



## **The Importance of Christian Community October 27, 2019**

**Gen 2:18 (ESV)** - *Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."*

- The the LORD - YHWH, the proper name of God.
- God - Elohim (the supreme God)

**Acts 2:42-47 (ESV)** - *And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. 44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.*

With Bishop out this week, we are taking a break from Matthew for a topical message on Christian community. My prayer is that our Lord will strengthen His bride through the preached word this morning.

At times, I am guilty of throwing out words that I take for granted that my audience is familiar with. This is a gross error on my part (especially in our family integrated worship). The Lord has gathered together a diverse group of sons and daughters at CRCC (and I am grateful for every one of you). Please don't hesitate to stop the preacher for the day and ask about what you heard but didn't understand clearly. Some questions can be answered on the spot, others might take a little unpacking (phone, email, or in

person). I speak for every pastor here.... We love you all and we are grateful to serve as your leaders. While we are certainly imperfect in our leadership, our collective desire is to glorify God by serving you (His people).

I would like to discuss the word "Community" today. Webster's 1828 defines community as **1.** Properly, common possession or enjoyment; as a *community* of goods.

It is a confirmation of the original *community* of all things.

**2.** A society of people, having common rights and privileges, or common interests, civil, political or ecclesiastical; or living under the same laws and regulations. This word may signify a commonwealth or state, a body politic, or a particular society or order of men within a state, as a *community* of monks; and it is often used for the public or people in general, without very definite limits.

In the Christian context, when discussing community, speakers are generally speaking of relationships among the brothers and sisters in faith.

I believe when looking at God's word, we see relationships from the very beginning.

**Genesis 1:1 (ESV)** *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.* Our english word "God" here is translated from the Hebrew "Elohim". Elohim is the **plural** of the Hebrew "Elowahh".

**Genesis 1:26 (ESV)** *Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."*

**Point #1** - The creator of everything exists in a perpetual community (relationship). The three distinct persons (God the Father, God the Son, & God the Holy Spirit) work in their unique functions in perfect harmony.

The creation account in Genesis declared everything good with the exception of one thing.... Adam was alone (**Genesis 2:18**). The remedy to this was God

making a helper “fit for him”. I’ll take some liberty in my storytelling this morning. Here is Adam going about the business of naming the animals created by God. Adam looked at the features of the different animals and named each one (Doesn’t he sound more intelligent than what many scientists and movies teach (Caveman that were still evolving from apes and lacking intelligence)). Adam probably noticed there were pairs of each type of beast and bird he named. None of these beasts were suitable for him. Adam was different from them. They weren’t created in the image of God like him. None of the beasts or birds were on his “level”.

**Genesis 2:21-23** *21 So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22 And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 23 Then the man said,*

*"This at last is bone of my bones*

*and flesh of my flesh;*

*she shall be called Woman,*

*because she was taken out of Man."*

It’s a shame that these God breathed verses cause much controversy in today’s culture. They are beautiful and show us the love God has for us. He did not want His image bearer to be alone. God created woman to complete the man. Without the woman, Adam would not be able to glorify God by fulfilling his purpose.

**Genesis 1:28** *28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."*

There are some who take issue with the language used in Genesis 2:18 to describe the woman as a “Helper fit for him or in the KJV “Help Meet””. The word helper is translated from the Hebrew “Ezer” which simply means “one

who helps". Far from a derogatory term, it is used many times to describe God Himself.

**Exodus 18:4** *4 and the name of the other, Eliezer (for he said, "The God of my father was my **help**, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh").*

**Psalm 33:20** *20*

*Our soul waits for the Lord;*

*he is our **help** and our shield.*

**Psalm 121:2** *2*

*My **help** comes from the Lord,*

*who made heaven and earth.*

The phrase "fit for him" simply means Adam needed a helper to be like him as a human (not a beast or bird) but distinct from him. The woman God created for Adam was suited to him, fit him, but was not precisely the same as him.

The Bible makes it clear that women are without a doubt needful. It wasn't good that Adam had no helper. He needed someone to fulfill that role in his life. There were certain strengths, gifts, abilities, and proclivities that he will benefit from, and that only she possesses. Adam couldn't fill the role. It's not that he's crying in the corner; he can function without a wife. But without Eve, his existence will be impoverished, and God's plan of dominion will lie slack. The biblical text makes clear that his life is missing blessings God wants him to have, blessings that Adam cannot produce. (**The Grand Design, Owen Strachan & Gavin Peacock**)

As Christians, our thinking should be shaped by scripture, not the culture (The Grand Design). Who are we to deny His plan?

**Point #2:** Relationship was vital for God's creation to fulfill his purpose.

The feasts and festivals of Israel in the Old Testament were shared by the entire community. They brought everyone together to remember (by worshipping and celebrating) the experiences of the people.

Passover

Unleavened Bread

First Fruits

Pentecost

Trumpets

Day of Atonement

Tabernacles

**Point #3:** God is serious about relationships to the point that he commanded these times of gathering together.

As we move towards the New Testament, we see the pattern of the people of God living life together. I admit there are differences that exist today that make close relationships a bit more difficult to experience. There was no social media or television during the Bible times. With that said, I still encourage you to seek relationships intentionally.

**Mark 6:7** *And he called the twelve and began to send them out **two by two**, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits.*

Jesus sent them out in pairs for ministry.... Why? Two witnesses are always better than one. Jewish law required two witnesses to convict someone of murder ([Deut 19:15](#)). William McDonald noted that there would also be strength and mutual help in traveling together. He also noted the presence of two might be helpful in cultures where moral conditions were low.

Apostle Paul's missionary journeys note many different companions traveling with him ([Acts 27:2](#) - Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica), ([Acts 14:14](#) - Barnabas), ([Col 1:7](#) Epaphras - beloved fellow servant), ([Acts 19:29](#) - Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul's companions in travel.), ([Philemon 1:24](#) - and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers.), ([2 Cor 1:19](#) - Silvanus and Timothy and I)

**Point #4:** While our survey isn't exhaustive, I believe it's safe to say that when setting out to fulfill the commission given to ALL believers, the pattern laid out before us is one where we serve together. We are not lone rangers.

Some points from [Acts 2:42-47](#)

And they devoted... The word devoted is from the Greek "Prostarkareo". It's defined as: to be earnest towards, i.e. (to a thing) to persevere, be constantly diligent, or (in a place) to attend assiduously all the exercises, or (to a person) to adhere closely to (as a servitor):—attend (give self) continually (upon), continue (in, instant in, with), wait on (continually).

You don't "slip" into devotion. It doesn't happen "on an accident".

They devoted themselves to:

Apostles teaching - Who is teaching you? Are your pastors your primary teachers?

Fellowship - Not just any fellowship... Specifically partnership with fellow believers.

Breaking of Bread - This refers to the Lord's table (which during this time also included a meal enjoyed by all)

Prayers - Praying together and for one another

I believe the description of [Acts 2:43](#) (awe/fear/reverence) due to the signs & wonders worked by the Apostles is God's blessing to the believers. Do you agree that the church could use a healthy dose of awe/fear/reverence for God and the things of God?

The explosion of love and generosity amongst the believers is tremendous ([Acts 2:44-45](#)). There was no separation of class, finances, employment. All things were in common (better stated as "shared").

The believers we read about in Acts 2 shared similarities with us. We all are sinners saved by the grace of God. Is there anyone who thinks there weren't times when the believers (who were spending all this time together) didn't rub each other the wrong way? Christian relationships will be difficult to maintain if we don't move quickly to one another when there is offense.

**Christian Community is:**

**Forgiving**

**Intentional**

**Necessary**

**Sacrificial**

Prayer: May God grant the grace for CRCC to reject superficial relationships and commit to living life together. Please grant the grace to reject the notion of independence. Help us to love one another, forgive one another, regard others more highly than ourselves, pray for one another, bear one another's burdens. Help us to overcome the fear of connecting with others and becoming vulnerable. We trust you to keep us safe. We want your best for us, and your best is unity with our brothers and sisters in the faith. Show us where we error and allow us to make progress towards genuine christian community. Don't allow us to remain where we are today. We trust you to hear our prayer. In the name of Jesus our Lord.