

Community

Emphasis: cultural trend, Spirit emphasizing, biblical

The Bible is lived out more in Community than individually.

Corporate Functionality to Church

why Unity and Division are significant

Early Church immediately entered into Religious Community

Why? corporate experience of Culture of Heaven

(Ac 2:1) ¹When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

(Ac 2:42-47) ⁴²And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. ⁴³Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. ⁴⁴Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, ⁴⁵and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. ⁴⁶So 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, ⁴⁷praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

(Ac 4:32-35) ³²Now 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. ³³And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. ³⁴Nor 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, ³⁵and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.

Communes: commandment vs culture (careful with cultural application)

neither emulate nor disregard, but apply Principles within current culture

(principles reinforced elsewhere in scripture)

Key Principles:

- 1. Gathered Together - large and small gatherings**
- 2. Doctrine - agreement around Word**
- 3. Prayer**
- 4. Practical Care**
- 5. Natural Growth**

History:

communes short lived, scattered because of persecution (Acts 1:8 mandate)

Paul: Asia Minor/Greece - house churches, elders (doctrine), relational

church buildings - eventually institutional

monastic movement - relational but insular

Moravians - perhaps best example of balance

1st American colony - quickly traded communal for capitalism

How do we Apply these Principles with Balance in our Culture?

Gathering Together

(Heb 10:24-25) ²⁴And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, ²⁵**not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together**, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

assembling together is a mandate

purposes: care, provocation, encouragement, protection

context: approaching Day - sin (next verses), deception (Prov 18:1)

Why both Large and Small Gatherings?

accomplish different things, have different weaknesses

Doctrine in Community

History:

Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) - doctrine established by group dispute, word, experience

early church built on foundation of apostle's writings (NT)

drift from word authority to leader authority (word withheld)

(tendency of theologians to quote theologians more than scripture)

reform - denominations become default method of resolving differences

(1Co 1:10-13) ¹⁰Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. ¹¹For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. ¹²Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." ¹³Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

(1Co 3:1-7) ¹And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. ²I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; ³for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? ⁴For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal? ⁵Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? ⁶I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. ⁷So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.

Denominations are not spiritual, they are a mark of carnality (immaturity)

inability to recognize Christ's body = Pharisee spirit (persecute Christ - Acts 9:4)

no division in heaven - continuing reformation

Moravian motto: In essentials Unity; in non-essentials Liberty; in all things Charity

(Pr 27:17) ¹⁷As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.

The church has a shallow depth of understanding of the Word

because divisions allow us to circumvent the process. (Prov 18:1)

(1Co 12:4-7) ⁴There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. ⁶And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. ⁷But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all:

Diversity without Division - perspectives according to gifts/experience

ex: IHOP KC small groups

(Pr 25:2) ²It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter.

God hasn't hidden treasure *from* you; He has hidden treasure *for* you in His Word!

small group excavation teams (diverse tools)

Prayer in Community

History:

OT reveals pattern of human nature (ex: young man in trouble)

Apostles gave themselves to prayer (Acts 6:4)

early church gave itself to prayer (Acts 2:42)

early American colonies - Franklin on the founding of America

every major revival ever

(2Ch 7:13-15) ¹³“When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people, ¹⁴if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. ¹⁵Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to prayer made in this place.”

Prayer is the church's best weapon.

Believe this, or circumstances will drive us to it. (fallen world, hostile devil)

Moravian motto: No one work unless someone prays.

(Rev 5:8) ⁸Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

(Rev 8:3-6) ³Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. ⁴And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand. ⁵Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake. ⁶So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

The praying church partners with God in bringing Justice to the earth!

Benjamin Franklin - Constitutional Convention June 28, 1787 Philadelphia, PA

Mr. President:

The small progress we have made after 4 or five weeks close attendance & continual reasonings with each other -- our different sentiments on almost every question, several of the last producing as many noes as ayes, methinks a melancholy proof of the imperfection of the Human Understanding. We indeed seem to **feel** our own want of political wisdom, since we have been running about in search of it. We have gone back to ancient history for models of government, and examined the different forms of those Republics which having been formed with the seeds of their own dissolution now no longer exist. And we have viewed Modern States all round Europe, but find none of their Constitutions suitable to our circumstances. In this situation of this Assembly groping as it were in the dark to find political truth, and scarce able to distinguish it when to us, how has it happened, Sir, that we have not hitherto once thought of humbly applying to the Father of lights to illuminate our understandings? In the beginning of the contest with G. Britain, when we were sensible of danger we had daily prayer in this room for the Divine Protection. -- Our prayers, Sir, were heard, and they were graciously answered. All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of a Superintending providence in our favor. To that kind providence we owe this happy opportunity of consulting in peace on the means of establishing our future national felicity. And have we now forgotten that powerful friend? Or do we imagine that we no longer need His assistance.

I have lived, Sir, a long time and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth -- that **God** governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured, Sir, in the sacred writings that "except the Lord build they labor in vain that build it." I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without his concurring aid we shall succeed in this political building no better than the Builders of Babel: We shall be divided by our little partial local interests; our projects will be confounded, and we ourselves shall become a reproach and a byword down to future age. And what is worse, mankind may hereafter this unfortunate instance, despair of establishing Governments by Human Wisdom, and leave it to chance, war, and conquest. I therefore beg leave to move -- that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven, and its blessings on our deliberations, be held in this Assembly every morning before we proceed to business, and that one or more of the Clergy of this City be requested to officiate in that service.