responsible (for the people).
- b. Exercising leadership *before*
 - i. Direction, vision and revelation
 - ii. Equipping the saints (Eph.4:11)
- c. Apostles led the church directly, not just through the eldership team
- d. There needs to be the recovery of the church functioning as a whole body not as passive recipients of eldership decisions or observers of leaders' ministry

10. The Community of the Spirit

- a. Our fellowship is in the Spirit. (Phil.2:1; 2 Cor.13:14)
- b. Not the result of our own efforts but a work of the Spirit!
- c. We must maintain the unity of the Spirit and receive the leadership gifts Christ has given to the church to reach the unity of the faith. (Eph.4:3,13).