

THE COMPELLING COMMUNITY

Week 1 – “A Vision for Community”

August 2016

I. INTRODUCTION

We have a responsibility to nurture and protect community, but only God can create it. When this happens, the wisdom of God is put on display for the world to see.

Problem: because of ignorance or impatience, we try to build community in our own ways.

Example: trying to build community based on similarity.

In contrast, the wisdom of God is put on display when the gospel creates supernatural community between people who would otherwise have nothing in common.

II. A COMMUNITY GIVEN BY GOD

Ephesians 2.11 – 3.13...

God’s plan is for the church to be the place where his manifold wisdom is put on display for all the world to see. How? You see people together who have no other reason in the world to be together!

God’s wisdom is never what the world expects – 1 Corinthians 1.18-30.

- The apparent foolishness of the Cross
- The supernatural community of the Church

III. COMMUNITY RUNS DEEP

The danger of consumerism

Relationships thrive on commitment

The Bible calls Christians to a life of deep commitment to one another:

- love one another deeply and sacrificially (Romans 12.13-16)

- assemble with one another regularly (Hebrews 10.25)
- teach and admonish one another (Colossians 3.16; 1.28)
- exhort and guard one another (Hebrews 3.13)

AND, the Bible assumes this will occur within a formalized commitment:

- clear line between those “inside” and “outside” the church (1 Corinthians 5.9-13)
- possible for Paul to discern “the majority” (2 Corinthians 2.6)
- clear authority and accountability (Matthew 18.17)
- particular leaders of particular believers (Hebrews 13.17)

We call this “church membership”; without it community can’t be what it’s intended to be.

IV. COMMUNITY GOES BROAD

Ephesians 2.11-22

“Being a Christian is more fundamental to your identity than your family, your ethnicity, your profession, your nationality, your sexuality, your personality—or any other way this world defines identity. And so the unity you share with every Christian supersedes every other bond. That means that wherever gospel people exist, diversity should as well. Diversity grows naturally from the gospel...Far from ‘nice to have,’ diversity should be one of the most obviously supernatural characteristics of a local church. The visible bond of our unity shows off the power of an invisible gospel.”

This is true of our church as well: ethnicity, age, socio-economic status, what else?

When people who have little in common in the world’s eyes love each other as if they are closer than family, all heaven looks on with amazement at what God has done.