

## Christian Growth

### Week 7: Community as a Means of Grace

#### Introduction

Acts 2:42\* They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

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#### Important general principles concerning the MOG

- View them **not as ways** to earn God's acceptance, or to make God more inclined to bless you, or to impress other Christians, etc.

*The MOG are God's prescribed avenues through which we relate personally to Jesus and are nourished by God's grace.*

- We need to \_\_\_\_\_ *participate in* the MOG ("continuously devoted themselves").

We need to participate in the MOG so we grow and develop:

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- We need a \_\_\_\_\_ of all the MOG.
- The MOG are an avenue through which \_\_\_\_\_ God's love and grace to others.

Prayer

The Word

Fellowship

- We should participate in the MOG in both \_\_\_\_\_ and *planned* ways.
- We should participate in the MOG both \_\_\_\_\_ and *corporately*.

## Community as a MOG

### What is the basis for Christian Community?

#### Why do we start here?

Many Christian workers first emphasize prayer and Bible reading for new Christians. But we emphasize community with other Christians for three reasons:

- Healthy community exposes us to Bible study and prayer.
- Healthy Christian community stimulates evangelism, (Jn. 13:34,35; 17:20-23) and strengthens us to be good witnesses (Heb. 10:24,25).  
  
John 13:34,35 “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (NASB)  
  
Hebrews 10:24,25 ...and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, 25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. (NASB)
- God created us to be in relationship with Him and with others. We cannot be truly human or grow spiritually without community (Col. 2:19; Eph. 4:11-16\*\*).

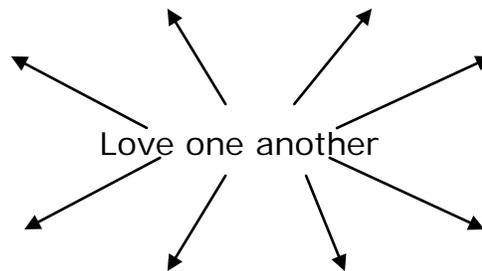
Eph. 4:11-16\*\* And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; 13 until we all attain to the unity of the

faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. 14 As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; 15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love. (NASB)

## How involved in Christian community should we be?

We need to be involved enough that we are practicing \_\_\_\_\_  
reciprocally.<sup>1</sup>

John 13:34 “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another...”



See footnote for biblical references.<sup>2</sup>

Are you involved enough that you regularly \_\_\_\_\_ these aspects of love?

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<sup>1</sup> For a more complete explanation and application of these “one another” imperatives, see Gary DeLashmutt, *Loving God’s Way: A Fresh Look At the ‘One Another’ Passages* (Xenos Publishing, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> serve (Gal. 5:13); encourage (1 Thess. 5:11); admonish (Col. 3:16); be patient/forbearing (Eph. 4:2); forgive (Eph. 4:32); bear burdens (Gal. 6:2); accept (Rom. 15:7); confess (Jas. 5:16)

Do you have mutually enriching relationships with Christians?

How much personal investment and time does one need to invest to have these enriching love relationships?

What is the value of church structures like home church, cell group, central teaching, etc?

### **We need to be involved enough that we can discover and use**

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Romans 12:4-8 For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. 6 Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; 7 if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; 8 or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. (NASB)

Are you involved enough \_\_\_\_\_ the diversity of gifts in the church?

Are you involved enough that *you* are gradually gaining clarity \_\_\_\_\_?

The context in which this happens:

Indicators of gifting:

## What beliefs/attitudes impede involvement in Christian community?

We shouldn't legislate or impose involvement in Christian community on ourselves or on others. Instead, We want to \_\_\_\_\_ deep theological and principle-based convictions.

Consider the following common attitudes that impede Christian community and the Biblical provision for each.

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vs. healthy individuality (1 Cor. 12:15-19; Rom. 12:3-5)

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vs. humility & self-distrust

Heb. 3:12,13 Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. 13 But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is *still* called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.(NASB)

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vs. trusting God to meet our love needs

1 Pet. 4:19 Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right. (NASB)

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vs. gaining significance from taking up the role God gives you in the church

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vs. finding joy and peace through God's work

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vs. scriptural priorities & wise counsel

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vs. realizing that community involvement is necessary for a healthy marriage & family (Col. 3)

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vs. walking in the light

1 Jn. 1:7 But if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. (NASB)

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vs. other-centered love

Gal. 5:13 For you were called to freedom, brethren; only *do not turn* your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.(NASB)

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vs. real friends that you grow with (1 Thess. 2:17-3:11)

". . . the kind of community required for the resuscitation of (spiritual) life requires the grace that comes through the human touch, the human voice, the human gaze. Genuine community shines through the human presence of truth expressed personally. Cyberspace can only mimic or mirror these things (however convincingly); it cannot create them. It can, however, beguile us into mistaking connectivity for community, data for wisdom, and efficiency for excellence. If cyberspace is kept closely fastened to the real world, and if we refuse its temptations to exchange the virtual for the literal, it can be our servant. Otherwise it will become a demanding and all-consuming media monster."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Douglas Grootuis, *The Soul in Cyberspace* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House Co., 1997), p. 143.

vs. embrace healthy community as God's will as revealed in Scripture.

## The joy of living in Christian community

Christians stay involved in *real* community because it brings *real* joy.

Jn. 15:11,12 “These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and *that* your joy may be made full. 12 This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. (NASB)

Consider some of the ways God leads us into real joy through community:

- (Eccles. 4:10)
- (Jn. 13:17; Acts 20:35)
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- Being part of a \_\_\_\_\_ with a \_\_\_\_\_
- Seeing God \_\_\_\_\_
- Seeing your spiritual “children” \_\_\_\_\_  
(3 Jn. 1:4; 1 Thess. 2:19)

### Memory Verses

Eph. 4:11-16\*\* God provides the church (community) to promote individual growth and his purposes.

Acts 2:42 The early church practiced the Means of Growth(Grace)

### Assignment

McCallum, Members of One Another, Chapters 2 & 3. Write responses as requested on handout.

Article: Flight From Conversation